

# The Idea of the City



The Idea of the City:  
Early-Modern, Modern and Post-Modern  
Locations and Communities

Edited by

Joan Fitzpatrick

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

The Idea of the City: Early-Modern, Modern and Post-Modern Locations and Communities,  
Edited by Joan Fitzpatrick

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

JOAN FITZPATRICK

This collection of essays emerges from a two-day international conference held at the University of Northampton, UK in June 2007. The conference benefitted from a British Academy Conference Grant that enabled the participation of scholars from overseas, for which I am very grateful. The book contains the best of the papers presented by 45 delegates from 12 countries (UK, India, USA, Canada, Italy, France, Ireland, Australia, Romania, Japan, Germany, Portugal) involving both established academics and new scholars. The collection is interdisciplinary and eclectic; its aim is to explore the nature of the modern city in literature, history, film and culture from its origins in the early-modern period to post-modern dislocations. These essays consider the city as a context within which literature is created, structured, and inspired, and as a space within which distinct voices and genres emerge.

The collection begins with an historically contextualizing essay by John Martin entitled "Counter-urbanisation: An Historian's View". Martin sets the scene for subsequent discussions of city scapes by investigating the changes that have taken place in the migration of people into rural areas. Reviewing the different explanations for the process, he shows how migration flows are continuing to change in terms of intensity and pattern. There has been a tendency to allow our understanding of this process to be unduly influenced by the romanticism implicit in most descriptions of the English countryside. However, recent research has radically challenged our attitudes toward the historical process of counter-urbanisation, thus enhancing our understanding of the forces that attracted the movement to the town as well as the continuing shift from urban centres.

Part One of the collection is entitled 'Medieval and Early-Modern Cities: Performance and Poetry'. This section historicizes the European city 1300-1700 as a space where political, secular and religious authorities impacted upon drama and verse. Alexandra Johnston's essay "The Politics of Civic Drama and Ceremony in late Medieval and Early-Modern Britain" considers historical manuscripts that provide external evidence of

the impact religious and secular authorities had on the formal procession of dignitaries through English cities. The texts that form the focus of Johnston's analysis are hitherto overlooked ones that provide an important insight into the role of the authorities upon early-modern city-dwellers. Alex Lee's focus is Petrarch's hatred for Avignon, which he characterized as the new Babylon. In his essay entitled "Sin city? The image of Babylon in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*" Lee argues that while appearing to adapt scriptural imagery to classical modes, Petrarch actually used 'Babylon' to refer to a highly interior state of confusion based upon the triumph of temporal desire over reason. Petrarch's attacks were not merely assaults on the vice of a particular city, but carefully considered invectives that made the city of Avignon a cipher for human irrationality and an emblem for the mistaken attachment to temporal things.

In "Preserving and Reserving the Past in Stow's *Survey of London*" Andrew Griffin produces a vision of past and present that is at odds with comparable Elizabethan chorographies where the past is both radically distant from the present and yet surprisingly close to it, as absolutely foreign to the present and as something to which the present relates intimately. Griffin contends that this bivalent understanding of the relationship between past and present is a function of Stow's under-theorized antiquarianism, and that it is also a function of London itself, the fraught object that he chose to survey. Shona McIntosh's essay "Space, Place and Transformation in *Eastward Ho!* and *The Alchemist*" examines the genre of city comedy via the playing space of private London theatres during the early years of the reign of James I. She argues that the satiric nature of the drama has hitherto been overstated. Jacobean City Comedy is, in fact, celebratory of social mobility. The fantasy of escaping from the city is countered by the cultural opportunities it affords as a site of transformation, an important feature of the theatre itself. In "Women and the Theatre in Thomas Heywood's *London*" Marissa Greenberg argues that Thomas Heywood's combination of historical crime and urban topography signals the importance of London women playgoers as consumers and patrons of drama. Ironically, women were depicted as transgressors in the drama when, without committing the slightest transgression, female playgoers actually advanced and authenticated the cause of commercial performance in early-modern London. What unites these essays is their historical approach to the emergent phenomenon of the European city, of which London was prototypical.

In the second part of the book, an approach is made via the newly re-theorized notions of cultural and social space. This section, entitled 'Defining Urban Space: the Metropolitan and the Provincial' considers

some of the complexities surrounding definitions of urban spaces (central and peripheral) in literal, metaphorical, and psychological terms. In the first essay, “Venice Imagined: The Invisible & Imaginary City Or, ‘Les Lieux De La’” Julian Wolfreys is concerned with the intangibility of Venice, a city that he will argue, via reference to literature and music, is infused with mystery; although efforts have been made to capture the essence of the city via its famous landmarks, it remains, ultimately unknowable. Venice is also the focus for Arkady Plotnitsky’s essay entitled “‘A Palace and a Prison on Each Hand’: Venice between Madness and Reason, from the Baroque to Romanticism”, which looks at the poetry of Byron and Shelley and the city’s architecture; for Plotnitsky, Venice is a city that at once defines and is defined by Romanticism and the Baroque.

In “Seward’s Lichfield” Teresa Barnard is concerned with eighteenth-century Lichfield in the English West Midlands as described by Anna Seward, whose posthumously published letters were drastically edited by Walter Scott. This process left nothing of Seward’s own battles against the gendered inequalities of female education. Barnard’s essay examines a selection of anecdotes that provide a profile of the city unavailable elsewhere. Staying with Britain’s regional cities is Jarrad Keyes’s essay “‘Archaeologies of the Future’: Niall Griffiths—Pathways of the Urban”. Shifting between post-millennial settings of Liverpool and Wales, Niall Griffiths’ recent novel *Wreckage* explores the often-uncontested concepts of city and countryside. In its delineation of decaying industrial backdrops, idyllic villages, and vestigial council estates, *Wreckage* creates a counter-intuitive idea of the city, traversing the ontological, epistemological, and representational interstices of the shift towards a fully urbanized society. Jarrad explores the complex transactions between displaced traces of pastoral and uncanny aesthetic in *Wreckage* to discuss the significance of Lefebvre’s exposition of the urban in terms of the continued uses (or otherwise) of the very ‘idea of the city’.

Peter Sjølyst-Jackson’s essay, “‘Kristiania, that strange city’: Location and Dislocation in Knut Hamsun’s *Hunger*” takes us to Kristiania (now Oslo), the rather modest capital of late-nineteenth century Norway. His paper explores the uncertain borders between country and city in Knut Hamsun’s text, in which material conditions, including hunger and poverty, are attended by a disturbing sense of dislocation whereby the city is a place of transit that articulates the paradoxical and unresolved experience of modern migration.

Part three, ‘Modern and Post-modern Cities: Marginal Urban Identities’, brings us to the social issues encountered by twentieth and twenty-first century city dwellers, specifically those usually thought to be

living on the margins of society. Robert Ward's essay, "'I'm walking here! I'm walking here!': New York Flâneurs in James Leo Herlihy's *Midnight Cowboy*", considers the representation of the urban walker in Herlihy's novel. As theorised in the writings of Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, and Michel de Certeau, prostitutes and tricksters (walkers with a distinct purpose) are transformed, temporarily, into flâneurial-type figures: the wanderer and the saunterer. As Ward points out, the quotation that prefaces his paper does not appear in the novel, but, rather, in James Schlesinger's Oscar-winning film of the same title; the reference to walking--especially appropriate for a novel fascinated by walking--is thought by some to come from a moment of improvisation by the method actor Dustin Hoffman. The figure of the flâneur is a feature also of Delphine Bénézet's essay entitled "Beyond Blank Fiction: Palimpsestic Flânerie and Converging Imaginaries in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic Of Orange*", which considers Yamashita's novel's depiction of Los Angeles. Yamashita presents an eccentric revision of Los Angeles via ironic engagement with several genres including dystopia and magic realism. Behind carnivalesque scenes Yamashita highlights the inequities and traumas experienced by marginal groups living in, or migrating to, the city.

Staying with the United States of America, Kenneth E. Roon Junior's essay, "John Rechy's *Borderless City of Night*", focuses on Rechy's novel in which the hypersensualization combined with the hypercapitalization of the individual in the city leads to a blasé erasure of the borders that mentally differentiate cities. In "The Wounded City: Ambiguous subjectivities and the riotous metropolis in Samuel Delany's *Dhalgren*" Stephanie K. Dunning contends that in Delany's novel the anarchic city functions as a metaphor of post-civil rights' African American identity and the unnamed protagonist who experiences multiple exclusions exposes the incoherence that lies at the heart of humanity.

Ipshita Ghose's essay "Bombay, Multipl-city: Demarginalizing Urban Identities and Activites in Gregory David Roberts's *Shantaram* and Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City*", focuses on recent English language fiction about Bombay that gives voice to marginal urban identities and activities beneath the apparently innocuous city life. Preconceived notions of indigence and vice are cleverly subverted so that a slum becomes a collaborative effort of the disenfranchised that thrives upon trade and foreign tourism. In the essays included in this section the United States of America is a common focus for issues surrounding modern and post-modern marginal urban identities, specifically the tension between the marginal and the mainstream. This suggests that America's status as a

nation of immigrants has encouraged a more intensive introspection about identity than is usual in the Old World. Yet, as Ghose reminds us, this extends also to post-colonial nations (although America is, of course, itself post-colonial), where identities have traditionally been imposed and manipulated by colonists and where inhabitants must find new ways to relate to themselves and each other.

In the 'Afterword' that concludes this collection, Pamela Gilbert surveys the essays presented in the volume, drawing together common threads and alerting the reader to the range and diversity of opinions on the role and significance of the city in all its manifestations.



# INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

## COUNTER-URBANISATION: AN HISTORIAN'S VIEW

JOHN MARTIN

The term counter-urbanisation was first used by US geographers in the 1970s, in order to account for the censuses that revealed a negative correlation between settlement size and population growth. The process is usually depicted as the voluntary movement of individual families from cities and other urban conurbations to live in the countryside. This social science-derived definition denotes a process that has been commonly accepted as an exclusively post-Second World War phenomenon. Since the 1960s, the population of the rural counties of England has changed significantly both in terms of numbers and composition.

### **The Process**

Out-migration from urban areas has been remarkable not only in terms of the pattern of the urban-rural shift but also in terms of its intensity. The most powerful locational trend in the UK has been the shift in population, firms, output and employment from conurbations and big cities to smaller towns, New Towns and rural areas. Increases in the rural population have been caused primarily by net in-migration as opposed to indigenous population growth. In the 1970s, this exceeded 10 per cent in East Anglia, the Welsh Borders, parts of the Southwest and the South coast of England. A similar pattern is evident in the 1980s, although the rate of increase in these areas was at a lower level, mainly in the 5 to 10 per cent band. In contrast, the mainly urbanised counties experienced either a declining population or, at best, a marginal growth of less than 5 per cent in the same period.

The distinction between urban and rural areas is not, of course, as clear-cut as it may appear at first glance. It is rather simplistic to categorise counties as being exclusively rural or urban, when it would be more appropriate to classify them as predominately one or the other. All of the counties which might be deemed rural, for example, incorporate towns, the population of which is greater than the commonly accepted rurality threshold of 10,000. In spite of these methodological problems in ascertaining the degree of the demographic shift, it is evident that the migration of population has been very substantial. Since the highpoint in the 1970s, counter-urbanisation has not only declined in terms of intensity but was replaced by a more complicated pattern of migration.

### Historical patterns

Counter-urbanisation has been used primarily as a means of denoting the gravitational shift of population which has taken place since the 1960s, rather than the process of rural migration which was evident in previous decades and centuries. In a numerical sense, the movement of population away from what were widely portrayed as the 'dark satanic mills' located at the centre of the new industrialised towns and cities, first became noticeable in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. With the advent of cheap and efficient railway travel, new housing developments sprang up around larger towns and conurbations, encouraging the wealthier middle class members of society to relocate to the leafy suburbs. The trend was exacerbated by Victorian snobbery, which tended to despise those who had to earn their living from trade and industry, especially if they were compelled to live adjacent to their workplaces. In an effort to increase their degree of personal privacy, a number of wealthier artisans and tradesmen sought a social and geographical separation between work and home.

The romantic imagery of country life reproduced in magazines such as *Country Life* appealed to a minority of the lower middle classes and artisans who attempted to establish craft workshops in rural locations. These pioneers were inspired by a renewed interest in the simple values of rural life espoused by influential men of the time. William Morris's version of a society where men were freed from the thrall of machinery to dwell among pastoral scenes had been reinforced by Robert Blatchford's sentiments in *Merrie England*.

The salient feature of this migrational flow was that it was dominated, both numerically and in terms of importance, by the wealthier merchants and manufacturers. They were the only group of society who could afford



to divorce their business activities from their home lives, transgressing the medieval ditch or historic wall which established the physical and psychological dividing line between urban and rural life. A small minority of families sold up and moved en bloc to become rentiers rather than active entrepreneurs in terms of their traditional core business activities. This aversion to remaining in trade and industry once the family had accumulated sufficient wealth, led to aspirations of an idyllic lifestyle reminiscent of the landed gentry. However, this did not mean that they forsook all of their entrepreneurial activities. Interests were refocused on estate management, the building of country mansions and other forms of leisure activities in which they expected to play a decisive role in the decision-making process.

Movements of this nature had been noted as early as the thirteenth century, when the growth of London began to affect adjacent counties such as Hertfordshire. Land values were significantly higher in the south of the county approaching London than in the more remote, less accessible northern parts. By this time, a significant number of wealthy Londoners had started to buy estates in the countryside, switching from commercial enterprises to the management of their newly acquired rural fiefdoms.

In the Tudor period, it is recorded that banking and brewing, chiefly in London, were responsible for the increasing wealth of quite an exceptional proportion of families who invested in land and property in accessible rural areas. The urban exodus was particularly evident during the Great Plague of 1664-5, when both Parliament and the Court were relocated to Oxford, and the great and the good of London society fled the capital. Among the army of professionals who sought refuge in the shires, were a considerable number of physicians and, to the despair of the religious populace, members of the clergy. In the early nineteenth century Arthur Young perceptively evaluated the benefits of these investments:

They occupy a considerable space of ground, which otherwise would be held by common farmers, yet their decorated lawns, and ornamental grounds, not only adorn the county and please the travellers' eye, by their neatness and general beauty, but may also be considered as a national benefit, from the very extensive employment with which they supply the industrious poor in their neighbourhood. (Young 1804, 2)

Migration was not an isolated phenomenon. Roper Power provided a perceptive review of the process of regeneration:

The descendants of the original *nouveau homme* now turned from Whig merchants into Tory squires, became in their turn easy victims to the new

wave of rich men from London. And so the process went on. But the consequences of this cycle are of even greater importance. Local estates have received what amounts to a subsidy from the city. They have been run as social amenities and have attracted a considerable army of hangers-on of one sort and another. (Roper Power 1937, 393-4)

A substantial group of rural workers depended on the continued patronage of these heads of influential *nouveaux riches* families. There were significant differences between the attitudes of old and new wealth by the end of the nineteenth century. Convention suggests that this migration which led to businessmen divorcing themselves from their activities to become gentrified landowners and, in turn, losing their will to make money, accounted for the long-term decline of British business. This theory has been robustly challenged by F. M. L. Thompson, who considered that the real dividing line was between those who ostentatiously enjoyed themselves and the evangelical and dissenting group who objected to self-indulgence but became esteemed as good entrepreneurs (Thompson 1991, 98-119).

This process of gentrification was particularly noticeable in the London region after the First World War. Urban dwellers, many with arcadian perceptions of rose-covered cottages and palatial mansions where inhabitants could recreate their own concept of rural England, moved out to live in a string of commuter villages known as 'metroland' which sprang up along the Metropolitan railway line, transforming Londoners into a race of 'straphangers'.

The lack of effective planning controls during the inter-war depression allowed urban sprawl to continue unchecked. Better transport between town and country provided by bicycles, buses, trams, private cars and motor cycles, encouraged speculative builders and railway companies to actively promote the idea of commuting to work. It was in this period that the village was rediscovered as a desirable place to live. Edith Whetham described educated townspeople as going back to the land in an attempt to become self-supporting, in an effort to escape from the capitalist society of markets and finance. She concluded, however, that they did not understand the care of livestock, the harshness of farm work or the seasonal fluctuations in incomes and food supply and, as a result, "brief lived communities came, ploughed up a few fields, quarrelled, and returned to their paved streets, piped water, indoor sanitation, and security of urban life" (Whetham 1978, 323).

## **Changes in counter-urbanisation**

What differentiates the post-Second World War period from earlier phases of out-migration is not so much the pattern of the urban-rural shift, but its intensity. Since the 1960s, the most powerful locational trend in the UK has been the shift in population, firms, output and employment from the conurbations and big cities to smaller towns, New Towns and rural areas. These trends manifested themselves not only in terms of North-South differences in regional economic performance but also in the continuing shift in urban-rural employment.

Social scientists have traditionally perceived counter-urbanisation as contributing to the processes of gentrification and geriatrification of the countryside. The most visible signs of gentrification are the expansion of well kept houses, while geriatrification is marked by an ageing population associated with the migration of the elderly members of the population to the countryside for retirement when the family nest is empty. Although the two consequences are not mutually exclusive, autonomous changes, upon which most research has centred, have been attributed primarily to the influx of two specific groups: the retired and commuters.

The retired, or those close to retirement, have traditionally been regarded as a numerically and socially important group, which has often migrated long distances to live in the countryside. Investigating their impact on rural areas is fraught with methodological problems, primarily because the geographical origins of the retired in any community are not always easy to ascertain. Moreover 'the retired' is merely a classification category and does not constitute an homogeneous group. It comprises not only individuals with substantial wealth who have moved to rural areas but also the indigenous retired, many of whom belong to the largest low income group. These latter individuals are often wholly dependent on state pensions and disadvantaged by rural isolation and poor access to services. Their children, unable to find work or afford locally housing, will frequently have moved away. Given these analytical difficulties, quantifying population movements of this kind has been derived principally from the figures for second home ownership, which can be extracted from the rating records of local authorities.

Early settlers were concentrated in rural areas associated with the high quality of the local environment including scenery, social structure and closeness to the coast. Second homes were increasingly purchased for recreational use after the Second World War, with the subsidiary aim of using them during retirement. The most popular locations were Snowdonia and the west coast of Wales, East Anglia, the Lake District and Southwest

England. Their numbers were estimated to have risen from about 30,000 in 1950 to 200,000 in 1970.

The second group of rural inhabitants which investigators have concentrated on is long distance commuters. Early post-war statistical data on counter-urbanisation, while providing an insight into the actual numbers of migrants, makes little reference to the type of person involved or the reasons for the move. A case study of North Lancashire, found that about 40 per cent of people moving into rural areas between 1970 and 1988 came from the service class, a group characterised by high levels of academic achievement, a considerable degree of autonomy and discretion at work, with reasonably high incomes and opportunities for promotion within or between enterprises (Halfacre 1992, 63). Moreover, the more rural the settlement the higher was the service class proportion amongst those who moved in. An empirical study of the demographic take-over of the countryside by the service class using the census data by Hoggart in 1997 concluded that the demographic dominance by the service class was not only exaggerated but largely applied to the south-east of England (Hoggart 1997, 253-73).

This argument raises issues about not only what we mean by the service class but also about how the boundaries of the different groups are delineated. Traditional definitions of the middle classes have tended to differentiate between those employed in the manufacturing sector as administrators or owners of their own businesses, and the professionals employed in the service sector. These distinctions have become increasingly blurred with time, particularly in view of the growing numbers in the service sector who have developed more direct links with running and organising their own businesses and consultancies.

The entrepreneurial component of the middle classes is more important than their numbers suggest. They were not necessarily full-time entrepreneurs in terms of their occupational classification but consisted of an enterprising group who were instrumental in transforming their environment. Entrepreneurial families, who had sufficient resources to move and were adaptable, proved a vital asset to the countryside. Research by the Countryside Agency indicates that, on average, every self-employed migrant to rural England generated 1.7 additional full time jobs, mainly in small professional businesses. Moreover their influx into an area led to additional part-time jobs. The main reason for their move has been the value they attribute to the quality of life in the countryside and the recreational opportunities it offers.

Recent research in the late twentieth century has revealed that the typical migrant is now a family unit with a husband in mid career. Many

of these are likely to be commuters who have chosen to live in the countryside and travel either daily to their place of work, or who commute for the week, returning home at weekends. The development of fax and e-mail communications has enabled many to work flexible hours from an office at home, with infrequent trips to their formal place of work. The liberalising influences of these innovations has benefited the working day, with increased productivity and less time wasted in traffic jams.

A detailed investigation by the Countryside Agency, which divided newcomers into two types, namely local movers and incomers, has revealed the complex pattern of out-migration into rural England. Most migrations over the 1980s took place over short distances within a post code area.

## **Social Values and Rural Conflict**

Urban perceptions of rural society have been bedevilled by ideological romanticism. There has been a preoccupation in rural literature with agricultural landscape resources and the appearance of the countryside, the perversity of this being that "the arcadian image of rural living is slowly being destroyed by the very presence of those who have money to follow their dream" (Short 1991, 15.). Traditionally the principal reason for the urban exodus has been regarded as social. Many migrants were attracted to what Pahl has referred to as the 'state of mind', or the belief that life in the countryside was characterised by harmonious relationships between all members of rural society. Such ideological close-knit rural communities appeared to be in stark contrast to the impersonal, relatively anonymous aggregations, dominated by economic relationships, which characterised urban industrial societies. Idyllic rural images were reinforced by the mass media and, more recently, by soap operas conjuring up the idea of a society in which rogues are easily identifiable and able to live alongside the respectable. Little reference is made to rural crime or the deeply ingrained hostility which can exist in such communities.

This eulogised perception of an organic society at peace with itself was prevalent amongst rural newcomers who brought with them the trappings of high status associated with well-paid, white collar, professional types of employment, and little or no conspicuous social baggage that locals could gossip about. Newcomers had the advantage over the resident population in that few people knew about their background and they had sole discretion over what they chose to tell their neighbours. Many newcomers expected deference as one of the social rewards of their upward social mobility. There was the added bonus that, with their inherently high

professional status, the indigenous village manual workers were seen as props or sceneshifters on a rustic stage, and social controls which had previously regulated rural communities went unheeded by urban migrants.

A fundamental change taking place in post-war rural society has been the growing gulf between newcomers and locals. It was this middle class influx into rural England that social scientists originally perceived as threatening the very stability and harmony on which rural communities were based. Howard Newby described the impact of commuters moving in large numbers into villages in the Home Counties:

As the agricultural population was displaced, so it moved out, to be replaced by an urban, overwhelmingly middle-class population, which was attracted . . . by their idyllic vision of life in a real community. (Newby 1988, 36)

Newcomers often failed to integrate with the native community since their work, social activities and even shopping continued to be focused on nearby towns. In many areas a wide chasm opened up between the indigenous, largely working class population and the middle class immigrants, a division denoted by Harris as 'social polarisation'.

Amongst the general pattern of relative prosperity, there remained a proportion of the rural population which continued to experience various forms of disadvantage, including poor access to local services and housing, low levels of income and employment. Social problems were frequently exacerbated by the success of the incomers who forced up the levels of house prices, but did not make use of locally provided services, especially public transport. Researchers have argued that resentment aimed at newcomers reflected the fact that they failed to appreciate the rhythms of village society. Hostility intensified as the agricultural population declined and the indigenous population began to feel outnumbered, although the influx of newcomers merely exacerbated rather than initiated this process.

Conflict of the type is neither new nor novel, but more an endemic part of rural society. Beneath the surface there have always been clear divisions between farmers and their labour force. Village communities were afflicted by internal dissension which was kept in check by a mixture of paternalism and a willingness on the part of locals to accept their place. This created a sense of psychological certainty and, with it, a not altogether unwelcome sense of security.

The challenge to established rural order had gained ground in the aftermath of the First World War but failed to reach fruition, not only as a consequence of the agricultural depression but also because of the

emergence of a set of culturally conservative village institutions which, in conjunction with order and paternalism, formed an unbeatable unified opposition. The divisions which remained within rural society revealed that, even as late as the 1960s, in the rural heartland of East Anglia at least, farmers and landowners still dominated rural local government as effectively as in the past. Consequently, while this group claimed to be concerned with providing a service to the local community, what they perceived as being in the public interest more generally reflected their own values, beliefs and ideologies. In contrast, the indigenous working class comprising farm labourers and other low paid groups, not only remained marginalised from the decision making process, but for the most part accepted their position in a rather deferential and fatalistic way.

Counter-urbanisation after the 1960s brought newcomers to English villages who formed an articulate, vociferous group, showing little concern for the remnants of paternalism and patronage. Not all of them grasped particular problems associated with living in rural areas arising from the higher cost of service provision, accessibility problems and constraints on housing. Newcomers had the power and political influence to shape the physical features of their local environment in accordance with their expectations. The locals became an 'encapsulated community', a village within a village, suspicious of and resistant to any intimate social contact with the commuter or second home owners. Many locals responded to this with a fatalistic grim good humour, rather than a grinding stoicism. As a result, the older, more established members of the village tended to withdraw and to employ non-commercial criteria to describe status, such as a sense of belonging derived from long-term residence, family continuity, dialect and a confidence in being country people.

Conflict between the two groups of village inhabitants appeared endemic in many villages. While not denying the existence of social conflict between the resident rural population and newcomers, it is very easy to exaggerate its importance and to eulogise the harmonious social relationships which existed in villages prior to the influx of newcomers. The potential for conflict between incomers and the resident population undoubtedly intensified as a result of post-war agricultural developments. The sheer pace of agricultural intensification led many newcomers to object to developments which were out of keeping with their own concept of sustainable, traditional farming methods. In fairness to the newcomers, their objections often reflected rational objections which many farmers themselves concurred with. Corporate agriculture and large-scale intensive methods of farming resulted in conspicuous management techniques such

as straw burning and monoculture, which brought farming and wildlife into ever-increasing conflict.

Social conflict intensified after the mid-1980s, with the continuing squeeze on farmers' incomes as a result of the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a trend which became increasingly acute in the late 1990s. Many farmers had to resort to tourism and other novel ways of generating income, such as the erection of unsightly telecommunications towers on their land. Lax planning controls allowed the proliferation of these eyesores in inappropriate positions close to residential areas, proving a very divisive factor in many rural communities.

In the prevailing economic rural climate of the early twenty-first century, it is probable that there will be an ever-increasing divergence in people's experiences of rural life. A majority will enjoy the countryside for its scenery, the environmental aspects of rural life and low population densities. However a minority will continue to be excluded from aspects of life perceived as essential for a satisfactory standard of living, including access to transport and services, an adequate wage and decent housing. The quest for the 'good life' of sustainable living is essentially an illusion, since the use of fossil resources is much greater by county dwellers, most of whom not only have considerably more cars per family than their urban counterparts but also travel greater distances.

## Conclusion

Whilst the term counterurbanisation is relatively new, the process it denotes can be traced back over several centuries. It is only since the post-Second World War expansion in the numbers of newcomers to rural areas that social scientists have begun to investigate these trends in detail. Our understanding of counter-urbanisation has been influenced by our romanticised, idyllic perceptions of the English countryside. It is important to see it, not as an homogeneous process, but as the result of a complex pattern of migration by several different groups. To consider newcomers as a unified group, or to talk about indigenous village societies as being undifferentiated, is too simplistic. Only an appreciation of the whole picture will make it possible to identify those elements of rural society who face social deprivation, facilitating the appropriate policy responses. A study of this process reveals the complexity of population movements and reminds us that urbanisation and town growth was not simply a one way process. Counter trends and pressures were also evident, and should not be neglected.



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## **PART I**

### **MEDIEVAL AND EARLY-MODERN CITIES: PERFORMANCE AND POETRY**



## CHAPTER ONE

# THE POLITICS OF CIVIC DRAMA AND CEREMONY IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY-MODERN BRITAIN

ALEXANDRA JOHNSTON

In 1617 the Irish writer and traveller Fynes Moryson, reflecting on a display of civic pageantry in Dublin, remarked “there is a secret mystery in these solemn pomps” (Fletcher 1997, 31). A close study of these ‘solemn pomps’ whether expressed through what some would call ‘true drama’ or civic display or pageantry during the late medieval and early-modern periods reveals a complex and inter-related set of ‘mysteries’. To a certain extent they were about power—how to get it, wield it, display it, share it and retain it. Late medieval and renaissance cities, though powerful communities jealous of their own jurisdiction, were constantly negotiating their relationships with other secular and religious authorities either in a position of power over them such as the crown or possessing parallel power as when civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions came into conflict. Civic displays were also the major tool of public propaganda in a period when the vast majority of the public were either illiterate or had received very limited education. What Greg Walker has called the ‘drama of persuasion’ became a central feature of public performance since drama and public ceremony were among the few ‘media’ available to the people trying to influence the complex web of inter-relationships that made up English society. What was said in public performance and how it was used is essential to our understanding of the period. Cities sought to fashion their own corporate self-image in order to establish the limits of their power in relationship to the countervailing powers surrounding them. Their method was active participation as producers of drama and ceremony that was both didactic and partisan.

'Modernism' revived the idea of a 'drama of persuasion'. The twentieth century saw the rise in importance of such political playwrights as J. M. Synge and Sean O'Casey and their successors in Ireland, and American playwrights such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams who exposed the flaws in the society around them. Later playwrights have picked up the often ephemeral though, at the time, burningly important social issues of their day and had their characters argue their positions passionately. One of the most potent critics of the Nazi regime was Bertold Brecht. These playwrights have all taken a position 'over against' the establishment. But the twentieth century also saw drama (and particularly its celluloid counterpart, film) turned to the service of totalitarian regimes to carry the 'party-line' with glitz, glitter and deliberate emotional manipulation. More recently, the techniques of persuasion have been subsumed by both more personal and more public electronic media—the radio, television and the internet. We are bombarded with it in our own homes and on the road by giant flashing signs and billboards seeking to sell us something or, more insidiously, seeking to persuade us of something without our being aware of it. Spin-doctors censor or manipulate the information we receive; attack ads destroy the image of successful political leaders; newspapers around the world are controlled by fewer and fewer people. But the modern media, however it may manipulate public opinion, is a buffer between us and those who govern us. There were very few opportunities for such mediation in late medieval and renaissance Britain. Although the basic patterns were set by custom, drama and ceremony were used to establish, publicly, political or religious positions sometimes too dangerous to state directly. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, St Augustine enunciated a principal that was commonly held: "a sign is a thing which, over and above the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else to come into the mind as a consequence of itself . . ." (Schopp 1948, 535). Verbal and visual symbolism dominated the drama and ceremony of the period, providing the vehicle for indirect discourse about dangerous issues that needed to be explored and, if possible, resolved.

The most common expression of community coherence in England was in public processions either religious or secular. Before the Reformation the most potent occasion for processions was Corpus Christi Day, a relatively new festival that fitted neatly into the 'festive season'—the progression of spring and summer events that began with Easter and ended with Midsummer or the Feast of St John the Baptist on June 24. It was a day celebrated by clergy and laity alike all over Europe most commonly with a procession in which the host was carried through the