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Country and City

'COUNTRY' AND 'CITY' are very powerful words, and this is not surprising when we remember how much they seem to stand for in the experience of human communities. In English, 'country' is both a nation and a part of a 'land'; 'the country' can be the whole society or its rural area. In the long history of human settlements, this connection between the land from which directly or indirectly we all get our living and the achievements of human society has been deeply known. And one of these achievements has been the city: the capital, the large town, a distinctive form of civilisation.

On the actual settlements, which in the real history have been astonishingly varied, powerful feelings have gathered and have been generalised. On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times.

Yet the real history, throughout, has been astonishingly varied. The 'country way of life' has included the very different practices of hunters, pastoralists, farmers and factory farmers, and its organisation has varied from the tribe and the manor to the feudal estate, from the small peasantry and tenant farmers to the rural commune, from the *latifundia* and the plantation to the large capitalist enterprise and the state farm. The city, no less, has been of many kinds: state capital, administrative base, religious centre, market-town, port and mercantile depot, military barracks, industrial concentration. Between the cities of ancient and medieval times and the modern metropolis or conurbation there is a connection of name and in part of function, but nothing like identity. Moreover, in our own world, there is a wide range of settlements between the traditional poles of country and city: suburb, dormitory town, shanty town, industrial estate.

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Even the idea of the village, which seems simple, shows in actual history a wide variation: as to size and character, and internally in its variation between dispersed and nuclear settlements, in Britain as clearly as anywhere.

In and through these differences, all the same, certain images and associations persist; and it is the purpose of this book to describe and analyse them, to see them in relation to the historically varied experience. For practical reasons I take most of my examples from English writing, though my interests go much wider. It ought in any case to be clear that the English experience is especially significant, in that one of the decisive transformations, in the relations between country and city, occurred there very early and with a thoroughness which is still in some ways unapproached. The Industrial Revolution not only transformed both city and country; it was based on a highly developed agrarian capitalism, with a very early disappearance of the traditional peasantry. In the imperialist phase of our history the nature of the rural economy, in Britain and in its colonies, was again transformed very early: dependence on a domestic agriculture dwindled to very low proportions, with no more than four per cent of economically active men now engaged in farming, and this in a society which had already become the first predominantly urban-dwelling people in the long history of human settlements. Since much of the dominant subsequent development, indeed the very idea of 'development' in the world generally, has been in these decisive directions, the English experience remains exceptionally important: not only symptomatic but in some ways diagnostic; in its intensity still memorable, whatever may succeed. For it is a critical fact that in and through these transforming experiences English attitudes to the country, and to ideas of rural life, persisted with extraordinary power, so that even after the society was predominantly urban its literature, for a generation, was still predominantly rural; and even in the twentieth century, in an urban and industrial land, forms of the older ideas and experiences still remarkably persist. All this gives the English experience and interpretation of the country and the city a permanent though of course not exclusive importance.

This importance can be stated, and will have to be assessed, as a general problem. But it is as well to say at the outset that this has been for me a personal issue, for as long as I remember. It happened that in a predominantly urban and industrial Britain I was born in a remote village, in a very old settled countryside, on the border between England and Wales. Within twenty miles, indeed at the end of a bus route, was in one direction an old cathedral city, in the other an old frontier market town but only a few miles beyond it the first industrial towns and villages of the great coal and steel area of South Wales. Before I had read any descriptions and interpretations of the changes and variations of settlements and ways of life, I saw them on the ground, and

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working, in unforgettable clarity. In the course of education I moved to another city, built round a university, and since then, living and travelling and working, I have come to visit, and to need to visit, so many great cities, of different kinds, and to look forward and back, in space and time, knowing and seeking to know this relationship, as an experience and as a problem. I have written about it in other ways but also I have been slowly collecting the evidence to write about it explicitly, as a matter of social, literary and intellectual history.

This book is the result, but though it often and necessarily follows impersonal procedures, in description and analysis, there is behind it, all the time, this personal pressure and commitment. And since the relation of country and city is not only an objective problem and history, but has been and still is for many millions of people a direct and intense preoccupation and experience, I feel no need to justify, though it is as well to mention, this personal cause.

Thus at once, for me, before the argument starts, country life has many meanings. It is the elms, the may, the white horse, in the field beyond the window where I am writing. It is the men in the November evening, walking back from pruning, with their hands in the pockets of their khaki coats; and the women in headscarves, outside their cottages, waiting for the blue bus that will take them, inside school hours, to work in the harvest. It is the tractor on the road, leaving its tracks of serrated pressed mud; the light in the small hours, in the pig-farm across the road, in the crisis of a litter; the slow brown van met at the difficult corner, with the crowded sheep jammed to its slatted sides; the heavy smell, on still evenings, of the silage ricks fed with molasses. It is also the sour land, on the thick boulder clay, not far up the road, that is selling for housing, for a speculative development, at twelve thousand pounds an acre.

As I said, I was born in a village, and I still live in a village. But where I was born was under the Black Mountains, on the Welsh border, where the meadows are bright green against the red earth of the ploughland, and the first trees, beyond the window, are oak and holly. Where I live now is in the flat country, on a headland of boulder clay, towards the edge of the dikes and sluices, the black earth of the Fens, under the high East Anglian skies.

That physical contrast is continually present to me, but it is not the only contrast. Within that Black Mountain village, as again here, there is a deep contrast in which so much feeling is held: between what seems an unmediated nature—a physical awareness of trees, birds, the moving shapes of land—and a working agriculture, in which much of the nature is in fact being produced. Both kinds of hedgerow, there on its earthbank, here on the flat or with a lining ditch, together with the oaks and hollies or the elms and thorns that follow their lines, have been seen and planted and tended by men. At the end of the lane by the cottage where I was a child, there is now a straight wide motor road

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where the lorries race. But the lane also has been set, stoned, driven over: it is a mark on the land of no more than two generations, since a young builder married the daughter of a farmer and was given a corner of a field on which to build their house, and then his workshop with the lane to it, and then neighbouring houses, and then successive workshops converted to new houses; the first workshop was my parents' first home. In the field with the elms and the white horse, behind my own present home, there are faint marks of a ninth-century building, and a foot below the grass there is a cobbled road, that resists the posts being driven, today, for a new wire fence.

This country life then has many meanings: in feeling and activity; in region and in time. The cobbles under the field are older than the university to which the bridletrack leads, five miles under thin thorn hedges, across the open and windy fields, past Starvegoose Wood. The foot of earth over them is a millennium, in one kind of reckoning. But the lane in that Black Mountain village, now so different both from the motor road and from the shaded lane I remember, is recent: about as far back as when my father, at twelve, went to work as a boy on a farm. I have the farmer's reference when he left: the shaky, rounded writing that he was honest and willing; and what he left for was to be a boy porter on the railway: that line of four through the valley, old road, tramroad, new road, railway: the cuttings and embankments moving like foothills; settled and familiar, laid a hundred years ago. When I was born he was a signalman, in the box in the valley: part of a network reaching to known named places, Newport and Hereford, and beyond them London, but still a man in the village, with his gardens and his bees, taking produce to market on a bicycle: a different network, but it was a bicycle he went on, to a market where the farmers came in cars and the dealers in lorries: our own century. He had been as much born to the land as his own father, yet, like him, he could not live by it. That man, Joseph, my grandfather, was a farmworker until middle age, when he lost his job and with it his cottage, and became a roadman: cutting and clearing along a length of the road that led away to the Midlands, to other cities. One uncle lived in London; another in Birmingham; we moved, as a family, on visits and holidays, between country and city, in our own direct relationships. We were a dispersed family, along the road, the railway, and now letters and print. These were the altering communications, the altering connections, between country and city, and between all the intermediate places and communities, the intermediate or temporary jobs and settlements.

So this country life had its meanings, but these changed in themselves and changed in relation to others. In the south-west, at nights, we used to watch the flare, over the black ridge of Brynarw, of the iron furnaces of industrial South Wales. In the east now, at nights, over the field with the elms and the white

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horse, I watch the glow of Cambridge: a white tinged with orange; and in the autumn, here, the stubble fields are burned, sometimes catching the thorn hedges, and when I saw this first at night I took it as strange accidental fire. My own network, from where I sit writing at the window, is to Cambridge and London, and beyond them to the postmark places, the unfamiliar stamps and the distant cities: Rome, Moscow, New York.

The lights of the city. I go out in the dark, before bed, and look at that glow in the sky: a look at the city while remembering Hardy's Jude, who stood and looked at the distant, attainable and unattainable, Christminster. Or I remember Wordsworth, coming from high country to London, and saying from Westminster Bridge:

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

It is true that this was the city before the rush and noise of the working day, but the pulse of the recognition is still unmistakable, and I know that I have felt it again and again: the great buildings of civilisation; the meeting-places; the libraries and theatres, the towers and domes; and often more moving than these, the houses, the streets, the press and excitement of so many people, with so many purposes. I have stood in many cities and felt this pulse: in the physical differences of Stockholm and Florence, Paris and Milan: this identifiable and moving quality: the centre, the activity, the light. Like everyone else I have felt also the chaos of the metro and the traffic jam; the monotony of the ranks of houses; the aching press of strange crowds. But this is not an experience at all, not an adult experience, until it has come to include also the dynamic movement, in these centres of settled and often magnificent achievement. H. G. Wells once said, coming out of a political meeting where they had been discussing social change, that this great towering city was a measure of the obstacle, of how much must be moved if there was to be any change. I have known this feeling, looking up at great buildings that are the centres of power, but I find I do not say 'There is your city, your great bourgeois monument, your towering structure of this still precarious civilisation' or I do not only say that; I say also 'This is what men have built, so often magnificently, and

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is not everything then possible?' Indeed this sense of possibility, of meeting and of movement, is a permanent element of my sense of cities: as permanent a feeling as those other feelings, when I look from the mountain at the great coloured patchwork of fields that generations of my own people have cleared and set in hedges; or the known living places, the isolated farms, the cluster of cottages by castle or church, the line of river and wood and footpath and lane; lines received and lines made. So that while country and city have this profound importance, in their differing ways, my feelings are held, before any argument starts.

But then also, specifically, I came from a village to a city: to be taught, to learn: to submit personal facts, the incidents of a family, to a total record; to learn evidence and connection and altering perspectives. If the walls of the colleges were like the walls of parks, that as children we had walked round, unable to enter, yet now there was a gate, an entry, and a library at the end of it: a direct record, if I could learn to read it. It is ironic to remember that it was only after I came that I heard, from townsmen, academics, an influential version of what country life, country literature, really meant: a prepared and persuasive cultural history. I read related things still, in academic books and in books by men who left private schools to go farming, and by others who grew up in villages and are now country writers: a whole set of books, periodicals, notes in the newspapers: country life. And I find I keep asking the same question, because of the history: where do I stand in relation to these writers: in another country or in this valuing city? That problem is sharp and ironic in its cultural persistence.

But there was more to Cambridge than that. An ambivalence certainly: a university of scholars and teachers but also of coaches and placemen, on their way to higher places; a world of men extending human knowledge and bringing light to nature and to the lives of others; a world of other men contracted in sympathy, telling their qualifying paradigms inside the walls, in an idle and arrogant observation and consumption. The university, to my family, had been equally foreign, whether it was Cambridge or Bologna. But there was also the Cambridge of Stourbridge Fair, once the leading market of the country: 'the prodigious resort of the trading people of all parts of England' as Defoe described it in the 1720s; 'a prodigious complex of people' and also a model, to Bunyan, for Vanity Fair. When I returned much later, as a Fellow of a College, I found I was by virtue or default of an intellectual appointment an aspect, an unwilling member, of a collective and perpetual landlord, and I was asked, politely, to attend tenants' lunches, which I could never stomach. I remembered Arthur Young on the University of Cambridge:

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its revenue £16000 a year and for 1s 6d a member can sit down to a dinner such as a gentleman with £1000 a year cannot often give with prudence.

Defoe had followed one road out:

on the edge of the Fenns, to Huntingdon, where it joins the great north road; on this side it is all an agreeable corn country, as above, adorned with several seats of gentlemen.

Young, in 1791, had followed another:

Taking the road from Cambridge to St Neot's, view six or seven miles of the worst husbandry, I hope, in Great Britain. . . . There seems somewhat of a coincidence between the state of cultivation within sight of the venerable spires of Cambridge and the utter neglect of agriculture in the establishment of that University.

That is the road I now drive on, coming home from the university. The fields are well farmed now. But in the next village west, Cobbett saw, in 1822, something

which very much resembles almost a village of the same size in Picardy, where I saw the women dragging harrows to harrow in the corn. Certainly this village resembles nothing English except some of the rascally rotten boroughs in Cornwall and Devonshire, on which a just Providence seems to have entailed its curse. The land just about here does seem to be really bad. The face of the country is naked. The few scrubbed trees that now and then meet the eye, and even the quick-sets, are covered with a yellow moss. All is bleak and comfortless; and, just on the most dreary part of this most dreary scene, stands almost opportunely, 'Caxton Gibbet', tendering its one friendly arm to the passers-by. It has recently been fresh-painted, and written on in conspicuous characters, for the benefit, I suppose, of those who cannot exist under the thought of wheat at four shillings a bushel.

That, too, is different now, but whenever I consider the relations between country and city, and between birth and learning, I find this history active and continuous: the relations are not only of ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation and power; a wider system.

This then is where I am, and as I settle to work I find I have to resolve, step by slow step, experiences and questions that once moved like light. The life of country and city is moving and present: moving in time, through the history of a family and a people; moving in feeling and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions.

A dog is barking—that chained bark—behind the asbestos barn. It is now and then: here and many places. When there are questions to put, I have to push back my chair, look down at my papers, and feel the change.

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2

A Problem of Perspective

THE INITIAL PROBLEM is one of perspective. A few years ago I was sent a book for review: a country book, in a familiar idiom, that I would normally have enjoyed reading. But there in front of the experience was a formula:

A way of life that has come down to us from the days of Virgil has suddenly ended.

In detail, certainly, this was curious. From Virgil? Here? A way of country life?

But in outline, of course, the position was familiar. As it is put in a memorable sentence, in the same book:

A whole culture that had preserved its continuity from earliest times had now received its quietus.

It had happened, it seemed, in the last fifty years: say since the First World War. But this raised a problem. I remembered a sentence in a critically influential book: Leavis and Thompson's *Culture and Environment*, published in 1932. The 'organic community' of 'Old England' had disappeared; 'the change is very recent indeed'. This view was primarily based on the books of George Sturt, which appeared between 1907 and 1923. In *Change in the Village*, published in 1911, Sturt wrote of the rural England 'that is dying out now'. Just back, we can see, over the last hill.

But then what seemed like an escalator began to move. Sturt traced this ending to two periods; enclosure after 1861 and residential settlement after 1900. Yet this at once takes us into the period of Thomas Hardy's novels, written between 1871 and 1896 and referring back to rural England since the 1830s. And had not critics insisted that it was here, in Hardy, that we found the record of the great climacteric change in rural life: the disturbance and destruction of what one writer has called the 'timeless rhythm of agriculture and the seasons'? And that was also the period of Richard Jefferies, looking back from the 1870s to the 'old Hodge', and saying that there had been more change in rural England in the previous half-century—that is, since the 1820s—than in

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any previous time. And wasn't George Eliot, in *Mill on the Floss* (1860) and in *Felix Holt* (1866), looking back, similarly, to the old rural England of the 1820s and early 1830s?

But now the escalator was moving without pause. For the 1820s and 1830s were the last years of Cobbett, directly in touch with the rural England of his time but looking back to the happier country, the old England of his boyhood, during the 1770s and 1780s. Thomas Bewick, in his *Memoir*, written during the 1820s, was recalling the happier village of his own boyhood, in the 1770s. The decisive change, both men argued, had happened during their lifetimes. John Clare, in 1809, was also looking back—

Oh, happy Eden of those golden years

—to what seems, on internal evidence, to be the 1790s, though he wrote also, in another retrospect on a vanishing rural order, of the 'far-fled pasture, long evanish'd scene'.

Yet still the escalator moved. For the years of Cobbett's and of Bewick's boyhood were the years of Crabbe's *The Village* (1783)

No longer truth, though shown in verse, disdain,
But own the Village Life a life of pain

and of Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1769)

E'en now, methinks, as pondering here I stand
I see the rural virtues leave the land.

And by ordinary arithmetic, in the memory of Sweet Auburn—

loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd;
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please

—back we would go again, over the next hill, to the 1750s.

It is clear, of course, as this journey in time is taken, that something more than ordinary arithmetic and something more, evidently, than ordinary history, is in question. Against sentimental and intellectualised accounts of an unlocalised 'Old England', we need, evidently, the sharpest scepticism. But some at least of

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these witnesses were writing from direct experience. What we have to inquire into is not, in these cases, historical error, but historical perspective. Indeed the fact of what I have called the escalator may be an important clue to the real history, but only when we begin to see the regularity of its pattern.

It is worth, perhaps, getting on the escalator again, since all we have done so far is to move 'Old England' and its timeless agricultural rhythms back from the early twentieth century to the middle of the eighteenth century. When we remember 'our mature, settled eighteenth century', we may not, after all, have made very much difference to the ordinary accounts. Shall we then go back to Philip Massinger, in the early 1620s, in *The City Madam* and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*? Here the new commercialism is breaking the old landed settlement and its virtues. Here is the enclosing and engrossing Sir Giles Overreach. Here is the corruption of an older rural civilisation:

Your father was
An honest country farmer, goodman Humble,
By his neighbours ne'er called Master. Did your pride
Descend from him?

We can't say, but we can go on back to Bastard's *Chrestoleros*, in 1598, where the same complaints are being made, or, if we are asked to assume that the disturbance occurred at the turn of the century, to Thomas More's *Utopia*, in 1516, where another old order is being destroyed:

For looke in what partes of the realme doth growe the fynest and therfore dearest woll, there noblemen and gentlemen, yea and certeyn abbottes, holy men no doubt, not contenting them selves with the yearely revenues and profytes, that were wont to grow to theyr forefathers and predecessours of their landes, nor beyng content that they live in rest and pleasure nothinge profiting, yea much noyinge the weale publique, leave no ground for tillage, thei inclose all into pastures; thei throw doune houses; they plucke downe townes, and leave nothing standynge, but only the churche to be made a shepehouse. And as though you lost no small quantity of grounds by forestes, chases, laundes and parkes, those good holy men turne all dwelling places and all glebeland into desolation and wildernes.

Except that then, of course, we find ourselves referred back to the settled Middle Ages, an organic society if ever there was one. To the 1370s, for example, when Langland's *Piers Plowman* sees the dissatisfaction of the labourers, who will not eat yesterday's vegetables but must have fresh meat, who blame God and curse the King, but who used not to complain when Hunger made the Statutes. Must we go beyond the Black Death to the beginning of the Game Laws, or to the time of Magna Carta, when Innocent III writes:

the serf serves; terrified with threats, wearied by corvees, afflicted with blows, despoiled of his possessions?

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Or shall we find the timeless rhythm in Domesday, when four men out of five are villeins, bordars, cotters or slaves? Or in a free Saxon world before what was later seen as the Norman rape and yoke? In a Celtic world, before the Saxons came up the rivers? In an Iberian world, before the Celts came, with their gilded barbarism? Where indeed shall we go, before the escalator stops?

One answer, of course, is Eden, and we shall have to look at that well-remembered garden again. But first we must get off the escalator, and consider its general movement.

Is it anything more than a well-known habit of using the past, the 'good old days', as a stick to beat the present? It is clearly something of that, but there are still difficulties. The apparent resting places, the successive Old Englands to which we are confidently referred but which then start to move and recede, have some actual significance, when they are looked at in their own terms. Of course we notice their location in the childhoods of their authors, and this must be relevant. Nostalgia, it can be said, is universal and persistent; only other men's nostalgias offend. A memory of childhood can be said, persuasively, to have some permanent significance. But again, what seemed a single escalator, a perpetual recession into history, turns out, on reflection, to be a more complicated movement: Old England, settlement, the rural virtues—all these, in fact, mean different things at different times, and quite different values are being brought to question. We shall need precise analysis of each kind of retrospect, as it comes. We shall see successive stages of the criticism which the retrospect supports: religious, humanist, political, cultural. Each of these stages is worth examination in itself. And then, within each of these questions, but returning us finally to a formidable and central question, there is a different consideration.

The witnesses we have summoned raise questions of historical fact and perspective, but they raise questions, also, of literary fact and perspective. The things they are saying are not all in the same mode. They range, as facts, from a speech in a play and a passage in a novel to an argument in an essay and a note in a journal. When the facts are poems, they are also, and perhaps crucially, poems of different kinds. We can only analyse these important structures of feeling if we make, from the beginning, these critical discriminations. And then the first problem of definition, a persistent problem of form, is the question of pastoral, of what is known as pastoral.

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16

Knowable Communities

MOST NOVELS ARE in some sense knowable communities. It is part of a traditional method—an underlying stance and approach—that the novelist offers to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways. The full extent of Dickens's genius can then only be realised when we see that for him, in the experience of the city, so much that was important, and even decisive, could not be simply known or simply communicated, but had, as I have said, to be revealed, to be forced into consciousness. And it would then be possible to set up a contrast between the fiction of the city and the fiction of the country. In the city kind, experience and community would be essentially opaque; in the country kind, essentially transparent. As a first way of thinking, there is some use in this contrast. There can be no doubt, for example, that identity and community became more problematic, as a matter of perception and as a matter of valuation, as the scale and complexity of the characteristic social organisation increased. Up to that point, the transition from country to city—from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban society—is transforming and significant. The growth of towns and especially of cities and a metropolis; the increasing division and complexity of labour; the altered and critical relations between and within social classes: in changes like these any assumption of a knowable community—a whole community, wholly knowable—became harder and harder to sustain. But this is not the whole story, and once again, in realising the new fact of the city, we must be careful not to idealise the old and new facts of the country. For what is knowable is not only a function of objects—of what is there to be known. It is also a function of subjects, of observers—of what is desired and what needs to be known. And what we have then to see, as throughout, in the country writing, is not only the reality of the rural community; it is the observer's position in and towards it; a position which is part of the community being known.

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Thus it is still often said, under the pressure of urban and metropolitan experience, and as a direct and even conventional contrast, that a country community, most typically a village, is an epitome of direct relationships: of face-to-face contacts within which we can find and value the real substance of personal relationships. Certainly this immediate aspect of its difference from the city or the suburb is important; it is smaller in scale; people are more easily identified and connected within it; the structure of the community is in many ways more visible. But a knowable community, within country life as anywhere else, is still a matter of consciousness, and of continuing as well as day-to-day experience. In the village as in the city there is division of labour, there is the contrast of social position, and then necessarily there are alternative points of view. It is to these points of view, in the nineteenth-century country novel, that we must now turn, for while the contrast between country and city is dramatic and important, the intricate developments within country life and country writing are also inescapable and significant.

Look back, for a moment, at the knowable community of Jane Austen. It is outstandingly face-to-face; its crises, physically and spiritually, are in just these terms: a look, a gesture, a stare, a confrontation; and behind these, all the time, the novelist is watching, observing, physically recording and reflecting. That is the whole stance—the grammar of her morality. Yet while it is a community wholly known, within the essential terms of the novel, it is as an actual community very precisely selective. Neighbours in Jane Austen are not the people actually living nearby; they are the people living a little less nearby who, in social recognition, can be visited. What she sees across the land is a network of propertied houses and families, and through the holes of this tightly drawn mesh most actual people are simply not seen. To be face-to-face in this world is already to belong to a class. No other community, in physical presence or in social reality, is by any means knowable. And it is not only most of the people who have disappeared, in a stylised convention as precise as Ben Jonson's. It is also most of the country, which becomes real only as it relates to the houses which are the real nodes; for the rest the country is weather or a place for a walk.

It is proper to trace the continuity of moral analysis from Jane Austen to George Eliot, but we can do this intelligently only if we recognise what else is happening in this literary development: a recognition of other kinds of people, other kinds of country, other kinds of action on which a moral emphasis must be brought to bear. For just as the difference between Jonson and Crabbe is not the historical arrival of the 'poor laborious natives' but a change in literary bearings which allows them suddenly to be seen, so the difference between Jane Austen and George Eliot, and between both and Thomas Hardy, is not the

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sudden disintegration of a traditional rural order but a change in literary bearings which brings into focus a persistent rural disturbance that had previously been excluded or blurred.

Thus *Adam Bede* is set by George Eliot in Jane Austen's period: at the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. What she sees is of course very different: not primarily because the country has changed, but because she has available to her a different social tradition.

The germ of *Adam Bede* was an anecdote told me by my Methodist Aunt Samuel . . . an anecdote from her own experience. . . . I afterwards began to think of blending this and some other recollections of my aunt in one story, with some points in my father's early life and character.

Thus the propertied house is still there, in the possession of the Donnithornes. But they are now seen at work on their income, dealing with their tenants:

'What a fine old kitchen this is!' said Mr Donnithorne, looking round admiringly. He always spoke in the same deliberate, well-chiselled, polite way, whether his words were sugary or venomous, 'And you keep it so exquisitely clean, Mrs Poyser. I like these premises, do you know, beyond any on the estate.'

We have encountered this 'deliberate, well-chiselled, polite' way of speaking before, but it is not now among relative equals, just as the old Squire's way of looking is not now simply an aspect of character but of character in a precise and dominating social relationship. As Mrs Poyser says, it seems 'as if you was an insect, and he was going to dab his finger-nail on you'.

The proposition that is put, through the politeness, is in fact a reorganisation of the tenancy, for the estate's convenience, which will take away the Poyser's corn land; it is accompanied by a threat that the proposed new neighbour, 'who is a man of some capital, would be glad to take both the farms, as they could be worked so well together. But I don't want to part with an old tenant like you.'

It is not a particularly dramatic event, but it is a crucial admission of everyday experience which had been there all the time, and which is now seen from an altered point of view. The politeness of improvement is then necessarily counterpointed by the crude facts of economic power, and a different moral emphasis has become inevitable. This is then extended. The young squire is anxious to improve the estate—as the tenants saw it, 'there was to be a millennial abundance of new gates, allowances of lime, and returns of ten per cent'—and he takes up Adam Bede as the manager of his woods. But in what is essentially the same spirit he takes up Hetty Sorrel as his girl and succeeds in ruining her. A way of using people for convenience is an aspect of personal character—this emphasis is not relaxed—but it is also an aspect of particular social and economic relationships. And then, as George Eliot observes ironically:

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It would be ridiculous to be prying and analytic in such cases, as if one was inquiring into the character of a confidential clerk. We use round, general, gentlemanly epithets about a young man of birth and fortune.

Jane Austen, precisely, had been prying and analytic, but into a limited group of people in their relations with each other. The analysis is now brought to bear without the class limitation; the social and economic relationships, necessarily, are seen as elements, often determining elements, of conduct.

It is more important to stress this aspect of George Eliot's development of the novel than her inclusion of new social experience in a documentary sense. Certainly it is good to see the farmers and the craftsmen, and almost the labourers, as people present in the action in their own right. But there are difficulties here of a significant kind. It is often said about the Poysers in *Adam Bede*, as about the Gleggs and the Dodsons in *The Mill on the Floss*, that they are marvellously (or warmly, richly, charmingly) done. But what this points to is a recurring problem in the social consciousness of the writer. George Eliot's connections with the farmers and craftsmen—her connections as Mary Ann Evans—can be heard again and again in their language. Characteristically, she presents them mainly through speech. But while they are present audibly as a community, they have only to emerge in significant action to change in quality. What Adam or Dinah or Hetty say, when they are acting as individuals, is not particularly convincing. Into a novel still predicated on the analysis of individual conduct, the farmers and craftsmen can be included as 'country people' but much less significantly as the active bearers of personal experience. When Adam and Dinah and Hetty talk in what is supposed to be personal crisis—or later, in a more glaring case, when Felix Holt talks—we are shifted to the level of generalised attitudes or of declamation. Another way of putting this would be to say that though George Eliot restores the real inhabitants of rural England to their places in what had been a socially selective landscape, she does not get much further than restoring them as a *landscape*. They begin to talk, as it were collectively, in what middle-class critics still foolishly call a kind of chorus, a 'ballad-element'. But as themselves they are still only socially present, and can emerge into personal consciousness only through externally formulated attitudes and ideas.

I would not make this point bitterly, for the difficulty is acute. It is a contradiction in the form of the novel, as George Eliot received and developed it, that the moral emphasis on conduct—and therefore the technical strategy of unified narrative and analytic tones—must be at odds with any society—the 'knowable community' of the novel—in which moral bearings have been extended to substantial and conflicting social relationships. One would not willingly lose the Poysers, the Gleggs, and the Dodsons, but it is significant that

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we can talk of them in this way in the plural, while the emotional direction of the novel is towards separated individuals. A knowable community can be, as in Jane Austen, socially selected; what it then lacks in full social reference it gains in an available unity of language in all its main uses. But we have only to read a George Eliot novel to see the difficulty of the coexistence, within one form, of an analytically conscious observer of conduct with a developed analytic vocabulary, and of people represented as living and speaking in mainly customary ways; for it is not the precision of detailed observation but the inclusive, socially appealing, loose and repetitive manner that predominates. There is a new kind of break in the texture of the novel, an evident failure of continuity between the necessary language of the novelist and the recorded language of many of the characters.

This is not, it must be emphasised, a problem of fact. The consciousness of actual farmers and tradesmen was as strong and developed as that of the established and manoeuvring proprietors of Jane Austen's world; these people also are, and are shown as, inclusive, socially appealing, loose and repetitive; it is a common way of talking at any time. But whereas the idiom of the novelist, in Jane Austen, is connected with the idiom of her characters, in George Eliot a disconnection is the most evident fact and the novelist herself is most acutely aware of this. Speech and narrative and analysis, in Jane Austen, are connected by a *literary* convention. While the 'deliberate, well-chiselled, polite' idiom is the product of a particular education and of the leisured, dominating relationships which the education served, it is also idealised, conventionalised; the novelist's powers of effect and precision are given without hesitation to her characters, because, for all the individual moral discrimination, they are felt to belong in the same world. At points of emotional crisis and confrontation this is especially so, and it is the novelist who articulates a personal experience, in a way for the sake of her group, and to give it an idiom. But then it is clear that George Eliot is not *with* anyone in quite this way: the very recognition of conflict, of the existence of classes, of divisions and contrasts of feeling and speaking, makes a unity of idiom impossible. George Eliot gives her own consciousness, often disguised as a personal dialect, to the characters with whom she does really feel; but the strain of the impersonation is usually evident—in Adam, Daniel, Maggie, or Felix Holt. For the rest she gives out a kind of generalising affection which can be extended to a generalising sharpness (compare the Poyzers with the Gleggs and Dodsons), but which cannot extend to a recognition of lives individually made from a common source; rather, as is said in that foolish mode of praise, the characters are 'done'. For there is a point often reached in George Eliot when the novelist is conscious that the characters she is describing are 'different' from her probable readers; she then offers to

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know them, and to make them 'knowable', in a deeply inauthentic but socially successful way. Taking the tip from her own difficulty, she works the formula which has been so complacently powerful in English novel-writing: the 'fine old', 'dear old', quaint-talking, honest-living country characters. Observing very promptly the patronage of economic power—'deliberate, well-chiselled, polite' in the exercise of its crude controls—she still slips against her will into another patronage: since the people she respects in general (and of course for good reasons) she cannot respect enough in particular unless she gives them, by surrogate, parts of her own consciousness. There are then three idioms uneasily combined: the full analytic, often ironic power; the compromise between this and either disturbed intense feelings or a position of moral strength; and the self-consciously generalising, honest rustic background.

I can feel enough connection with the problems George Eliot was facing to believe I could make these points in her presence; that I am, in a sense, making them in her presence, since her particular intelligence, in a particular structure of feeling, persists and connects. Some years ago a British Council critic described George Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence as 'our three great autodidacts'. It was one of the sharp revealing moments of English cultural history. For all three writers were actively interested in learning, and while they read a good deal for themselves were not without formal education. Their fathers were a bailiff, a builder, and a miner. George Eliot was at school till sixteen and left only because her mother died. Hardy was at Dorchester High School till the same age and then completed his professional training as an architect. Lawrence went into the sixth form at Nottingham High School and after a gap went on to Nottingham University College. It is not only that by their contemporary standards these levels of formal education are high; it is also that they are higher, absolutely, than those of four out of five people in contemporary Britain.

So the flat patronage of 'autodidact' can be related to only one fact: that none of the three was in the pattern of boarding school and Oxbridge which by the end of the century was being regarded not simply as a kind of education but as education itself: to have missed that circuit was to have missed being 'educated' at all. In other words, a 'standard' education was that received by one or two per cent of the population; all the rest were seen as 'uneducated' or as 'autodidacts'; seen also, of course, as either comically ignorant or, when they pretended to learning, as awkward, over-earnest, fanatical. The effects of this on the English imagination have been deep.

But to many of us now, George Eliot, Hardy and Lawrence are important because they connect directly with our own kind of upbringing and education. They belong to a cultural tradition much older and more central in Britain than the comparatively modern and deliberately exclusive circuit of what are called

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the public schools. And the point is that they continue to connect in this way into a later period in which some of us have gone to Oxford or Cambridge; to myself, for instance, who went to Cambridge and now teach there. For it is not the education, the developed intelligence, that is really in question; how many people, if it came to it, on the British Council or anywhere else, could survive a strictly intellectual comparison with George Eliot? It is a question of the relation between education—not the marks or degrees but the substance of a developed intelligence—and the actual lives of a continuing majority of our people: people who are not, by any formula, objects of record or study or concern, but who are specifically, literally, our own families. George Eliot is the first major novelist in whom this question is active. That is why we speak of her now with a connecting respect, and with a hardness—a sort of family plainness—that we have learned from our own and common experience.

The problem of the knowable community is then, in a new way, a problem of language.

In writing the history of unfashionable families, one is apt to fall into a tone of emphasis which is very far from being the tone of good society, where principles and beliefs are not only of an extremely moderate kind, but are always presupposed, no subjects being eligible but such as can be touched with a light and graceful irony. But then, good society has its claret and its velvet carpets, its dinner-engagements six weeks deep, its opera and its fairy ballrooms; rides off its *ennui* on thoroughbred horses, lounges at the club, has to keep clear of crinoline vortices, gets its science done by Faraday, and its religion by the superior clergy who are to be met in the best houses: how should it have time or need for belief and emphasis? But good society, floated on gossamer wings of light irony, is of very expensive production; requiring nothing less than a wide and arduous national life condensed in unfragrant, deafening factories, cramping itself in mines, sweating at furnaces, grinding, hammering, weaving under more or less oppression of carbonic acid—or else, spread over sheepwalks, and scattered in lonely houses and huts on the clayey or chalky corn-lands, where the rainy days look dreary. This wide national life is based entirely on emphasis—the emphasis of want, which urges it into all the activities necessary for the maintenance of good society and light irony. . . .

This striking paragraph from *The Mill on the Floss* is at once the problem and the response. The emphasis of want is undoubtedly central in George Eliot, and she sees work here as it is, without any sentimental contrast between the town and the village labourer. Emphasis as a class feeling: this is what she acknowledges and accepts. But then it has to be noticed that she writes of it with her own brand of irony; she is defensive and self-conscious in the very demonstration of emphasis, so that in this structure of communication the very poor become the 'unfashionable'. Her central seriousness, and yet her acute consciousness of other and often congenial tones, is at once a paradox of language and of community. We find this again in two characteristic passages in *Adam Bede*:

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Paint us an angel, if you can, with a flowing violet robe, and a face paled by the celestial light; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory; but do not impose on us any aesthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands, those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pot-house, those rounded backs and stupid weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world—those homes with their tin pans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs, and their clusters of onions. In this world there are so many of these common coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness. It is so needful we should remember their existence. . . .

I am not ashamed of commemorating old Kester: you and I are indebted to the hard hands of such men—hands that have long ago mingled with the soil they tilled so faithfully, thriftily making the best they could of the earth's fruits, and receiving the smallest share as their own wages.

The declaration is again serious, but who is being spoken to in the anxious plea: 'do not impose on us any aesthetic rules which shall banish . . .' ? Who made the compact of 'you and I', who must be shown as indebted? Who, finally, provoked the consciousness which requires the acknowledgment 'I am not ashamed' and its associated language of 'clowns' and 'stupid weather-beaten faces', mixing as it so strangely does with the warmth of memory of the kitchens and with the truth about wages, the firm rejection of 'picturesque sentimental wretchedness'?

In passages like these, and in the novels from which they are taken, George Eliot has gone further than Crabbe in *The Village*, and yet is more self-conscious, more uneasily placating and appealing to what seems a dominant image of a particular kind of reader. The knowable community is this common life which she is glad to record with a necessary emphasis; but the known community is something else again—an uneasy contract, in language, with another interest and another sensibility.

What is true of language will be true of action. George Eliot extends the plots of her novels to include the farmers and the craftsmen, and also the disinherited. But just as she finds it difficult to individuate working people—falling back on a choral mode, a generalising description, or an endowment with her own awkwardly translated consciousness—so she finds it difficult to conceive whole actions which spring from the substance of these lives and which can be worked through in relation to their interests. *Adam Bede* is the nearest to this, but it is overridden, finally, by an external interest: Hetty is a subject to that last moment on the road before she abandons her baby; but after that moment she is an object of confession and conversion—of *attitudes* to suffering. This is the essential difference from Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, which has the strength to keep to the subject to the end. *Adam Bede* and Dinah Morris—as one might say the dignity of self-respecting labour and religious enthusiasm—are more important, finally. Even the changed, repentant Arthur is

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more important than the girl whom the novelist abandons in a moral action more decisive than Hetty's own confused and desperate leaving of her child.

Yet still the history she is writing is active: a finding of continuity in the stress of learned feelings. *The Mill on the Floss* is the crisis of just this development and tension. It is an action written from within the emphasis of want: but now of want not as leading to ordinary work but as human deprivation; in the guarded, unattractive rituals of survival of the small farmers, the Dodsons; in the rash independence of Tulliver, broken by the complications of law and economic pressure that he does not understand. In neither of these ways, as George Eliot sees them, can any fullness of life be achieved, but there is no other way through; only the imagined escapes, the reading and the history, and then the unwilling, temporary escape of the trip on the river: a fantasy of comfort. All that can then finally happen is a return to childhood and the river; a return which releases feeling, but as death, not life. From the social history, which had been seen as determining but as narrowly determining, there is a contraction of sympathy to the exposed and separated individual, in whom the only action of value, of any full human feeling, is located. And then what in *The Mill on the Floss* is an active, desperate isolation becomes, in a new way of seeing, a sad resignation.

For in the subsequent works, for all their evidence of growing maturity and control—a control, precisely, based on sad resignation; a maturity construed as that exact feeling—the actions become more external to that common world in which the emphasis of want had been seen as decisive. As if overcome by the dead weight of the interests of a separated and propertied class, the formal plots of the later works are in a different social world. *Felix Holt* is made to turn on the inheritance of an estate, and this is a crucial surrender to that typical interest which preoccupied the nineteenth-century middle-class imagination. Of course Esther rejects the inheritance in the end; George Eliot's moral emphasis is too genuinely of an improving kind, of a self-making and self-made life, to permit Esther to accept the inheritance and find the fashionable way out. The corruption of that inheriting world, in which the price of security is intrigue, is powerfully shown in *Mrs Transome and Jermyn*. But the emphasis of want is now specialised to Felix Holt: to the exposed, separated, potentially mobile individual. It is part of a crucial history in the development of the novel, in which the knowable community—the extended and emphatic world of an actual rural and then industrial England—comes to be known primarily as a problem of ambivalent relationship: of how the separated individual, with a divided consciousness of belonging and not belonging, makes his own moral history.

This is the source of the disturbance, the unease, the divided construction of the later George Eliot novels (the exception is *Middlemarch*, significantly a novel

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of a single community again; a small town just before the decisive historical changes). Yet we have only to compare George Eliot with her contemporary, Anthony Trollope, to see the significance of this disturbance. Trollope, in his Barsetshire novels, is at ease with schemes of inheritance, with the interaction of classes and interests, with the lucky discovery and the successful propertied marriage. His interest is all in how it happens, how it is done. An even, easy narrative tone, with a minimum of searching analysis, can then achieve all that is asked of it: a recorded observation, an explanation at that level of social mechanics. To read *Doctor Thorne* beside *Felix Holt* is not only to find ease in Trollope where there is disturbance in George Eliot; to find a level of interest corresponding with the plot instead of struggling to break free of a dutifully sustained external complication; to find the conventional happy ending where property and happiness can coexist and be celebrated instead of an awkward, stubborn, unappeased resignation. It is also, quite evidently, to see the source of these differences in a real social history.

Near the beginning of *Doctor Thorne*, Trollope announces with characteristic confidence the state of his rural England:

Its green pastures, its waving wheat, its deep and shady and—let us add—dirty lanes, its paths and stiles, its tawny-coloured, well-built rural churches, its avenues of beeches, and frequent Tudor mansions, its constant county hunt, its social graces, and the air of clanship which pervades it, has made it to its own inhabitants a favoured land of Goshen. It is purely agricultural: agricultural in its produce, agricultural in its poor, and agricultural in its pleasures.

Here the extent of realism is the mannered concession that the lanes are dirty. For the rest, what is seen is a social structure with pastoral trimmings. The agricultural poor are placed easily between the produce and the pleasures. And while this easy relationship holds, there is no moral problem of any consequence to disturb the smooth and recommending construction.

England is not yet a commercial country in the sense in which that epithet is used for her; and let us hope that she will not soon become so. She might surely as well be called feudal England, or chivalrous England. If in western civilised Europe there does exist a nation among whom there are high signors, and with whom the owners of the land are the true aristocracy, the aristocracy that is trusted as being best and fitted to rule, that nation is the English.

As a description of mid-nineteenth-century England this is ludicrous; but as a way of seeing it without extended question it is perfect. It takes the values for granted, and can then study with a persistent accuracy the internal difficulties of the class, and especially the problem of the relation between the inheriting landed families and the connected and rising cadet and professional people. Trollope shares an interest in getting into that class, which is what the inheritance plot had always mainly served, and he can describe its processes without further illusion, once the basic illusion of describing the landowners as

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an aristocracy has been accepted. George Eliot, by contrast, questioning in a profoundly moral way the real and assumed relations between property and human quality, accepts the emphasis of inheritance as the central action, and then has to make it external, contradictory, and finally irrelevant, as her real interest transfers to the separated and exposed individual, who becomes sadly resigned or must go away. What happens to the Transomes' land in *Felix Holt*, or to Grandcourt's in *Daniel Deronda*, is no longer decisive; yet around the complications of that kind of interest a substantial part of each novel is built. In this sense, George Eliot's novels are transitional between the form which had ended in a series of settlements, in which the social and economic solutions and the personal achievements were in a single dimension, and the form which, extending and complicating and then finally collapsing this dimension, ends with a single person going away on his own, having achieved his moral growth through distancing or extrication. It is a divided consciousness of belonging and not belonging; for the social solutions are still taken seriously up to the last point of personal crisis, and then what is achieved as a personal moral development has to express itself in some kind of physical or spiritual renewal—an emigration, at once resigned and hopeful, from what had been offered as a decisive social world.

The complications of the inheritance plot, with its underlying assumption of a definite relation between property and human quality, had in fact been used in one remarkable novel, significantly based on a whole action rather than on individual analysis. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is remarkable because it takes the crisis of inheritance at its full human value, without displacement to the external and representative attitudes of disembodied classes. There is a formal contrast of values between the exposed and working Heights and the sheltered and renting Grange, and the complicated relations between their families are consistently determined by the power and endurance of the Heights. Yet the creation is so total that the social mechanism of inheritance is transcended. It is class and property that divide Heathcliff and Cathy, and it is in the positive alteration of these relationships that a resolution is arrived at in the second generation. But it is not in social alteration that the human solution is at any point conceived. What is created and held to is a kind of human intensity and connection which is the ground of continuing life. Unaffected by settlements, it survives them and, in a familiar tragic emphasis, survives and is learned again through death. This tragic separation between human intensity and any available social settlement is accepted from the beginning in the whole design and idiom of the novel. The complication of the plot is then sustained by a single feeling, which is the act of transcendence. George Eliot, by contrast, working in a more critically realist world, conceives and yet cannot sustain

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acceptable social solutions; it is then not transcendence but a sad resignation on which she finally comes to rest. As a creative history, each of these solutions has a decisive importance, for each is reworked by the significant successors of George Eliot and Emily Brontë: Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence.

The country action of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* takes place in Wessex. But whereas the Loamshire and Stonyshire of *Felix Holt* had been George Eliot's England, the Wessex of *Daniel Deronda* might be Jane Austen's Hampshire or Derbyshire: the great and the less great houses, and the selected 'knowable community', as it is to be found again later in Henry James and in other 'country-house novels' of our own century. *Daniel Deronda* was finished in 1876, but by that time there was a new Wessex in the novel: the country of Hardy. To move from one to the other is to repeat, ironically, the movement from the world around Chawton to the world of *Adam Bede*: a reappearance, a remaking of the general life, with its known community and its hard emphasis of want.

For George Eliot, in writing her only novel set in her own time, had moved significantly away from the full and known world of her earlier works. She had her own clear reasons for this. If the decisive history was that of character and of the frustration of human impulse by an unacceptable and yet inevitable world, she needed to create no more than the conditions for this kind of moral, intellectual and ideal history. The social conditions for a more generally valuing history were in every real sense behind her.

And this is the right way, I believe, to introduce the question of George Eliot's important attitudes to the past, especially the rural past. In *Adam Bede*, for example, she had looked back with a generalising affection to the first years of the nineteenth century, 'those old leisurely times', and concluded:

Leisure is gone—gone where the spinning wheels are gone, and the pack-horses, and the slow waggons, and the pedlars, who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons. Ingenious philosophers tell you, perhaps, that the great work of the steamengine is to create leisure for mankind. Do not believe them: it only creates a vacuum for eager thoughts to rush in. Even idleness is eager now—eager for amusement: prone to excursion-trains, art-museums, periodical literature, and exciting novels: prone even to scientific theorising, and cursory peeps through microscopes. Old Leisure was quite a different personage: he only read one newspaper, innocent of leaders, and was free from that periodicity of sensations which we call post-time. He was a contemplative, rather stout gentleman, of excellent digestion—of quiet perception, undiseased by hypothesis: happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves. He lived chiefly in the country, among pleasant seats and homesteads, and was fond of sauntering by the fruit-tree wall, and scenting the apricots when they were warmed by the morning sunshine, or of sheltering himself under the orchard boughs at noon, when the summer pears were falling. He knew nothing of weekday services, and thought none the worse of the Sunday sermon if it allowed him to sleep from the text to the blessing—liking the afternoon service best because the prayers were the shortest, and not ashamed to say so; for he had an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself, and able to carry a great deal of beer and port-wine—not being made squeamish by doubts and qualms and lofty aspirations. Life was not a task to him, but a sinecure;

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he fingered the guineas in his pocket, and ate his dinners, and slept the sleep of the irresponsible; for had he not kept up his charter by going to church on the Sunday afternoons!

Fine old Leisure! Do not be severe upon him, and judge him by our modern standard; he never went to Exeter Hall, or heard a popular preacher, or read *Tracts for the Times* or *Sartor Resartus*.

It is lightly enough written, an ironic rumination on the past which has been extended into a kind of history; a personification, using the simplest devices of fiction, which is significantly very different from the active personifications of Dickens: the shaping contemporary forces. Old Leisure is history, is a time and a period; but with his apricots and his orchard, his single newspaper, his port-wine and his guineas in his pocket, he is a class figure who can afford to saunter, who has leisure precisely in the sweat of other men's work. This foreshortening, this selection, this special indulgence are all characteristic of what has become a main form of the modern rural retrospect.

Yet in being lightly done, conveying a clear picture yet always ready to qualify, to smile, to move on, it seems protected against the very feelings, including the emphasis of want, which it effectively mediates and suppresses. For it was not *Tracts for the Times* or *Sartor Resartus* or the newspapers or science which disturbed Old Leisure as he fingered his guineas. It was—but can one say it, while the smiling reminiscence continues?—men who in just those years were being broken by endless work and by the want of bread; Old Leisure the roundsman, Old Leisure with the pauper's letter on his back, Old Leisure in the workhouse as a reward for fifty years in the fields. Yet there is another leisure, a quiet, of some childhood days, and of a father asleep on a Sunday afternoon, which can suddenly, in inattention, become a whole past and an historical scheme.

George Eliot's most extended rural retrospect—important because it is not given as a dream by the fire but as conscious historical interpretation—is the introduction to *Felix Holt*. It is more persuasive and more substantial than the dream of Old Leisure, but in its whole organisation shows even more clearly the structure of feeling which was being laid over the country. The description of the meadows and the hedgerows has the warmth of observation and of memory; it is the green language of Clare. But the passenger on the box of the stage-coach, through whose eyes we are directed to look, is more than a nature poet; he has, as it were naturally, combined with these perceptions a quite solid set of social presuppositions. When he sees the shepherd 'with a slow and slouching walk', he knows by some alchemy that the shepherd feels 'no bitterness except in the matter of pauper labourers and the bad luck that sent contrarious seasons and the sheep rot'.

What bitterness about the 'pauper labourers'? That he might become one of them, which was always possible and even likely? Or that they troubled the

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ratepayers? In this moment of watching, when the quiet landscape has 'an unchanging stillness, as if Time itself were pausing', and when 'it was easy for the traveller to conceive that town and country had no pulse in common', there is a sudden conflation, a stereotyping, of 'rural Englishmen' whose 'notion of Reform was a confused combination of rick-burners, trades-unions, Nottingham riots, and in general whatever required the calling-out of the yeomanry'.

Who then, the traveller might ask as Time pauses, were the yeomanry called out to face? Who, always somewhere else, was burning the ricks or combining under the threat of transportation? These others by the conflation of 'rural Englishmen' are effectively abolished.

The passenger on the box could see that this was the district of protuberant optimists, sure that old England was the best of all possible countries, and that if there were any facts which had not fallen under their own observation, they were facts not worth observing: the district of clean little market-towns without manufactures, of fat livings, an aristocratic clergy, and low poor-rates.

And this is then not the known but the knowable community: a selected society in a selected point of view. The low poor-rates—that index of the emphasis of want: are they an irony or a comfort? For when the poor are suddenly present it is not as people but as 'a brawny and many-breeding pauperism'—that word, 'breeding', that George Eliot so often uses where the poor are in question, as if they were animals; in any case not men but a condition, an 'ism'. And 'brawny'?—getting strong and fat, no doubt, on the poor-rates.

The point of this willing illusion is then suddenly seen: it is manufacturing and the railways which destroy this old England. The full modern myth comes quite sharply into focus.

The breath of the manufacturing town, which made a cloudy day and a red gloom by night on the horizon, diffused itself over all the surrounding country, filling the air with eager unrest. Here was a population not convinced that old England was as good as possible.

The unrest, that is to say, is a product of industrialisation; in being placed in that way, after the country idyll, it can itself be placed and on the whole rejected. What is then being bought from this view on the box-seat is a political comfort: a position which admits one set of causes for radicalism but in a comfortable contrast with the settled content of the old rural order. The social position of the observer is then quite clear: a whole reality is admitted in the industrial districts; a selected reality in the rural.

After the coach had rattled over the pavement of a manufacturing town, the scene of riots and trades-union meetings, it would take him in another ten minutes into a rural region, where the neighbourhood of the town was only felt in the advantages of a near market for corn, cheese, and hay, and where men with a considerable banking account were accustomed to say that 'they never meddled with politics themselves'.

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Of course; because the visible unrest of the town, in a whole action, is compared not with the whole knowable community of the rural region, but with the condition and point of view of 'men with a considerable banking account'. A willing, lulling illusion of old country life has now paid its political dividends. A natural country ease is contrasted with an unnatural urban unrest. The 'modern world', both in its suffering and, crucially, in its protest against suffering, is mediated by reference to a lost condition which is better than both and which can place both: a condition imagined out of a landscape and a selective observation and memory.

This is then the structure on which we must fix our attention, for it connects crucially with George Eliot's development. A valuing society, the common condition of a knowable community, belongs ideally in the past. It can be recreated there for a widely ranging moral action. But the real step that has been taken is withdrawal from any full response to an existing society. Value is in the past, as a general retrospective condition, and is in the present only as a particular and private sensibility, the individual moral action.

The combination of these two conclusions has been very powerful; it has shaped and trained a whole literary tradition. And this is the meaning of George Eliot's Wessex, in the only novel set in her own actual period: a narrowing of people and situations to those capable, in traditional terms, of limitation to an individual moral action; the fading-out of all others, as most country people had been faded out in that view from the box-seat; the re-creation, after all the earlier emphasis of want, of a country-house England, a class England in which only certain histories matter, and to which the sensibility—the bitter and frank sensibility—of the isolated moral observer can be made appropriate. She is able, conscientiously, to narrow her range because the wide-ranging community, the daily emphasis of want, is supposed past and gone with old England. All that is left is a set of personal relationships and of intellectual and moral insights, in a history that for all valuing purposes has, disastrously, ended.

We can then see why Mr Leavis, who is the most distinguished modern exponent of just this structure of feeling, should go on, in outlining the great tradition, from George Eliot to Henry James. It is an obvious transition from that country-house England of *Daniel Deronda* (of course with Continental extensions and with ideas, like Deronda's Zionism, about everywhere) to the country-house England of James. But the development that matters in the English novel is not to James; it is within that same Wessex, in the return of a general and inescapable history, to the novels of Hardy.

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The New Metropolis

IN CURRENT DESCRIPTIONS of the world, the major industrial societies are often described as 'metropolitan'. At first glance this can be taken as a simple description of their internal development, in which the metropolitan cities have become dominant. But when we look at it more closely, in its real historical development, we find that what is meant is an extension to the whole world of that division of functions which in the nineteenth century was a division of functions within a single state. The 'metropolitan' societies of Western Europe and North America are the 'advanced', 'developed', industrialised states; centres of economic, political and cultural power. In sharp contrast with them, though there are many intermediate stages, are other societies which are seen as 'underdeveloped': still mainly agricultural or 'under-industrialised'. The 'metropolitan' states, through a system of trade, but also through a complex of economic and political controls, draw food and, more critically, raw materials from these areas of supply, this effective hinterland, that is also the greater part of the earth's surface and that contains the great majority of its peoples. Thus a model of city and country, in economic and political relationships, has gone beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, and is seen but also challenged as a model of the world.

It is very significant that in its modern forms this began in England. Much of the real history of city and country, within England itself, is from an early date a history of the extension of a dominant model of capitalist development to include other regions of the world. And this was not, as it is now sometimes seen, a case of 'development' here, 'failure to develop' elsewhere. What was happening in the 'city', the 'metropolitan' economy, determined and was determined by what was made to happen in the 'country'; first the local hinterland and then the vast regions beyond it, in other people's lands. What happened in England has since been happening ever more widely, in new dependent relationships between all the industrialised nations and all the other

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‘undeveloped’ but economically important lands. Thus one of the last models of ‘city and country’ is the system we now know as imperialism.

European expansion into the rest of the world had already, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, brought back significant wealth, which found its way into the internal system. Important parts of the country-house system, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, were built on the profits of that trade. Spices, sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, gold and silver: these fed, as mercantile profits, into an English social order, over and above the profits on English stock and crops. It was still mainly, at that stage, a profit of trading: bringing goods from one kind of economy to another, though often with physical force to back this up. The country-houses which were the apex of a local system of exploitation then had many connections to these distant lands. But another process was already under way: another kind of ‘improvement’. Demand for these valued and exotic commodities was steadily rising, and the European societies and their emigrant settlers were beginning to organise increased production. To do this, in tropical regions, they began organising ‘labour’: that polite term for the slave trade from Africa—anything from three million slaves in the seventeenth century to seven million in the eighteenth. The new rural economy of the tropical plantations—sugar, coffee, cotton—was built by this trade in flesh, and once again the profits fed back into the country-house system: not only the profits on the commodities but until the end of the eighteenth century the profits on slaves. In 1700 fifteen per cent of British commerce was with the colonies. In 1775 it was as much as a third. In an intricate process of economic interaction, supported by wars between the trading nations for control of the areas of supply, an organised colonial system and the development of an industrial economy changed the nature of British society.

The unprecedented events of the nineteenth century, in which Britain became a predominantly industrial and urban society, with its agriculture declining to marginal status, are inexplicable and would have been impossible without this colonial development. There was a massive export of the new industrial production. Much of the trade of the world was carried and serviced by Britain, from its dominant position in shipping, banking and insurance, the new ‘City’ of London. Following these profitable developments, often to the exclusion of others that might have been possible, the economy by the middle of the nineteenth century was at the point where its own population could not be fed from home production. The traditional relationship between city and country was then thoroughly rebuilt on an international scale. Distant lands became the rural areas of industrial Britain, with heavy consequent effects on its own surviving rural areas. At the same time, the drive for industrial markets and the drive for

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raw materials extended the effective society across half the world. Already in the eighteenth century the most important of the colonies, in North America, had achieved independence and were eventually, and even more dramatically, to follow the same paths. From the 1870s, especially, there was intense competition between the rising industrial societies, for markets, raw materials and areas of influence. This was fought out in trade and in many colonial wars. It produced, in Britain, the formal establishment of new kinds of political control over the colonial areas: the British Empire in its political sense. In the twentieth century the same rivalry was fought out in its European bases, in the First World War.

The effects of this development on the English imagination have gone deeper than can easily be traced. All the time, within it, there was the interaction at home, between country and city, that we have seen in so many examples. But from at least the mid-nineteenth century, and with important instances earlier, there was this larger context within which every idea and every image was consciously and unconsciously affected. We can see in the industrial novels of the mid-nineteenth century how the idea of emigration to the colonies was seized as a solution to the poverty and overcrowding of the cities. Thousands of the displaced rural workers had already gone there. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* ends in Canada, in a mood of rural idyll and escape as powerful as any of the earlier English images. In *Wuthering Heights*, in *Great Expectations*, in *Alton Locke* and in many other novels of the period there is a way out from the struggle within English society to these distant lands; a way out that is not only the escape to a new land but as in some of the real history an acquisition of fortune to return and re-enter the struggle at a higher point. Alexander Somerville and several of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, casualties of the crisis of rural society, ended their days overseas. Many of the casualties of the urban crisis, leading Chartists among them, went the same way. The lands of the Empire were an idyllic retreat, an escape from debt or shame, or an opportunity for making a fortune. An expanding middle class found its regular careers abroad, as war and administration in the distant lands became more organised. New rural societies entered the English imagination, under the shadow of political and economic control: the plantation worlds of Kipling and Maugham and early Orwell; the trading worlds of Conrad and Joyce Cary.

From about 1880 there was then this dramatic extension of landscape and social relations. There was also a marked development of the idea of England as 'home', in that special sense in which 'home' is a memory and an ideal. Some of the images of this 'home' are of central London: the powerful, the prestigious and the consuming capital. But many are of an idea of rural England: its green peace contrasted with the tropical or arid places of actual

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work; its sense of belonging, of community, idealised by contrast with the tensions of colonial rule and the isolated alien settlement. We can pick up the force of this idea in many twentieth-century images of rural England. The society from which these people had come was, after all, the most urban and industrialised in the world, and it was usually in the service of just these elements that they had gone out. Perhaps this worked only to deepen the longing and the idealisation. Moreover, in practical terms, the reward for service, though anticipated more often than it was gained, was a return to a rural place within this urban and industrial England: the 'residential' rural England, the 'little place in the country'; unless the service had been profitable enough to follow the older movement, to the 'country house', the real place. The birds and trees and rivers of England; the natives speaking, more or less, one's own language: these were the terms of many imagined and actual settlements. The country, now, was a place to retire to.

It is easy to see this in the generations of colonial officers, civil servants, plantation managers and traders. But within their own class these were the least successful. The landed aristocracy had lost much of its particular identity and its political power in the course of industrial and imperialist development. But its social imagery continued to predominate. The network of income from property and speculation was now not only industrial but imperial. And as so often before it was fed into a self-consciously rural mode of display. The country-houses of late George Eliot, of Henry James and of their etiolated successors are, as we saw, the country-houses of capital rather than of land. More significantly and more ritually than ever before, a rural mode was developed, as a cultural superstructure, on the profits of industrial and imperial development. It was a mode of play: an easy realisation of the old imagery of Penshurst: field sports, fishing, and above all horses; often a marginal interest in conservation and 'old country ways'.

Meanwhile there was still, within Britain, a small rural proletariat, and the farmers, as we have seen, were in increasing numbers becoming owner-occupiers: adjusting, often with difficulty, to the subordinate position of home agriculture, but with increasing efficiency drawn from the resources of a scientific and industrial society. In a minor key, some of the old real images persisted. But they were now at last outnumbered by the new images, themselves transmuted by their changing functions. The quiet place to retire to, or the place in which to live in a country style: these, now, were the dominant ideas, in the literature as in the history.

Yet all the time, out of their sight, there was a huge rural proletariat, in the distant lands. As Orwell, who had seen some of them, wrote in 1939:

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What we always forget is that the overwhelming bulk of the British proletariat does not live in Britain, but in Asia and Africa.

This, indeed, had been the developing system. Millions of slaves; millions of indentured and contracted labourers; millions of rural workers kept at wages so low that they could barely sustain life. Out of these 'country' areas there eventually came, through blood and struggle, movements for political independence. At various stages, to protect such an order, young officers from the country-houses led other Englishmen, and the expropriated Irish and Scots and Welsh, to the colonial battles in which so many died. It is a strange fate. The unemployed man from the slums of the cities, the superfluous landless worker, the dispossessed peasant: each of these found employment in killing and disciplining the rural poor of the subordinated countries.

It is often said now, in a guilty way, that the British people as a whole benefited from the system of imperialism. If we add up the figures of the movement of wealth we cannot doubt that this is true. The rise in the general standard of living depended, in large part, on the exploitation of millions who were seen only as backward peoples, as natives. Much of the guilt and hatred and prejudice bred through those generations was still there when, ironically, unemployment in the colonies prompted a reverse migration, and following an ancient pattern the displaced from the 'country' areas came, following the wealth and the stories of wealth, to the 'metropolitan' centre, where they were at once pushed in, overcrowded, among the indigenous poor, as had happened throughout in the development of the cities. Yet we have always to remember that the total wealth which came back, and which is still coming back, was not evenly distributed. London was at one of its peaks as an imperialist city when it created its desperate centre of poverty and misery in the East End. For wealth from the Empire, channelled through so few hands, was a critical source of the political and economic power which the same ruling class continued to exercise. The advantages of living in a developed industrial society, even at the lower ends of the scale, were of course more widely diffused. Even then, internally, these workers were directly exploited. But for many of these advantages British workers had to pay: with blood in repeated wars which had little or nothing to do with their immediate interests; and in deeper ways, in confusion, loss of direction, deformation of the spirit. It is the story of the city and the country in its harshest form, and now on an unimaginably complex scale.

It is now widely believed in Britain that this system has ended. But political imperialism was only ever a stage. It was preceded by economic and trading controls, backed where necessary by force. It has been effectively succeeded by economic, monetary and commercial controls which again, at every point that resistance mounts, are at once supported by political, cultural and military

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intervention. The dominant relationships are still, in this sense, of a city and a country, at the point of maximum exploitation.

What is offered as an idea, to hide this exploitation, is a modern version of the old idea of 'improvement': a scale of human societies which theoretically culminates in universal industrialisation. All the 'country' will become 'city': that is the logic of its development: a simple linear scale, along which degrees of 'development' and 'underdevelopment' can be marked. But the reality is quite different. Many of the 'underdeveloped' societies have been developed, precisely, for the needs of the 'metropolitan' countries. Peoples who once practised a subsistence agriculture have been changed, by economic and political force, to plantation economies, mining areas, single-crop markets. The setting of prices, on which these areas specialised to metropolitan needs must try to live, is in the decisive control of the metropolitan commodity markets. Massive investment in this kind of supply, and in its kind of economic and political infrastructure, brings in from these specialised 'rural' areas a constant flow of wealth which then further accentuates the dominating interrelations. It is essentially the same whether the crop is coffee or copper, rubber or tin, cocoa or cotton or oil. And what is called 'aid', to the poor countries, is with few exceptions an accentuation of this process: the development of their economies towards metropolitan needs; the preservation of markets and spheres of influence; or the continuation of indirect political control—sustaining a collaborating regime; opposing, if necessary by military intervention, all developments which would give these societies an independent and primarily self-directed development. Much of the history of the world, in the middle years of the twentieth century, is this decisive relationship and its turbulent consequences. It is ideologically overlaid by the abstract idea of 'development': a poor country is 'on its way' to being a rich one, just as in industrial Britain, in the nineteenth century, a poor man could be seen as someone who given the right ideas and effort was 'on his way' to being a rich man, but was for the time being at a lower stage of this development. But the facts are that the gap is widening, and that its consequences are so extensive that they are deciding the history of the world.

Within this vast action, the older images of city and country seem to fall away. But some are still relevant; the history and the ideas are relevant. We can still, any day, find rural literature, of the most traditional kinds, but we have to go farther and farther afield for it. We find stories of distant lands, but we can then recognise in them some of our own traditional experiences. The local details are different, as is natural among different peoples, but many of the historical experiences are essentially similar. If we read Yashar Kemal's fine novel of the migrant pickers in Anatolia, *The Wind from the Plain*, we can see a form of the

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Cities and Countries

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THE COUNTRY AND the city are changing historical realities, both in themselves and in their interrelations. Moreover, in our own world, they represent only two kinds of settlement. Our real social experience is not only of the country and the city, in their most singular forms, but of many kinds of intermediate and new kinds of social and physical organisation.

Yet the ideas and the images of country and city retain their great force. This persistence has a significance matched only by the fact of the great actual variation, social and historical, of the ideas themselves. Clearly the contrast of country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society. But when this is so, the temptation is to reduce the historical variety of the forms of interpretation to what are loosely called symbols or archetypes: to abstract even these most evidently social forms and to give them a primarily psychological or metaphysical status. This reduction often happens when we find certain major forms and images and ideas persisting through periods of great change. Yet if we can see that the persistence depends on the forms and images and ideas being changed, though often subtly, internally and at times unconsciously, we can see also that the persistence indicates some permanent or effectively permanent need, to which the changing interpretations speak. I believe that there is indeed such a need, and that it is created by the processes of a particular history. But if we do not see these processes, or see them only incidentally, we fall back on modes of thought which seem able to create the permanence without the history. We may find emotional or intellectual satisfaction in this, but we have then dealt with only half the problem, for in all such major interpretations it is the coexistence of persistence and change which is really striking and interesting, and which we have to account for without reducing either fact to a form of the other. Or, to put it more theoretically, we have to be able to explain, in related terms, both the persistence and the historicity of concepts.

The ideas of the city and the country are among the major cases to which this problem applies. It is clear, for example, that an idea derived from experience of a medieval city cannot be taken, in a merely nominal continuity, as an idea about a twentieth-century metropolis, any more than a pastoral idea of rural Boeotia can be taken as a relevant interpretation of modern Norfolk. But equally we cannot say that the idea of pastoral innocence, or of the city as a civilising agency, coming up, as each does, in so many periods and forms, is a simple illusion which has only to be exposed or contradicted. Exposure and contradiction are often critically necessary, but if we keep only to the ideas we are already aware of this, in the comparable persistence of ideas of rural idiocy or the city as a place of corruption. We then find ourselves facing the further questions: what kinds of experience do the ideas appear to interpret, and why do certain forms occur or recur at this period or at that?

To answer these questions we need to trace, historically and critically, the various forms of the ideas. But it is useful, also, to stop at certain points and take particular cross-sections: to ask not only what is happening, in a period, to ideas of the country and the city, but also with what other ideas, in a more general structure, such ideas are associated. For example we have to notice the regular sixteenth- and seventeenth-century association of ideas of the city with money and law; the eighteenth-century association with wealth and luxury; the persistent association, reaching a climax in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the mob and the masses; the nineteenth- and twentieth-century association with mobility and isolation. Each of these ideas has a certain persistence, but isolation, for example, only emerges as a major theme during the metropolitan phase of development, while the response to the city as money ranges from isolated kinds of corruption and intrigue to perception of a commercial and political system. There are similar radical differences in associations with ideas of the country: the idea of settlement, for example, as compared with the idea of rural retreat, which implies mobility. Each idea can be found in very different periods, and seems to depend on class variations, whereas the other obvious contrast, between an idea of cultivated country, cultivation being honest growth, and the idea of wild or unspoiled country, not cultivation but isolated

nature, has a clearer historical perspective, since the latter so evidently involves response to a whole way of life largely determined elsewhere. The degree to which the fact of labour is included, in observing a working country, is similarly, as we have seen, historically conditioned. Yet even within a period, we can see how in an idea like that of the Golden Age an apparent similarity turns out, on analysis, to cover different real ideas, as in its alternative uses by an aristocracy, by small proprietors and by the landless. Often, in these cases of association and internal variation, it matters more what else is being said than what is being said about the country; just as in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it often matters more what else is being said than what is being said, in conventional ways, about the city.

This complexity goes very deep. It is useful, for example, to see three main periods of rural complaint in which a happier past is explicitly invoked: the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; the late eighteenth and early nineteenth; the late nineteenth and early twentieth. And it is then clear enough that each of these corresponds to a period of exceptional change in the rural economy, which we find directly reflected in varying ways. But it is not only that each of these reflections comes to include other social and metaphysical ideas. It is also that the convention of the country as a settled way of life disturbed by unwanted and external change has been complicated, in our own century, by very similar ideas about towns and cities. The complaints of rural change might come from threatened small proprietors, or from commoners, or even, in the twentieth century, from a class of landlords, but it is fascinating to hear some of the same phrases—destruction of a local community, the driving out of small men, indifference to settled and customary ways—in the innumerable campaigns about the effects of redevelopment, urban planning, airport and motorway systems, in so many twentieth-century towns and even, very strongly, in parts of London. I have heard a defence of Covent Garden, against plans for development, which repeated in almost every particular the defence of the commons in the period of parliamentary enclosures. Clearly ideas of the country and the city have specific contents and histories, but just as clearly, at times, they are forms of isolation and identification of more general processes. People have often said ‘the city’ when they meant capitalism or bureaucracy or centralised power, while ‘the country’, as we have seen, has at times meant everything from independence to deprivation, and from the powers of an active imagination to a form of release from consciousness. At every point we need to put these ideas to the historical realities: at times to be confirmed, at times denied. But also, as we see the whole process, we need to put the historical realities to the ideas, for at times these express, not only in disguise and displacement but in effective mediation or in offered and sometimes effective transcendence, human interests and purposes for which there is no other immediately available vocabulary. It is not only an absence or distance of more specific terms and concepts; it is that in country and city, physically present and substantial, the experience finds material which gives body to the thoughts.

I have traced what I believe to be these major processes, in their major variations, within a single literature and society: a literature, English, which is perhaps richer than any other in the full range of its themes of country and city; and a society which went through a process of historical development, in rural and then industrial and urban economies and communities, very early and very thoroughly; still a particular history but one which has also become, in some central ways, a dominant mode of development in many parts of the world. Each of the phases of this history can be looked at more deeply in itself, and there are still other ways of describing the sequence, the interaction and the development. There is an obvious need for more comparative studies: there is already rich material in French and Russian literature, where both the country and the city have related but specific major meanings; in German thought and literature, where the idea of the city as a cultural centre followed an especially positive course; in American literature and culture, where the speed and scale of the process have created very powerful and at times universal ideas and images; in Italian culture, not only as a source, but in the dramatic character of its contemporary transition; in the literatures, as we have seen, of the developing world, where other ways of seeing a related process have been becoming articulate. All this, it is hoped and can be expected, will be specifically and comparatively studied.

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But it is not, was not, ever a question of study alone. The very fact that the historical process, in some of its main features, is now effectively international, means that we have more than material for interesting comparisons. We are touching, and know that we are touching, forms of a general crisis. Looking back, for example, on the English history, and especially on its culmination in imperialism, I can see in this process of the altering relations of country and city the driving force of a mode of production which has indeed transformed the world. I am then very willing to see the city as capitalism, as so many now do, if I can say also that this mode of production began, specifically, in the English rural economy, and produced, there, many of the characteristic effects—increases of production, physical reordering of a totally available world, displacement of customary settlements, a human remnant and force which became a proletariat—which have since been seen, in many extending forms, in cities and colonies and in an international system as a whole. It then does not surprise me that the complaints in Covent Garden echo the complaints of the commoners, since the forces of improvement and development, in those specific forms—an

amalgam of financial and political power which is pursuing different ends from those of any local community but which has its own and specific internal rationale—are in a fundamental sense similar, as phases of capitalist enterprise.

What the oil companies do, what the mining companies do, is what landlords did, what plantation owners did and do. And many have gone along with them, seeing the land and its properties as available for profitable exploitation: so clear a profit that the quite different needs of local settlement and community are overridden, often ruthlessly. Difficult and complex as this process is, since the increases in production and the increases in new forms of work and wealth are undoubtedly real, it is usually more necessary to see this kind of contrast—between forms of settlement and forms of exploitation—than to see the more conventional contrast between agricultural and industrial development: the country as cooperation with nature, the city and industry as overriding and transforming it. There is a visible qualitative difference between the results of farming and the results of mining, but if we see only this contrast we see only some of the results. The effects on human settlements, and on customary or locally self-determined ways of life, are often very similar. The land, for its fertility or for its ore, is in both cases abstractly seen. It is used in an enterprise which overrides, for the time being, all other considerations. Since the dramatic physical transformations of the Industrial Revolution we have found it easy to forget how profoundly and still visibly agriculture altered the land. Some of the earliest and most remarkable environmental effects, negative as well as positive, followed from agricultural practice: making land fertile but also, in places, overgrazing it to a desert; clearing good land but also, in places, with the felling of trees, destroying it or creating erosion. Some of these uses preceded any capitalist order, but the capitalist mode of production is still, in world history, the most effective and powerful agency for all these kinds of physical and social transformation. The city is only one if now conventional way of seeing this kind of change; and the country, as almost all of us now know it, is undoubtedly another. Indeed the change from admiration of cultivated country to the intense attachment to ‘unspoiled’ places is a precise record of this persistent process and its effects at one of its most active stages.

But we must then also make a distinction between such techniques of production and the *mode* of production which is their particular social form. We call the technical changes improvement and progress, welcome some of their effects and deplore others, and can feel either numbed or divided; a state of mind in which, again and again, the most abstract and illusory ideas of a natural rural way of life tempt or at least charm us. Or we can fall back on saying that this is the human condition: the irresolvable choice between a necessary materialism and a necessary humanity. Often we try to resolve it by dividing work and leisure, or society and the individual, or city and country, not only in our minds but in suburbs and garden cities, town houses and country cottages, the week and the weekend. But we then usually find that the directors of the improvements, the captains of the change, have arrived earlier and settled deeper; have made, in fact, a more successful self-division. The country-house, as we saw, was one of the first forms of this temporary resolution, and in the nineteenth century as many were built by the new lords of capitalist production as survived, improved, from the old lords, sometimes their ancestors, of the agrarian change. It remains remarkable that so much of this settlement has been physically imitated, down to details of semi-detached villas and styles of leisure and weekends. An immensely productive capitalism, in all its stages, has extended both the resources and the modes which, however unevenly, provide and contain forms of response to its effects.

It is then often difficult, past this continuing process which contains the substance of so much of our lives, to recognise, adequately, the specific character of the capitalist mode of production, which is not the use of machines or techniques of improvement, but their minority ownership. Indeed as the persistent concentration of ownership, first of the land, then of all major means of production, was built into a system and a state, with many kinds of political and cultural mediation, it was easy for the perception to diminish though the fact was increasing. Many modern ruralists, many urban conservationists, see ‘the state’ or ‘the planners’ as their essential enemy, when it is quite evident that what the state is administering and the planners serving is an economic system which is capitalist in all its main intentions, procedures and criteria. The motorway system, the housing clearance, the office-block and supermarket replacing streets of homes and shops, may materialise in the form of a social plan, but there is no case in which the priorities of a capitalist system have not, from the beginning, been built in. It may be simple industrial development or mining: the decision will have been made originally and will be finally determined by owners calculating profit. The road system will include their needs and preferences for modes of distribution and transport, and these are given priority, either as in the case of lorries against railways or as in the more general situation in which the land itself is looked on, abstractly, as a transport network, just as it is looked on elsewhere, again abstractly, as an opportunity for production. Housing clearance and housing shortage are alike related to the altered distribution of human settlement which has followed from a set of minority decisions about where work will be made available, by the criteria of profit and internal convenience. What are called regional policies are remedial efforts within these priorities rather than decisively against them. The industrial-agricultural balance, in all its physical forms of town-and-country relations, is the product, however mediated, of a set of decisions about capital investment made by the minority which controls capital and which determines its use by calculations of profit.

When we have lived long enough with such a system it is difficult not to mistake it for a necessary and practical reality, whatever elements of its process we may find objectionable. But it is not only that the specific histories of

country and city, and of their immediate interrelations, have been determined, in Britain, by capitalism. It is that the total character of what we know as modern society has been similarly determined. The competitive indifference or the sense of isolation in the cities can be seen as bearing a profound relation to the kinds of social competition and alienation which just such a system promotes. These experiences are never exclusive, since within the pressures and limits people make other settlements and attachments and try to live by other values. But the central drive is still there.

Again, enough of us now, for a long enough period, have been living in cities for new kinds of communication to become necessary, and these in their turn reveal both the extension and mobility of the urban and industrial process and the appropriation and exploitation of the same media for capitalist purposes. I do not only mean advertising, though that is a specific deformation of the capitalist city. Nor do I mean only the minority ownership and purposes of the press. I mean the conversion of a necessary social mode into specific forms. It is very striking that in response to the city and to a more deeply interrelated society and world we have developed habitual responses to information, in an altered sense. The morning newspaper, the early radio programme, the evening television, are in this sense forms of orientation in which our central social sense is both sought and in specific and limited ways confirmed.

Wordsworth saw that when we become uncertain in a world of apparent strangers who yet, decisively, have a common effect on us, and when forces that will alter our lives are moving all around us in apparently external and unrecognisable forms, we can retreat, for security, into a deep subjectivity, or we can look around us for social pictures, social signs, social messages, to which, characteristically, we try to relate as individuals but so as to discover, in some form, community. Much of the content of modern communications is this kind of substitute for directly discoverable and transitive relations to the world. It can be properly related to the scale and complexity of modern society, of which the city is always the most evident example. But it has become general, reaching to the most remote rural regions. It is a form of shared consciousness rather than merely a set of techniques. And as a form of consciousness it is not to be understood by rhetorical analogies like the 'global village'. Nothing could be less like the experience of any kind of village or settled active community. For in its main uses it is a form of unevenly shared consciousness of persistently external events. It is what appears to happen, in these powerfully transmitted and mediated ways, in a world with which we have no other perceptible connections but which we feel is at once central and marginal to our lives. This paradoxical set of one-way relationships, in itself determining what we take to be relevant information and news, is then a specific form of consciousness which is inherent in the dominant mode of production, in which, in remarkably similar ways, our skills, our energies, our daily ordering of our lives, our perceptions of the shape of a lifetime, are to a critical extent defined and determined by external formulations of a necessary reality: that external, willed reality—external because its means are in minority hands—from which, in so much of our lives, we seem to have no option but to learn.

Underlying social relations often manifest themselves in these habitual and conventional ways. The communications system is not only the information network but also the transport network. The city, obviously, has always been associated with concentration of traffic. Notoriously, in modern transport systems, this is still the case, and the problem often seems insoluble. But traffic is not only a technique; it is a form of consciousness and a form of social relations. I do not mean only the obvious derivation of so many problems of traffic from a series of decisions about the location of work and the centralisation of political power; decisions which were never, in any real sense, socially made, but which were imposed by the priorities of a mode of production. I mean also the forms of modern traffic. It is impossible to read the early descriptions of crowded metropolitan streets—the people as isolated atoms, flowing this way and that; a common stream of separated identities and directions—without seeing, past them, this mode of relationship embodied in the modern car: private, enclosed, an individual vehicle in a pressing and merely aggregated common flow; certain underlying conventions of external control but within them the passing of rapid signals of warning, avoidance, concession, irritation, as we pursue our ultimately separate ways but in a common mode. And this is no longer only a feature of the city, though it is most evident there. Over a whole network of the land this is how, at one level, we relate; indeed it is one form of settlement, intersecting and often deeply affecting what we think of as settlements—cities, towns, villages—in an older mode.

In all these actual social relations and forms of consciousness, ideas of the country and the city, often of an older kind, continue to act as partial interpreters. But we do not always see that in their main bearings they are forms of response to a social system as a whole. Most obviously since the Industrial Revolution, but in my view also since the beginning of the capitalist agrarian mode of production, our powerful images of country and city have been ways of responding to a whole social development. This is why, in the end, we must not limit ourselves to their contrast but go on to see their interrelations and through these the real shape of the underlying crisis.

It is significant, for example, that the common image of the country is now an image of the past, and the common image of the city an image of the future. That leaves, if we isolate them, an undefined present. The pull of the idea of the country is towards old ways, human ways, natural ways. The pull of the idea of the city is towards progress, modernisation, development. In what is then a tension, a present experienced as tension, we use the contrast of country and city to ratify an unresolved division and conflict of impulses, which it might be better to face in its own terms.

Aspects of the history of the ideas can then help us. We have seen how often an idea of the country is an idea of childhood: not only the local memories, or the ideally shared communal memory, but the feel of childhood: of delighted absorption in our own world, from which, eventually, in the course of growing up, we are distanced and separated, so that it and the world become things we observe. In Wordsworth and Clare, and in many other writers, this structure of feeling is powerfully expressed, and we have seen how often it is then converted into illusory ideas of the rural past: those successive and endlessly recessive 'happy Englands of my boyhood'. But what is interesting now is that we have had enough stories and memories of urban childhoods to perceive the same pattern. The old urban working-class community; the delights of corner-shops, gas lamps, horsecabs, trams, piestalls: all gone, it seems, in successive generations. These urban ways and objects seem to have, in the literature, the same real emotional substance as the brooks, commons, hedges, cottages, festivals of the rural scene. And the point of saying this is not to disprove or devalue either kind of feeling. It is to see the real change that is being written about, as we discern its common process.

For what is at issue, in all these cases, is a growth and alteration of consciousness: a history repeated in many lives and many places which is fundamentally an alteration of perception and relationship. What was once close, absorbing, accepted, familiar, internally experienced becomes separate, distinguishable, critical, changing, externally observed. In common or backstreet, village or city quarter, this process happens. We can say, of course, that it is an inevitable process; that this growth of adult consciousness is profoundly necessary, if only to see that these valued worlds were and are being created by men. But we have to say also that the village or backstreet of a child is not and cannot be the village or backstreet of the contemporary working adult. Great confusion is caused if the real childhood memory is projected, unqualified, as history. Yet what we have finally to say is that we live in a world in which the dominant mode of production and social relationships teaches, impresses, offers to make normal and even rigid, modes of detached, separated, external perception and action: modes of using and consuming rather than accepting and enjoying people and things. The structure of feeling of the memoirs is then significant and indispensable as a response to this specific social deformation. Yet this importance can only be recognised when we have made the historical judgement: not only that these are childhood views, which contemporary adult experience contradicts or qualifies; but that a process of human growth has in itself been deformed, by these deep internal directions of what an adult consciousness must be, in this kind of using, consuming, abstracting world. It is not so much the old village or the old backstreet that is significant. It is the perception and affirmation of a world in which one is not necessarily a stranger and an agent, but can be a member, a discoverer, in a shared source of life. Taken alone, of course, this is never enough. Indeed its displacement to fantasies about old villages and old backstreets can diminish even its immediate significance. To make an adult, working world of that kind would involve sharp critical consciousness and long active agency. Yet we can see here, in a central example, the true aetiology of some of the powerful images of country and city, when unalienated experience is the rural past and realistic experience is the urban future. If we take only the images, we can swing from one to the other, but without illumination. For we have really to look, in country and city alike, at the real social processes of alienation, separation, externality, abstraction. And we have to do this not only critically, in the necessary history of rural and urban capitalism, but substantially, by affirming the experiences which in many millions of lives are discovered and rediscovered, very often under pressure: experiences of directness, connection, mutuality, sharing, which alone can define, in the end, what the real deformation may be.

(iii)

In the late nineteen-forties I knew that I was at last separated from the village in which I had grown up. I began to write what I thought this experience was, in the seven versions that eventually became the novel *Border Country*. It wasn't only, through those versions, that I found myself connecting the experience to a more general history of physical and social mobility, and beyond that to a crisis of education and class which when I had worked it through I went back and read, as if for the first time, in George Eliot and Hardy and Lawrence. It was also that I had to look at the village again, and to set up some tension between my childhood memories and the adult working experience of my father's generation. But even that was not enough. Many people have assumed that Harry Price, the signalman with his gardens, was a portrait of my father; but this is not really so. I found that to get the real movement I had to divide and contrast what I had seen in my father as conflicting impulses and modes. I had to imagine another character, Morgan Rosser, the politician and dealer, who in his relation to Harry Price could express and work through what I believed I had seen as an internal conflict. The modes of contemplation and of action, of absorbed work and of mobile and critical change, had to be expressed in a relationship if the complicated development of the life of the village was to be fully expressed. Beyond this again was the son, the observer, more specifically removed; bound to these two modes, these two figures of a father, and taking that continuing action into his work in the city.

I used the same method, of dividing and then connecting to express this internal crisis, in a novel of the city, *Second Generation*, which was essentially the same movement, in a different environment. That was an image of traffic, of relationships as traffic and of persistent attempts to find other relationships, as clearly as in *Border*

Country, with its simpler form of the country railway and its changes. That is how I have seen the whole problem since, in more general ways. The experience that went into the novels became the questions I put to the tradition.

But at one time, while writing *Border Country*, I felt a sudden sadness, apparently separate from my theme. I felt, because I think I had been told, that the rural experience, the working country, had gone; that in Britain it was only a marginal thing, and that as time went by this would be so everywhere. I accepted this, at one level, for much longer than now seems possible. It was one of the impulses, I can see now, that kept sending me back to old rural literature and history. And I cannot clearly remember when I suddenly realised that it was not really true at all. Even while I was showing in the novels a different and persistent experience, this idea had stuck. When at last I saw that it was false I knew I had to look for its sources. These were not only, as might be supposed, the sentimental ruralists, though just because of my experience I had to face them. They were also, and more critically, the brisk metropolitan progressives, many of them supposedly internationalists and socialists, whose contempt for rural societies was matched only by their confidence in an urban industrial future which they were about in one way or another—modernisation, the white heat of technology, revolution—to convert into socialism. There are so many writers and thinkers, still, of each of these kinds, that it takes a long time, a long effort, to look round and say that their common idea of a lost rural economy is false.

Is it then not false? Is it not obvious that in Britain a working agriculture is marginal? That was the first mode of error I learned to perceive: an unnoticed persistence, in the old imperialist countries, of a kind of abstract chauvinism: that what happened to them was what was happening or would happen to everyone. Still most countries in the world were predominantly rural, but within the imperialist division of the world they did not really count, were not in important ways there. Even those who saw that they were exploited, within the imperialist division of the world, did not necessarily go on to see that in and through this condition and its struggles a working agriculture, a rural economy in any of its possible forms, simply had to persist: in the exploited countries themselves and, if some elements of the exploitation were to be diminished, in what had been abstractly thought of as the developed metropolitan countries. Perhaps more of us now know this. The facts of the food and population crisis have been widely and properly publicised. If we are to survive at all, we shall have to develop and extend our working agricultures. The common idea of a lost rural world is then not only an abstraction of this or that stage in a continuing history (and many of the stages we can be glad have gone or are going). It is in direct contradiction to any effective shape of our future, in which work on the land will have to become more rather than less important and central. It is one of the most striking deformations of industrial capitalism that one of our most central and urgent and necessary activities should have been so displaced, in space or in time or in both, that it can be plausibly associated only with the past or with distant lands.

Some of this, now, is changing, even within old imperialist Europe. But it is still the case that the future of agriculture is seen, here and in the third world, in mainly capitalist forms, and especially as involving massive social displacement. It could be done, and is elsewhere being done, in quite different ways. And the urgency of its doing, in ways that break with capitalism, is linked with that other complementary aspect of the crisis: the condition and the future of the cities and of industry. One of the real merits of some rural writers, often not seen because other elements are present, is an insistence on the complexity of the living natural environment. Now that the dangers to this environment have come more clearly into view, our ideas, once again, have to shift. Some of the darkest images of the city have to be faced as quite literal futures. An insane over-confidence in the specialised powers of metropolitan industrialism has brought us to the point where however we precisely assess it the risk to human survival is becoming evident, or if we survive, as I think we shall, there is the clear impossibility of continuing as we are.

It is necessary to say this, in the deepening crisis of modern metropolitan and industrial living, and in the more serious crisis of persistent and intractable poverty in the rest of the world, even while we know it can easily be diverted into yet another rural threnody, or into a cynical fatalism. It is important to remember how much damage to the environment was and is being done by the capitalist mode of progressive agriculture; this is not a crisis of manufacturing industry alone. Similarly we need to acknowledge that recognition of the crisis, and almost all possible ways of resolving it, are functions of consciousness: of a flexible and highly mobile capacity to observe and intervene: in techniques and modes of planning and conservation, but even more critically in the area which will really decide our future, the area of decision itself. As we perceive a total environment, and as we register the consequences of so many abstracted and separated activities, we begin to see that all the real decisions are about modes of social interest and control. We begin to see, in fact, that the active powers of minority capital, in all its possible forms, are our most active enemies, and that they will have to be not just persuaded but defeated and superseded. The scale and connection of the necessary decisions require social powers and social resources which capitalism in any of its forms denies, opposes and alienates. The different social consciousness of the dispossessed labourers and of the urban workers, born in protest and despair, has to come through in new ways as a collectively responsible society. Neither will the city save the country nor the country the city. Rather the long struggle within both will become a general struggle, as in a sense it has always been.

We have more to work with than we ordinarily acknowledge. Rural England is said to be a thing of the past, and of course the changes are evident. But if we look up from the idea and back at the country we see how much is still present, even in this exceptionally industrialised and urbanised nation. Four-fifths of our land surface: the cultivated land, much of it better kept than it has ever been; the wild land, made more accessible, in a complicated process of pressure and openness. Most of the natural and working experiences which have been so powerfully celebrated in our rural literature are still directly available. It is still in so many places a beautiful country, and many of us can work, in different ways, to keep and enhance it. I have had the luck to thin a wood and watch the cowslips and bluebells and foxgloves come back; to repair and rebuild old drystone walls; to hedge and ditch, after long neglect, and to see from skilled men how the jobs should be done. And if we look up from the idea of the city, we find in and through the extraordinary pressures a good deal of caring and intelligent work to make the cities cleaner and finer, to bring out and to build their best qualities. To know any of this directly is to know also, very closely, the constant threat of deliberate and indifferent destruction. But each process is a fact; in the best and in the worst there is neither a lost nor a won cause; it is an active, immediate and persistent struggle. It is also, as we shall see, a very complicated struggle, reaching into every part of our lives.

(iv)

I have been arguing that capitalism, as a mode of production, is the basic process of most of what we know as the history of country and city. Its abstracted economic drives, its fundamental priorities in social relations, its criteria of growth and of profit and loss, have over several centuries altered our country and created our kinds of city. In its final forms of imperialism it has altered our world.

Seeing the history in this way, I am then of course convinced that resistance to capitalism is the decisive form of the necessary human defence. Many particular defences stop short of seeing this decisive process, and need to be challenged to take the ideas and the feelings right through. Many others, however, get through as defences, as forms of opposition to what is called the modern world, in which capitalism or technology may well be included, but with no specificity: the reflex indeed being fundamentally defensive, with no available confidence in any different way of life, or with such confidence replaced by utopian or apocalyptic visions, none of which can connect with any immediate social practice or movement. And what serious movement, it is asked, could there be? Look at socialism or communism: historically the enemies of capitalism, but in detail and often in principle, in matters of the country and the city, continuing and even intensifying some of the same fundamental processes.

This is a genuine historical and political difficulty. Trotsky said that the history of capitalism was the history of the victory of town over country. He then proceeded, in the critical first years of the Russian Revolution, to outline a programme for just such a victory, on a massive scale, as a way of defeating capitalism and preserving socialism. Stalin carried through very much that programme, on a scale and with a brutality which made that 'victory' over the peasants one of the most terrible phases in the whole history of rural society. The local needs and priorities were desperate: a shattered economy and an appalling food shortage; rural capitalism, in new forms, undoubtedly spreading. But the way it was done, and the spirit in which it was done, were not only brutal; they drew on one element of an ambiguity in Marxism which in its turn had massive consequences on the character of the society as a whole.

Engels, as we saw, was among the first to see the modern city as a social and physical consequence of capitalism: built and living in its modes. He added, later, the decisive idea that the very processes of disturbance and exposure, in these particular forms, had created a proletarian and a socialist movement which could end capitalism and create different social relations and different kinds of human settlement. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels argued that 'the bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns . . . has created enormous cities . . . has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones': the familiar history of capitalism and imperialism. They argued that these relations of centralisation and dependence had created the conditions for revolution, and in one sense they were right.

But there was an ambiguity at the core of the argument. They denounced what was being done in the tearing progress of capitalism and imperialism; they insisted that men must struggle to supersede it, and they showed us some ways. But implicit in the denunciation was another set of value-judgements: the bourgeoisie had 'rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life'; the subjected nations were 'barbarian and semi-barbarian', the dominating powers 'civilised'. It was then on this kind of confidence in the singular values of modernisation and civilisation that a major distortion in the history of communism was erected. The exposed urban proletariat would learn and create new and higher forms of society: if that was all that had been said it would have been very different. But if the forms of bourgeois development contained, with whatever contradiction, values higher than 'rural idiocy' or 'barbarism', then almost any programme, in the name of the urban proletariat, could be justified and imposed. The terrible irony has been that the real processes of absolute urban and industrial priority, and of the related priority of the advanced and civilised nations, worked through not only to damage the 'rural idiots' and the colonial 'barbarians and semi-barbarians', but to damage, at the heart, the urban proletarians

themselves, and the advanced and civilised societies over which, in their turn, the priorities exercised their domination, in a strange dialectical twist. To see exposure creating revolution was one thing; to see more of the same producing more of something quite different was at best an apocalyptic hope.

This difficulty worked itself through, in a surprising way, in our own century. Revolutions came not in the 'developed' but in the 'undeveloped' countries. The Chinese revolution, defeated in the cities, went to the country and gained its ultimate strength. The Cuban Revolution went from the city to the country, where its force was formed. In a whole epoch of national and social liberation struggles, the exploited rural and colonial populations became the main sources of continued revolt. In the famous Chinese phrase about world revolution, the 'countryside' was surrounding the 'cities'. Thus the 'rural idiots' and the 'barbarians and semi-barbarians' have been, for the last forty years, the main revolutionary force in the world.

We can then look back, from this real historical experience, to one of the underlying forms of the idea of revolution. In some of the fundamental thinking of the socialist tradition, including that of Marx and Engels, there is a formulation which is at once the most exciting, the most relevant and yet the most undeveloped in the whole revolutionary argument. Engels wrote of socialism as 'abolishing the contrast between town and country, which has been brought to its extreme point by present-day capitalist society'. Marx and Engels wrote that the housing question could never be solved while 'modern big cities' were maintained, and that only with socialism could we restore 'the intimate connection between industrial and agricultural production'. The utopian socialists had made many proposals for new kinds of balanced communities and societies; William Morris, as we saw, continued to think in this way. But under many pressures, in the twentieth century, from the sheer physical drive of developing capitalism and imperialism to the class habits of thought of metropolitan socialist intellectuals, this extraordinary emphasis was virtually lost. Its phrases were remembered, but as an old, impractical, childish dream. Yet it is an emphasis that is now being revived. It has been stated as a direction of policy in the Chinese Revolution. And it has been significantly revived, among Western revolutionary socialists, as a response to the crisis of industrial civilisation and what is seen as megalopolis.

It can be restated theoretically. The division and opposition of city and country, industry and agriculture, in their modern forms, are the critical culmination of the division and specialisation of labour which, though it did not begin with capitalism, was developed under it to an extraordinary and transforming degree. Other forms of the same fundamental division are the separation between mental and manual labour, between administration and operation, between politics and social life. The symptoms of this division can be found at every point in what is now our common life: in the idea and practice of social classes; in conventional definitions of work and of education; in the physical distribution of settlements; and in temporal organisation of the day, the week, the year, the lifetime. Much of the creative thinking of our time is an attempt to re-examine each of these concepts and practices. It is based on the conviction that the system which generates and is composed by them is intolerable and will not survive. In many areas of this thinking there is not only analytic but programmatic response: on new forms of decision-making, new kinds of education, new definitions and practices of work, new kinds of settlement and land-use.

I can now look back a generation, to the immediate postwar years, and remember my feeling that except for certain simple kinds of idealising retrospect there was no main current of thought in the world which had not been incorporated within the fundamental forms of the capitalist and imperialist system. Orthodox communism and orthodox social-democracy—its traditional opponents—indeed showed many features of this system in their most powerful forms, all the more dangerously because they had been fused with continuing aspirations to social liberation and development. But to feel this was to be pressed back towards the extreme subjectivism and fatalism which then, and for a generation, dominated our thought. Many descriptions of our current crisis were and still are cast within these subjectivist and fatalist forms.

Yet a deeper change has now become quite evident. All the conventional priorities are again being questioned. Other kinds of social response and social analysis have worked their way through, until in often confused and still unfinished forms they hold a certain initiative. The theoretical if not practical confidence of defenders of the existing system has gone. The position in ideas is again quite open, ironically at the very time when the practical pressures are almost overwhelming.

This change of basic ideas and questions, especially in the socialist and revolutionary movements, has been for me the connection which I have been seeking for so long, through the local forms of a particular and personal crisis, and through the extended inquiry which has taken many forms but which has come through as this inquiry into the country and the city. They are the many questions that were a single question, that once moved like light: a personal experience, for the reasons I described, but now also a social experience, which connects me, increasingly, with so many others. This is the position, the sense of shape, for which I have worked. Yet it is still, even now, only beginning to form. It is what is being done and is to do, rather than anything that has been finally done.

For there is nothing now more urgent than to take the fundamental idea, the problem of overcoming the division of labour, to the tests of rigorous analysis, rigorous proposal and rigorous practice. It can be done only in new forms of cooperative effort. If what is visible already as the outlines of a movement is to come through with the necessary understanding and strength, we shall have to say what in detail can be practically done, over a vast range from

regional and investment planning to a thousand processes in work, education, and community. The negative effects will continue to show themselves, in a powerful and apparently irresistible pressure: physical effects on the environment; a simultaneous crisis of overcrowded cities and a depopulating countryside, not only within but between nations; physical and nervous stresses of certain characteristic kinds of work and characteristic kinds of career; the widening gap between the rich and poor of the world, within the threatening crisis of population and resources; the similarly widening gap between concern and decision, in a world in which all the fallout, military, technical and social, is in the end inescapable. And to see the negative effects, with whatever urgency, can be to paralyse the will. The last recess of the division of labour is this recess within ourselves, where what we want and what we believe we can do seem impassably divided.

We can overcome division only by refusing to be divided. That is a personal decision but then a social action. I can only record what I have myself learned. Others will learn it quite differently. But I grew up, as I said, where the division was visible, in a land and then in a family. I moved from country to city, and now live and work in both. I learned, in many forms, the shapes of this history, its ideas and its images, in the society and the literature which had earliest and most thoroughly experienced a change that was to become universal or at least an offered model for universal development. This left, in my mind, every kind of question and intricacy, and I had slowly to retrace the experience, in myself and in the record, as a way of gaining the present and the future through a different understanding of the shaping and fascinating past.

It was always a limited inquiry: the country and the city within a single tradition. But it has brought me to the point where I can offer its meanings, its implications and its connections to others: for discussion and amendment; for many kinds of possible cooperative work; but above all for an emphasis—the sense of an experience and of ways of changing it—in the many countries and cities where we live.