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Introduction

All his life, Trevelyan remained convinced that it was in the countryside that Britain's history had been made and that it was nature which had provided the inspiration for its poetry and literature. He believed that walking was the best means whereby a man could have back his own soul in sacred union with nature. All these feelings for the countryside, be them poetic, historical or religious were set down in his earliest essays and they continued throughout all his works. Trevelyan's earliest historical writings are suffused with this mystical love of the countryside. In fact the opening chapter of *England Under the Stuarts* evokes the outdoor pursuits of country gentlemen, especially their delight in hunting and fowling. We can find the same attraction in Trevelyan's writing about Lord Grey of the Reform Bill. Here the writer explored the tension between the claims of rural quietude and public duty, again evocated in his later biography of Grey of Fallodon. His studies concentrated on the profound transmutation toward a more mechanical world and a more democratic world, that of the great city instead of the country village and a world closer to science than to poetry and literature. He developed this argument in his *History of England*, which contained many lyrical passages of rural evocation, that anticipated the later Social History.

Trevelyan observed:

*"What a place it must have been that virgin woodland wilderness of Anglo Saxon England still harbouring God's plenty of all manner of beautiful birds and beasts and still rioting in the vast wealth of trees and flowers- treasures which modern man, careless of his best inheritance, has abolished, and is still abolishing, as fast as new tools and methods of destruction can be invented"*¹.

The greatest work was *Must England's Beauty Perish* on behalf of National trust to protect England's nature and the nation's spiritual values. He concluded this lecture by saying:

*"Without vision, the people perish and without natural beauty the English people will perish in the spiritual sense"*².

1 G.M.Trevelyan, *History of England*, Longmans & Co., New York, 1942, p. 87

2 David Cannadine, *G.M.Trevelyan, A life in History*, London, Penguin Books, 1992, p.155

He frequently wrote to *The Times* underlining the need to preserve the region's increasingly exploited natural beauty. As a senior figure in the National Trust he invented the Council for the preservation of Rural England. Moreover he became the President in 1930 of the Youth Hostels Association whose intention was to help young city dwellers to obtain a greater knowledge, to provide care and love of the countryside and to recover their long-lost rural roots. His maxim was "be at one with nature"³.

In 1931 he held the Rickman Godlee Lecture at London University. His subject was "The Call and Claims of Natural Beauty" in which he reconfirmed the importance of man's relation to the natural world. He began with a familiar account of the threat to the countryside and of the need for town dwellers to recover their long-severed links with nature. He felt strongly that the major poets, such as Milton, Chaucer, Wordsworth and especially Shakespeare had been inspired by rural life and countryside.

He affirmed that the countryside was the sure and certain source of spiritual values:

Through the loveliness of nature, through the touch of sun or rain, or the sight of the shining restlessness of the sea, we feel:

Unworried things and old to our pained heart appeal. This flag of beauty, hung out by the mysterious Universe, to claim the worship of the heart of man, what is it, and what does its signal mean to us? Natural beauty is the ultimate spiritual appeal of the Universe, of nature, or of the God of nature, to their nursing man.. It is the highest common denominator in the spiritual life of today."⁴

In 1926 Trevelyan published *History of England*. In it both English character and history are well mixed and the famous passage "England is the country, and the country is England"⁵ reveals a deep anthropological thread. He analyses the growth of a national community by coming to concern himself with the history of his society.

This successful work like the others written from 1938 and 1944 represented social and anthropological works of history. He restated the Whiggish view that personal freedom became universal in English country which was one of the reasons for the ideological attachment of Englishmen to the very name of freedom. The democracy of those days was good-natured and the writer explained English history in a rural metaphor: "a continuous

3 David Cannadine, *G.M.Trevelyan, A life in History, op.cit.*, p.157

4 G.M.Trevelyan, *The call and claims of Natural beauty, Rickman Godlee Lecture for 1931*, essay in *Autobiography*, Longman, 1950, p.106

5 David Cannadine, *G.M.Trevelyan, A life in History, op.cit.*, p.221

stream of life, with gradual change perpetually taking place."⁶

He analysed flora, fauna, places and people of all England and he described trees, plants, flowers and herbs which were introduced into early seventeenth century. Each country had been described and studied with its own economical, geographical and social peculiarity. From Westmorland and Wales to Northumberland the writer tried to record history by leaving out politics and giving space to literature, painting and architecture. The writer and voyager Fynes Moryson left us a splendid itinerary of these places during the Seventeenth century. The redundant theme of this itinerary is the natural set of the territory where Morrison joined the description of the geographical structure of the diverse landscapes with a bizarre tale about the diverse coins used in each country. Chaucer's poetry was deep with rural images of the countryside and farms similar to Shakespeare's success which was rooted in the forest and the field of Tudor times.

Trevelyan in his works depicted England through the words of important writers and poets and through the images of famous painters.

Trevelyan's love for the preservation of an unspoiled nature and his faith for the beneficial powers of nature would have been understandable without the new way of thinking extended in England from the XVI to the end of XVIII centuries. This argument, about the interest of nature and the relationship with the man, is usually considered a recent phenomenon. On the contrary Trevelyan demonstrated to us that the numerous considerations on the relationship between nature and man dated from the beginning of the Modern Age.

In fact between the XVI and the XIX centuries there was a change in thinking and classifying the natural world that surrounded men and women of every social class. In this process the place occupied by the man in the natural structure changed and a new feeling towards animal, plants and landscapes emerged from this transformation. Trevelyan tried to trace out a map of the process taking place in England by searching the intellectual origin of the National Trust and of the Council for the Protection of Rural England. We will pick out this map by analysing his essay *The Call and Claims of Natural Beauty*.⁷

The writer had another purpose, he wanted to rejoin the study of history with those of literature. Following this purpose, we will lastly present concerning works of Shakespeare, his poetical counterpart.

For this reason the present work aims to analyse both historical and literary sources to

⁶ G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History*, Longmans, Green 1942, p. 230

⁷ G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and Other Essays*, Longmans, London, 1949

demonstrate that the supremacy of man on the vegetative and animal world was a needed precondition for the development of the human history.

Chapter I

Trevelyan's English Social History and the relationship between man and nature.

1.1 The importance of rural landscape for man's spiritual life in England between XVI and XVIII centuries.

Sixteenth-century England was ahead of Germany and France in having eliminated the servile status of the peasant, of which little was left in the reign of Henry VII and practically nothing in the reign of Elizabeth. But the agrarian changes of the epoch were beginning another evolution less to the peasants advantage, which in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gradually got rid of the peasant himself. This converted him either into a farmer or yeoman, or into the landless labourer on the large leasehold farm.

The English village grew its own food and subsistence agriculture was the basis of English life. The self-supplying village also grew wool and food-stuffs for special markets abroad. Such specialization for the market demanded enclosure and private methods of farming. The new lands won from forest, marsh and waste were now enclosed with hedges and farmed on the individualist system.

Elizabethan London took a larger place in the economy of the nation than the London of the twentieth century. London contributed as all the other towns of England put together, from Norwich down to the smallest place that functioned as a local market-centre for its own countryside. The other provinces of England were more individual than in the twentieth century. The landed gentry still spoke, not the standardized speech of a social class, but with all the rich variety of their native parts. The towns in general kept their ablest men and hence the lively culture of their town though writers like Shakespeare had been drawn to London and some country merchants had sought their fortunes in it as well. Beneath the regional capitals of Elizabethan England lay a considerable group of towns, named county towns that for the most part had no cathedral churches and no social demands. They were either the seat of county government or markets for an unusually wide area or both. These were Derby and Leicester which numbered five hundred and six hundred households. Bridgewater, Crewkerne in Somerset, Cranbrook or Maidstone in Kent, Walsall or Wolverhampton in Staffordshire, Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, or

Stamford in Lincolnshire had no administrative functions but served as market-centres for a wider area. They were of a fairly uniform size, somewhere between two and three hundred households. The Elizabethan provincial towns were formed of very small communities by modern standards, from one to three thousand people in all. The historians must not share the modern obsession with large numbers, they had to consider the quality of life by speaking of Elizabethan town. This quality could produce a William Shakespeare out of a town of a dozen streets and perhaps twelve hundred people. In fact many towns conformed to a general pattern like Leicester that was a community of some three thousand people. It was the largest and wealthiest town between the Trent and the Thames had no means of livelihood. Elizabethan Leicester kept a country air about it. Orchards, barns and stables and large gardens lay among the streets. It had a wealthy central area and suburbs composed of the labouring class that grew in housing outside the walls where land was cheaper. The more well to do retained their ample gardens, orchards and courtyards. This social paint had been presented by J.H.Plumb in his tribute to Trevelyan. In his social study he analysed the Elizabethan Provincial Town and its dwellers.

The Elizabethan English were in love with life and large classes felt the up spring of the spirit and expressed it in music, song, poetry, landscape-painting, hunting and shooting. The pastoral civilization had been the seed bed of all finest arts in English culture. The majority of the population lived in the countryside. The landowning classes were attached to their estates and foreigners were astonished at the love of the English gentry for rural life. The social structure of England survived unaltered until the seventeenth century:

"The ordinary Englishman was not yet a townee, wholly divorced from nature. On the contrary, in those days, men were much left alone with nature, with themselves, with God."⁸

There was none of the rigid division between rural and urban which has prevailed since the Industrial Revolution. The small squires, freehold yeoman, leasehold farmers and craftsmen formed a large part of the rural population. Moreover in every village there was a large class of folk and nomad population like the tinker, the landless, the wandering craftsman, and the ballad monger. It was, a world of infinite variety which Shakespeare loved and portrayed in his works.

No Englishman was ignorant of country things, as the great majority of Englishmen are in

⁸ G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History*, Longmans, Green 1942, pp.125, 236.

XX century. Most of population lived in the countryside and it was they who provided the nation's shield and buckler in the form of the stout yeoman. The Yeoman was not a figure characteristic of medieval society, which rested on the two bases of the serf and his lord. With the gradual emancipation of the villains, the yeoman had come to the front in the English scene. He flourished under Tudor and Stuart, when the number of small landowners and of large farmers was multiplied. The praise of the English yeoman in prose and verse is a favourite motif of English literature from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries. The reign of Anne was the culminating point of the development of the English freehold yeoman. It was believed that the freehold yeoman was on average a richer man than the tenant farmer even if a hundred years later the freehold yeoman existed any more. The tenant farmer had the benefit of his landlord's capital poured into his land while the small free holder had no financial resources. The difference between these two types of yeoman was political and social. The freeholder had a vote for Parliament and was often in a position to use it. On the contrary the tenant farmer had no vote. As our writer underlined in his *England under queen Anne*, in the election of country gentlemen we meet such expressions as "The freeholders do not stick to say they will show their liberty in voting"⁹. The squire was disposed to buy out the freehold yeoman and many of them were ready to quit the countryside. During the XVII century the cultivating freeholders enumerated by the king, were still the class upon whose unforced support the structure of Church and State. The forty-shilling freehold was the basis of the uniform Parliamentary franchise in every country of England and Wales.

The yeoman was no newcomer to the English scene. He was the very epitome of the guileless and uncorrupted countryman, the hearty and independent peasant. Many descriptions of him pervade the literature of the period. One of the most reliable commentators, William Harrison, observed in his *Description of England* that yeoman have a certain pre-eminence and more estimation than labourers and artificers and these commonly keep good houses and travail to get riches. Ignoring the legal definition of a yeoman, Harrison continued that they are also for the most part farmers to gentlemen.

For others the yeoman was peculiar to England and in every way a better man than his peasant counterpart on the continent.

Thomas Fuller, the source quoted in *The Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England* described him as follow:

⁹ G.M.Trevelyan, *England Under Queen Anne*, Longmans, London, 1930, p.22

English yeoman flouted foreign fashions, ate substantial food, displayed modesty, paid his debts, practiced good husbandry, and in time of famine he is the Joseph of the country and keeps the poor from starving.

Though he serveth on foot, is ever mounted on an high spirit, as being a slave to none and a subject only to his own prince.¹⁰

In the great chain of being everything had its place and the yeoman's was somewhere between the gentleman's above and the husbandman's below.

In reality this neatly defined status was obscured by considerable social fluidity among classes.

The yeoman's story is one that varied significantly from one part of England to another. The countryman who reached maturity during the age of the Tudors and Stuarts traced his origin to the Middle Ages. In the fourteenth century the old manorial economy lost its intensity and there was a commutation of villain services for money payment that increased the class of free tenants. During the sixteenth-century the enterprising yeoman experienced unprecedented opportunities. The same who had risen on the ruins of the manorial economy were now prepared to take the monastic lands. Yeomen tried to increase production of foodstuffs and wool that demanded taking risks but in the hopes to procure greater profits. The yeoman recognized that costly old methods of tillage and grazing would hardly enable him to tap the new markets and reap the harvest of rising prices. For these reasons the new husbandman chucked the open-field system, consolidated and expanded his holdings and finally enclosed the land.

Thomas Tusser gave us a perfect vision of this kind of yeoman:

The country enclosed I prase,
The t'other delighteth not me;
For nothing the wealth it doth raise,
To such as inferior be-
or
Let pasture be stored and fenced about,
And tillage set forward as needeth without;
before ye do open your purse to beginnings
With anything doing for fancy within.¹¹

Land was always the paramount basis of wealth, but not until the century of the

10 Albert J. Schmidt, *The Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, the Folger Shakespeare Library, 1961, p.3

11 Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, Kessinger Publishing, USA, 2009, P. 4

enterprising yeomen and gentry was it recognized as the basis for capitalistic endeavour. A kind of maddening cycle developed in which the yeoman laboured endlessly for greater profits from his land in order that he could purchase more. A multitude of legal documents had come down to us to indicate that the yeoman was forever engaged in the purchase or leasing of land. To buy or lease land the yeomen had to dispose of considerable capital. The yeoman who enclosed the land, drained their fens, rack-rented and hoarded corn were hardly popular and the literature of that period provided us with ample evidence. Even if they employed brutal tactics they often improved their earthly existence. The social mobility of the yeoman was striking even in the age when movement from one social stratum to another was becoming commonplace. As our source Albert Schmidt underlined, the line separating yeoman from gentry was often surmounted without difficulty. A yeoman might acquire gentry status but few ever lost pride in their roots and most usually retained many of those characteristics which were distinctly yeoman.

Let gentlemen go gallant, what care I.
I was a yeoman born, and so I'll die.
Then if you best my son, be of my mind.¹²

The yeoman prided himself on his industry and ridiculed the gentry for their idleness. The stereotyped yeoman was not the gentleman farmer but one who knew his land because he worked it with his servants. Yeoman diaries and account books show that the literature sources were not wrong when they made such claims for their hero. Yet yeomen did have their forms of recreations and pastimes. Riding, gardening, hunting and fishing were close to every countryman's heart. The yeoman was not an inveterate traveller. Distrustful of foreigners, he rarely journeyed to other lands. This portraits given to us by Albert Schmidt described the beau ideal of the country fellow.

The English yeoman who prided himself on hard work, frugality and neighbourliness was often the one who set sail from England for America during the seventeenth century. His distinct English qualities and his independent spirit played a relevant role in the evolution of democratic institutions in New England just as in Old England across the seas.

¹²Albert J. Schmidt, *The Yeoman in Tudor and Stuart England*, op.cit., p.16

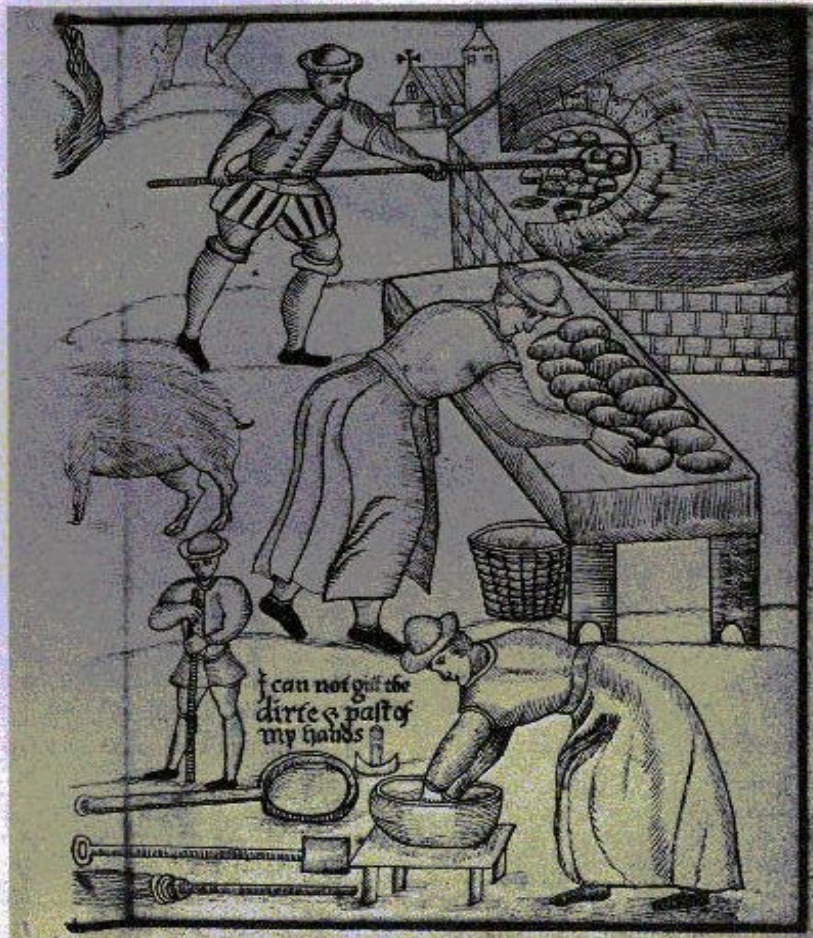


Plate 11. Scenes from the yeoman's life: baking bread. From T. F., "A Book of Divers Devices" (1585-1622). Folger MS. V.a.311.

1.2 English lifetimes

By following the social study of our source Plumb it can be asserted that the essence of a pre modern English person was his independence, his hearty good nature and his skill in archery.

The English are so naturally inclined to pleasure, as there is no Country, wherein the gentlemen and Lords have so many and large parks, reserved for pleasure or hunting.

During the Stuart epoch shooting had gradually superseded hawking with the result that game birds were more rapidly destroyed. In Anne's reign it was already not unusual to shoot flighted birds. Netting birds on the ground was a fashionable sport, often carried on over dogs. Liming by twigs, snaring and trapping birds of all kinds, not only pheasants and wild duck, had still a prominent place in manuals of *The Gentleman's recreation*, edited by the Edinburgh Review in 1710:

*Shooting...was a fine sport, and helped to inspire the class that then set the mode in everything...with an intimate love and knowledge of woodland, hedgerow and moor, and a strong preference for country over town life, which is too seldom found in the leaders of fashion in any age or land.*¹³

They built their houses with well structured gardens and orchards that had changed structural and social function.

The writer William Lawson offered in his *A new Orchard and Garden* new insights on planting and grafting. This work suggested why there appeared an increasing variety of fruits and berries. The countrymen were providing the town folk with a bountiful table during Shakespeare's time.

The prosperity enjoyed by the yeoman from his fields was reflected in the kind of house in which he lived. The period of the Great Rebuilding refers to the cottages and farmhouses. Charming stone Cotswold houses were built on the foundations of their timber predecessors. The equally picturesque black and white buildings of Shrewsbury and other towns of the West Midlands and Welsh border point to the prosperity of this region during the late Tudor and early Stuart periods. Throughout the Stuart period fine country-houses were rising in place of the castles. Some houses in Devon were remodelled so that to lose their medieval features. The fifteenth-century hall house was converted into a two-story, multiple room dwelling by the insertion of a ceiling midway between the first floor and roof. Partitions were placed on both floors transforming the old house of one room into a new one. As Schmidt described, in Cotswold country and in Northamptonshire rebuilding was more complete, new materials were substituted for old. Two floors and several rooms on each floor were customary. Throughout England as evidenced of his constant search for land, the prosperous yeoman built entirely new dwellings on new sites. His financial independence enabled him to appreciate privacy that his fathers had not known in the medieval hall. The multiplication of small rooms was less a revolution in

¹³ G.M.Trevelyan, *England Under Queen Anne*, op. cit., p.41

housing and more a revolution in human psychology.

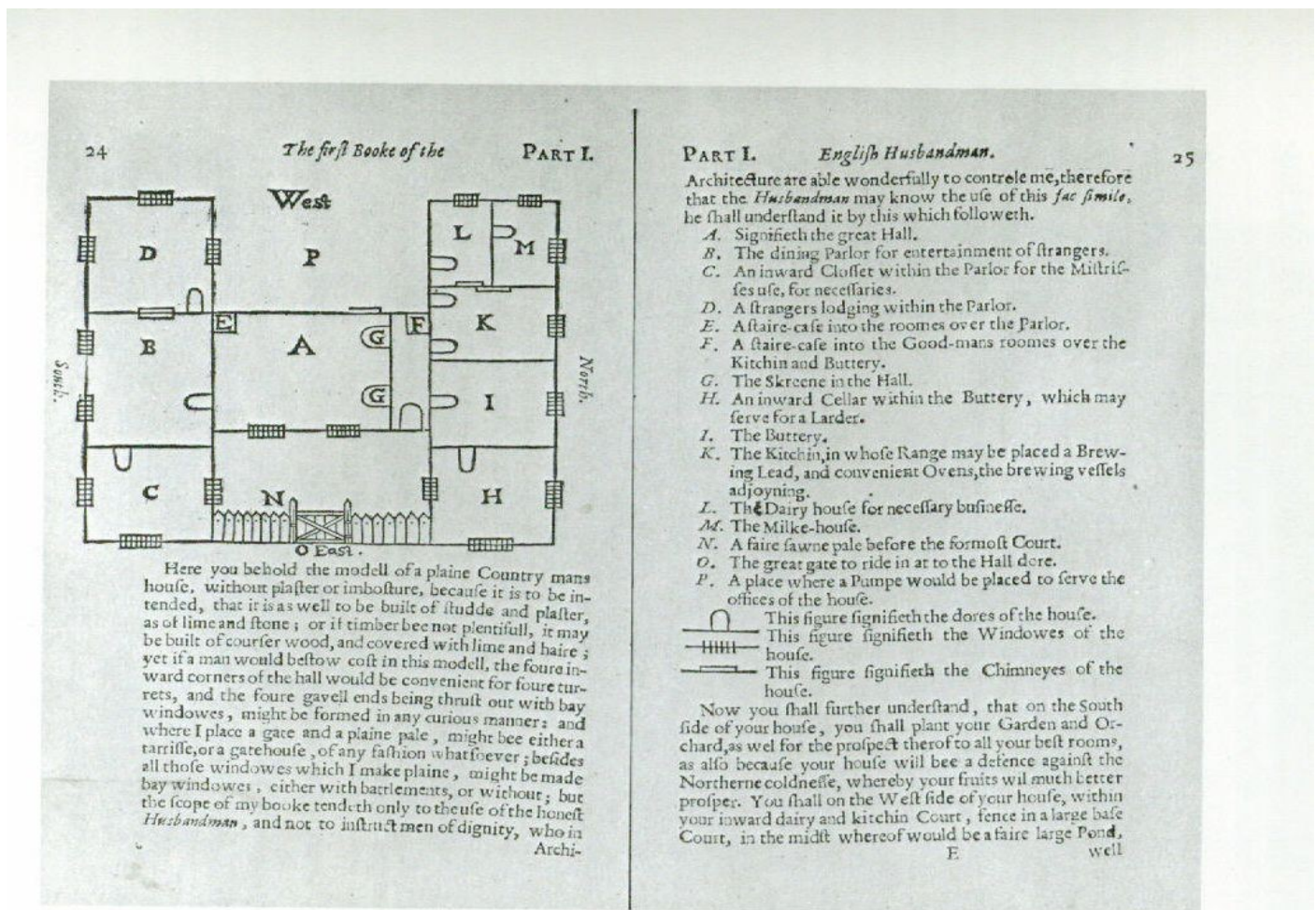


Plate 18. Markham's plan for a country house. From Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman* (1635).

The towns were not overcrowded and many inhabitants were engaged in agriculture. Due to the recession of the sea and the increase in the size of ships demanding larger harbours, many citizen workers migrated into rural villages and hamlets where cloth and other manufactures had moved by changing the role of the great trade centres. The barycentre of the major commerce and industry activities was moved from the older centres to the villages by giving a new social role to the rural areas. The villages and open market towns were now sufficiently civilized and secure to become the homes of highly elaborated craftsmanship. From Elizabeth to George III, the bulk of the industrial population lived under rural conditions of life. The typical Englishman was a villager, but a villager accustomed to meet men of various crafts, occupations and classes.

At the same time the town population was on the increase in the island. The new oceanic conditions of trade favoured other port towns in the west, like Bideford. But above all London developed more and more as the home for foreign commerce of the country and represented a wonder for size in England and in Europe.

By continuing to study the situation issued by Trevelyan in his *English Social History*, it can be stressed that the London of Queen Elizabeth by its sheer size, wealth and power was the most fashionable city in the Kingdom. It exercised a social, intellectual and political influence that led the success of the Protestant Revolution in the sixteenth-century and of the parliamentary revolution in the seventeenth.

The feeding of Tudor London governed the agricultural policy of the home countries. In the capital, due to its population, food was required in vast quantity. Kent with its enclosed fields, called "the garden of England", was the fruit-garden of London, rich with apples and cherries. The barley of East Anglia, came through brewing towns like Royston, while Kent and Essex were dedicated to hops. In all the south-eastern counties the wheat and rye were cultivated.

The great market of the capital changed agricultural methods. As William Harrison in his *An historical description of the Island of Britanye* wrote that another kind of husband man, or yeoman rather, who waded in the weeds of gentlemen became one of the new figures of the trade.

Besides London, there were other markets for agricultural produce. Few towns could grow all the food they required in the "town fields". Even in the country, if a rural district had a bad season it could buy the surplus of other districts.

In normal years some English corn was exported. Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and other regions of the Rose valley sent great quantities of wheat through Lynn and the Wash to Scotland, Norway and the cities of the Netherlands. Much food came to Bristol and the western towns from the granary of central England, and the Feldon lying between the north-west of Avon, as Leland and Camden both noted, was deep woodland, thinly studded with pastoral settlements: the famous Forest of Arden. The river Avon passing through the fourteen arches of stone Stratford's bridge, divided the lonely forest from the populous corn lands. From one side of the river one who was born there could admire the wild nature and on the other the most relevant of man's touch.

The cultivation of oats, wheat, rye and barley came according to the soil and climate. Oats prevailed in the north; wheat and rye in most parts of England. Everywhere barley abounded and was used for beer. The west with its apple orchards, drank cider. In all

parts of England the villages grew a variety of crops for its own use and its bread was often a mixture of different kinds of grain. Our source Fynes Moryson wrote after Queen Elizabeth's death:

"The English husbandmen eat barley and rye brown bread, and prefer it to white bread as abiding longer in stomach and not so soon digested with their labour; but citizens and gentlemen eat most pure white bread, England yielding all kinds of corn in plenty."¹⁴

Nevertheless, this cheerful picture of agricultural and distributive activity must not delude us into imagining that England of this period was already the land of improved agriculture and reformed traffic. It became that only at the end of eighteenth century. Until that time the best corn lands in England, the Midlands, Lincoln and Norfolk were still for the most part unenclosed. In those regions the vast and edgeless village field was still being cultivated on the mediaeval method of three-course agriculture. The initiative of an improving landlord or farmer was closely circumscribed on these village fields. More progress was present on the enclosed portion of a squire's farm and in the enclosed lands of southern, western and northern England. Taking into account the great variety of local conditions, it is true to say of England that as a whole enclosure was only one, but possibly the most important, of the many changes that combined to reduce the numbers of independent peasantry. This also increased the aggregate wealth of the countryside. Enclosure was a burning issue because it crystallized the conflict between the old and new systems of value. This system had some brutal consequences but enclosure lifted English agriculture from a subsistence level to one of higher quantity and quality.

In the county of Northumberland, the travellers along the coast and in the valley of the south Tyne, found plenty of good bread and beer and stock of the famous claret. There was still the figure of a County Keeper for Northumberland who drew a salary of £ 500 in return for making good all cattle. Peace with Scotland, the wealth of the Tyneside mines, and the trade of Newcastle were factors raising the standard of life all along the border. In the more southerly districts of England where civilization was of older date, long peace was multiplying the comforts of life. This included making roads and enclosing and draining the moorland farms of Northumberland.

Everywhere that perfectly beautiful equilibrium between man and nature which marked the

¹⁴ Fynes Moryson, *An itinerary written by Fynes Moryson*, Gent., London, 1617, p.167

Eighteenth-Century landscape, was in process of being established. The society was characterized by the balance of town and country rather than the dead weight of life in great cities, of literature rather than journalism, and of arts and crafts rather than the machine.

Most Englishmen still ignored the reality of city since they rejoiced in the close contact with nature and relished the traditions and character of their own village community:

*Buildings still added to the beauty of the land and taste had not yet been vitiated by too much machine production.*¹⁵

Country gentlemen were concerned about their accounts, their families, they attended to their estates, county business and horses and were devoted to their gardens and their ponds more than their books. They lived a wholesome and useful life, half public, half private, wholly leisured, natural and dignified.

The problem was the coming of the Industrial Revolution which was considered the most important movement in social history since the Anglo-Saxon conquest. The factory system ruined craftsmanship and divided employers from the employed. Neither Church nor State gave their attention to this new class of masters creating a state of laissez-faire where the men were repressed. The result was a rootless, artificial society, in which industrial labourers became dissociated from the rural life of the country. For this reason England was divided between town and country.

Trevelyan called the growth of cities the harsh distinction between rural and urban life.

In Renaissance times the city had been synonymous with civility, the country with rusticity and boorishness. To bring men out of the forests and to contain them in a city was to civilize them. Adam had been placed in a garden and Paradise was associated with flowers and fountains. For centuries town walls had symbolized security and human achievement. The classical convention that country-dwellers were not just healthier but morally more admirable than those who lived in the city was a conspicuous literary theme in English literature.

It was in the cities that the rural profits were consumed and there the countrymen found the latest fashions and the most expensive vices. On the contrary life in the country lacked that anonymity which made the city a better setting for clandestine intrigue.

Modern cities were a deadening cage for the human spirit since urban and suburban life in

15 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History*, Longmans, Green 1942, London, p.304

modern England lacked the visual appeal to seed the imagination as had the old village of England. The general divorce of Englishmen from life in contact with nature combined with the advent of nationwide elementary education, resulted in a social process in the stair of the anthropological system.

The natural response of the town was to harp on the reputation of the rustic gentry for too much drinking, hunting and shooting. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, an aristocratic traveller, in one of her letters condemns the squires of a certain district of Sussex as being insensible to pleasures other than the bottle and the chase. In the same letter she regrets the society of the squires of Northamptonshire that, the learned country gentlemen celebrated in Somerville's sententious lines:

A rural squire, to crowds and courts unknown
in his own cell retired, but not alone;
for round him view each Greek and Roman sage.
Polite companions of his riper age.¹⁶

Nevertheless, as Trevelyan remarked in his study of *England under the Queen Anne*, the impression left by over hundreds of letters of better-to-do gentry and travellers of the reign of Anne, is neither that of country scholar nor of country yokel. The letters reported us the various thoughts of squires, anxious about their account books, their daughters marriages and their sons debts and professions. Their lives were devoted to their hounds, horses and their gardens more than their books.

The country gentleman, rich or poor, spent little or nothing for the education of his sons. Their education was not obligatory exclusively in patrician schools. At the nearest local grammar school the squire's children sat beside those sons of yeoman who had been selected for a clerical career. Otherwise children were taught at home by a neighbouring parson.

The common education of the upper and middle class was considered too classical. They studied only Latin and Greek were not taught well. But there was important variety in the type of school patronized by gentlemen. In spite its educational defects, the Eighteenth Century produced remarkable and original men from among those who passed through its schools. That education allowed them to have leisure in the free range of the countryside. Among the lower classes, women had less education than their brothers. Most ladies learned at home from their mothers and only a few could read the Italian poets.

¹⁶ G.M.Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1930, p. 30.

Nevertheless, country-house letters of the period written by wives and daughters showed them to be intelligent advisers of their men folk. They practised the same activities and rural pastimes as men such as shooting, galloping and also drinking.

1.3 The attachment to the land

Smaller squires paid equally little for their sons schooling and therefore forced them into cheaper trades like the army or diplomatic service.

The fact that the younger son went out to make his fortune in the army, at the bar, in industry or in commerce was one of the general causes favouring the Whigs and their goals. These goals included the desire of the High Tories to keep the landed gentry an exclusive as well as a dominant class. The country gentlemen continued to keep their rule in the interest of commerce and empire during the Eighteenth-Century.

One of the curiosities of English life from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries was that while, the landed gentry looked down on the mercantile class as a lower order of society, many of the landed families had not only acquired their estates by money made in trade but continued from generation to generation to invest in mercantile and financial adventures. The close personal connection between the landed and trading interest gave stability and unity to the social fabric in England. This fabric was lacking in the ancient regime of France, with its distinction of interest between noblesse and bourgeoisie.

The attachment to the land, not only as a trade or economical source but also as a family inheritance, laid the foundations of a new social model that highlighted the relationship between man and nature. A new value was emerging: the respect of the nature as the respect of the personal origin.

It was only in the course of the Eighteenth Century that the beauty of Wordsworth's homeland attained the moment of rightful balance between nature and man. In previous centuries, the valleys were without sounds, marshy and nondescript. During the Industrial Revolution, man over-regulated nature with machines. Only in the reign of Anne did the dales begin to take on their brief perfection of rural loveliness, ordered but not disciplined. In 1802 Wordsworth thought that earth had nothing fairer to show than the sleeping city of London seen from Westminster Bridge. Yet, long before that date it had become a commonplace to maintain that the countryside was more beautiful than the town.

WISDOM and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!
And giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion! not in vain,
By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man;
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature; purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying by such discipline
Both pain and fear,--until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valleys made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon; and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.
And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
The cottage-windows through the twilight blazed,
I heeded not the summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us; for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village-clock tolled six--I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home.--All shod with steel
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,--the resounding horn,
The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag

Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,
 Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
 The orange sky of evening died away.
 Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay, or sportively
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
 To cut across the reflex of a star;
 Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
 Upon the glassy plain: and often times,
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,
 And all the shadowy banks on either side
 Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
 The rapid line of motion, then at once
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
 Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
 Wheeled by me--even as if the earth had rolled
 With visible motion her diurnal round!
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
 Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.¹⁷

Here the impact of quiet contact with nature upon human achievement and quality is expressed by Wordsworth's genius as if he could perceive the wonder of each man personally connect with God in the wide spaces.

We can recognize the far-stretched horizons of the Fenland and of Cambridgeshire, the wide fields of the East Anglian countryside, the meadows, the lanes, and the woodland fens of Bedfordshire. All visions of his youth.

There was much hardship, poverty and cold in those peasant villages and farms but the simplicity and beauty of the life with nature was a historical reality not merely a poet's dream.

Both indoors and outside England was a lovely land. Man's work still added more than it took away from the beauty of nature. Farm buildings and cottages of local style and material sank into the soft landscape. The fields, enclosed by hedges, and the new plantation of oak and beech were a fair exchange for the bare open fields. Near to almost

¹⁷ Wordsworth, *Influence of natural object, In calling forth and strengthening the imagination in boyhood and early youth*, 1799. www.online-literature.com

every village was a manor-house park with clumps of great trees. The country houses to which the aristocracy retreated were not rural cottages but splendid mansions designed to bring urban civilization to country surroundings. The formal garden, and the walks decorated by leaden statuettes in the Dutch style prevalent under William and Anne were eliminated in order to bring the grass and trees of the park. The fruit and vegetable garden within its high brick walls, considered an appendage of a country-house, was placed at a little distance. The abolition of Dutch gardens to make room for grass slopes and trees visible from the windows, testified to the growing delight in natural scenery. This soon led Englishmen to take pleasure even in mountains, to flock to the Lake District and in the following century to the Scottish Highlands. These kind of house provided a base for a distinctly country field style of life.

The idea of a summer house in the country became increasingly familiar to prosperous town-dwellers. A rural haven was healthier and quieter and it afforded more room for gardens and orchards. Those too poor to afford the weekend cottage still looked to the country for occasional refreshment. Country jaunts or rambles were a common form of relaxation in the seventeenth century. The countryside was portrayed as a holier place than the town and much of the devotional literature exhibited what the poet John Clare would call the religion of the fields. Fields and groves naturally awakened a sense of the divine.

In the last decade of the century arose the great school of landscape painters, Girtin and Turner, soon followed by many more like Constable. They depicted England at her best, at the perfect moment of her beauty. The first paintings were dedicated to portraits and subject pictures rather than to landscapes. But thanks to literature, from Thomson's *Season* to Wordsworth, the landscapes were sublimated. The joy of the English in their land received its expression in letters and in art at the hands of Wordsworth and the landscape painters.

It was the growth of that division between town and country which encouraged this sentimental longing for rural pleasures and idealization of the spiritual and aesthetic charms of the countryside.

It was no accident that it was in Renaissance Italy that the taste first emerged for *villeggiatura*, retirement to an elegant country villa during the summer season, for it was there that town life was earliest developed. In early modern England the yearning for the countryside was intensified by the enormous growth of London. But it also drew strength from what has been called the de-ruralisation of the towns, namely the elimination of trees

and flowers to build houses for the mounting pressure of population. The growing tendency to disparage urban life and to look to the countryside as a symbol of innocence rested on a series of illusions.¹⁸ The idealized shepherds of the literary idylls so popular in the early seventeenth century bore no relationship to the wage- labourers of Stuart England. The social inequality of the English countryside meant that arcadia had vanished. Even Horace' s ideal of the self-sufficient husbandry was wholly unrealistic. Country dwellers were not less sly than townsmen.

The poets and artists who fed the new rural longings preferred to conceal such harsh realities. Most of them depicted the countryside as free from social tension, they ignored the gentry's economic reasons for being there and they manifested an extreme reluctance to mention the practical aspects of rural life.

The cult of the countryside was in many ways a mystification and a evasion of reality. Many poets were so addicted to London and Bath that they wrote so much about the virtues of the country. Much celebration of the countryside emanated from those who were compelled for political failure to go out the city. This explained the enormous vogue in the 1650s of Walton's *Compleat Angler* and similar literature, for the defeated Royalist gentry sensibly made a virtue of necessity by extolling the merits of country life. With the return of Charles II in 1660, the attractions of rural existence became less compelling for Royalist, but they still appealed to other unsuccessful politicians and disappointed careerists. Many of the best-known rural idylls of the seventeenth century were compensatory myths composed by disconsolate figures. We can remember Thomas, Lord Fairfax who exiled from politics in the 1650s or Bulstrode Whitelocke who after escaping punishment at the Restoration, retired to Chilton Park in Wiltshire, where he wrote reflections on the superiority of rural life. Another was Sir William Temple who retreated to Moor Park after being struck off the list of privy councillors in 1681 and wrote his essay *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus*. As Shelley would write in solitude or that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings and yet they sympathise not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, the waters and the sky.

The growing rural sentiment reflected an authentic longing which would steadily increase, both in volume and intensity, with the spread of cities and the growth of industry. This longing was expressed in an unprecedented volume of writing about nature and the countryside: *The Compleat Angler*, first published in 1653 underlined the rural nostalgia of

18 T.Keith, *Man and the Natural World*, Penguin Groups, London, p.253

town-dwellers. Another essay which followed this genre was *On the love of the country* written by William Hazlitt. Here the writer underlined the ingredient of that nostalgia, the natural objects like trees, flowers, farm animals which are valued for their early associations. They bring back memories of childhood, as we have seen in Wordsworth, in a way which is more vivid and immediate than any human being ever can. This nostalgia also drew strength from increasing distaste for the physical appearance of the town. In the seventeenth century those who preferred country did not hate the town. But it was common that the most beautiful cities was the one that had the most rural appearance. The ideals of the garden city and the green belt have proved enduring. By the eighteenth century a combination of literary fashion and social facts had created a genuine tension between the relentless progress of urbanization and the rural longing. This longings indicated that many people thought that, although the natural world should be tamed, it needed a close link between man and nature. This ancient pastoral ideal has survived into the modern industrial world.

1.4 The Forest

In older times forests and wooded areas were closed and man was constantly at war with the wilderness. In the sixteenth century the emphasis was on tillage. The common law gave arable land before meadows, pastures, woods mines. In the seventeenth century there was greater appreciation of the value of pastoral farming. Sir George Peckam declared that God had created land to the end that it should by culture and husbandry yield things for man's life. The cultivation of soil was a symbol of civilization whereas wild and vacant lands were like a deformed chaos.

Later in the Eighteenth century the countryside was transformed into hedgerows and plantations. As Thomas Keith explained in his *Man and the Natural World*, Planting trees and creating landscape garden were the first and favourite pastime of rich people whereas a new passion for flower was diffused between the English people. Beyond animals they demonstrated even more a growing attraction for plants and flowers which were classified into categories which corresponded to the categories used for the classification of animals. Hedgerows and orchards had been always considered domestic plantations while the forest had been considered in a wild state. The contemporary geographical experts demonstrated that, in the land more adapted to cultivation, the forest was missed before the arrival of Romans and that in England the most important phase of

deforestation had come already at the end of Anglo-Saxon period. Under the Stuarts and the Tudors the wild areas gave spaces to cultivation and pasture-land but also to industrialization and production of glass, salt or porcelain. Many parks were abolished. The nature reserves were enclosed and the pasture-lands were created by deforesting and felling trees. The reduction of wild areas transformed into pasture-lands met the needs of market forces. Between the sixteenth-century and eighteenth century the number of trees decreased too much. In the last decade of seventeenth century there only three millions wild uncultivated acres remained with another three millions of local forestry, parks and woods areas. In each county of the reign there were places named forest, grove or park but these were only nude lands destined to pasturing or to cultivations. In England and in Wales in the nineteenth century woods occupied only a four per cent of the United Kingdom. This kind of development meant the triumph of the civilization. By labour and investment, men could remove the curse of thorns and wild roses which had come with the Fall and restore barren heaths to their primitive fertility and beauty. This landscape of cultivation, described by Keith, was distinguished by increasingly regular forms. The practice of planting corn or vegetables in straight lines was not just an efficient way of using limited space but also a pleasing means of imposing human order on the disorderly natural world. Neatness, symmetry and formal patterns had always been the human way to indicate the separation between culture and nature. The long, straight, quick-set hedges of the eighteenth century emerged in contrast with the straggling irregularity of earlier field patterns. Throughout this century the improvers continued to perfect this regular landscape of opulence and productivity and to deplore the uncultivated waste. The generality of people found wild country in its natural state totally unpleasing:

There are few who do not prefer the busy scenes of cultivation to the greatest of nature's rough productions. In general indeed, when we meet with a description of a pleasing country, we hear of haycocks, or waving cornfields or labourers at their plough.¹⁹

Many writers, painters and also the same Wordsworth agreed with this sentence because the affectations of the landscape-gardeners and the conquered lands were more appreciated than impenetrable, tamed and fertile lands.

Before the end of the eighteenth century things changed and in place of the clipped and manicured formal garden which had been the old horticultural ideal there had developed a

¹⁹ K. Thomas, *The man and the natural world*, op.cit., p.266

different English style of landscape garden. This garden was informal and even more wild, barren landscape became a source of spiritual renewal. The wilder, the greater its power to inspire emotion. Nature had become objects of high aesthetic admiration, as it has been well explained in *The man and the natural world*.

This new attitude to wild nature had first become apparent during the course of theological controversy. Mountains became really import such us deserts. In the later seventeenth century the growth of nature mysticism among the theologians and philosophers underlined the concept that mountainous country was enjoyable. The Lake District, the Wye Valley, Snowdonia and the Scottish Highlands with their exciting scenic effects became place of spiritual and bodily regeneration. In the eighteenth century the appreciation of wild nature had been converted into a sort of religious act. The value of the wilderness became morally healing and its places were not merely places of privacy and self-examination but they had a beneficial spiritual power. This semi-religious devotion to wild landscape was a European phenomenon, whose prophets included Rousseau and Alexander von Humboldt. This phenomenon, well described again in *The Man and The natural world*, was developed in England through a divination of nature and thanks to improvements in communications which made mountains, deserts and natural resorts more accessible. According to Rousseau's doctrines, nature had to be modelled in compliance with the projects and imagination of man that should have been limited since man's life had to act in symbiosis with nature. In the first part of his *Contratto Sociale*, Rousseau described the man condition in the Nature's state. The *natural* man is an *animal* less strong than some, less agile than others but in the whole he is better organized than anyone because his needs are modest and his passions are elementary. The *natural* man cannot be neither good nor bad, he can only follow natural tendencies such as self-preservation and pietas towards others intended as natural abhorrence to pain. The equation *natural* man animal is not correct since the man can perfect himself by developing his faculties to build his own history.²⁰

The second part of the work described the incredible development of man's potentialities that transformed man into a self-centred subject who introduced for the first time the concept of private property and consequently the discovery of social difference. Rousseau highlighted that inequality is the result of the history and civilization, and not of Nature.

Another explanation for the new taste for wild landscape and for the growth of gardening styles was the progress of English agriculture. It was in England that the natural style

20 Luca Molinari, saggio sullo stato di natura secondo Rousseau, www.cronologia.leonardo.it

became famous such as the landscape-gardening became one of the country's most distinctive cultural achievements. The English ordinary countryside reflected the geometrical gardens of the past and took care of its aesthetic appeal. Even if the new taste in landscape was shaped by continental models, for example the gardens of Italy, it was English agricultural progress which made these models attractive. Formal gardens was brought under rigorous and symmetrical cultivation and it was the same for wild or mountainous or seaside landscape.

These symmetrical models of natural and healthy landscapes became important also for the medicine of the body and at the same time represented a medicine of the soul. The contemplation of the sea and of coast scenery added an attraction also for mental pleasure linked with health. The taste for mountains began in the late Eighteenth century. The same was for the love for the seaside. In the first half of the century the new of spending treat s seaside resort for medical purpose was created. The doctors ordered people to inhale the sea air at the village of Brighthelmstone or drink the water at Scarborough. It was in the reign of George that Turner truly delineated the waves of the sea for the first time.

In the Eighteenth century the sites for new country houses were chosen for aesthetic and not merely from practical reasons. The zeal for estate management and agricultural improvement put the squire on his horse at all hours of the day, and caused the ladies to be preserving their large households. In this period it was usual for a country-house to have a library filled with volumes stamped with the family arms, ranging from the English, Latin, and Italian classics to many tomes of illustrated travels, and local histories. The literary, the sporting, the fashionable and the political sets were one and the same. All the activities of town and country, of public and private life, were pursued and relished by those liberal-minded, open hearted aristocrats, whom their countrymen felt not the slightest wish to guillotine. In the reign of George III, stags browsing under the oaks were an ornament to gentleman's park, safely enclosed within its pales. Architecture was safe in the plain English style now known as Georgian. The squalor of the medieval village had long been in retreat before the homely dignity and comfort of the rural middle class. As Trevelyan reminds us in his *England under the Queen Anne*, in Anne's reign men were everywhere building or enlarging farmhouses, using stone, brick or half-timber according to the tradition or material of the district. The architectural results of rustic prosperity were most evident in those favoured regions where the cloth manufacture made a great demand for the local wool. Besides the fine old farmhouse familiar to the traveller in the

Lake District there were many cottages wherein the poorer dalesmen brought large families. In the reign of Anne the dales were just beginning to take on their brief perfection of rural loveliness, ordered but not disciplined, in contrast with the mountain magnificence above and around.

1.5 Wilderness versus cultivation

At the beginnings the forests were synonymous with barbarism and with danger as the word savage reminds us its root *silva* (*grove*)²¹. The primitive men preferred the open field to the forest because they felt safer there. When the Elizabethans talked about *wilderness* they were not suggesting a plain, deserted land rather a wild forest such as Shakespeare's forest of Arden, *an impenetrable desert under the shadow of melancholic branches*²².

John Locke contrasted the civil and rational inhabitants of cities with the irrational, untaught denizens of woods and forests. Literary convention as well as actual experience thus underlay the seventeenth-century commonplace that forest-dwellers tended to be lawless squatters, poverty-stricken, stubborn and uncivil. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would see many bitter disputes between forest-dwellers and the officials of the Crown and the larger landlords, who tried to impose more efficient control upon the resources and inhabitants of the forest areas.

Untamed woodlands were seen as obstacles to human progress and to agriculture that supported the plantation of trees.

In England many former woods had become gallant corn countries and there was not space for any other kind of cultivation. There was a practical change due to the need of wood for building, for domestic use and for fuel. English woodlands, particularly in the Lowland Zone had been intensely managed as a self-renewing resource and woods had already ceased to be wild and hostile and had become domestic, an essential part of the rural economy. Various Acts of Parliament permitted the protective enclosure of young trees and ordered the preservation of a state number of timber trees. The famous work

21 T.Keith, *L'uomo e la Natura*, Torino Einaudi, 1994, p.252

22 William Shakespeare, *As you like it*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, 1992, p.78

Sylva written by John Evelyn attacked the spreading of tillage enjoying great literary success leading to an act for planting in the Royal Forest of Dean to the sowing of millions of timber trees by private landowners. At the beginnings of Anne's reign both Evelyn and his book of propaganda were still alive and probably caused the plantation of millions of timber trees.

Not all the hedgerow trees in which England abounded had got there by natural means and there is enough evidence to suggest that trees had been planted in England from Norman times. In early Tudor times the agricultural writer Fitzherbert assumed that farmers would gather acorns and ash keys to plant and he gave advice on transplanting. Many manorial regulations of sixteenth-century described the duty of tree planting. The motives of this activity were economic. In the seventeenth century the agricultural improvers set out to show that planting trees landowners could raise the value of their estates. As Adam Smith thought, in several parts of Great Britain the profit from planting timber was equal to that from either corn or pasture. Besides these practical arguments for the preservation of old woods and the planting of new woods we have to consider the meaning of the forest that was:

A certain territory of woody grounds and fruitful pastures, privileged for wild beasts and fowls of forest, chase and warren to rest and abide in, in the safe protection of the king, for his princely delight and pleasure.²³

As this definition reveals, the so called forest was not all covered with trees. It harboured cattle as well as deer. Forest was not necessarily woodland and woodland was not necessarily forest. But the needs of auto-preservation made it necessary to keep up some woods and coverts within the forest. This system aimed to convert woodland into arable or pasture. The Crown was prepared to regard forest law as a profitable jurisdiction rather than a serious means of woodland conservation. During the thirteenth century the monarchs were ready to dis-afforest certain areas altogether and this process of dis-afforestation continued actively during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The royal forests represented a notable attempt to preserve a large part of England for recreation of a privileged few. Only in the seventeenth century the royal forests were regarded primarily as mere timber reserves. In the Restoration period the demands of serious timber-planting were seen as in conflict with the maintenance of the forest as a place for the king's deer.

23 J.Manwood, *A treatise and discourse of the lawes of the forest*, Garland, London, 1978, p. 145

In Saxton's Elizabethan maps there are over eight hundred of private deer parks and they were a distinctive feature of the English landscape. These parks were an important symbol of social rank. One of the fashionable aspects which represented these parks was the hunting and in particular the pursuit of the fox and the hunting of deer and hare, an old sport beloved of Shakespeare. The most constant outdoor background in Shakespeare's mind was hunting of various kinds. Throughout his plays he described this sport with technical and sporting terms came from his vivid personal experience. There are many passages which demonstrated the passion of our writer.

In the forest of Arden the wounded stag seeks the brook, in the King of Navarre's park the princess takes careful aim-to kill and not to wound- in the northern English forest the keepers with crossbows discuss coverts and the best way to shoot, and the musical discord of hounds and horn re-echoes through the wood outside Athens as in the forest near Rome.²⁴

As Trevelyan reported us in *England under the Queen*, in the eighteenth century the association between hunting and trees was reconfirmed when the passion for fox hunting led to the planting of coverts in many parts of rural England. These deer parks and royal forests generated a further and more enduring reason for tree conservation. It was believed that wood added beauty and dignity to the scene. There was a vast quantity of timber all over the island in private possession, fenced in as deer parks or otherwise preserved alike for beauty and for profit. Forestry kept its proper place in the economy of an estate and an attempt was made by landowners to cut trees at the right time and then to replant. An oak would not ripen for a century but men still believed that their great-grandchildren would inherit them.

1.5 Landscape in an anthropological vision

Another approach to the evolution of the landscape refers not to its romantic meaning but to its social function. The landscape view as the complex keystone of our cultural identity and the physical and spiritual place where we live on the earth.

The archaic society was characterized by the statics. The characteristics were: the attachment to the place, the rhythms based on the natural cycles and the symbolisation of the space as a *sacral circle*. In this circle the single man lives and the community

²⁴ Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, Cambridge University Press, 1935, Chapter III

celebrates cosmic harmony. Living in a sacral place meant to join its spirit and this characterized the physiognomy of the communities and civilities faithful to their own interpretation of *genius loci*.²⁵

Contrary to the aesthetics of the civilization that consumed the distance to the natural world, the traditional enhancement of the spacial element connected to the earth was the harmonic result of essential gestures whose beauty came from the union with Nature.

On the contrary the modernity destroyed the naturalisation. The modern individual with his symbolic identity assumed a universal behaviour imposing the technoscientific ratio on the whole planet. The civilization ceased as *space*, as *topos* and it becomes a *time* without special barriers. The research of a global village and the disorientation emerged from the dissolution of the idea of space. Since here the desire to live all together in the same time disdaining the past.

The concrete manifestation of this globalisation is the devastation of the landscapes. The landscape is the result of the alliance between man and nature. For this reason the landscapes are diverse and their beauty is due to their naturalness. With the civilization all this disappears. The geographic aspects disconnects from that aesthetic, the subject from the object and nature from the culture. This division from culture and nature transfers us into an alienated space where places are degraded and oppressed by the aesthetics consumerism. But everywhere there is a place, a centre of the world and as Mircea Eliade said from the limitedness of the earth a new awareness could emerge. The earth is constitutes by a complicate multitude of aspects and singular places which do not form a unique models of interpretation. In this prospective the opposition between the landscapes regions and those of the objective reality decease. Starting from the earth's principles we can plan again in a new way our own localization: the community and the identity.

The earth, one and completed, needs all its differences and complexity. By studying the *geosofia*, a Jungherarian super-session of the modern concept of native country, the individual finds the Unitarian idea of the earth and the valorisation of the local reality.

The relation between natural and techniques represents the modern landscape of the planet and mixes in a unique scenario all the diverse characteristics of the earth. It is the extension of the civilisation to the whole planet that makes us understand the limits where the Nature collapses.

In this contest the philosophers recall the need to come back to the astonishment by the earth and by the Nature. This is a call to a different awareness of the Nature. To do this it

²⁵ Luisa Bonasio, saggio sulla geofilosofia, Università di Pavia, www.geofilosofia.it/paesaggi/Bonasio

is necessary that the Nature came back to its symbolic objectivity. The individual becomes only a thing between other things and he can recognize the limit of the earth and the law of nature. How can the individual deeply understand the symbolic call of the nature?

It is needed to come back to the wild, to find the wildness to rediscover the deep roots of our existence. The idea of the wood is that of a spiritual dimension different from the nihilism whose symbol is the desert. The wood and the forest are imagine of the primitive world, the unspoiled world.

Analysing the work on Shakespeare's imagery of Caroline Spurgeon, it emerges that the wood is in contrast with the appearance and is the place of imagines and powers of the men as opposed to the sterile desert. The forest is a space which includes all places figuring the multitude of earth's faces. To find that centre of the world where relationing with everything is the aim of most historians and writer as our Shakespeare who created the famous world of the Forest of Arden. The forest is not a real place, it has not an objective existence but it is a place of the soul and of imagination. It does not matter if it is the forest of the *Ardenne*, anglicised as Arden; it does not matter that a known Forest of Arden exists in England near Stratford. In fact it is thought that Shakespeare, when wrote about Arden, was not thinking of the French Ardenne but of his Warwickshire and of his Arden. In *As you like it* there is nothing that defines the board lines of the forest that on the contrary seems to change continually with the change of the characters who live in it. Through Orlando's words it appears as a wild and desert place. Through Rosalind's words the forest is full of olives tree and hawthorns and through those of Celia the forest enriched with a stream. These different images do not reconcile each others. The forest where the exiled duke lives with a many merry men like the old Robin Hood of England *fleeting the time carelessly as they did in the golden world* ²⁶ is not in armony with the wild wood, the unwelcoming desert revealed by Orlando. But this changeability underlines the fact that the forest is not a real place but a feeling. Arden was not only a forest near Stratford but also the surname of Shakespeare's mother. Besides the name the Forest of Arden is a metaphor of the return to the origins, to the childhood, a passage from the adult life of the court to the infantile life of the adventure, of the fables, of the love's plot.

The forest, the wood is a magic place preferred in the theatre of Shakespeare but it has often a negative connotation: it is the place of witches, death and violence. On the contrary the Forest of Arden is the only to have a positive connotation and to epitomize the return to the native sinlessness.

26 W.Shakespeare, *As You like it*, op.cit., p.12

The forest as the image of the garden were two predominant similes in Shakespeare and in other Elizabethan dramatists who marked the anthropological interpretation of these symbols. The gardening similes are peculiar and rich of personal significance for Shakespeare but also common for Elizabethan dramatists.

Shakespeare visualises human beings as the trees and plants he loved so well in orchard or garden²⁷.

He thought of matters human as of growing plants and trees. His interest in countryside and its varying aspects had been expressed as he was a gardener. He was interested in the processes of growth and decay, in the likeness between men and plants. He saw the diseases in plants with the gardener's eye.

In *Midsummer Night's Dream* there are a high number of nature images. In *As You Like It* there are images of nature and also of animals and here there is a vivid feeling of outdoor country life. Also in *Much Ado* there are continual touches which connect the audience with the background of nature. We have to remember in *As You Like It* the opening scene in the orchard in which the duke refers to winter's wind and trees and running brooks, the stag hunt, the shepherd's cot, Orlando's verses, the foresters and their songs.

We are constantly reminded of Shakespeare's favourite haunts of garden and orchard from grafting, pruning and weeding, as in Rosalind's chaff with Touchstone about grafting with the medlar, Orlando's warning to Adam that in staying with him he prunes a rotten tree, Touchstone's metaphor of fruit ripening and rotting.

²⁷Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1935, p.87

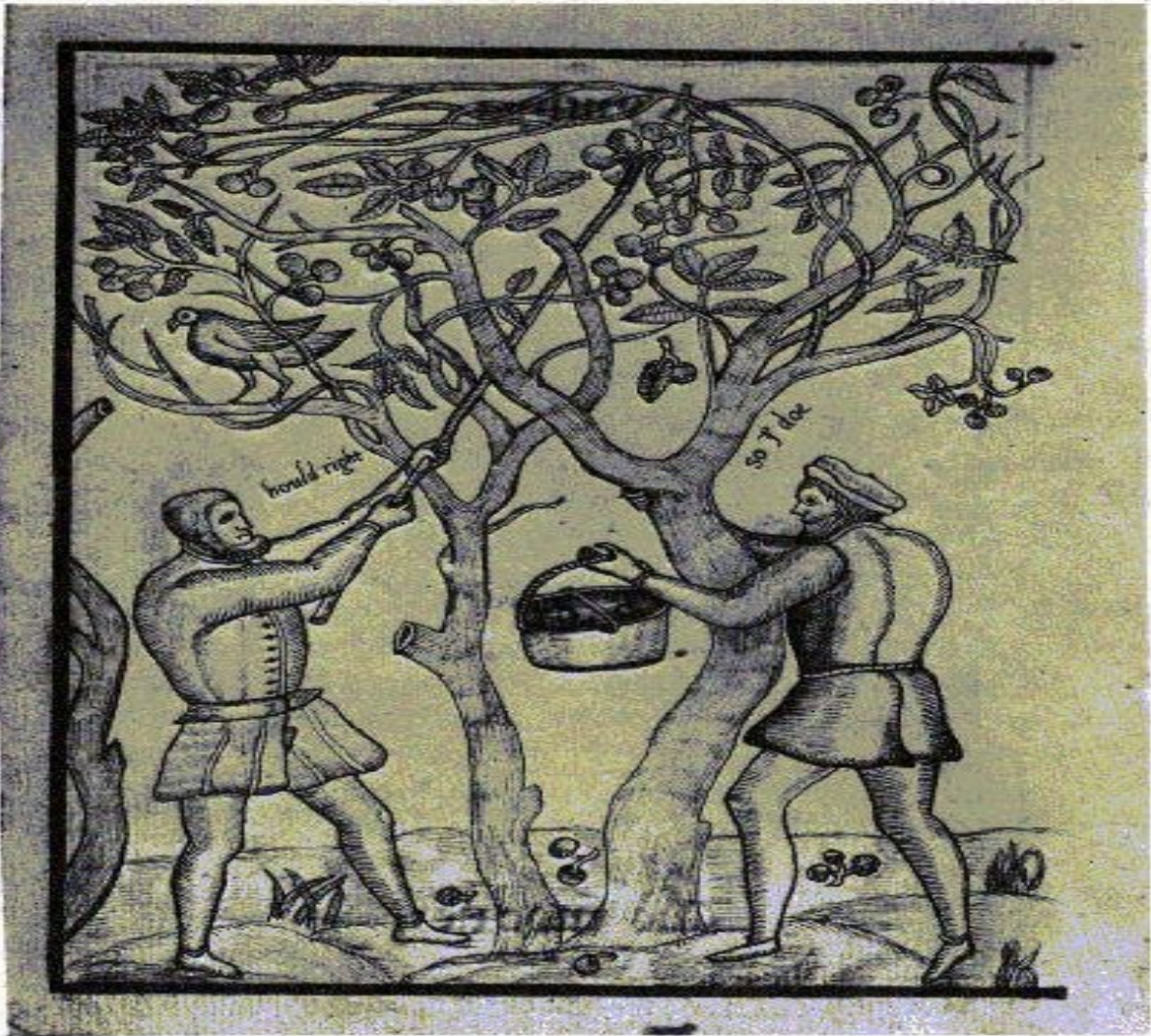


Plate 12. Scenes from the yeoman's life: gathering fruit. From T. F., "A Book of Divers Devices" (1585-1622). Folger MS. V.a.311.

1.6 The call and claims of natural beauty

Trevelyan was acted by Sir Rickman Godlee who for being an outstanding example of a specialist with broad knowledge. More particularly, he was a man whose mind had been trained in the splendid discipline of physical science, but whose heart and eyes delight in the development of art, the history of man, and the beauties of nature. For Trevelyan, a man with such perspective is the best that the modern civilization can produce. A person such as this is il *promotore* of the idea of connection between the history of man with the beauty of nature.

Two things are characteristic of this age, especially in England: The conscious

appreciation of natural beauty, and the rapidity with which natural beauty is being destroyed. This passion for natural beauty, that consumed many people of the twentieth century, found expression in the late poet laureate's *Testament of beauty*. In the sphere of practical effort there were the national trusts, acting as councils for the preservation of rural England and town planning. Whether all this passion and effort was to prove vain or not, be it a rear-guard action or a march to some modified victory, in any case many of the ancestors fought for the preservation. They lived all the year round in unadulterated, rural surroundings. They were unconscious of natural beauty because it was the element in which they lived and moved. The natural ambience pervaded and formed their minds and personalities. The Cavaliers drew their charm from the fields, and the Roundheads their strength from the earth. Indeed, it was influence of the fields and woods of Elizabethan England that fostered the thousand-and one lyric poets and musicians, those.

Bards who died content on pleasant sward, living great verse unto a little plan. ²⁸

Among the English minstrels of that day, the finest flower was Shakespeare. His poetry was an expression of that country life, and his detective novels are influence by the mechanical life of the modern age. As Trevelyan commented, if the modern society does not save England's rural beauty, there will likely be no future for English poetry or for the feeling that inspired poetry.

The Elizabethan song-men had no doubt a certain consciousness of their own, delighting in natural beauty. The modern attitude to natural beauty, more philosophic and more conscious, began with Wordsworth who we quoted in the first chapter.

Trevelyan was convinced that man never again could live under the continual and ubiquitous influence of nature with its lovely sights and sounds. Through the conquests of science over nature, the human race changed its destiny. Some people preferred the city life to the rural landscapes. But such rural landscape should be preserved to satisfy the soul's desire of the town dweller.

The experience with nature varies from place to place, and its appeal is composed of diverse aspects. Men with their aptitudes, tastes, traditions, mysticisms and physiological urgings convert nature and mould it according to their exigencies. One aspect is the aesthetic, or the beauty of form and colour. But the aesthetic does not make up the whole appeal of natural beauty, even though nature conditions our emotions. Another aspect or

28 G.M. Trevelyan, *Autobiography, op.cit.*, p.94.

call of nature, as Trevelyan wrote, is the sense of life. This sense of life is the eternal recurrence of spring at once allegory and reality.

What joy when after a long winter one looks out into the garden and sees by some little sign that incorrigible Old Mother Earth is at it again. ²⁹

Trevelyan talked about a religious call, but this sense of life is older than any form of religion. This joy in spring and early summer inspired prehistoric man to make those old rites and legends. It is not only in the spring that we feel the love for the growing of plants, but it is a natural love for all that is nature. Trevelyan explaining this love entered in an anthropological philosophy that recognized the feeling of the man for the Earth of the Origins.

They and we are all, literally, children of earth, for we have been evolved as science teaches us, out of earth by infinite generations. We are, literally as well allegorically, brothers and sisters of a family, and when a beautiful aesthetic form has been given to our brother the rock, we feel our kinship and delight in them and in their pulsing life, with a feeling of attachment stronger than the mere aesthetic pleasure, although that is certainly a great part of the sentiment.

George Meredith's poetry gave the most definite expression to this concept of our family relationship to earth and nature. Men have always rejoiced in nature, but not all of mankind has reborn in it. The Arabs have seen God in the deserts. The wild Highlanders have loved their rugged mountains from old times. But the same mountains were a horror for the lowlander, and even more so to the Englishmen. At the same time the Englishmen rejoiced in their green and ordered landscape of field and hedgerow. They changed attitude with regard to mountain scenery with the advent of the industrial revolution. One of the causes of the dislike for mountains felt by civilized man was the fear to be killed by the Highlanders. The strength of the mountains was associated in the mind of the lowland visitor with the lawless character of the inhabitants.

In passing to the heart of the Highlands we proceed from bad to worse, which makes the worst of all the less surprising. But I have often heard it said by my countrymen, that they verily believed, if an inhabitant of the South of England were to be brought blindfold into some narrow rocky hollow, enclosed with these horrid prospects and there to have his bandage taken off, he would be ready to die with fear, as thinking it

29 G.M.Trevelyan, *The call and claim of Natural Beauty*, Rickman Godlee Lecture, 1931, p.96

impossible he should ever get out to return to his native country.³⁰

The above description wrote by Burt does not want to give an obscure vision of that landscape but he underlined the historically dangerous aspect of the mountains. In contrast, he described the Richmond Hills as a poetical mountain, *rising amid the green, luxuriant landscape of South England*. There is a reason for the two different versions: the first attributed the dislike felt by the ancestors for mountain scenery to the danger of Highlands, but only for that specific place. While in describing the Richmond Hill the writer was moved by a feeling of aesthetic appreciation. This aesthetic appreciation became typical of the modern age. The modern aesthetic taste for mountain form was connected with a moral and intellectual change that differentiated modern civilized man from man in previous ages. The new desire and need for wildness and for the greatness of the untamed, aboriginal nature, emerged as a feeling. The civilized man attained the victory over nature through science, machinery and organization. This was a victory so complete that he is de-naturalizing the lowland landscape. As continued Trevelyan, this new form of human desire went besides the vulgarity of man's bossiness over nature and went back to the old beginnings, to nature as creation of God. This taste for mountain scenery, this love of nature in its natural and unadulterated form had grown with the Industrial Revolution. James Watt and George Stephenson were contemporaries of Rousseau and Wordsworth and the two movements progressed equally.

The first sign of the change in taste was the introduction of hobby of landscape gardening. In the mid Eighteenth Century, Capability Brown persuaded the noblemen and gentlemen of England to apply the care for the garden to their estates. They brought the grass and trees of their parks up to the walls of their country seats, abolishing the formal Dutch and Versailles gardens. In this period the desire for wilderness came back from the artificial to the natural landscape gardening. As we have already written in the chapter I, the enclosures were turning more and more into a chess-board, less irregular and less accidental than the heaths, forests, and common fields. In ancient and mediaeval times when men struggled against wilderness, the lords desired to refuge in formal gardens made for their delight. The grandees of the Roman Empire had loved their gardeners deep with ordered structures and shine. The same was for the mediaeval gardener whose gardens became trimmed and rectangular. This was the idea of it until in the middle of the Eighteenth Century. Neatness, symmetry and formal patterns had always been the

30 G.M.Trevelyan, *The call and claim of Natural Beauty*, Rickman Godlee Lecture, p.99

distinctively human way of indicating the separation between culture and nature. Roger North declared that order was the essence of beauty,

As in trees, planting which is done usually in equal spaces and straight ranges.³¹

The long, straight hedges of the eighteenth century contrasted markedly with the irregularity of earlier field patterns. The modern field archaeologists assume that, if the edge of a boundary of a wood is perfectly straight, it means that the site has to be post eighteenth century in date.

Most people found wild country in its natural state displeasing. Wordsworth stated:

In the eye of thousands and tens of thousands, a rich meadow, with fat cattle grazing upon it, or the sight of what they would call a heavy crop corn, is worth all the Alps and Pyrenees in their utmost grandeur and beauty.³²

From the eighteenth century the ordinary landscape desired more wildness typical of the English parkland. In place of the clipped and manicured formal garden which had been the old horticultural ideal, there had developed a distinctively English style of landscape garden so informal and uncultivated that it became a source of spiritual renewal. The wilder the scene, the greater its power to give emotion.

The appreciation of nature, in particular wild nature had been converted into a sort of religious act. The value of the wilderness was not only negative. It did not provide a place for privacy but had a more positive role, exercising a beneficent spiritual power over man. The inhabitants of mountains were no longer repugnant but became known for their simplicity. The mountains became the highest form of natural beauty and of God's sublimity. This semi-religious devotion to wild landscape was a European phenomenon, whose prophets included Rousseau and Alexander Von Humboldt. The reason behind the new taste for wild nature is the eighteenth century improvements in communication. This made mountains more accessible to town-dwellers. Moreover, in ordinary life people were more able spend holidays in the mountains.

31 Thomas Keith, *L'uomo e la natura, op.cit.*, p.257

32 Thomas Keith, *L'uomo e la natura, op.cit.*, p.257

The progress of English agriculture permitted the new hobby for wild landscape and for the growth of informal gardening styles. The natural style and the landscape-gardening became one of the country's most distinctive cultural achievements. The new taste in landscape was shaped by continental models as in the gardens of Italy, but the English style was the most fascinating.

The pioneer historian of the English gardening was Loudon who explained that

As the lands devoted to agriculture in England were, sooner than in any other country in Europe, generally enclosed with hedges and hedgerow trees, so the face of the country in England, sooner than in any other part of Europe, produced an appearance which bore a closer resemblance to country seats laid out in the geometrical style; and for this reason, an attempt to imitate the irregularity of nature in laying out pleasure-grounds was made in England, with some trifling exceptions, sooner than in any other part of the world; and hence the style became generally known as English gardening. ³³

There was a change in human perception. People had pleasure from scenes of desolation and the taste for the wild seduced the well-to-do while the agriculturalists were battling with the lands. The men who lived in romantic countryside regarded the wild differently than those who struggled for modelling the lands. The new taste for the English landscape garden required a classical education and some knowledge of history and literature. The self-conscious appreciation of rural scenery was reinforced by the diffusion of the tradition of European painting.

The initial appeal of rural scenery was that it reminded the spectator of landscape pictures. Indeed the scene was only called a landscape because it was reminiscent of a painted landscape; it was picturesque because it looked like a picture. The circulation of topographical art in which human figures were absent or unimportant thus preceded the appreciation of rural landscapes and determined the form it took. ³⁴

In the middle class houses, there were many prints of landscapes hung on the walls. Most of them were Netherlandish and Italian, but during the course of the eighteenth century English scenery became the protagonist of this new art.

With the encouragement of artists, naturalist and poets, the town dwellers began to regard

33 Thomas Keith, *L'uomo e la natura, op.cit.*, p.263

34 Thomas Keith. *L'uomo e la natura, op.cit.*, p. 265

the wild plants with artistic eyes. Seventeenth century Londoners sought willow herb and poppies to decorate their homes. In this period, wild plants acquired a medicinal value. Apothecaries had always believed in the healthy features of the wild plants since Elizabethan times. The knowledge of those herbs, of the other plants and the natural world became an important branch of history. Gentlemen, clergymen and townsfolk turned out in increasing numbers to the natural world for pleasure, curiosity and emotional satisfaction. The movement was not peculiar to England, the taste for natural history diffused in Italy, Spain, France and Germany. Middle class women were involved in this object and it became an important discipline.

Following the study of Keith, the scope of natural history in the early modern period derived from a combination of religious impulse, intellectual curiosity and aesthetic pleasure. Besides the moral impulse was added a fashion motif. People began to buy depictions of butterflies, birds and plants initiating a new luxury market. The vogue was diffused by George III who was described as one of the most scientific and botanic in Europe. Unfortunately, the other side of the coin was the persecution and the progressive extinction of the natural species. People thought to recreate a microcosm in their garden to the detriment of wild nature. Many sensitive persons no longer took pleasure in the destruction of the forests, the eliminations, or of wild predators and the uprooting of the weeds. Wordsworth wrote:

I grieve when on the darker side of this great change I look; and there behold such outrage done to nature has compels the indignant power to justify herself; yea, to avenge her violated rights....³⁵

Trevelyan wrote that in the sought English landscape they had what we could call the marriage of men's work and nature's in perfect harmony. Obviously, this condition was true only in appearance because nature had already been spoiled since the advent of the industrial revolution.

English, underlined Trevelyan, disfigured England and murdered natural beauty:

*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*³⁶

35 Thomas Keith. *L'uomo e la natura, op.cit.*, p. 285.

36 G.M.Trevelyan, *The call and claim of Natural Beauty, op. cit.*,p. 105

He intended to explain that there were fewer people who cared for preservation of natural beauty than those who were completely indifferent to that cause.

The mystery of the universe and the marriage between man and nature remained for someone a spiritual encouragement, and for others a dogma and fashion leisure.

By the side of religion, by the side of science, by the side of poetry and art, stands Natural Beauty, not as a rival to these, but as the common inspirer and nourisher of them all, and with a secret of her own beside.³⁷

³⁷ G.M.Trevelyan, *The call and claim of Natural Beauty*, *op. cit.* p.105

Chapter 2

Trevelyan' s idea of alliance between literature and history.

Trevelyan believed that the prime purpose of history lay in its didactic public function. History should be written and history should be read to instruct enlarge and cultivate the human mind in the responsibilities of good citizenship.

Historians should write their best books not for their scholars but for the whole public of readers, not for profession but for the nation. Reporting the analyse of David Cannadine on Trevelyan's life in history, he argued that they must excel in three separate but connected fields. First, there was research: the accumulation of facts and the sifting of evidence. Second, there was the imaginative or speculative function, where the historian plays with the facts that he has gathered, selects and classifies them and makes his guesses and his generalizations. Finally there was the literary function: the exposition of the results of science and imagination in a form that will attract and educate our fellow countryman. Our historian knew these three aspects very well and all his life he insisted on the primacy of original, archival research: the truth about the past³⁸. This passage was important for the career of Trevelyan who considered himself a research historian. His major books were based on careful, detailed archival research to find the sense of the continuity of English history. The second stage in the writing of history was the interpretation of the results of the evidence which covered a variety of activities. The most fundamental was the evaluation of the sources and the establishment of an accurate chronology of events. Trevelyan's work was done in areas not investigated by other historians. His books are full of appendices containing detailed discussions on innumerable technical points. In fact he trusted in publishing original material.

But our writer was convinced that history provides more a work of interpretation than of evidence. Equally important were the qualities of mind which the historian himself could bring to bear upon his material. The historian will give the best interpretation after having discovered and weighed all the important evidence available, given his broad range of historical knowledge and of worldly experience, the warmest human sympathy, and the highest imaginative powers³⁹.

38 David Cannadine, *G.M.Trevelyan, op. cit.*, p.196

39 David Cannadine, *G.M. Trevelyan, op. cit.*, p. 189

He believed that the more varied an historian's life, the broader the perspective he would bring to bear on his work.

The literary historian or indeed any sort of historian, ought to have a very full mind of knowledge of many books and periods and historical personages of all ages and many countries.⁴⁰

The writer was possessed of compassion for mankind, a poetic sense of the transience and the tragedy of the human condition. He looked into the past as he devotes himself only to history. In one of the most celebrated passages in his *Autobiography* he underlined that the poetry of history lies in the quasi-miraculous fact that:

Once on this earth, once on this familiar spot of ground walked other men and women, as actual as we are today, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passions, but now all gone, one generation vanishing into another, gone as utterly as we ourselves shall shortly be gone, like ghosts at cock-crow.⁴¹

Imagination was a key word in Trevelyan's vocabulary by which he meant the ability to project oneself into another place by an effort of creative empathy. For our writer there could be no history without imagination which allows one to understand passions, feelings and emotions. Sometimes the passions and feelings were of individuals and sometimes they were stirred by great events.

The third aspect of history writing was the exposition of the results which is literature. For Trevelyan, history was an art and writing was one of the primary tasks of the historian to present the results of researches in an artistic form. It was not just that history was the handmaid of literature. The history of Macaulay, of Carlyle, of his father was itself literature.

Our historian handled with care his evidence and the imaginative insight creating a uniquely style and a wise, vivid, truthful and poetic kind of history. He explained that the writing and the reading of history means:

The appeal of history to us all is in the last analysis poetic. But the poetry of history does not consist of imagination roaming at large, but of imagination

40 J.H.Plumb, *A tribute to G.M. Trevelyan*, Longmans, Green, 1955, p.215

41 G.M. Trevelyan, *Autobiography, op. cit.*, p.13

pursuing the fact and fastening upon it. That which compels the historian to scorn delights and live laborious days is the ardour of his own curiosity to know what really happened long ago in that land of mystery which we call the past. To peer into the magic mirror and see fresh figures there every day is a burning desire that consumes and satisfies him all his life, that carries him each morning, eager as a lover, to the library and the muniment room. It haunts him like a passion of terrible potency, because it is poetic. The dead were and are not. Their place knows them no more and is ours today. Yet they were once as real as we, and we shall tomorrow be shadows like them.

42

Besides the poetic connotation of history, another criterion of historical study is finding the truth and recreating the ambience and the atmosphere in which men lived.

The matter is that in history there are no clear beginnings and endings. Origins are often unexpectedly early, survivals almost always stubborn and long dated, and anything that suggests that history can be cut into exclusive watertight compartments must be a falsification. Yet periods are a necessary convenience and there is one fact which must remain true of any period however arbitrarily chosen; the men who lived through it did and they all lived in a mental atmosphere which is not that of everyday. The atmospheres are difficult to isolate and to describe. Often the only evidence available is that of impression. It is bad historical to writing the relevant facts depict them with minuteness of detail and then to suggest that contemporaries would base their action on the way those facts appear to us. But there would be unexpected blind spots and differences of perspective and there would be a variety of tones and values contributed by the observer himself. As every historian knows it is difficult for a man's letters survive. For the bulk of humanity there are at best few records of individual action such letters. Any knowledge of the complexity of contemporary human beings or of their banking accounts or any detailed research into any part of the past will suggest that methods are unsatisfactory. The atmosphere in which men lived could constitute the background to build their records. The picture they saw and liked, their newspapers, their music, their architecture, their furniture these all to tell a story about the people.

As reported Cannadine, the historians of art and literature have a natural preference for good art and valuable literature.

42 David Cannadine, *A life in History*, *op. cit.*, p. 196

2.1 History and truth

Truth is the criterion of historical study but the method of study of Trevelyan is poetic. The question that researchers asked for ages was if Trevelyan's history was true or not. As an historian in his treatment of evidence he was far too scrupulous, far too valiant for truth, to falsify the past to suit contemporary partisan ends. Throughout his life he was widely regarded as a Whig historian. It was too simplistic to describe him as a Whig in terms of the kind of history he wrote. He was too diverse for his background and his circumstances to espouse any form of partisanship. During his life the historian was at different times an Old Whig, a New Liberal, a John Bright radical, a Baldwinite Tory, a sceptical Churchillian or a guarded admirer of the post war Labour governments.

In one of his earliest articles on Thomas Carlyle he spelled out his demanding notion of historical truth:

Inaccuracy is inevitable; dishonesty alone cannot be pardoned. If an author withholds the evidence against his side; if he chooses out one part of a document, which by itself bears a meaning it did not bear in the context; if like Freud, he relates only what is creditable to one party and only what is discreditable to another, it is just that he should stand in the pillory and to the pillory, sooner or later, he is sure to come.

History cannot rightly be used as propaganda even in the best of causes. It is not rightly taught by selecting such facts as will, it is hoped, point towards some patriotic or international moral. It is rightly taught by the disclosure, so far as is humanly possible, of the truth about the past in all its variety and many-sidedness.⁴³

The harm that one-sided history has done in the modern world is immense. When history is used as a branch of propaganda its purpose become devious. Since one of the prime purposes of history was to enable an educated citizenry to form broad views of political controversies, it was essential for the historian to study the past from different angles. Trevelyan regarded his own history as part of a scientific enterprise. He never suppressed material or quoted documents out of the context. The rules of evidence and method to which he adhered were part of an effort at objectivity which gave his work its scholarly

43 David Cannadine, *A life in History, op. cit.*, p.198

value.

It can be remembered the position of Hegel on Nature throughout the analyse of Collingwood's Philosophy. He believed that Nature exists outside and independent of us. In fact by the nave notion of real nature is the totality of all real things. But of course it all depends on what you really mean by real and as Hegel is aware there are many possible shades of reality. As a picture it is a thing and as a thing it is real it exists. But a picture is more than a thing, it also tries to embody an idea. It lacks not *realitas* but *veritas*. Hegel accepts the old idea of nisus. In fact the whole point of Hegelian philosophy is to identify this general nisus, whether it comes from Nature or History. Thus any realization is by nature tentative and imperfect forms being Utopian. To Hegel Nature is characterized by externality. Everything is external to everything else- space- and also external to itself-time⁴⁴.

The Renaissance debate on human nature to which Gonzalo's utopian vision forms an important contribution is an essential element in Shakespeare's plays, in fact it would be no exaggeration to say that it informs most sixteenth-century social and political thought. The terms of the debate are set out as clearly as anywhere in apolitical treatise written in the 1530s by a scholar at Henry VIII's court.

A dialogue between Pole and Lupset of 1534 by Thomas Starkey is one of the most important documents of English Renaissance thought. Before Starkey embarks on his diagnosis of the ills of his society he first establishes certain fundamental truths about human nature. His discussion takes the form of an imaginary dialogue between two of his friends, Reginald Pole, a diplomat at court before his conscience drove him into exile and a cleric named Thomas Lupset. What divides the two is their interpretation of the social evils they both agree in deploring. For Pole represented by Starkey here as a primitivism, the cause lies in the very nature of social institutions. In particular, it is city that has contaminated our natural virtue. But Lupset argues that, on the contrary, it is not civilization that is responsible for the ills of modern society but a flaw in human nature itself.

To better understand the confrontation between the natural status and the civil status to develop a civil society, we have preferred to report completely the dialogue of Thomas Starkey as following:

44 R.G. Collingwood, *The idea of Nature*, Oxford University Press, 1960, p.12.

POLE

you said last of all that man is born and of nature brought forth, to a civility and to live in politic order- a thing-which to me seemeth clean contrary. For if you call this civility and living in politic order, a commonalty to live either under a prince or a common council in cities and towns, meseemeth man should not be born thereto, forasmuch as man at the beginning lived many years without any such policy; at the which time he lived more virtuously and more according to the dignity of his nature than he doth now in this which you call politic order and civility. We see also now in our days those men which live out of cities and towns and have fewest laws to be governed by live better than others do in their goodly cities never so well built and inhabited, governed with so many laws for common.

You see by experience in great cities most vice, most subtlety and craft, and contrary, ever in the rude country most study of virtue and very true simplicity.

You see what deceit, what gluttony and all pleasure of body is had in cities and towns, by the reason of this society and the company of men together after your civility. Therefore is this be civil life and order- to live in cities and towns with so much vice and disorder -meseem man should not be born thereto, but rather to life in the wild forest, there more following the study of virtue, as it is said men did in the golden age wherein man lived according to his natural dignity.

LUPSET

Nay, Master Pole, you take the matter amiss, this is not the civil life that I mean- to live together in cities and towns so far out of order, as it were a multitude conspiring together in vice, one taking pleasure of another without regard of honesty. But this I call civil life, contrary: living together in good and politic order, one ever ready to do good to another, and as it were conspiring together in all virtue and honesty.

This is the very true and civil life and thought it be so that man abuseth the society and company of man in cities and towns and drive man to the woods again and wild forests wherein he lived at the first beginning, rudely. The fault whereof is in neither the cities nor towns, nor in the laws ordained thereto, but is in the malice of man, which abuseth and turneth that thing which might be to his wealth and felicity to his own destruction and misery- as he doth almost all thing that God and nature hath provided to him for the maintenance of his life. For how abuseth he his health, strenght and beauty, his wit, learning and policy, how all manner of meats and drinks to the vain pleasure of the body; yea, and shortly to say, everything almost he abuseth. And yet things are not therefore utterly to be cast away nor to be taken from the use of man.

And so the society and company of man is not to be accused as the cause of this disorder, but rather such as be great, wise and politic men, which fly from office and authority; by whose wisdom the multitude might be contained and kept in good order and civility- such, I say, are rather to be blamed. For like as by the persuasion of wise men in the beginning men were brought from their rudeness and bestial life to this civility so natural to man, so by like wisdom they must be contained and kept therein.

Therefore, Master Pole, without any more cavillations, meseemeth it should be best for you to apply your mind to be of the number of them which study to restore this civil order and maintain this virtuous life in cities and towns to the common utility.⁴⁵

In this dialogue it has been analysed the relationship between civil status and natural status. Both considered for centuries the two basis for the building of a democratic or less society. With the passing of the golden age, humanity lost its natural but also primitive virtue to favourite the civilization. Pole and Lupset agree that it is unrealistic given the facts of human nature, to imagine that such a society could ever survive. The same point is made in dramatic terms in *The Tempest* as we see Gonzalo's dream of an egalitarian utopia punctured by the sardonic interruptions of Antonio and Sebastian. Shakespeare was clearly aware of the appeal of the primitivism view of human nature. But he had enough of the realist in him to recognise, like Machiavelli, that in an imperfect world where men like Antonio and Sebastian exist, there is an overwhelming need for powerful government.

For Machiavelli, history was a storehouse of political lessons that could be applied to the modern world. Human nature was considered the same in all ages. Thus we can analyse the past behaviour to understand the political problems of the modern world. Renaissance literary theorists believed that a knowledge of human nature was the key to understand the modern life. Thanks to dramas we can acquire those knowledge of behaviour, thoughts and trends of the past human nature and to reflect them to the modern world. Literature was like a mirror for the historical events that reflected the universal features of human nature. Renaissance writers believed that literature was unique to instruct us about human nature by showing us theatrical characters confronting irresolvable dilemmas and finding out a disastrous solution in a ethical and political manner.

In treating the past Trevelyan tried to strike a difficult but essential balance between dispassion and judgement, impartiality and emotion, truth and opinion to give the real public function to history.

⁴⁵ Robin Headlam Wells, *Politics and the State*, LTD, London, 2009, pp.27-8

2.2 Romantic Politics

The history of the men is based on emotion and imagination, two principal elements useful to complete the analysis of political and social evidence. The historians of art and literature need the assistance of political and social historians. The primary characteristic is that romanticism lyrics to emotion and imagination. The motions of heart are apt to be considered to be of greater validity and interest than what may be called the motions of the head. Intellectual exercises which the eighteenth century had called reason or even those restricting influences might be called common sense by other ages.

There is an emphasis on the moment of intense feeling rather than on the long, duller days and months that may follow. There was emphasis on action, on decisive choice, even on gesture rather than on results. It must be remembered that to the romantic the true nature of the whole is closer to experience and vision than to the processes of analysis and calculation.

The pleasures of emotion for the sake of emotion become dangerously attractive and they are exaggerated for by the extravagances of imagination. In literature forced situation are produced in which probability, ethics and all delineation of character have been sacrificed for the sake of emotion. The loosening of imagination, the interest in what was different had sometimes led men to an emotional appreciation of the values and conditions of a past period. Which was more profound and more realistic than the old projection of fixed attitudes and common motives into any period that might be named.

What romanticism could do for history can be seen in the works of the great French historian Michelet. But the change was pre-eminently the work of Walter Scott⁴⁶. These authors assisted the romantic conception of history. Since ballads were the past speaking voice of a nation and the product of romantic history they contributed to the vision of nationalism and to the imaginative conception of the significant past and peculiar identity of a particular nation. The past so realized was not the past of the scientific historian but the past of poetry. This emphasizes a romantic literature of dissatisfaction of revolt inspired by the attraction of the past. The revolt of men dissatisfied could take the form of reaction. Lamennais, in two books, shows clearly the road that led to the revolution. The

46 J.H.Plumb, *A tribute to Trevelyan, op. cit.*, p. 216

same road that followed by other great French romantics like Victor Hugo and Lamartine.⁴⁷

The vision was stabilized and solidified by the fact that in the nineteenth century the novel was the favourite instrument of literature which connected poetry with politics. The novels of Victor Hugo, George Sand, Eugene Sue and Charles Dickens taught men to see and feel what the world was like.

Romanticism had liberated two powers in men. One the power to present the world with renewed clarity and insight; the other to dramatize it. In poetry, there is a contrast between Wordsworth and Byron. In painting the contrast existed between the Norwich school or Constable and Turner. There were the historical painters and the biblical and apocalyptic painters who painted over-dramatized scriptural scenes.

Emotion was potent. It had revived religion, enlivened politics, and even revived nationalism. It taught men to feel and to understand the lot of the less fortunate and to stand up for their own wrongs. Through all this, sweeps that mysterious tidal wave which passed through Europe which men have called romanticism. Romanticism must also be considered not only as something which affected some of the leading minds of the day, it must be considered as a popular movement, even a vulgar movement with the expressions of exalted politics.

2.3 Rhetoric and elocution in history and literature

By continuing to study the source of Plumb we can report that the development of literary and philosophical societies and local press in the eighteenth century suggests a vigorous provincial intellectual life which seems to have honoured their local celebrities. Literary criticism followed to some extent the political and denominational divisions of the country. For example the *Edinburgh* was a Whig review, the *Quarterly Blackwood's* was Tory reviews, the *Eclectic* and the *Monthly Repository* catered for Dissenters. This was a world in which the eloquent speaker still played a great part whether in Parliament, at the pulpit, or even on a cart in the open air. There were also a great many moral and political movements which depended on oratory. The public was extraordinarily ready to hear lectures on almost any subject and even recitations from Shakespeare.

All this produced some very considerable rhetoricians such as the politicians George Thompson, and the Antislavery orator Fox. Rethoric was honoured and studied in

⁴⁷ J.H.Plumb, *A Tribute to Trevelyan*, *op. cit.*, p. 217

Classical times. Cicero, Quintilian and Longinus have played an important part in the history of European thought. Many books on rhetoric and elocution were published in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Speaking both in public and on the stage changed in these times. The sentences became shorter and less elaborate and the massed repetitions more numerous. These repetition could captured the attention of the audience or enable the speaker to think what he would say next.

Contemporary oratory ought to be compared with what was going on the stage at that time. The comedies were feeble and stagey often poor translations from the French. Often they were machines for the wordy display of violent emotions in improbable circumstances. This was influenced by the old view that a passion was an entity which could exist apart from the complexities of personality.

It was a period of great actors and actresses who acted with power. They were elevated when they appeared in Shakespeare or in contemporary tragedies which had its influence on contemporary thought and speech.

A great many people wrote because a great many people wanted to write. They wanted the enthusiastic metaphysics, the sensational religiosity, the medievalism and the appeals to the heart. One reason for the force of the romantic movement was its ability to find forms to gratify instincts and to destroy inhibitions, in most ages these instincts were held in check by countervailing forces, the power of ridicule and the power of criticism. Here the reading public was divided. There was therefore probably an unusually large section of the public beyond the reach of scholarship or criticism.

It was the source of political idealism to men like the enthusiasts of Young England and encouraged an attitude to the past which instructed the ideas of others who have made a much deeper mark than they upon the history of Europe.

The tone of journalism, the methods of controversy, the style of religion all combined to suggest that a politician historian must take into account a general emotionalism. This emotionalism may be due to ideas, associations and literary forms but at the same time he must realize that emotions did not have the same effect on all sections of community. Certain types of systematic thought would reject them. The necessary realism of many occupations would deaden them. In their place men might be controlled by the most rational arguments, by the common-sense or by the demands of office or party in a system of politics. There were many men in Great Britain who were not noticeably the victims of unusual emotionalism.

In the lower ranges of literature and art religious motifs were prominent. Christianity

supplied much of the furniture of the minds of a good many English people. It supplied the literature, their ethics, their ancient history. In fact Trevelyan, in his *Autobiography*, noted that it was impossible for the English historian to ignore religion. Religion could give to historian's verse a deeper sincerity and significance. In the eighteenth century here had been the great Evangelical revival which satisfied all the categories of romanticism. For the Evangelical the inner history of the individual is of supreme importance. His literature is subjective and his hymns speak to heart. The social complacency of the earlier eighteenth century and its rationalism had not given permanent satisfaction to men. Men like Rousseau had taught other to look into their own hearts, to find truths and values that an over-civilized society had never known. Collingwood said that the value of history is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.⁴⁸

By continuing to analyse the philosophy of Collingwood about the rationalism versus romanticism, he had distinguished between three levels of rational choice, according to utility, right and duty and he explicitly linked thinking about duty with historical thinking. To summarise his concept we can report the words of Stein Helgeby by summarising that history is an universal aspect of action present in each and every act, because they are the result of a process of answering questions, a process which is at the same time mental and historical, through which the mind's cogitations become objectified in history, this last point implying that history is constituted by reason.⁴⁹

Coming back to the religion, the moral force and the power of well-savoured moral denunciation of the Evangelical movement provided an ethical code enforced by emotion. The first effective nationwide organization to secure one particular political objective was the agitation against slavery.

But the emotional incentive for politics were mirrored in the religious and romantic literature that was full of the struggles of the heroes of liberty such as Rienzi and William Tell, also in poetry as Byron or Burns addressed to the Scots. Scotland was rediscovered but the classical example of literary romanticism to emergent nationalism was in Ireland. Very different was the group which began to come into politics in 1840. Their engine was that remarkable paper the *Nation* and the approach of Davis Thomas who had the romantic's view of history. He considered it a needed refuge from the degrading utilitarianism.

48 R.G.Collingwood, *The idea of Nature, op. cit.*,p.176

49 S.Helgeby, *Action as History: The Historical Thought of R.G.Collingwood*, Imprint Academic, UK, 2004, p.93

Tis a glorious world historic memory. From the grave the sage warns; from the mound the hero, from the temple the orator-patriot inspire and the poet sings in his shroud; and heard his friends were anxious to renew Irish history, to recover Irish antiquities and to inspire Irish novelists and tragedians. National poetry and the ideas are familiar, presents the most dramatic events, the largest characters, the most impressive scenes and the deepest passions in the language most familiar to us.⁵⁰

It was such a service to men of like nature, using the same means, who were performing by the use of the same instruments for other nations in Europe But perhaps the clearest and most interesting parallel is the development at the same time of national self-consciousness among the whites of the Southern States of America. They put forth a tremendous set orations often on historical themes, ballads, tournaments and chivalry, and admiration for Walter Scott. In Ireland the literary romanticism was based on physical force and was bellicose. In England with Chartism the literary background was different and the physical force men gave examples of romantic oratory. The romantic element with its encouragement to self-dramatization was certainly present both in England and in Ireland where the realities of the situation justified the romantic approach.

Trevelyan believed that historians should see all aspects of a question and should present them all in their writings. This did not mean that they should be impartial, presuming that all sides in the past were equally in the right. On the contrary he believed that the historian also had an obligation. Like his father he had the Victorian belief in the emphatic differences between right and wrong conduct. He had no time for the tone of artificial indifference to right and wrong wisdom and folly which some modern historians assume . He used more morality than others. For him it was essential to allow for the different standards of morality in different ages and different countries to come through in his writings. He believed historians must bring moral judgements to bear on the past but at the same time he recognized that no historian was fully free from his own personal predilections.

To bring the historical figures vividly to life the historians needed to be emotionally involved and to have a close sense of identity. They had from time to time to stop themselves for writing history with simplistic and presents hits teleology.

Trevelyan had a preference for stories with happy endings. Those had occurred in the

50 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history*, Green, London 1955, p. 233

past: 1688, 1714, 1715, 1832.

He believed that the purpose of the history was to bring home the unlikeness of past worlds to the present. One of the historian's prime functions, he insisted was to teach the reader to understand that other ages had not only a different social and economic structure but also different ideals and interests from those of his own age. He admires the work of Frederic Maitland because he showed us that the past was so different from the present.

Every historian should follow Maitland and try to get inside the minds of the people of the Middle Ages and of the Tudor times and of the eighteenth century and see their problems as they saw them.⁵¹

In his *History of England* and in *English Social History*, he was continually pointing out how important it was for the reader to appreciate the difference between the present and the past, as underlined by Cannadine in his *A life in History*. One of the ways in which the past differed from the present was that religion never doubted its force in history. Our writer retained a love of the Bible and an understanding of the beauty and tenderness of religious feelings. In his Romanes Lecture at Oxford he argued that religious differences were the key to understanding the history of two parties in Britain: the Tories were fervently loyal to the Church of England, the Whigs and Liberals were more concerned to protect and promote Dissenters' rights.

Trevelyan was at pains to suggest that religious feeling continued to be significant thereafter. In his *Autobiography*, Trevelyan pointed out that religion was one of the supreme efforts of the human spirit.

In the years before the First World War, Trevelyan was more and sensitively Whiggish than men who had depicted him as being. He was too imaginative, too compassionate, too much in love with the past to adhere to a dogma which divided men into progressive reactionists.

During his long life, he has devoted himself to historical study and to the cause of goodwill among nations. I think his two qualities are width of knowledge and exact scholarship on the one hand and a marvellous fairness of mind, seeing all sides of a controversy while feeling and expressing his

51 G.M Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays*, (Clio), *op.cit.*, p.153

own ultimate judgement.⁵²

2.4 Fate and history

The idea, based on the second commandment of the Decalogue that God takes an active interest in human affairs, intervening to protect the good and to punish the wicked, had always been considered a relevant element in the Christian view of history. The Reformation laid a new stress on the doctrine of special providence. The predestination was the fundamental bases for Protestantism. In fact the elect are guaranteed salvation by the God's free grace. This to emphasize man's complete dependence on divine grace .

The role played by providence in human affairs is a preoccupation of many of Shakespeare's characters. For example Hamlet makes specific reference to the doctrine of special providence before his fatal duel with Laertes. The passive fatalism of Hamlet is in contrast to his earlier sense of will to change the world. He is volatile because he lives under his ideal of rational stoicism but at the same time he became an hostage to fortune.

Also in *Julius Caesar* the minds of most of the major characters are confused by the interpretations of the play's unnatural portents and the real signs of divine interest.

While Cicero argues that, when it comes to interpreting omens, men construe things after their fashion. Clean from the purpose of the things themselves, Cassius notes the way people tend to blame heaven for the misfortunes they bring themselves:

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.⁵³

In his *Shakespeare, politics and the state* Robin Headlam Wells remarks that from the variety of ways in which providence is referred to in the histories and tragedies, Shakespeare's intent is that of using a dramatic device to satirize credulity. Though images of nature appeals to providence in the plays usually form part of a dialectic in which opposing views are contrasted. In the history plays the Shakespeare's characters tend to interpret events in the light of their own interests, for this reason the plays reflect their sources.

Prophecy is an effective dramatic device and Shakespeare often uses it to create

⁵² David Cannadine, *The Historian and the Reputation*, op.cit., p.203

⁵³ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Arden Shakespeare, David Daniell, ed.2010, p. 172

suspense. In many works as *Julius Caesar* or *Henry IV* and others of Shakespeare's time historians providence does not give the sociological interpretation. The key of the meaning was in history, not in God's will but in human action. Shakespeare's chronicle sources belonged to the past and they compared the moral with the political value of history.

As humanism came to influence every aspect of European thought, historians turned to classical antiquity for their models. The medieval sources tended to cover the human history with an apocalyptic vision whereas the new politic historians represented not the man's eternal salvation but the immediate problem of his political survival.

This new pragmatic approach to history is well described in the following pass extract by the *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*:

History is a certain rule and instruction, which by examples past, teacheth us to judge of things present and to foresee things to come, so as we may know what to like of and what to follow; what to dislike and what to eschew. It is a picture which (as it were in a table) setteth before our eyes the things worthy of remembrance that have been done in old times by mighty nations, noble kings and princes, wise governors, valiant captains and persons renowned for some notable quality, representing unto us the manners of strange nations, the laws and customs of old time, the particular affairs of men, their consultations and enterprises, the means that they have used to compass them withal and their demeaning of themselves when they were come to the highest, or thrown down to the lowest degree of state. So as it is not possible for any case to rise either in peace or war, in public or in private affairs but that the person which shall have diligently read, well conceived, and thoroughly remembered histories, shall find matter in them whereas to take light and counsel whereby to resolve himself to take a part, or to give advice unto others, how to choose in doubtful and dangerous cases that which may be for their most profit and in time to find out to what point the matter will come if it be well handled; and how to moderate himself in prosperity, and how to cheer up and bear himself in adversity. These things it doth with much greater grace, efficacy and speed, than the books of moral philosophy do, forasmuch as examples are of more force to move and instruct, than are the arguments and proofs of reason, or their precise precepts, because examples be the very forms of our deeds and accompanied with all circumstances.

To be short it may be truly said that the reading of histories is the school of wisdom, to fashion men's understanding, by considering advisedly the state of the world that is past and by marking diligently by what laws, manners and discipline, empires, kingdoms and dominions, have in old time been

established and afterwards maintained and increased or contrariwise changed, diminished and overthrown.⁵⁴

Shakespeare was aware of the limitations of the past historical sources but while the new historians analysed the involvement of the man in the history actions, many writers still were convinced that providence was responsible for the course of history.

2.5 Trevelyan's approach to history

George Macaulay Trevelyan remains the Grand Old Man of English historiography. He has not been the greatest technician amongst our historians and some of his books seem to me to be rather weak. But when I put together what I have seen and what I have read of him, I wonder whether he is not the one who most definitely bears the marks of greatness.

My feeling about this becomes assured if, to the qualities of sheer intellect, I add the ones that come from what I should call grandeur of the soul. From his combination of qualities from the whole man there comes a deep human wisdom which is his commentary on the story he narrates. His capacity for historical resurrection his ability to make the past live again and his gift for narrative are not to be despised by the academic historian. And few of his contemporaries achieved such moments of poetry.

Trevelyan has become the Grand Old Man and everything seems to be forgiven all criticism seems to be suspended once one reaches the age of seventy-five or eighty. But he suffered a good deal in his youth because he was regarded as a literary man and a popularizer rather than a technician in the field of research. He belongs to an urbane world that is really Edwardian and as a survival of that world he is beyond price.⁵⁵

This was one of the many critics he received in the ages. Herbert Butterfield attacked him not only for his incorrigible Whiggery but also he banished him as an amateur, a gentleman-scholar, who was hostile to and largely ignorant of the increasing professionalization of history⁵⁶.

In his *Autobiography*, Trevelyan depicted himself as a traditional historian who was lazy

⁵⁴ Robin Headlam Wells, *Shakespeare, politics and the state, op.cit.*, p.30

⁵⁵ David Cannadine, *A life in History, op.cit.*, p. 213

⁵⁶ David Cannadine, *A life in History, op.cit.*, p.213

about everything except writing. In his Clark Lectures on English Literature, he presented himself as a layman or a lowed man, as Chaucer called him, not a professional scholar and critic at all.

As the self-appointed bearer of the family standard of literary history, Trevelyan regarded himself as a lonely figure at the beginning of his career. For during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the cult of scientific history seemed to gain success. This was because the expansion of undergraduate history courses in Oxford, in Cambridge and London encouraged university teachers to be primarily professional scholars rather than men of letters. This was due to the growing influence of the rigorous methods of German scholarship which meant the English tradition of history written for the general reader was abandoned for the crabbed German ideal of the learned man who has nothing to do with literature.

The men with whom I lived as an undergraduate were most of them two or three years older than I was, and of high powers of mind . My crude ideas had to run the gauntlet of their frank conversation. They talked on literature in a way that helped me forward. (I remember how a few words from Bertrand Russell opened me the glory of Shakespeare's sonnets). They listened to me talking about history, and interjected pregnant critical remarks. But they talked most of all on philosophy, and a little on economics, when I could only sit and listen to what I very slightly understood.⁵⁷

Moreover natural science became more prestigious and encouraged some historians to defend the status of their subject. For all these reasons Trevelyan believed that the reaction against literary history was imminent.

Many professors were convinced that history was ceasing to be the province of literary artists or men of letters and was becoming a rigorous, professionalized, scholarly endeavour. They insisted that history was not a branch of literature and on the contrary it was in the process of becoming a science. The furtherance of research was henceforth to be the highest duty of universities and that research was to be based on the discovery, collection, classification and interpretation of the facts. This was the new idea of history which most of scientists detained . On the contrary Trevelyan responded that there was a real danger of the complete annihilation of the few remaining individuals who still believed that history was an art. Trevelyan never denied that history was both a science and an art.

⁵⁷ G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays, op.cit.*, p.14

His real objection was to the exaltation of the scientific aspect of history at the expense of creative.

He devoted an impressive amount of time and effort to some of the more arid tasks of historical scholarship. He published extensive collections of original documents as by products of his research for *England in the Age of Wycliffe* and *England Under Queen Anne*. He may have wished historians to produce their best work for the public rather than the profession but he never denied the value of the detailed and he regarded the scholarly monograph as the deep foundation of the temple of history. Equally important for our writer was the encouragement of research.

As Trevelyan's career demonstrated there was no a vivid division between those professionals who stressed research and craftsmanship and those amateurs who preferred to stress imagination and artifice. All his life Trevelyan insisted that history was a science and an art and judged by the standards of his time. His history was as scientific as anyone else's.⁵⁸ But his particular self appointed task was to reconcile the evidential rigour of the professional historian with the broad appeal and educative function of the literary historian to write scholarly but readable history.

In the years since his death, Trevelyan has been made the whipping boy by scholars who seem to feel that the best way to exalt their own brand of history is to denigrate what they mistakenly believe to have been his.

Trevelyan many times was criticized to be a not very scholarly writer and was condemned to saunter around problems of intellectual gravity. Again Trevelyan was considered more a poet than an historian and he himself has declared that he more generally takes delight in history, even its most prosaic details, because they become poetical as they recede into the past.⁵⁹

Professor J.P. Kenyon, one of his criticizer, claimed that Trevelyan's postwar attitudes were socially retrograde and he dismissed Macaulay's love of the countryside as a bucolic excess. Another criticizer, J.C.D. Clark, berated Trevelyan for not paying sufficient attention to the traditional elites of eighteenth-century England. Trevelyan believed that these professors quarrels were always ridiculous and unedifying. But the attacks made on him during his life went essentially unanswered and even if he was judged by the standards of his own time, Trevelyan was neither the crude Whig nor the superficial amateur.

58 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays, op.cit.*, p.1

59 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays,op.cit.*, p.13

Having formed his mind on the great staples of a late nineteenth-century liberal education, he did not feel any urge to keep up with new writing. There is no evidence that he read Marx or Freud or Max Weber or Durkheim or Pareto. He was not interested in philosophy of history or historical methodology. He believed that narrative was the bedrock of history. Trevelyan's major concern was writing for the general public. He never regarded research as an end in itself. He was anxious to keep up with new work. He did not see history as a succession of technical exercises in games playing or problem solving. For our writer the techniques of inventing problems and to pursue historical inquiry was not a very helpful way of getting important history written. The result was that in Trevelyan's work, the questions are always embedded in the narrative or biographical treatment and his books dynamic was more narrative vigour than explanatory rigour⁶⁰.

Although the writer sets great store by intuition and imagination, we have to say that asking the question was for him a subordinate but important activity. Natural science is concerned about space and time and each study of science takes time. To judge a life you need all the evidences. Similarly to be a writer it takes time. Writing a sentence is not the same thing as writing. Writing a sentence is the particular response to a local question that may be related to a more global one, connected to the writing of a book. As the philosopher Collingwood noted the subject of history is connected to the time-scale which determines what kind of things we study. Short time-scales will concentrate on destruction because this takes far shorter time than construction. Thus such a history would be a record of catastrophes and give no indication of how those very things subjected to destruction ever came about. What makes a scientist is not his knowledge of facts that come with the territory but his ability to ask questions.⁶¹

Trevelyan's traditionalism also came out in the fact that apart from biographies he only wrote national histories. He produced books with Britain or England in the title on six occasions. But he was not xenophobe., even if he recognized that Britain had been fortunate when it was compared with the histories of most other European countries.

In fact, he was known as the writer who wrote the history of the people with the politics left out. This because in his *History of England* the politics had predominated too much. For this reason he wanted to create something different in his *Social History* by linking economic, social and political changes at the same time.

60 David Cannadine, *The Historian and the Reputation*, op.cit., p.223

61 R.G.Collingwood, *The idea of Nature*, op.cit.,p.3

Its scope may be defined as the daily life of the inhabitants of the land in past ages: this includes the human as well as the economic relation of different classes to one another, the character of family and household life, the conditions of labour and of leisure, the attitude of man to nature, the culture of each age as it arose out of these general conditions of life and took ever-changing forms in religion, literature and music, architecture, learning and thought.⁶²

Even when it first appeared and especially since the expansion of social history during the 1960s and 1970s, Trevelyan's survey has been widely condemned by professional historians for its lack of concern with class conflict and for not really being a social history at all. Eric Hobsbawm thought that his residual view of the past was not acceptable and Sir G. Elton declared that the content: history of the people with the politics left out was too sentimental.

In fact *Social History*, as in most of his general surveys, was criticized to treat the economic side inadequately and the narrative moved forward by literary artifice rather than by the momentum of the historical process itself. We have to say that when he wrote *Social History* the subject scarcely existed. Surely Trevelyan's work with its excursus of six centuries was premature but far from closing down the subject.

Much of the social history done during the last generation has been concerned to look at the subjects. His concern for the victims of the industrialization process has continued to illuminate the work of such historians as E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm.⁶³

In a letter at the time of the Parliament Bill crisis, Sir George Otto Trevelyan noted with pride that his son relies on the old arts in his work as an historian. In these years since the second World War, those old arts were forgotten, ignored by many historians. They no longer sought to argue that history was a science but that it was a social science.

Since that period analysis took the place of narrative, fine prose and seminars and conferences proliferated with the result that historians became self-absorbed. As a consequence Trevelyan, under the eyes of a new generation of grammar-school academics, became a patrician amateur who strolled in from Northumberland hills and then returned to his country walk.

The last decade has seen a growing recognition that professional history was in danger of collapsing under the erudition while there was a growing interest in the revival of narrative

62 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History*, *op.cit.*, p.10

63 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays*, *op.cit.*, p.48

history and in the imaginative aspects of historical research and writing.

Historians like Gibbon, Tocqueville and Trevelyan possessed a mind of remarkable range, power, erudition and creativity. They sought to mediate between the past and the present and they tried to render the one intelligible in the light of the other.

Trevelyan wrote passages of greater lyrical beauty and greater poetic feeling and he never ceased to try to keep the spiritual and imaginative life in touch with reason and scholarship. For half a century he brooded on the human dramas and political events of his own day and generation. He was convinced that the writing of history was a public duty and that he had an obligation to reach the broadest possible audience.

2.6 History and the reader

Trevelyan in his *Autobiography* considered the coexistence of two kinds of history. As we have already studied, he argued that history was both a science and an art. He said that the discovery of historical facts should be scientific in method but that the exposition of them for the reader partook of the nature of art.⁶⁴

Trevelyan approach to history lets emerge that there was a number of historical students who redact the results of their research into literary form and they catch the attention of a numerous public. It emerges that history in the age became more and more a part of the literature of the day, obviously some historical works were analysed by the historical specialists and other more poetical were appreciated by the general readers. Before explaining the relationship between the history and the reader, Trevelyan makes a consideration about the truth of the historical sources. He quoted Herodotus, Thucydided and Tacitus who were able to arrive at all true facts even if their statements were affected by artistic or dramatic instincts. The tradition of Greece and Rome was the tradition of history both as a science of facts and as an attractive art to the general reader.

As Trevelyan wrote, in the Middle Ages there were English monks to write good historical works especially chronicle of contemporary events; in the Renaissance, the study of the ancient historians were more ambitious than the previous one.

In the documents of the Middle Ages historians ,such as Hume, Robertson and Gibbon, we can understand that history in England fully developed its principal method of modern research. Those writers made the history-reading public in Britain and Gibbon was able to

64 G.M. Trevelyan, *Autobiography, op.cit.*, p. 52

connect perfectly science with the art of history.

Trevelyan referred us that during the beginning of the Nineteenth Century History was regarded in England as a specialized branch of literature, in fact the large educated public bought and read history books. Macaulay and Carlyle were part of the the literature of their country as well as the novelists.

It was only on the half of the Nineteenth Century that literary History was neglected and history was written only for scientific readers and not for general readers.

History was to have nothing to do with literature. It was a science, no less, no more. Two of my predecessors in the Chair at Cambridge historians, Acton and Maitland, never went these doctrinal lengths, and both of them were most friendly to me and to my young hopes of writing literary history. To day professional historians are tolerant of the diversities of historical aim in their brotherhood and not a few of them successfully practise the art of writing literary history. And the public appears to welcome their efforts.⁶⁵

Even if Trevelyan was convinced that History was a a branch of literature, he understood the reasons of the non-literary or scientific reaction among the historians. At the beginnings of the Nineteenth Century history was a very important subject of teaching and examination at the Universities. It was considered the most popular arts subject of general education. But in the Twentieth-century history needed to be more scientific in weighing evidence in University teaching. Another cause of the repudiation of the literary art was the influence of Germany. The American Universities followed the model of German and not of England. The English tradition of history written for the general reader was thrown aside for the German ideal of the learned man.

In those years science changed the vision of the world transmuting the economic and the social life of mankind. Many historians supposed that the value of history would be enhanced if it was called a science. But Trevelyan continued to struggle again this idea and he asserted that

The life history of one man, or even of many individual men, will not tell you the life history of other men. Moreover you cannot make a full scientific analysis of the life history of any one man. Men are too complicated, too spiritual, too various, for scientific analysis; and the life history of millions

65 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.*, p.55

cannot be inferred from the history of single men. History, in fact, is a matter of rough guessing from all the available facts. And it deals with intellectual and spiritual forces which cannot be subjected to any analysis that can properly be called scientific.⁶⁶

In the classical authors and in the Bible, history and literature were closely interwoven and for that reason the old form of education was stimulating to the thought and imagination of our ancestors. For the readers to read the classical authors and the Bible it meant to read at once the history and the literature of the ancient world.

The interest and value of history is the key to understand the literature, art and monuments of the past. As he wrote in his essay *History and the Reader*, history try to answer two great questions.

What was the life of men and women in the past ages?
How did the present state of things evolve out the past?⁶⁷

The reader could have an interest for the past, for the value he finds in former states of society or he could be interested in the explanation which history can afford of the origin of the institutions, beliefs, habits and prejudices of the people. He could be interested in the scenes and happenings of past or in the events.

Trevelyan considered the value to the reader of discovering what life was like in various ages and countries of old an intellectual curiosity. This curiosity could be satisfied by the work of modern scholarship. He wrote that it was a wonderful thing to get a glimpse to the past to our ancestors to discover that they thought or lived as we do today.

In the matter of reality, there is no difference between past and present; every moment a portion of our prosaic present drops off and is swallowed up into the poetic past.⁶⁸

Here Trevelyan put all his poetic motive in history leaving out the scientific historical research and giving the reader the opportunity to turn the pages of history.

Besides the contemplation and study of the Past, Trevelyan analysed another value, namely the repercussion of the past events in the present.

We cannot understand our own country unless we know something of its history.

66 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.*, pp.56

67 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.*, pp.60

68 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.*, pp.60

You cannot even understand your own personal opinions, prejudices and emotional reactions unless you know what is your heritage as an Englishman, and how it has come downy to you. Why does an Englishman react one way to a public or private situation, a German another way, a Frenchman in a third way? History alone can tell you.⁶⁹

The ignorance about the past of our country causes also a political danger that comes from learning little news of past without fulfilling on the present.

When history is used as a branch of propaganda, it could become a dangerous weapon because of the ignorance of it.

Bringing as example the already quoted Butterfield, it can be reported his discourse in his lecture for the Chair of Modern History at Cambridge to underline that history should be a mean of acquiring positive knowledge and of educating the mind of the reader:

Nations do remember one thing and another in the past. And so terrible are the evils of little history that we must have more history as quickly as we can. And since one of the most dangerous devices of propaganda at the present day-by far the neatest trick of the year-is to narrate what the foreigner once did, while withholding everything in the nature of historical explanation, we must more of the kind of history which is not mere narrative but exposition-the history which takes account of the differences between the centuries, between stages of intellectual development, even between types of social structure. The study of history matters, not because it turns men into statesmen-that at least is a thing which it palpably does not do (valuable though it may be when added to the other qualifications of a political leader)-but because in every genuine victory that it gains, it is contributing to the growth of human understanding.⁷⁰

The Professor Butterfield agreed with Trevelyan on the fact that the reading of history is an important mean to educate the mind understanding the dynamics of the past events and the process of human affairs. As Trevelyan said, we shall acquire a mentality which, when we return to our own problems, will be less at the mercy of newspapers and films, trying to oversimplify the tangled skein of human affairs.

Since history is an interpretation of human affairs human knowledge has his own limited vision and his bias that is not acceptable to the whole human race. The historian has to

69 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.* p.62

70 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.* p. 64

select some facts and the more important actions have got to be chosen out for narration but that choice has a personal interpretation. For this reason most of historians cannot avoid bias. Supposing that opinion is not universal, men differ from one another in mental attitude and in political and religious creed.

The introduction of the element of the bias is due to the judgement of the past by our own knowledge of the present. The writer or teacher of history has the function of looking forward from the past to later events and of finding out what people of the past themselves felt and intended.

Trevelyan himself declared that when he wrote his three volumes on Garibaldi, he should have never written them without bias. He was moved to write them by poetical sympathy with the passions of the Italian patriots of that period which he shared. He was involved in the real situation and he was guided by his experience with its elements of emotion and passion for the past. Those emotions entered into the historian's narrative making those feelings live again for the modern reader.

The ideal history requires indeed a more various combination of qualities of heart and of head, of science and of art than any other study undertaken by man. No wonder there has never yet been the perfect historian. His functions have to be put into commission. There have to be various kinds of history.⁷¹

Trevelyan's Italian histories written in the years before the First World War must also be seen in their English context. Garibaldi volumes caused something of a sensation in a Liberal circles.

The year in which Trevelyan wrote *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic* was 1906, and it was published in 1907. These were the years of the greatest Liberal victory in English politics for a generation. The intellectual world responded to the optimism of the politicians. Here was the manifest triumph of that long nineteenth-century tradition of liberal humanism; the final defeat of obscurantism was at hand. It was one of those rare monuments in history in which the atmosphere of life is lyrical and charged with hope, when man seems his own master, his destiny secure.⁷²

Garibaldi books taught English Liberals a series of lessons. They showed that Garibaldi became a model of gallantry and chivalry. Moreover thanks him the British public saw the Risorgimento as a liberal protest against tyranny and reaction. As Trevelyan underlined,

⁷¹ G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays*, *op.cit.*, p.78

⁷² David Cannadine, *G.M Trevelyan, a life in history*, *op.cit.*, p. 72

the Garibaldi books showed how Garibaldi's triumphant visit to England in 1864 had helped to reinforce the movement for democracy at home culminating in the Second Reform Act of 1867.

Another hero who was really fundamental for the liberal writing of Trevelyan was John Bright, an English man of peace. He was connected with its family because Trevelyan's father had regarded Bright as his hero and mentor.

Bright's son asked Trevelyan to write the biography in 1908 and no figure in the nineteenth-century Liberalism's history received so high appreciation among his successors as did Bright.

Trevelyan's admiration for Bright was similar to his attitude for Garibaldi .

What a brave man he was to uphold the peace policy almost alone, in the face of nearly all England; but now it is evident to all how right he was.⁷³

According to Trevelyan, Bright was the symbol of an honest man in politics who with Gladstone had done most to exalt public life above the material level.⁷⁴

This vision unfortunately changed by 1914 when his Liberalism was no longer as uncorrupted, confident, creative or successful, in both its Italian and British guises, as it had seemed during the period of Bright. In fact the Liberal party in Britain seemed corrupted and to have lost its way. When the First World War came Trevelyan changed his position sided pro-war. He wrote:

I am not going in for any pacific or antiwar movements till the war is won to such a degree that I think peace ought to be made. The present awful struggle is to save England, Belgium and France from the Junkers and to save our island civilization with its delicate economic fabric, from collapse.⁷⁵

He decided to participate actively to the war volunteering for action on the Italian front but contrary to the interpretation of some readers, he was neither a pacifist nor an objector. When he made active service Trevelyan remained in close touch with the British authorities. He described his experience in his *Scene from Italy's War*, where the reader can perceive that he was convinced that Italy would never have sided with Germany and Austria because of the claims of Anglo-Italian friendship and because her political liberty

73 David Cannadine, *G.M Trevelyan, a life in history, op.cit.*, p. 75

74 David Cannadine, *G.M Trevelyan, a life in history, op.cit.*, p. 77

75 David Cannadine, *G.M Trevelyan, a life in history, op.cit.*, p. 78

and her instincts for humanity and justice.

It has been reported this part of Trevelyan participation in war life to underline his idea of social history. Besides studying and analysing historical elements he lived inside history by issuing a final verdict of history which can appreciate or less by readers. He believed that was the people, rather than parliament who had decided that Italy must join the struggle on the side of the alliance.

2.7 The life of Trevelyan

Trevelyan had been born in 1876 at Welcombe in his mother's house near Stratford-upon-Avon, the birth city of Shakespeare. He went to the Trinity College in Cambridge as his father and his brothers. He was sure that the writing history would be his task in life and he began with a fellowship at Trinity. In 1898 he was rewarded for the first time by the College for a research into Peasant's Rising. He converted the fellowship in a book in 1899: *England in the Age of Wycliffe*.

In 1903 he resigned his Fellowship at Trinity for London. In 1904 married Janet Penrose Ward and they moved to a house in Chelsea where he had fitted into the political and literary society of the metropolis. Here he helped to edit a progressive journal called the *Independent Review*.

Since it was writing what he interested more, in 1904 he produced *England Under the Stuarts*. In the same year he studied the George Meredith's verse publishing an edition of his poetry but the main work of that period was the Garibaldi Trilogy. Before the First World War broke out, he wrote a biography of John Bright and a collections of essays entitled *Clio: A Muse*.

In March 1915 he went on a tour to the United States where he put the British case in a series of lectures but he was convinced that he had to get to the front and in autumn he became Commandant of the first British Red Cross ambulance unit to be sent to Italy. He was honoured by both the Italian and the British governments. When he returned home he moved to Berkhamsted because he needed to enjoy the peace of the countryside and because there was an excellent school for his two children Mary and Humphry.

He wrote an account of his Italian experiences entitled *Scenes From Italy's War* and *Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848* in 1923. By then he wrote uniquely about his country. In 1922 he wrote *British History in the Nineteenth Century* and *History of England*

four years later.

In 1927 he established at Halligton Hall because he accepted the Regius Chair of Modern History at Cambridge. There he completed his most challenging work, *England Under Queen Anne* in three volumes: *Blenheim* in 1930, *Ramillies and the Union with Scotland* in 1932, and *The peace and the Protestant Succession* in 1934.

in 1940 Trevelyan changed again his life because he was candidate for the place of Master of Trinity and he accepted with pleasure:

It made my life as happy as anyone's can be during the fall of European civilization.⁷⁶

Despite this important mandate he continued to write and in 1944 he produced his most successful work: *English Social History*. In 1949 he published also his *Autobiography* and *A History of Trinity College*.

Trevelyan reached the total audience. By the 1950s sales had exceeded half a million. Many books were bought by libraries and used in schools. His important purpose was to promote interest in history and this became his message for all his life.

Most of Trevelyan's books were published by Longman imprint. By mid-century, Thomas Longman had established a reputation for publishing improving books of high educational quality. One of his jewels was *History of England* published in December 1855. The Longman connection was fundamental to Trevelyan because it reinforced his sense of dynasty identity and it gave him the opportunity to reach his principal public audience.

In 1929 Trevelyan made his first broadcasting in a series of National Lectures, on The Parliamentary Union of England and Scotland. He had different broadcasting for twenty years on diverse topics such as The nature and Function of History, on Roman Britain, on Thomas Carlyle as an Historian. In this broadcasts he underlined his position as the national historian and public educator.

Trevelyan reached a strategic position by virtue of his name, his ancestry, his links with Westminster and Whitehall, his publications, his journalism and his public presence.

He was one of the most important figures in the political, cultural and intellectual life of twentieth-century Britain. His life was a life in history because the past was his inheritance, his passion, his calling, his duty, his art. In the time in which he lived he had not been understood like most historians. In fact Trevelyan's reputation was in decline for

76 G.M.Trevelyan, *Autobiography*, *op.cit.*,p. 49

a decade before his death and many history students was not interested in his works. As David Cannadine wrote, the majority of graduate students at the Cambridge University admitted to have never read his volumes. This situation changed only during the first half of the twentieth-century and he became famous and the most influential historian of his generation.

Our writer was famous for his brilliant style, his soundness scholarship and for the quality of his poetic imagination. He was devoted to the countryside, was an ardent conservationist and was involved in the affairs of the National Trust. His books and letters reveal his lifelong struggle to classify them under the light of history. Trevelyan acted as a public teacher and public moralist exerting cultural authority among the governing and the educated classes of his day.

The history of ancient Trevelyan's family, went back as far as the history of his country. In the eighteenth century the Trevelyans inherited the estate of Wallington in Northumberland where they became landed gentry. He became from a governing family since he was a member of the aristocracy of birth. His father Sir George Otto as his brother worked in the worlds of government and public affairs while his elder brother kept the role of political activist in the twentieth-century as Secretary of Education in 1924-1929 and as Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland in 1949. Trevelyan was privileged for having this patrician background. He was a younger son but he inherited from his parents a house and small estate at Hallington, near Wallington. He considered himself lucky for having the possibilities and the liberty to dedicate himself to the studies and writings of history for all his life without worrying about money. His fierce honesty was the characteristic which determined all his writer's and historian's career. To understand Trevelyan as historian we have to remind that all his family lived inside history. He thought that:

History was not something which had happened long ago, which left behind decaying evidential residues, which was written about in the mouldering pages of learned quarterlies and which provided professional academics with a means of livelihood. On the contrary, history was something which my forbears had made, which my family was still making and which was thus an integral part of the fabric of his own life. The history of the nation was but the history of the Trevelyans writ large.⁷⁷

This special involvement in the past gave him more intimacy with the past figures whom

⁷⁷ G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays, op.cit.*, p.64

he traded not as historical characters but as personal acquaintances and as close contemporaries. This personal approach with the past characters thanks to his family allowed him to give more vividness and immediacy to his work. In fact it was as he wrote history as an insider than also to the many papers which had been found in his family home. On his father's death in 1928 he inherited a large collection of manuscripts. Moreover when he had to consult materials housed in diverse archives or important papers concerning political disputes, he could easily accede thanks to his privileged families acquaintances. Besides his family links he belonged to a particular aristocracy of talents. The Trevelyan were related to middle-class Evangelical families including the Darwins, the Butlers, the Thorntons which together formed an influential intelligentsia, as much a freemasonry as an aristocracy.

In 1904 Trevelyan married Janet Penrose Ward, the daughter of Mrs Humphry Ward and niece of the poet Matthew Arnold. She was an important aristocratic figure who permitted to his husband to consolidate his links with the intellectual aristocracy. Besides this Janet was a remarkable woman renowned for the force of her intellect and the independence of her spirit. She was a member of the British-Italian League and the author of *A short history of the Italian People*. Like all the Trevelyans wife she conformed to an exact standards: well-connected, independent-minded, public spirited and intelligent.

The Trevelyans were well socially placed belonging to the aristocracy of birth but also to the aristocracy of merit. We can remember the following classification of the tree Trevelyan brothers: Charles, the politician; Robert, the poet; and George, the historian.

Despite these advantages he attained what he really wanted. He was a young Liberal who shouted people down in argument. During the inter-war years he failed to establish close relations with the Labour leaders and became obsessed with the virtues of Soviet Russia. When appointed Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland he refused to go to the expense of purchasing the requisite uniform. He regularly figured in Virginia Woolf's diaries because of his eccentricities and his outbehaviour. He was described as a child of nature. He did not wash and he was fond of nude bathing. He used to dried himself after taking a dip walking and he had been described as following:

Une espèce de sauvage tout nu qui se promène de long en large comme si c'était la chose la plus naturelle du monde.⁷⁸

78 David Cannadine, *A life in History, op.cit.*, p.13

Trevelyan believed that walking was the best means whereby a man might regain possession of his own soul, by rejoining him in sacred union with nature.



The three brothers on the moors, sometime after the Second World War: Charles, Bob and George. 'Tell me', a lady once asked, having met all of them at the same party, 'are these Trevelyans a sect, like Wesleyans?'



2.8 Trevelyan and his literary, historical and poetical influences.

Thomas Carlyle was one of the most important figure who influenced Trevelyan during the twentieth-century. He was a close friend of his father Sir George Otto. They often went for long walks together on Hampstead Heath, talking and arguing about history and literature. Trevelyan appreciated Carlyle's works even after his death and when he went to Cambridge he studied his *On heroes and Hero-Worship*, a sage work about the past. He taught *Heroes and Hero-Worship* at the Working Men's College.

Carlyle was a prophet on Trevelyan's thoughts. He regarded *The French Revolution* as the greatest history of Carlyle who gave memorable pictures of the scenes and actors in that strange drama. He was moved by Carlyle's influence, in *Past and Present*, of the machine age of the 1830s and 1840s and by his hostility to the utilitarian profit and loss philosophers. Also Carlyle's *Cromwell* was a one-sided book that lacked interest in institutions. In this work Carlyle's preoccupation with heroes was degenerating into an obsession with despots. The last Carlyle's works were not to Trevelyan's taste; in fact *Latter day Pamphlets* and *Frederick the Great* were the expression of a misanthropic authoritarian, hostile to parliamentary government Carlyle.

But coming back to the fundamental principles of Carlyle doctrine such as the Stakhanovite injunction Produce! Produce! There were no doubt that Trevelyan was really influenced by his social interest and the belief that history was

The essence of innumerable biographies.⁷⁹

Trevelyan admiration for French revolution was due to Carlyle's passion and the same was for the portrait of Cromwell in his *England Under The Stuarts*.

Trevelyan, as Carlyle owned the capacity of writing history from the inside of the actors.

*Carlyle was unsurpassed in his imaginative grasp of persons, situations and events, and this essentially poetic sense of the past- tender as Shakespeare in his loving pity for all men- touched a responsive chord in Trevelyan's own nature. For like Carlyle, Trevelyan had boundless sympathy and compassion for the individual men and women of the poor, struggling human race.*⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Thomas Carlyle. *Selected Writings*, Mass Market Paperback Penguin Classic, 1980, p. 3

⁸⁰ David Cannadine, *A life in History, op,cit., p.31*

Like Carlyle Trevelyan studied the heroes of past as a noble doctrine. But his heroes were on the side of liberty and freedom instead those of Carlyle were on the side of tyranny and despotism. We have to remember the figure of Garibaldi who was depicted as a poet and as a man of action and also the biographies of John Bright, of Lord Grey of the reform Bill, of Grey of Fallodon and the study of Manin in 1848.

Another literary figure who influenced Trevelyan was the poet George Meredith. When Trevelyan was at Cambridge, he studied his poetry and novels. In 1906 he published the only book of a living person: *The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith*. For the centenary of Meredith's birth he wrote a gratefully essay in 1928.

Trevelyan was convinced that Meredith was a appreciated poet but also a philosopher and teacher. Like Wordsworth and our historian, he loved the English countryside and believed that man was at his best when communing with nature. He was the first poet of nature to consider Darwin's theories. Trevelyan was captivated from Meredith's combination of visionary ideals with practical wisdom. Meredith was an optimistic poet who believed in serviceableness to successor and at the same time he was the poet of common sense who celebrated the ordinariness of normal character.

In accordance with his *Autobiography*, he was appreciated from Trevelyan also for his political beliefs. He was a Liberal and he believed in democracy and education and in the emancipation of women. Like Trevelyan he admired the French Revolution and he regarded Italian unification as the main historical fact of the nineteenth century.

Trevelyan also shared with him a passionate patriotism believing in the fact that the nation must rearm in the face of the German threat.

Meredith influenced significantly the Trevelyan's work on Garibaldi with his books on Italy. In his *Vittoria* the character of the Italian revolution was evoked at best, in fact it provided a detailed and accurate analysis of people and of that period.

Both Meredith and Carlyle was very relevant for the artistic and historical life of Trevelyan but they are only two of a large variety of English poets and writers who conditioned his thinkings, ideals and writings. In fact among Trevelyan's earliest memories wwere visits to the theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon to see Shakespeare, learning Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*. At Harrow he read Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley and at Cambridge he discovered Meredith and Carlyle. Only there he realised that history and not poetry was his vocation.

But we have to remember that he continued to keep his passion for literature during the age and

He never wavered from his belief that history and literature were inseparable: no historian could write about the English past ignorant of what novelists and poets had said; and no critic could write about literature if he was unaware of the circumstances in which it had been created.⁸¹

In fact this *connubio* between history and literature remained an important symbol of the Trevelyan's artistic life. His devotion to English literature was in everything that he wrote. In his historical works he celebrated the writing of many poets and writers, especially of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Keats. In his polemical writings he felt the necessity of reunifying the study of history and literature.

He admitted that his love for poetry had affected the character and in places the style of his historical writings had dictated his choice of subjects. He held a poetic view of the past which brought a boundless compassion for men and women, the same loving pity for all men owned by Shakespeare.

Among Trevelyan's earliest memories were visits to the theatre at Stratford to see Shakespeare, learning Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and electrifying for Scotts' historical romances. At Harrow, he read Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley and Keats with passionate delight.⁸²

At Cambridge he definitely decided that his vocation was history not poetry even if his passion for literature never abandoned him. It was in this period that he convinced himself that history and literature were inseparable.

*No historian could write about the English past ignorant of what novelists and poets had said; and no critic could write about literature if he was unaware of the circumstances in which it had been created.*⁸³

The best expression of the sense of poetry had been written by Carlyle in the following sentence:

History after all is the true poetry; Reality, if rightly interpreted, is grander than Fiction; nay even, in the right interpretation of Reality and History, does genuine Poetry lie.⁸⁴

81 David Cannadine, *A life in history*, *op.cit.* p.33

82 G.M. Trevelyan, *Autobiography*, *op.cit.*, p.12

83 David Cannadine, *G.M.Trevelyan*, *op.cit.*, p.33

84 G.M. Trevelyan, *Autobiography*, *op.cit.*, p.60

The devotion to English literature helped Trevelyan all along his historian's career to dictate his choice of subjects. He explained to have chosen Garibaldi because his life seemed to him the most poetical of all true stories and Grey of Fallodon because his own life and fate were a prose poem. He continued to hold a poetic view of the past that analysed the tragedy of the human life by emerging a boundless compassion for all the human beings. He wanted to remind to his readers that on the earth previous generations had lived and died and that the same fate involved the men who came after them.

Chapter 3

Shakespeare's poetical England

History is read by different people for various purposes. History detains many uses and values. As Trevelyan wrote, for him its chief but not its only value is poetic. Its poetic value depends on its being a true record of actual happenings in the past. Apart the importance of the past time, history reveals many things that belongs by their own nature to the stuff of poetry, the passions and aspirations of men and of nations.

Trevelyan curiosity was that of analyse what opportunities and what liberties for the development of a man's faculties were available to folk in the various regions and epochs of the past. This kind of question reveals us the social purpose of Trevelyan's history. In fact he talked of social history as another branch of history. In a state with a totalitarian regime it is really difficult for a man to develop his own talents. In the Middle Ages there was more civil liberty than religious liberty. People who were erudite were considered heretics. As Trevelyan described in his *Autobiography*, the badness of the roads, the want of mechanical transport, diminished the tyrant's power; restricted the range of bureaucracy, exalted local differences into the main rule of life, limited even the powers of the Church; left every man free to look about him. Man could say what he himself thought and felt in completely freedom enjoying a spiritual freedom unknown to the trade union workman, the bank clerk or to the civil servant of the twentieth-century. The reason of this freedom has also a social structural clarification. In the Dark and Middle Ages the liberty was due to isolation; in fact men lived surrounded by woods and marshes without physical or mental patterns. These conditions continued under the Tudor and the Stuart and they

diminished a bit only with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. As Trevelyan revealed us the intellectual stimulus of the Reformation, the new learning, the new sense of nationhood, the discovery of a new world beyond the rural isolation, all this led the age of Shakespeare. The Forest of Arden was an example of that change; it was the symbol of a freedom of the rural isolation penetrated by the new learned good-natured men and women.

Trevelyan used two relevant literary sources for his social study of history: Shakespeare and Chaucer. They both give an impression of their English contemporaries each individual, not expecting much from the future, using their tongues as a wonderful new instrument to express the humour and the passions of millions of people. Through their literary description of England from Twelfth to the Sixteenth-century, they represented the most important stages of the English language until its perfection in the time of Shakespeare.

No people since the ancient Greeks had evolved so rich a vocabulary and phraseology as that of Chaucer, the English Bible and Shakespeare. The names of birds and wild flowers were coined by country folks in their simplicity and sweetness. As Fynes Morison reminded us in his *Itinerary*, the English are so naturally inclined to pleasure.⁸⁵ Thanks to their landscape they could ground about their houses for pleasure of Gardens and Orchards. Morison described us the fertility of England as following:

The air of England is temperate, but thick, cloudy and misty and Caesar witnesseth, that the cold is not so piercing in England as in France. For the sunne draweth up the vapours of the Sea which compasseth the Lland, and distills them upon the earth in frequent showers of raine, so that frosts are somewhat rare; and howsoever Snow may often fall in the Winter time, yet in the Southerne parts (especially) it seldome lies long on the ground. Also the coole blasts of Sea winds, mitigate the heat of Summer.

By reason of this temper, Lawrell and Rosemary flourish all Winter in the Sotherne parts, and in Summer time England yeelds Abricots plentifully, Muske melons in good quantity, and Figges in some places, all which ripen well, and happily imitate the taste and goodnesse of the same fruites in Italy. And by the same reason all beasts bring forth their young in the open fields, even in the time of Winter; and England hath such abundance of Apples, Peares, Cherries, and Plummes, such variety of them, and so good in all respects, as no cuntry yeelds more or better, for which the Utalians would gladly exchange their Citrons and Oranges. But upon the Sea coast, the

85 Fynes Morison, *Fynes Morison's itinerary; op.cit.*, p. 165

winds many times blast the fruites in the very flower.⁸⁶

Craftsmen had an artistic sense rather superior than that of nowadays men even if the medieval period was not a gold age because of wars, pestilence which destroyed human happiness. Cruelty and hypocrisy characterized the holders of power, ecclesiastical, monarchical and feudal. As we have already said the fact of local isolation of Middle Ages due to bad communications, protected many individual positions that survived by neglect. Moreover mediaeval folks rejoiced to constitute privileged autonomous societies to perform special functions. Parliaments and Inns of Court, Universities and Grammar Schools; clerical corporations, all these contributed to develop the civilization. When Trevelyan talks of civilization, he analysed also the religious aspect besides of that poetic. As he wrote in his *Autobiography*, religion and poetry have a common parentage in their higher manifestations.

They derive from a common origin in the spiritual and imaginative power of man, which forbids him to take a purely material view of the world and gives him glimpses of something divine, either external to, or immanent in nature and humankind.⁸⁷

The different between religion and poetry is in the fact that Religion offers to the believer a more sure creed than the value that the poets try to supply with their poems.

For example Wordsworth, Shelley and Meredith have felt the presents of the spirit in nature and in man because they couldn't see the manifestations of the spiritual world in a precise describable form.

Shelley with his finest lyrical gift and ardent nature wrote love songs that seemed religious rhapsodies but he was too abstract to give his readers any religious material.

Meredith indeed offered a more solid spiritual repertory. In fact his poems had *quasi religious value* where the reader approaches God through our mother Earth and Nature.

Meredith had both the brain and the spirit in abundance but he did not always fuse theme in due proportion.

It can be mentioned also Wordsworth to underline his capacity of expressing of the men's intuitions about life and the universe. In his poems through:

86 Fynes Morison, *Fynes Morison's itinerary*; *op.cit.*, 165

87 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays*, *op.cit.*, p.150

Hours of inspiration which we feel to be moments in the being of the eternal silence.⁸⁸

it can be perceived the common aim of religion and poetry, namely the central peace of God.

There is another class of poets who accepted the religion of their time besides the irruption of science. One of this Christian poets was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who with his *Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamounix* created an adaptation to mountains scenery of the idea of Adam's orison in Book V of *Paradise Lost*.

Other great poets such as Byron, Chaucer or Keats were not religious-minded even if they divinized Nature and they indirectly approached Religion.

The special function of secular poetry gives to ordinary human themes their full spiritual value which the poet has the sensibility to perceive and to pass to the readers.

This function comes naturally in the work of the greatest poet of all, Shakespeare who we cannot call a religious poet like Milton or a man of the world like Chaucer.

He was interested in the relation to Religion borne by the spiritual values of ordinary life which were his theme but for him was only a relation. The world of spirit and emotion both poetical and religious is one world.

As Trevelyan explained in his *Autobiography* when Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, he was not thinking in religious, not in Christian terms. One of the references to the divine powers is the bitter outcry of the blinded Gloucester:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.⁸⁹

The meaning of religion in *King Lear*, that is given by other characters like the religious-minded Edgar, is a consolation that Shakespeare let us perceive. Edgar regards the gods as good, differently Cordelia regards them as power controlling fate. Its theme is the awful power of evil that is self-destructive and not permanent. Shakespeare offers to the humanity a consolation of a not false optimism but the goodness of good people. As the writer believed Virtue lies at the base of religion and of morality. *King Lear*'s conversation to humility and universal sympathy through the discipline of sorrow is a Christian motif but probably Shakespeare was not consciously thinking to it as a Christian motif.

88 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.*,p.152

89 G.M.Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other essays, op.cit.*,p.154

As our writer annotated, whatever his personal creed was, Shakespeare was an outcome of Christian civilization and of Christian thought and feeling.

3.1 England at the time of Shakespeare

For the English historian it is impossible to ignore religion if he would explain other phenomena and aspects of the civilization. English religion was a free and healthy function of that old-world life, guiding itself between superstition and fanaticism on the one side and material barbarism on the other.

the religious life of the Sixteenth-century seemed more obscure, less attractive and less harmonious than the many aspects of the social life.

In England ecclesiastical feuds were so kept in check by the policy of the Queen and the good sense of the majority of her subjects, lay and clerical who avoided the religious fanaticism to pervade.

Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser were children of that period and breathed its religious atmosphere just as the poets of other ages, Langland, Milton, Wordsworth were the outcome and highest expression of a religious philosophy characteristic of their epochs.

Among Shakespeare's contemporaries many violent Puritans and Romanists and many narrow Anglicans but also more characteristic Elizabethan whose attitude ducked dogma and lives broadly in the spirit. This was common to Shakespeare and the Queen herself.

As following we relate the situation described by Trevelyan in his *English Social History* to resume the religious and social atmosphere during the Elizabethan reign.

The first year of Elizabethan saw a crisis in the social life of every parish. The English Prayer Book of Cranmer was ordered again to be read in place of the Latin mass. The change of religion was not accompanied by a change in the person of the parish priest. The parson had to obey the law and in some cases he was an ex monk or friar who had many varieties of religious experience. When Elizabeth was succeeded by her sister, the parson was a convinced Protestant and he did not want to consult his private judgement. People thought that was right to accept religious services and doctrines because they were ordained by Crown, Parliament and Privy Council. This was the Erastian attitude to religion that carried Englishmen the century of change.

This is our doctrine, that every soul, of what calling soever he be- be monk,
be he preacher, be he prophet, be he apostle- ought to be subject to King

and magistrates.⁹⁰

Religion was covered by the sphere of King and magistrates and everyone was agreed that there could be only one religion in the State and this must decide what religion should be.

Elizabeth's England was opposed to medieval and modern conceptions and its doctrine was the political consequence of the social revolt of the laity against the clergy.

The English society was composed also by the clergy affected by the Erastianism that were obedient and supine in the first years of Elizabeth. This alone stood between England and a papal restoration. Protestants accepted her Church compromise intending to reform it. So they were her defence of the new settlement but at the same time her most dangerous enemies.

As continued Trevelyan, the majority of the parish priests of 1559, who were ready to take their religion ready-made from a parliamentary statute, were lacking in any definite tradition that could give enthusiasm and authority to their ministrations.

Since the anti-clerical revolution of King Henry's day, priests were no longer hated but they were disdained.

Elizabeth continued to filch Church lands and property and to keep bishoprics vacant in order that the Crown enjoyed the rents of the manors.

The Church was treated very much as an arm of the Civil Service, a dignified but pleasantly helpless prey of an impecunious sovereign and rapacious court.⁹¹

Under Elizabeth priests were authorized to marry and this was another important change in social life. Freedom to marry became a real comfort to many honest men and a fine race of children were reared in the parsonages of England. For the generations to come they filled all the professions and services with good men and true. Clerical marriage at the beginnings had some difficulties, in fact it was needed time before the parson's wife reached a honourable and important position in parish society.

There was another problem, the poverty due to the need to support wives and children in a parson.

The clergy knew an economic and social rise only during the Hanoverian epoch.

90 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History; op.cit.*, p.189

91 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History, op.cit.*,p.190

Simony and pluralities did not cease with the disappearance of papal jurisdiction.

In the middle of the reign, during the foreign and domestic crisis that led the Armada and the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, English society in town and country was strongly conditioned by the religious differences of neighbours. The Jesuit had the hard mission of convincing the unfortunate gentry of the old religion, hiding in the manor-house walls, pursued by Justices of the Peace. At the same time Puritans, parish clergymen and Justices of the Peace were working hard to remodel the Church establishment.

In many counties the Puritan clergy held conferences of ministers similar to Presbyterian Synods and they intended to gain authority from the Bishops. In 1584 they pored into the Parliament with petitions from clergy, town corporations, Justices of the Peace and the leading gentry of whole counties. The House of Commons and even the Privy Council were half converted.

In 1640 England was sufficiently Protestant to indulge in a course of ecclesiastical revolution and counter-revolution. Queen Elizabeth and her Archbishop Whitgift withstood well the situation and Anglicanism slipped safely on between Romanism and Puritanism.

At the end of the reign there was a reaction; the Puritans reduced its obedience to the Church and some of the extreme Puritans had been imprisoned. The majority of the Puritan clergy, gentry and merchants were loyal to the Queen.

In this situation Trevelyan wondered how much longer the State would be able to impose one religion on this divided and obstinate race of Englishmen,

Where even maidservants sticked not to control learned preachers! The abomination of Toleration might yet be the ultimate issue, and England became famous for the hundred religions, which so much amused Voltaire on his visit to our island. ⁹²

As Trevelyan observed there was more chance that Queens religion would be acceptable to the English than the scripture of the Puritan who must find the test to justify every act of daily life. But the idea of enforcing one religion on all England meant many years of imprisonments and confiscations. Only out of all that misery England should have picked up the flower of its civil liberties and its Parliamentary constitution.

In the course of Elisabeth long reign the younger generation grew up with the Bible and the prayer book and they became fervent Protestants by sharing the struggle for national existence against Spain, Pope and Jesuits.

⁹² G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History, op.cit.*,p.193

In the first year of Elisabeth reign Puritanism was a foreign doctrine imported from Geneva and the Rhineland; when she died it became characteristically English. The same happened for the Anglicanism that in 1559 was more an ecclesiastical compromise with the consent of Lords and Commons than a religion. Only at the end of Elisabeth's reign it became a real religion and its philosophy and spirit had been related by Hooker in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*.

3.3 Elizabethans' culture

The end of Elisabeth's reign was marked by the improvement in the quality of the clergy, and in the learning of clergy due to grammar schools and universities. Most of the people were quite illiterate, with their education taught by village dames. The universities, like most other institutions, went through a bad time during the religious and economic troubles of 1530-1560. The convent of monks and friars, which had composed an important part of medieval Oxford and Cambridge, disappeared by diminishing the numbers of the universities. The medieval character of the two English seats of learning disappeared during these hard years of change and impoverishment. Under Elisabeth, Oxford and Cambridge revived and flourished up to the outbreak of the civil war. As our source noted, the number of great Elizabethans who had been at Oxford or Cambridge showed a new attitude to learning in the governing class. A gentle man who aspired to serve the State under the Queen would complete his education at one of the learned universities. For example, Camden and Hakluyt were at Oxford, and the Bacons, Spencer and Marlowe were at Cambridge.

This growing connection between the universities and the governing class was due to the improvement in the conditions of academic life. The college system, which replaced the hostelries of medieval times, guaranteed security and safety to the parents. One of the fellows of the college acted both as teacher and guardian. There was a system of private tutoring that had the tendency to favour richer pupils. In an age of patronage, nepotism was inevitable and most times fellowships were given to the sons or clients of powerful men who could finance the college. This damaged the universities. As Trevelyan reported, during the reign of Elizabeth, the Great Court of her father's foundation of Trinity at Cambridge grew up as the rival of Tom Quad at Christ Church.

A number of undergraduates, Kit Marlowe at Corpus, Cambridge, Philip Sidney at Christ Church, Oxford were interested in poetry and drama. Poetry and drama played a great role in the life of those days. Plays and interludes were acted out by the students.

The London theatrical performances of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century offered a warped representation of English life. The plots were drawn from Italian, from Spanish, and from classical sources and were often fantastic, full of violence and cruelty, of adultery and murder. The content of those plots were created by the dramatists themselves, usually by men who were more intelligent than others. They often knew the social situation and problems better than the political figures. Their judgements as to society and the changes taking place in it were amply supported by evidence. Literary men tended to exaggerate social differences. They used literary conventions and drew upon older literary sources.

The romantic poetry of the time meant to spare information about women. In innumerable lyrics we read of Phyllis, of Delia and Daphne who played Theocritan parts in an English setting. These women had expressive eyes and lovely complexions but rarely could appear as strong and winning. The poetry seems unreal and insensible in this regard. The English lyric poets of the early seventeenth century were unlike the dramatists who had little to tell about women. The pamphlets and booklets of the time are full of references to women and their ways. As Plumb reminds us women were described as fickle, foolish and given to making cuckolds of their husbands. Spent poets and superannuated bachelors followed the standard patten derived from Italian sources and from ancient writings to represents women in their poems. The students of the time picked up book after book, hoping to find an interesting comment. They came across long narratives of female inconstancy and folly designed. This kind of literature was so regular that the casual reader perceived it as the fashion of the time. The consideration that men had of women could be prised out of many writings of the time. To support this, Plumb documents what was written by men in letters:

Women were less mature than men was asserted. They were as wise at fifteen as at fifty. Our wives as well as other men's must be children. ⁹³

Women were considered immature also for their quarrelsomeness even if they were believed to be more humorous than men. Shakespeare's Rosalind outlined to Orlando

93 J.H.Plumb, *A tribute to Trevelyan, op.cit.*,p.73

what she should be for him to be a perfect wife:

I will be more jealous than a Barbary cock-pigeon; more clamorous than a parrot against rain, more new-fangled than an ape; more giddy in my desires than a monkey- I will weep for nothing and I will do what you are disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyena, and that when you are inclined to sleep. ⁹⁴

Moreover, women were depicted as not having enough to do. This was mainly directed against the great ladies of court and the wives of businessmen in London and in country towns. Such women were to be seen on the street going from one shop to another and chatting with their friends. In contrast, the countrywomen were less restless, and occupied themselves with gardens. Women were more conventional than men and they followed precedents and custom accepting the codes of their class. Over time they tended to lose conventionality, as they started freely behave in ways that ruined the codes. Their goings-on afforded rare gossip and opportunities to be censorious for the writers of moral tracts and of less moral plays.

Praise of women was depicted as tenderness and affection that they bestowed upon their mates. These feelings were celebrated in funeral sermons and epitaphs, in autobiographies and plays. Shakespeare, Massinger and other dramatists have left us heroines memorable for their devotion to their partners. As Plumb quoted in his *Tribute to Trevelyan*, patient Griselda in the ballad and in the play and Celia in *The Humorous Lieutenant* displayed a loving support that was not accepted. An Elizabethan said that women cheer men when they are melancholy and redeem them from the gates of the hell. Their grace and their quiet behaviour were important virtues appreciated by men and by poets.

A retir'd sweet life, Private and close, and still, and housewife becomes a wife,
sets of the grace of woman. ⁹⁵

Silence in women was considered a great virtue by poets, playwrights and biographers. They described women's patience and obedience to their lords as a duty, taught by their mothers.

The prejudice in favour of feminine subordination was prevalent and had been well represented by many playwrights of the time. Women in the seventeenth century must

⁹⁴ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, A. Mondadori Editore S.p.a, Milano, 1992, p.142.

⁹⁵ J.H.Plumb, *A tribute to Trevelyan*, op.cit., p.77

have understood such wiles but they were represented as resorting to them. They were charming thanks to their liveliness, high spirits and their natural friendliness. When we think of charming women we have to mention Rosalind, Miranda, Celia or Sidney's sister. The ease with which Rosalind assumes the role of a man could be taken as an unconscious desire to be like him. In her travestiment and in those of many feminine heroes of Shakespeare, we do not have to derive any single meaning. The point here is on the importance of the role of man. Rosalind wanted to assume the look of a boy to confirm her strong desire of being someone with her own personality. Anna Luisa Zazo, in her introductory essay to *As You Like It*, underlined the fact that the Elizabethan Theatre did not allow women to be on the stage. In fact, all the feminine characters were played by boys. But Shakespeare was in contrast with this Elizabethan Theatre, the religious intolerance, the adventure tendency, and also with the pleasure for brutality innate in the Elizabethan society and art. He was averse to the Elizabethan views that our Trevelyan considered a scene of life. The continuing presence of negative elements in everyday life was a constant for all countries of Renaissance Europe and especially for Renaissance England. The English Renaissance had its own characteristics, namely the ambiguity of the scenery and continuing contradictions that are typical of the human condition. The English Renaissance became a unique anthropological age. In few other ages have people lived with such intensity and torment like in the period of English Renaissance.

3.3 The English Renaissance

The English Renaissance derived from the Italian Renaissance and it was overlaid onto an England still deeply mediaeval. This kind of Renaissance, with its anthropological cult of life, was forced on a country barely out religious Reform. England was still mediaeval, feudal and with its puritan movements it was convinced to be the freer, the more civilized, the more virtuous of Europe. But to the contrary, the place of origin of the Renaissance civilization was Italy that appeared corrupt to the eyes of the English. The English Renaissance exalted life and was full of tensions. It had no serenity and without the balanced anthropocentrism of Italian Renaissance. But the Italian Renaissance passed more rapidly despite an England that was younger, rowdier and ready to test everything new. The English had an animated sense of pride and national unity that sometimes seemed more arrogance than dignity. They had a religious spirit, often agitated but with pride that was in opposition to Catholicism, making the national religion feel alien. In this

situation, art could be protected by court and by aristocracy. As Anna Luisa Zazo quoted in her introductory essay, England was a young, romantic, nationalist, religious, mediaeval country which modelled its artistic explosion on the base of a cultural movement that was already old, baroque, super national, pagan and looking to the past. The result was a contradictory Renaissance full of ambiguities and agitation. In fact, the contradiction and the play of self-affirmation or self-negation were innate in the English civilization and it was well represented in the cultural phenomena of theatre.

Zazo wondered why theatre was chosen as the representation of an ambiguous, agitated civilization. He further wondered why a country like England didn't adopt the most perfect literary and artistic forms of Italy instead of a form that was not Italian. The splendid development of the English theatre during the Elizabethan age was the autochthon pride reply of England to the European Renaissance challenge. The theatre was the artistic form most English because it was more close to life.

Elizabethan English were in love with life, not with some theoretic shadow of life.⁹⁶

The most famous name of the Elizabethan theatre is at the same time the most deeply Elizabethan. The rich, retired man of Stratford, a man who in his theatre does not have space for violence, the pleasure for violence nor for religious and racial intolerance, was distant from the typically agitated Elizabethan world. But he was the perfect playwright and writer who best represented this kind of ambiguity and illusion of the reality. The greatness of Shakespeare is not in his originality. He is not an initiator, he is not at the origin of the Elizabethan Renaissance, but he is a result of it. He did not create the Elizabethan theatre but he discovered it for himself with all its ambivalences. When Shakespeare entered in that world the Elizabethan theatre was already developed, but he gave it a tone that elevated its level. It discovered the Shakespearean decasyllable without rhyme renowned as blank verse. The theatre reached its complete process. In the Elizabethan England the theatre remained debtor of the Saint Representation and of the moralities. The free structure without Aristotelian rules and the peculiarity of the plot that forms different lines and footings, sometimes parallel, reveals the comic and still mediaeval characteristic of the Elizabethan theatre. This was already the most popular artistic expression of that time, because it gave the opportunity for the intellectual, the spiritual men, and the university wits to write about theatre before the artists, the actors started to play theatre. Moreover it

96 William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, op.cit., p.XXXIII

was popular because in London there were already four repertory theatres: the Teatro, the Sipario, the Rosa, and the Cigno. These were theatres, with an apparently primitive structure, singularly demonstrating the ritual nature of the Elizabethan theatre.

An important relationship is between Shakespeare's theatre with its pleasure for adventure, and the love for life typical of the Elizabethans. Through the story of the Voyages of Hakluyt or the reports of sir Walter Raleigh, we can perceive that the Elizabethans were not lacking the feeling of adventure, or the desire for knowledge or bravery. In the Shakespeare' s dramas, the ambience could be considered exotic and eventful. But Shakespeare did not intend to give attention to the exoticism of the place or to the idea of an adventurous trip, because he looked for the exoticism inside himself. It is an authentic internalization of the pleasure for voyages and adventure; Wien, Illiria, the Arden Forest and Bohemia are spiritual places, especially the desert island. This is the most exotic place because it is the only place where a savage lives, Prospero. He is the son of a witch and he lives a spiritual imagination. The desert island becomes a spiritual place. The geographical exoticism transformed into a place of ambiguities.

The Elizabethans loved, hunted, travelled, and composed poetry and music. Through all this they were consumed with the need to discover new places and to live new experiences. But they were ambiguous, because at the same time they loved brutality and violence as it was represented on the stage.

The purpose of the drama as asserted by Shakespeare, through Hamlet's words, is:

offrire alla natura lo specchio; mostrare alla virtù il suo volto, al vizio la sua immagine, e all'estessa e al corpo del secolo la sua forma e la sua impronta (III, 2).⁹⁷

The Renaissance had in some way reached the people. Via grammar schools, classicism became vivid from the study into the theatre and the street, from the folio to the popular ballad. The Greco-Roman and Hebrew doctrines were treated as new spheres of imagination and spiritual power. The Englishmen converted it to modern use. Shakespeare transformed Plutarch' s *Lives* into his own *Julius Caesar* and *Antony*. Others took the Bible and created a new thought for religious England. During the prosperous years of Elizabeth, the narrow seas that was the stage of English mariners for centuries expanded into the world' s oceans. These same oceans were filled with

⁹⁷ W.Shakespeare, *As you like it*, *op.cit.*, p. XLII.

adventurous youth who inspired romance and looked for wealth.

3.4 Elizabethan England

When Elizabeth came to the throne, the battle between the old and new religion, between the power of the Crown and the power of feudalism were the main issues. This struggle was most prevalent in the more civilized parts of the Border, the seaward plains of Northumberland on the east and of Cumberland on the west. The Middle Marches, the valleys situated in the middle, had a more lawless and primitive state of society. These were inhabited by clans who pledged allegiance with the warriors of the wild regions. They were in close league with the robbers of Scottish Liddesdale where existed a similar state. As described Trevelyan in his *English Social History*, the robber strongholds were built of oak trunks, covered with turf to prevent the application of fire, were hid in wildernesses among treacherous mosses, and none knew the paths. This kind of society, the same on both sides of the Border, produced the popular poetry of the Border ballads. This poetry was transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another. Many of the stanzas confirmed their shape in the days of Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots. These ballads, almost always tragic, describe such incidents of life and death typical of everyday life in those regions. The ballads were different from Shakespeare's gentle England, where stories talked of happy lovers. On the contrary like the Homeric Greeks, the Borderers were represented as cruel and brutal men who lived like beasts in the forest. Yet they were depicted as full of pride, honour and faithfulness. Moreover they were not sophisticated but they could naturally express in words of power the inexorable fate of men.

In Elizabeth's reign the relationship with Scotland improved because both had the common interest in defending the Reformation against enemies abroad and at home. But the problem of moss trooping continued and many farmers were compelled to militarize to protect the lands of the reign. Only during the reign of James I was there a change. The king himself hunted the moss trooping clans. North Tyne and Redesdale followed the law. In Queen Elizabeth's day the barbarous old-world life of the border lay close the main civilized industries areas.

Beyond these problems the England of Elizabeth was the land with manor and house different from one another in size, material, style of architecture. All this testified to the

peace and economic prosperity of the age underlying the beauty and the pleasure for life of Englishmen. Wealth and power passed from the Princes of the Church to the gentry. The age of great religious building passed over and the new religion was the religion of the Book, the sermon, and the psalm rather than the edifice. As we have already seen in the chapter one, Elizabethan architecture contained strong elements of both the Gothic and the Classical, namely the old English and the new Italian. Italian style was incorporated into the buildings, on glass accessories, or in the pictures. But the Elizabethan English paintings had no comparison. There was demand for the delicate and beautiful art of English miniature. Nicholas Hilliard founded the school of English miniature.

Another important and romantic aspect of the Elizabethan England was the diffusion of the inns which gave individual attention to travellers. Fynes Morison who knew very well the hospitality of half Europe described the inns as comfortable and sociable. Even if that hearty welcome was not always true. Shakespeare portrayed the seamy side of inns in his *Henry IV*. In fact, the nights of Fynes Morison's gentleman seemed undisturbed. But in contrast William Harrison intended to open the eyes to the travellers because the servants' intent, as underlined also Shakespeare, was that of diddling them.

The study of the history and literature of Elizabethan England gives an impression of a greater harmony and a freer intercourse of classes than other ages. Class divisions in Shakespeare's day were taken as a matter of course. There was not jealousy from the below classes and no intention to teach the grand law of subordination on the part of the upper classes. The typical unit of Elizabethan education was the grammar school where the social world consorted together without suspicion.

Class divisions were not rigid and were not hereditary. Individuals and families moved out of one class into another by acquisition or loss of property or by simple change of occupation. There is no such impassable barrier as used to divide the lord of the manor from his peasantry in mediaeval England. The same continued till 1789 to mark off the

French noblesse as an hereditary caste separate from everyone else. In Tudor England these rigid lines were not possible due to the numerous men collocated in the intermediate classes. Further, occupations were connected in the business and amusement of daily life. English society was based more on freedom than on equality. It means freedom of opportunity and freedom of personal intercourse. This was the England of our Shakespeare where men and women of every class and occupation were equally

interesting to him.

Elizabeth's reign was a great age for the gentry. Their numbers, wealth and importance had increased due to the decay of the old nobility, that previously positioned themselves between the gentry and the Crown. They achieved this by the distribution of the monastic estates and by vitality of commerce and land-improvement in the new era.

The esquire in Tudor and Stuart times led by no means so isolated and bucolic a life as some historians and imagined. He was part of the general movement of an active society.⁹⁸

Yeomen, merchants and lawyers were continually recruiting the ranks of the landed gentry who were closely intermingling with the commercial classes. The status of the gentlemen was not supposed to be confined to landed proprietors. As following it has been reported the situation about gentlemen's reality during the days of Shakespeare's boyhood:

Whosoever studieth the laws of the realm, whoso abideth in the university given his mind to his book, or professeth physic and the liberal sciences, or beside his service in the room of a captain in the wars, or good counsel given at home where by his commonwealth his benefited, kind live without manual labour, and thereto his able and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be called master which is the title that man give to esquires and gentlemen, and be reputed a gentleman ever after. Which is so much the less to be disallowed of, for that the Prince doth nothing by it, the gentleman being so much subject to taxes and public payments as is the yeomen or husband- man, which he likewise doth bear the gladlier for the saving of his reputation.⁹⁹

William Harrison from his description of the gentry passed to the citizens and merchants. The increasing importance of the merchant class is underlined by their monuments in parish churches. Their effigies were depicted there as noble men, and bass-reliefs below of their sons and daughters. The English merchants were stimulated by the new abilities of seamanship and inspired by the adventurous spirit of the age. The expansion of overseas enterprise was closely connected with the growth of merchant capitalism.

In their technique and the ordering of their life the merchants and craftsmen of the Middle Age surpassed perhaps the centuries which followed. But the guild outlook

98 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History; op.cit.*, p.179

99 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History; op.cit.*, p.180

was municipal and its structure inelastic, and therefore it gave way to a system which leant itself to expansion and change. This we call merchant capitalism, with its complement domestic industry. The merchant capitalist was a middleman who broke down ancient barriers. He defied corporate towns by giving out work to the country and evaded the monopolies of privileged companies by interloping.. he committed excesses but he was the lifeblood of economic growth. ¹⁰⁰

Englishmen looked forward to new things. The most influential writer in the age of Shakespeare who better narrated the deeds of English explorers and seamen was Hakluyt. He authored *The Principall Navigations, and the Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, both published in the year after the Armada. This book fascinated country-squires and farmers who began to dream of boundless expanses. As early as 1584, Hakluyt had won the Queen's favour and patronage by urging in his *Discourse of Western Planting*

The new city companies and the fighting seamen exercised a great influence not only among statesmen, merchants and scholars of the reign, but also over the country. The remaining class of people, as Harrison reminds us, was the wage-earning class of town and country. This class had no voice or authority in the commonwealth. In villages they were church-wardens, sides-man, ale-conners or constables. The English villager had not only rights, but he also had functions in the society, of which he was a member.

To render the idea of the self-respect and self-reliance of the English common folk, Trevelyan described the military service. Men regarded it as part of English liberty, but only during the period of peace after Waterloo. In all the past ages, the service was considered as compulsory for defence. Froissart, Fortesque, and other writers noticed the spirit of popular independence, fostered by the national skill in archery and the obligation to serve on the militia, as peculiarly English. England had no regular army, but she was not defenceless. Each man of property had to serve as soldiers by volunteering or by compulsion. In this way the national duty was fulfilled. But the English militia no longer had superiority over other nations that the long-bow had once given. At the beginning of the reign, even the well-appointed London militia were still bowmen, but the best companies already consisted of shot. During the alarm of the Armada, not one of the London's militiamen bore the bow. A decade later, Shakespeare wrote a scene in which Falstaff is pressing Cotswold yokels by the authority of the Justices of the Peace; he is not seeking archers but only shot.

100 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History, op.cit.*, p.215

Regarding the sphere of administration, the good order preserved in Elizabeth's kingdom was due to the power of the Crown. This power was thanks to the Privy Council that blended the old with the new, local liberty with national authority. The will of the central power was imposed on the localities by using the influential local gentry themselves as the Queen's Justices of the Peace. They were Elizabeth's maids of all work and were not left on a principle of laissez faire but regulated on nation-wide principles by parliamentary statutes.

It has been chosen to revive the diverse classes of the Elizabethan society to properly understand the real atmosphere that allowed Shakespeare to develop his characters. The greatest of mankind happened in Elizabethan England producing the plays of Shakespeare. His works would never have been produced in other periods than those of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean times in which he lived. If men and women of those days had been other than as they were, in habits of thought, life, and speech, Shakespeare could not have written as he had. The London theatres in the years after the Armada also allowed a certain stage of development.

3.5 The Elizabethan theatre and Shakespeare's female characters

In *English Social History* has been stressed that it was no accident that Shakespeare's plays were more poetry than prose. For the audience he addressed, as indeed the common English in town and country alike, were accustomed to poetry as the vehicle of story-telling, entertainment, history and news of contemporary incidents and sensations. The special genres diffused in that age were the ballads and the songs, not the novels or newspapers. Ballads were multiplied and sold, each with a story from the Bible or classical myths and histories, medieval legend or happenings of the day. Lyrics and love-song, considered masterpieces of literature in the modern anthologies, were sung as the common music and sentiment of the people. Twenty years before Shakespeare's first plays were acted, a new drama grew up with a new school of playwrights of whom Marlowe was the chief and with high seriousness actors. In the middle years of Elizabeth, a way of wealth and honour had been opened to the actor and the playwright. The travelling companies had the patronage of literary noblemen, whose castles and manors they visited as welcome guests. They acted in hall or gallery, like the players who had such princely entertainment at Elsinore. Both for reputation and profit, the theatres were built in the meadows on the Southwark bank of Thames. They played before the motley

and critical audience of the capital, while citizens with their wives and apprentices with their sweethearts, walked over London Bridge to see the play. As Trevelyan noticed

The performances were given in the day-time. The front of the stage was in the open air. The most privileged of the audience sat on stools almost among the actors. The groundings stood below, gaping up at the spectacle, exposed to rain and sun. The covered galleries, that enclosed the wooden O of the theatre, were also full of folk. Here then were gathered together several classes of society, differing from one another, more or less, in tastes and education. It was Shakespeare's business to please them all. ¹⁰¹

English songs and music were for the rhetoric of poetry a vehicle for play and passion. All those songs and poetry, that Marlowe and his fellow labourers had supplied, created the basis for the new drama that Shakespeare found ready for his hand. His poetry was of a yet higher strain than Marlowe's lines, and he invented a prose dialogue as subtle, as powerful and sometimes as lovely and harmonious as his verse. He made both forms the vehicles not only of beauty, terror, wit and high philosophy, but also of a thing new in the drama, the presentation of individual characters. Even the plot and the action became subordinate to the character, as in *Hamlet*. The men and women of Shakespeare were so real that we confuse the reality with the fiction. His plays have lived more in the study than on the stage.

It is to the Elizabethan theatre that we owe Shakespeare and all that he created. In this sense Trevelyan intended to thank the English Theatre and the Elizabethans. To follow Trevelyan creed about the relationship between history and literature, he stated that:

The social historian of today cannot really describe the people of the past; the most he can do is to pint out some of the conditions under which they lived. But if he cannot show what our ancestors were like, Shakespeare can. In his pages we can study the men and women of those times. More, for instance, can be found out in his plays about the real relations of the two sexes, the position and character of Elizabethan women, than could possibly be expressed in a social history. ¹⁰²

From his study of the English scene emerged a view that the great works of literature and fiction describing men and women, with their habits of thought, speech and conduct, helped to elucidate their history. Their impressions became historical documents of

101 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History, op.cit.*, p.218

102 G.M.Trevelyan, *English Social History, op.cit.*, p.219

priceless value.

All who crave to know what their ancestors were like will find an inexhaustible fount of joy and instruction in literature, to which time has added an historical interest not dream of by the authors. These are the books, the arts, the academes of the social study of the past, and the greatest of them all is Shakespeare.¹⁰³

The women of all classes suffered in varying degrees under privations. They desired to have the same education of men and this represented a fundamental disadvantage. To realize the difference of opportunity between boys and girls, Plumb underlined the thorough grammar school education given the young males. They had to learn to read and write the language, to compose essays and too form arguments and to debate it. They developed the power of organizing the thought and they discovered history and traditions of the ancient civilized world. Differently we know little about the schools for girls who studied only to sing, to dance and to play an instrument. They did not study Latin and if some of them could attend the school, they had only a desultory preparation. Few women, especially gentry's daughters, were fortunate to have a tutor who taught them Latin, Hebrew and Greek.

Another disadvantage of women, closely related to their lack of education, was that in many cases they had little association with their husbands in their interests and activities. The early seventeenth-century woman found herself cut off from the male world. If her husband were of the more common type, a hunting gentlemen who spent the day in the fields and some of his evenings over a bottle, it was hard that she could spent time with him, reported Plumb in his social study.

Until that period it was a man's world. Slowly through the decades of the seventeenth century women were considered more into the community life. More often women were accompanying their husbands on visits or they went hunting with them. The humbler folk did not spend time abroad so they could share more time with their wives. But the business and political affairs of men were for men. It was an old notion that *the prudent man looked after his property interests and determined his conduct and policies himself*¹⁰⁴. Women could not keep secret and this was confirmed and well represented by Shakespeare in his *Julius Caesar*. Portia implores Brutus to tell her his feelings and what

103 G.M Trevelyan, *English Social History, op.cit.*, p.219

104 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p.84

worried him. But Brutus kept her out of his political and personal problems:

Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,
is it excepted I should know no secrets
that appertain to you? am I yourself
but as it were in sort or limitation,
to keep with you at meals, comfort your bed
and talk to you sometimes? dwell I but in the suburbs
of your good pleasure? If it be no more,
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.¹⁰⁵

Shakespeare wanted underlined that women were kept out from political affairs since old ages. A fourth handicap of women was that they were often married by the arrangements of their parents and thus had limited opportunities or none to experience romance at the mating age. In Elizabethan England the minimum age to get married was twelve and often the women became mothers within they were fifteen. *Donna Capuleti* says her daughter *Giulietta* who was fourteen:

Beh, è ora che ci pensi, al matrimonio,
perché qui a Verona, anche più giovani di te,
e di buona famiglia, sono già madri.
Se non sbaglio I conti, io stessa ero già tua madre
quando avevo gli anni che hai tu ora. (Atto I, Scena 3)¹⁰⁶

Young men suffered in the same way but they were less bound down to the home and could change the fate that parents had chosen for them. But both girls and boys could not have a voice in marriage decisions.

It must not be supposed that young women did not have their own ideas about their future mates. Those ideas were stated in letters, even if they wrote few, but the playwrights afford us information on the subject and this was confirmed by the letters of parents.

The romantics hopes of young woman at least in the moneyed classes where seldom realised an those who desired in they husbands good looks and seemly attire, or the solid virtues, had sometimes to compromise with their ideals. The marriages arranged for them by parents where based largely on property considerations. Even the marriages among royal people were the result of political and social plans. Social position and financial

105 William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*; the Arden Shakespeare, op.cit., p.215

106 Simon Dunmore, *Monologhi Shakespeariani*, Ed. Gremese, Roma, 2009, p.27

status were regarded realistically and balanced carefully. The most reputable families expanded their power and estates forming an alliance through the marriage, as a modern business combination.

The reader of Elizabethan and early Stuart letters knew the planned marriages through the tells of parents. They were the more inclined to take pains in such matters because many of them were subject to hold feudal tenures that were an anachronism but still on the statute books.

Among feudal incidence was the write of the king to the ward-ship of heirs to take of himself their incomes during their minorities and to marry heiresses to the highest bidder. The court of Wards caused gentlemen great expense and worry about their heirs or heiresses and tended to make match-makers. Moreover they were bound by community opinion to busy themselves about the marriages of their sons and daughter. There was another good reason why parents decide everything about the marital plans for their children. It was they who had to make settlements upon their sons and provide dowries for their daughters.

In the negotiations young people had to obey their parents, but they were human beings and they fell in love. The women were romantic and their romanticism was well reported in the plays.

Another aspect, analysed by Plumb, that influenced the trend of society was the marriage of young ladies. Arranged marriages worked a special hardship in cases where older men were joined to very young women. The rate of mortality among young wives meant that many a man married three or four times so they wanted to choose a really young girl. Hence it was not uncommon for a man of forty –five to marry a girl of eighteen. It was not hard for him to command such a bride and from his own class. Parents were in many cases only too glad to bestow their daughters upon a man of settled habits and of an assured income. If the bride seldom fell in love with her husband, or indeed remained always afraid of him, as she had been of her father, that was her misfortune.

A fifth disadvantage for women was that they spent the years from eighteen to forty-five in the business of bearing children. If they survived the perils of childbirth, and the illness that followed frequent pregnancies, they bore from eight to fifteen it would appear that women were always in a state of expectancy. Some depositions of the time wrote:

She was the mother of ten children in the twelve years that she was a wife ,
though when she died she left only two sons, one of whom survived a short

time.¹⁰⁷

Women were always facing the possibility of death at the next childbirth. The death of a mother or of a child was a everyday problem. Children were needed to help family in the land work or to earn money. Many women, survived many childbirths, died of consumption. The story of what happened to women is written in stone in many an English church. Statistics on infant mortality would be hard to collect and impossible to verify. They watched at the besides of those little things as they died of convulsions or of some inexplicable illness, and, if they mentioned the blow in a diary or letter, recorded it in a matter of fact way.

A sixth handicap of women arose from the artificiality of the manners imposed upon them. The formal treatment of women as exalted beings, a relic of chivalry, implied their weakness, assumed their inferiority, and, made natural conversation with men difficult. Shakespeare makes Hermione say:

Cram us with praise and make us
As fat as tame things.¹⁰⁸

Aspasia was cynical in her advice to her sex:

Learn to be flattered, and believed and bless
The double tongue that did it.¹⁰⁹

A self-respecting woman must have grown weary of all the compliments paid her sex, many of them less than sincere. She was compelled to pay a part and her thought were sometimes far from what she said. It could not be otherwise. She got married in many case without affection, only for a convenient alliance.

The woman learned to be an actress. She was expected to accept the friends of her husband, even his female friends, to ignore unfaithfulness, and to make the best of unhappy situations.

Plumb listed a seventh handicap of women that is the impossibility of realizing themselves being an inferior beings. They are men's shadows and the subordination of women continued to be the central argument of feminist debate.

107 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p. 90

108 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p. 91

109 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p. 91

Nicholas Breton makes a character advise about the management of an unlearned wife:

Commend her housewifery, and make much of her carefulness and bid her servants take example at their mistress; wink at an ill word... sometime feed her humour .. at board be merry with her, abroad be kind to her, always loving to her, and never bitter to her, for patient Grizell is dead long ago.¹¹⁰

In other words the manual of the time suggested to treat the unlearned wife as a child. An Elizabethan pamphleteer was more moderate:

If thou be a husband govern so your wife
That her peevish means work not thy strife:
Give her not too much law, to run before,
Too much boldness doth work thy overthrow:
Yet abridge her not too much by any mean:
But let still be thy companion.¹¹¹

Such a policy explained us that men controlled their wives but they did not oblige them because it was a custom to obey to the husbands.

Their lower status was an old story, told by the parson, set forth in the Scripture, and sanctioned by custom. Women of character knew how to accept their situation gracefully and yet their heads high.

Other women rose not only above the handicaps of subordination but above all their handicaps.

Lady Winwood was devoted to their friends of her husband and spent her excess energy in multifarious gardening. Lady Oglander looked after her household with utmost pains and met her husband at the outer gate when he came home from official duties. Lady Verney took charge of everything in Claydon House because Sir Edmund was away most of the time in the king's service; she kept him informed of what she was doing and could act with decision because she knew that he relied completely upon her.¹¹²

Such women were possibly the happier for accepting gracefully the duty of showing

110 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p.92

111 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p.92

112 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p. 93

deference. If men controlled them without seeming to do so the women had often their way without seeming to expect it. Advantages there were in such a system. Plumb underlined that the women avoided those quarrels in which the strong-minded females of a later age became involved, and a few of them, like Lady Verney and Johanna Lady Barrington, had the pleasure of power without pains.

But the same disadvantage of being controlled by men, for some women, even sovereign women, became a fundamental characteristic. Here following it has been reported the dialogue between *Calpurnia* and *Julius Caesar* to demonstrate that her devotion to him constitutes an elegant aspect of her womanliness.

What mean you, Caesar? Think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house today.
Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies,
yet now they fright me. There is one within,
besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
A lioness hath whelped in the streets,
and graves have yawned and yielded up their dead.
Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds
in ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.
The noise of battle hurtled in the air.
Horses do neigh, and dying men did groan,
and ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Caesar, these things are beyond all use,
and I do fear them.
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.
Do not go forth today. Call it my fear
that keeps you in the house and not your own.
Let me upon my knee prevail in this.¹¹³

In some of these cases the worthlessness of the man or the ingrained quarrelsomeness of the woman was no doubt an essential factor. For ages women continued to keep a subordinate role. What is more significant is that most women were inclined to believe that woman who quarrelled with her husband was in the wrong.

The attentive reader will have noticed that the country gentlewoman have held the centre

113 William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, *op.cit.*, p.222

of the picture, for the reason that their husbands left in the muniment rooms letters and records and that some of the woman themselves wrote diaries and autobiographies. We know less about the wives of the successful lawyers, of the well-to-do physicians, and of the high clergy. It would be a good guess that in the country they were not in a very different situation from the women of the gentry. In towns they may have been better off, as respects their subordination to their husbands, and more in the position of the wives of the business aristocracy.

Those women, the consorts of the merchants in London and the larger town, figure in Chamberlain's letters as important people. In all banquets and feasts, wrote a traveller from the continent, they are shown the greatest honour; they are placed at the upper end of the table, where they are first served.

The smaller business people, the tradesmen in London and country towns taught to their wives their job so the women learned the business. Some of them were little less than partners. Following the description of Plumb about business women, they were likely to be good at details and more regularly on the job. They were not only shopkeepers; they sometimes played a part in the town. When we look over the records of boroughs, more of which are being published, we find some women increasingly mentioned. They complained of abuses in the town; they asked for a better schoolmaster; they proved themselves sometimes zealous Puritans and ad embarrassment to the vicar.

There was no many information about the yeoman wives. The helpmate of the farmer was associated with her husband in a common enterprise. If she were more interested in the dairy of the female help, if he were more concerned with the fields and the farm labourers, both of them went to markets and fairs and bought and sold commodities. They had much to consult about together. No doubt some farmers maintained their male authority but in many cases there was a kind of working partnership. In matters of their children the yeomen were sometimes as money-minded as the gentry. They economized to provide dories for their daughters and expected that their sons should receive dowries with their wives. Shakespeare makes Suffolk complain:

So worthless peasants bargain for their wives
A market men for oxen, sheep, or corn.¹¹⁴

Yet the daughters of the yeomanry came in natural contact with the young men about the

114 G.H.Plumb, *Studies in social history,op.cit.*, p. 95

farm and the neighbouring farms, and had a better chance than girls in the country house. Here and there a ballad and some doggerel verses deal with women of the humblest classes and make them out as sometimes too strong-minded for their mates. Plumb wrote that we need not to take such evidence too seriously, but we must remember that the husbands and wives in those families were close to the instant need of things and were forced to cooperate. We look hopefully at court records, trusting to find men and women of the hard-driven groups, and we do meet many of them, usually the less worthy. Unhappily we learn too little of the relations between men and women of those groups. Poverty and misfortune do not always degrade people; sometimes they serve to develop strong characters. Such characters might well have been able to hold their own in the war of the sexes.

The women we knew in this social study collected by Plumb are the social stereotypes of the Elizabethan England who gave us the opportunity to trace the structure of the English society. Mostly were handicapped beings, subordinated to their mates, unfitted by either training or experience to play any considerable role. Those women became the relevant characters developed in memories and novels.

Thanks to another fascinating and sympathetic woman, the queen Elizabeth, we can appreciate the characters of our Shakespeare.

I grandi momenti nella storia delle arti sorgono quando coloro che esercitano il potere sono disposti ad investire nella cultura della propria nazione.¹¹⁵

3.6 Shakespeare and the natural world

Shakespeare had grown up in Stratford-on-Avon, a not uncivilized country town and had been associated through his middle-class family with interesting people. There he had met young women and men of the middle classes and small artisan groups. He had an acute sensitiveness to the indoor occupations performed by women; this delight allowed us to understand how they lived Elizabethan England.

He loved outdoor activities and this nature, revealed chiefly in those images bearing on sport and animals, enabled him to enter into the hearts of so many different characters. Other relevant qualities were his sense of humour, his passion for health, for soundness,

115 Simon Dunmore, *Monologhi Shakespeariani*, op.cit., p.25

cleanliness in all realms of being, physical, moral and spiritual.

He spent his boyhood by the banks of the Avon that was always present in his mind both in fair weather, in winter and in summer. That river was another important image for Shakespeare's mind. The Avon river, often in flood, was one of the sights of boyhood which impressed Shakespeare's imagination. As Caroline Spurgeon noted in her work, Shakespeare developed fifty-nine river images with different aspects. Shakespeare's interest in the image is largely psychological since he saw in the picture of a river overbearing its boundaries a perfect analogy to the result of stress or rush of emotion in men. He drawn three pictures of the river comparing with the life of men:

The irresistible force of a river in flood, which suffers nothing to stop it, but engulfs and swallows all it meets, and how this force is increased by any stoppage or interference; the heavy rain on an unseasonable stormy day, which accompanies the flood and aggravates it; and the appearance of the meadows after a bated and retired flood, rank and stain'd with miry slime.¹¹⁶

Only Shakespeare could emphasised this image and none of the other Elizabethan dramatists marked interest in a river flood. His pictures were vivid and beautiful; he was interested in the life of the current itself, its course and movement, how violent it was like the lives of the human beings. This simile came from his boyhood memories of the Avon at Stratford. The relevant simile was the movement of the waters like the emotions and passions of men.

Stratford was the place to seek for the original current under the arches to discover the places of his youthfulness that was impressed in Shakespeare's memory. With his schoolfellows, he had often plunged in the angry waters of the Avon, as did Cassius once with Caesar in the Tiber.

His many vivid images from wading, diving, plunging and his pictures of reeds and river weeds moving with the stream or falling below a boat, as Spurgeon underlined, were the result of a personal experience. He was fond of the river and of its sports but he did not like the fishing.

We can deduce from his dramatic utterances what Shakespeare himself thought and felt. By following the analyse of Spurgeon, many students proved that he was a devout Christian like Isabella, a scoffing materialist like Macbeth and other described him as a philosopher like Edgar. The reason is that he was with all characters and felt with them

¹¹⁶ Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's imagery, op.cit.*, p. 92

all. He debated and hesitated with Hamlet, and was all impulse with Romeo, he prayed to the God of battles with King Henry and railed on Heaven with Gloucester.

His mind was like Orsino's, who absorbing and reflecting his environment, would be real or a product of his imagination. His wit, humour and imagination gave him a well-disposed understanding of all varieties of human nature.

In life he prized most the unselfish love; he thought that the greatest evil was fear. His behaviour was that of Christ-like, namely that of gentle, kindly, honest, brave and true and deep understanding for all living things. As underlined Spurgeon, he showed a passionate interest in the Christian life and a very strong belief in the importance of the relationships among human beings, the most important of these was love. This topic was really important for the development of his characters and his actions.

It emerged that Shakespeare had the same proclivity of Trevelyan; he studied data and daily evidences. He was an observant and sensitive man who absorbed impressions and movements to register them.

Another characteristic similar to Trevelyan was that he loved country-side and he rejoiced in the revolving of the seasons, in the changing of the weather and in all the outdoor activities. Like Trevelyan he loved walking and sauntering in his garden and orchard and studying the flight and movement of birds. All through his plays he followed the natural world as he was a gardener. In *Richard II* his tendency to think of matters human as of growing plant and trees was well expressed in the central gardening scene. In moment of great emotion this tendency of his mind was very marked and he often visualised human beings as the trees and plants. As in the life Shakespeare was interested in the processes of growth and decay. He thought in a linking between men and plants. As the plants growing become painfully and then decay so the men to reach the perfection grow and then begin to decay. He was deeply impressed, as a real gardener, by the vitality and strength of seeds and their power of overgrowing and killing all. Since he believed in the likeness with the men, he could represent the same strength and power in the weeds in human character. He captured many images from grafting, that was a new process in his time and he transported into the human world by wondering if such method of control could be achieved by scientific cross-breeding also in the human race. He followed the weather of the different seasons like all English gardeners who were conscious of the disaster created by spring winds or frosts to the flowers and plants. For such images Caroline Spurgeon quoted the following instances:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
and
Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds.
Biron is like an envious sneaping frost,
That bites the first-born infants of the spring,
and on Juliet death lies
like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.¹¹⁷

Caroline Spurgeon suggested another simile. Shakespeare saw the diseases in plants with the gardener's eye and felt deep hostilities for their destruction of beauty. The disease was continually affecting the plants like evil passions destroyed the human being.

Banish the canker of ambitious thoughts,
Prospero describes Ferdinand as
something stain'd
With grief, that's beauty's canker,
and Viola lets
concealment, like a worm l' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek.¹¹⁸

These gardening similes were of common Elizabethan stock and used by other Elizabethan dramatists. We have to underline that Shakespeare had a really loving knowledge of growing things and of the gardening world that was a new discipline in his time. His care of plants and his first hand gardening knowledge had no comparison with other writers. Only Bacon had particularly interested in the care of garden and in the question of soil.

Another characteristic concerning the natural world, appreciated also by Trevelyan, was the snaring of birds, a Shakespeare's boyhood sport. His bird images were full of intense feeling for the trapped or snared bird. These images symbolised the terror and agony of mortal creature. Shakespeare's intense sympathy with the feelings of animals was captured in many similes, especially his love of birds and his horror of their sufferings.

But the most constant running metaphor and picture in Shakespeare's mind in the early historical plays was that of growth as seen in a garden and orchard with the deterioration. The image of decay and destruction brought about by ignorance and carelessness on the

117 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, *op.cit.*, p.89

118 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, *op.cit.*, p.89.

part of the gardener who did not prune or manure, was developed in the Temple Gardens in *Henry VI*. Mortimer was described as a vine, pith less

And strength less, drooping his flowering youth in a loathsome dungeon, in consequence of an attempt to plant him as the rightful heir; while Richard Plantagenet is described as sweet stem from York's great stock.¹¹⁹

Also in *Richard III* the metaphor of nature was developed and the number of tree and garden images was considerable. The royal house was thought as a tree, the children drawn as branches, leaves, flowers or fruit. The idea of this tree being planted, shaken by storms, grafted and rooted up was constant.

The royal tree hath left us royal fruit,
says Gloucester hypocritically, when pretending to refuse the invitation
to take the crown himself,
which, mellow'd by the stealing hours of time,
will well become the seat of majesty.
Buckingham, referring to Edward IV's marriage, speaks of England's royal
stock graft with ignoble plants,
and declares to Gloucester that his brother's son shall never reign,
but we will plant some other in the throne.¹²⁰

The idea of trees and branches, plants and ripeness, decay and flowers unblossomed runs as an undertone throughout the play.

119 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, op.cit., p.217

120 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, op.cit., p 219

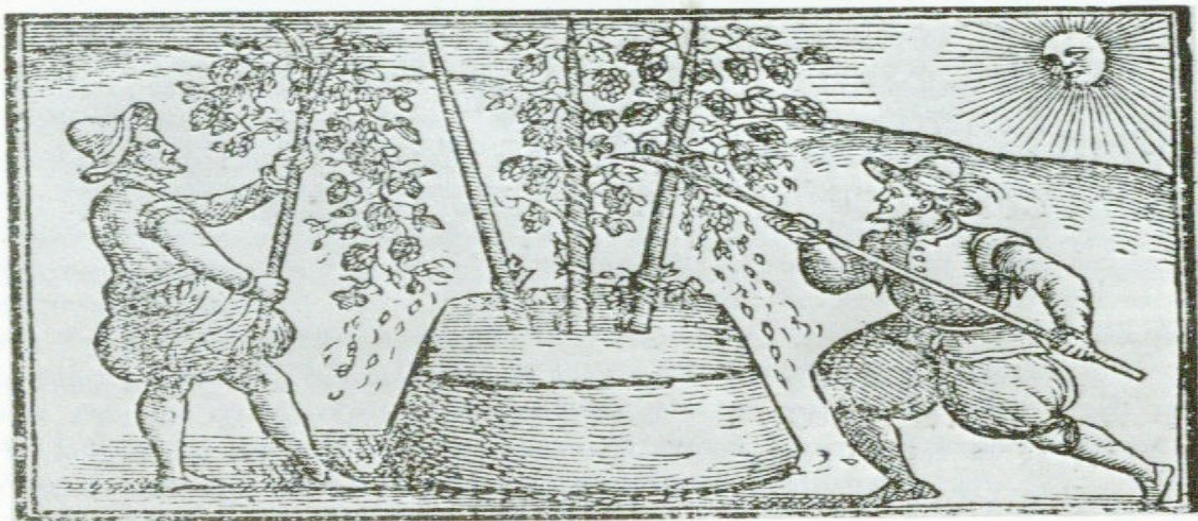


Plate 5. Tending the hops. From Reginald Scot, A Perfect Platform of a Hop Garden (1576).

The repeated use of the verbs plant, pluck, crop, wither that was applied to kings and members of the commonwealth showed how continually the picture of a garden was in mind of our Shakespeare.

In his earlier historical plays the theme of gardening and plants was undertone, on the contrary in *Richard II* became the leading theme and was presented near the middle of the play in the curious garden scene, a kind of allegory inserted for celebrating nature.

The young country playwright here translated all the horrors suffered by England under the civil wars into his pictorial imagination as the despoiling of a fair

Sea-walled garden, full of fruit, flowers and healing herbs, which
 ignorance and lack of care have allowed to go seed,
 to rot and decay; so that now in spring time, instead of all being in order

and full of promise, the whole land is,
as the under gardener says full of weeds; her fairest flowers choked up,
her fruit-trees all unpruned, her hedges ruin'd,
her knots disorder's and her wholesome herbs
swarming with caterpillars.¹²¹

This condition was the cumulative result of long-continued neglect that could be set right only working hard on it. The careless gardener, who could have avoided this deterioration, was depicted as a tree.

What pity is it, cries the gardener, that Richard had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land as we this garden, keeping in check unruly members of the state whoa are apt to be over-proud in sap and blood, pruning them as fruit trees are pruned, of which the superfluous branches have to lopped away so that bearing boughs may live.¹²²

Shakespeare loved the land he lived and his leading theme of garden and orchard was present in all his works and became a sort of habit that served to accentuate the place held in his love by the familiar country pursuit.

The dreaming and enchanted quality in the plays was reinforced by woodland beauty which stimulated poetical images and natural descriptions. These two elements melted into one enforcing the leading motif of Shakespeare's poetic.

The green corn which hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard,
which is really a personification, brings to the mind above all else the sight of the fields at the end of many a wet English summer, just as the description of the way the spring, the summer,
the children autumn, angry winter, change
their wonted liveries,
which comes under clothes, really presents us with a pageant of the swift succession of the seasons in their many-coloured garb.¹²³

Even in the farce of the rustics, Shakespeare described the nature beauty such as of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier.¹²⁴

In his plays Shakespeare was able to represent the succession of imaginative pictures

121 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, op.cit., p 223

122 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, op.cit., p 223

123 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, op.cit., p 261

124 Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, op.cit., p 262

crystallising experiences, emotions and sensations familiar to all English nature lovers. The English knew the delightful mid-season of early autumn when the night frosts nip the late summer flowers. Only Shakespeare could have painted the poet's picture of the season.

The dominant motive in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and in *Much Ado*, was English country life. In *Much Ado* Shakespeare developed the active outdoor work and sport. The outdoor bird-snaring and angling was not on Shakespeare's imagination but was supported by statistics. Here there were not many nature similes but in the orchard Spurgeon captured our attention for a succession of rural pictures.

The pleached honeysuckle-boer, ripened by the sun;
the lapwing running close to the ground,
couched in the woodbine;
the pleasant angling
to see the fish
cut with her golden oars the silver stream;
the young wild hawks, the vane blown with all winds,
the covered fire of weeds, the smoke of which so deliciously scents English gardens, the limed trap, and the wild bird being tamed all of which stimulate and sustain in us the consciousness of the background of active outdoor country life.¹²⁵

Besides the outdoor activities in the plays another relevant country topic was the group of images taken from types and classes of people who gave character to the play. Shakespeare was fond of this kind of simile and he left us many little pictures of the populace of Elizabethan England.

In his plays there were many diverse figures and type of country people who gave a vivid, amusing and realistic taste to his drama. He drawn children, beadsmen, soldiers, lords, prisoners, slaves and messengers.

In the first romantic comedies his primary characters are lovers, young men and women; differently in his last dramas the protagonists are whole families and their generations. In these dramas there are two plots: one concerning the old family and one concerning the sons and grandsons. This generation is usually represented by a daughter and her fiancè. For example *Marina* in *Pericles*, *Perdita* in *Winter Tale*, *Miranda* in *The Tempest*, *Imogen* in *Cymbeline*. The action is acted during a long period to give the possibility the children to grow. The happy ending is guarantee by the identification of the sons missed for ages,

¹²⁵ Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us*, op.cit., p 265

while old misfortune becomes happiness thanks to the hope of the new generations. The theme of the rapprochement is fundamental for the last dramas. Here we can see old discussions and the healing of old wounds. The hope a better future is left to the new generations. There is a deep philosophical meaning in these last dramas where we can perceive a magic feeling of connection between man and nature. The magic atmosphere is also a religious atmosphere, given by the theme of music symbolizing the restoration of harmony and reconciliation between old and new generation.

Henry VIII, a real king of England and his two wives, acted real historical characters, on the contrary *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *Leonte* or *Prospero* represented romantic princes. In this way the world of the last dramas is an independent world even if is linked to the previous thoughts of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare still lived in the age of James I, when many Elizabethan characters were still alive. The king was collocated in the old generation and the first part of his life was spent struggling against the problems of the end of sixteenth-century. But his son Henry, who represented the activist of protestantism and his daughter Elizabeth, who with her marriage made emerge the old traditions in a new sense, were both a new hope for the future. This real historical situation gave birth to his last dramas and thanks to his real participation to the active life of his time he influenced the poetry of his last years of life.

In *Cymbeline*, *Imogen* reminds the queen Elisabeth who was seen as phoenix, the symbol of a young bird, a regenerated queen. We can interpret *Cymbeline* as the popular opposition to a Spanish marriage. *Imogen*, the most relevant character of the drama was defined the delegate of the soul's integrity of England. *Imogen* is at the same time a virgin and wonderful woman and a pure reformed Church. The same Elisabeth represented a reborn Princess and like *Imogen* represented the pureness of the of a reformed Church. We can refer to the painting the *Ritratto dell'Arcobaleno* which indicates the imagine of the Vergin Queen transformed into a bridal imagine. Also *Imogen* was described as a rare-bird and the symbolism of birds keeps an important role in the play. She is the ancient phoenix, the Queen Elisabeth I, transformed into a pretty bride-phoenix. Her marriage with the Count Palatine Postumo Leonato represents a new union between Britain and the Roman sacred reign of August. In terms of imagines the marriage is depicted as the union of two rare-birds.

Orsù, bella sposa fenice, umilia il sole;
poiché attingi da te stessa

sufficiente calore, e dai tuoi occhi
tutti gli uccelli minori trarranno la loro allegria.
Orsù, bella sposa, chiama
le tue stelle dai loro molti scrigni, raccogli
I tuoi rubini, le tue perle e I diamanti e di essi
fatti costellazione;
e con il loro splendore mostra
che una grande principessa cade, ma non muore.
Sii nuova stella. Che a noi preannuncia
meravigliosi confini, e sii tu quei confini.¹²⁶

¹²⁶Frances A. Yates, *Gli ultimi drammi di Shakespeare*, Einaudi Ed., Torino, 1979, p.55



9. Il «Ritratto dell'Arcobaleno» della regina Elisabetta I, Hatfield House.

This union is portrayed also as the imagine of a Romano-Britannic imperial eagle prevailing on the stage.

One of the most noticeable aspects of Shakespeare's vision of life was the concept of society which he left us. His ideation of the society was closely linked to his faith in the monarchy. He thought that the belief in the monarchy was a principle of order and an instrument given by God to keep the right order in the world corresponding to the divine govern of the Cosmo. It is correct to talk of a imperial theme developed by Shakespeare. The imagines of the Empire in its sacral aspects were the base of the propaganda of Tudors and the root of symbolism used for Elizabeth. These imagines of an universally unblemished empire were used in the propaganda at Shakespeare's time and connected to the Church Reformation. One of the first instruments of propaganda of the Tudor Reformation was the recall of the *Britain History*, of Arthur legend and its chivalric manifestations with the purpose of spreading out a pure spiritual order.

For all his life Shakespeare faced with those problems that presented in his plays and his historical dramas both with hope and with desperation.

We can state that *Cymbeline*, reflecting in the form of a *masque* the marriage of the Queen Elizabeth, tends to confirm the total authenticity of the *Henry VIII*. The description of authentic characters, belonged to the English history, in the *Henry VIII* is parallel to the description of the characters derived from the mythic *Britain History*.

In this play Shakespeare reconfirmed the fundamental themes of the imperial Reformation but at the same time he created a sweet atmosphere of reconciliation and toleration for all the protagonists, be them protestant or catholic.

Again he reminded and restored the symbols of the Elisabeth's cult, in particular that of phoenix represented by the king James and his sons:

Né questa pace si spegnerà con lei, ma come quando
muore la vergine fenice, uccello prodigioso, dalle sue ceneri
genera un'altra se stessa e come lei cinta di splendore così questa regina, quando
il cielo la chiamerà fuori da questa nube di tenebra, trasmetterà le sue illustri virtù
a uno che si leverà dalle sacre ceneri della sua gloria come un astro pari a lei di
splendore e altrettanto saldo sul trono...¹²⁷

This allusion refers to James but actually it included his sons. Shakespeare used another natural imagine to describe them:

127 Frances A. Yates, *Gli ultimi drammi di Shakespeare, op.cit.*, p.70

Egli fiorirà, e come il cedro sulla montagna stenderà I suoi rami tutto intorno.¹²⁸

This image was the same used at the end of *Cymbeline*. Even if the principal branch, the Prince Henry, missed when the *Henry VIII* was composed, the other branch, the princess Elizabeth was at the centre of the splendid bridal parties. In fact the royal cedar had numerous branches; one of them was cut with Henry's death. All the hope was concentrated in Elizabeth.

Also in *Henry VIII* we found the theme of a long period where diverse generations encounters resolving the old controversies. Here the new generation are historical characters; the queen Elizabeth I appears as a newborn to renovate the times and more new generations emerged thanks to her marriage. These new generations receive a concrete historical expression in the historical drama. Especially the historical drama clarifies the ancient controversies: the religious conflicts and the disputes between Protestantism and Catholicism that the Prince Henry thought to eliminate.

In the drama Shakespeare demonstrated his tolerance and his good-nature connected to the new visions and new revelations of God. One of these moments of intuitions was acted with a magic song which raised the drama from the cruel world of religious controversies to a poetical level.

Così, musica dolce,
col tuo soave incanto disperdi le angosce del cuore;
così ogni pena, te ascoltando, muore.¹²⁹

The song became a sort of Orphean chant, practised at the French Academy of poetry and music of Baif, that had an effect of harmony and the aim of pacifying the agitated souls. Shakespeare's attitude was that of joining all the diverse good people beyond the earthy disputes.

Both in *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare used two kinds of history: the Britain History and the authentic history of English Monarchs. Through the Tudor's myth of the Britain origins, he presented a mythic character *Cymbeline* and a real King Tudor, *Henry VIII* to express his hope towards the younger royal generation.

The drama traced from the authentic history shares with the poetical drama the

128 Frances A. Yates, *Gli ultimi drammi di Shakespeare, op.cit.*, p.70

129 Frances A. Yates, *Gli ultimi drammi di Shakespeare, op.cit.*, p. 73

atmosphere of a new visions of God and a possibility of reconciliation between old and new.

As Trevelyan had connected the historical world to the poetical one so Shakespeare completed the historical dramas with some poetical elements which gave a lightness and brilliance to the play. This element kept alive the atmosphere of repartee and topical fun and delighted the early and further audiences.

Conclusions

The Master of Trinity is probably the most widely read historian in the world: perhaps in the history of the world.

Literally millions of men and women had waited to read his *Autobiography* that is full of fascinating reading. One of these, *The Call and Claims of Natural Beauty*, became the starting point of this thesis. Concentrating the attention on the relationship between man and nature it analysed historical, poetical, sociological and anthropological aspects of the natural world and his human liaisons.

Thanks to other two essays of the *Autobiography*, *Bias in History* and *the Stray Thoughts on History*, we had the opportunity to analyse the author's constant concern with the fundamental problems of historical composition and with the demand of the audience.

The moral that emerges from the *Autobiography* is perhaps that while it is an advantage to be born with a silver spoon in your mouth, it is better to know just what you want to do with your life.

The young Trevelyan was a good Latinist and efforts were made at Harrow to turn him into a classic. But

I wanted to be not a classic, but an historian.
I never remember desiring to be anything else,
except for a year when, after winning the school
prize poem twice running, I thought I might possibly
be a poet.¹³⁰

In this way as an historian he became also a poet.

More generally, I take delight in history,
even in its most prosaic details, because they become poetical
as they recede into the past.¹³¹

He defined himself not an original but a traditional kind of historian. As the son of Sir George Otto Trevelyan, the nephew and biographer of Macaulay, he has preserved the family tradition of a close alliance between literature and history.

¹³⁰ G.M.Trevelyan, *Autobiography and other essays*, *op.cit.*, p.9

¹³¹ G.M.Trevelyan, *Autobiography and other essays*, *op.cit.*, p.13

When he wrote that his histories were with the politics left out, he intended to write history following the scientific method of his days but with a study of the literary, anthropological and sociological sources of his times.

The post-war turned to the books of the Master of Trinity as an important historical problem analysed for his readers who were taken always seriously as well his subjects.

For him the writing of history has been a vocation. His chief value was to educate the public mind. The public responded making his audience and creating a growing demand.

This value was well known also by our Shakespeare who well captured the mind of his audience.

History for the Master of Trinity was only a matter of rough guessing from the available facts but it was also the basis of modern education in the humanities and the best school of citizenship.

His strong idea of connection between literature and history remained a trace in all his works where he studied with scientific elements the authenticity of history and at the same time the contribution of the literary sources.

In his masterpiece *Social History* the two inextricable components, history and literature were matched together to give a social analysis of the English history. In this was studied also Elizabethan England and his great influence on the dramas of Shakespeare. Following the direction of an alliance between historical dramas and their poetical elements, the present work rediscovered Shakespeare's plays where the stereotypes of the social models of the Elizabethan society were immortalized through a natural world's symbolism.

The natural world of the wild spaces with its animals and plants reflected the imagine of the human relationships. At the same time the descriptions of nature continually presupposed the use of metaphors obtained from the social organization of the time.

For this reason, through the book *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tells us* written by Caroline Spurgeon, the thesis captured the natural images which had represented the most important liaison between the social structure of the Elizabethan England and the poetical, dramatic world of Shakespeare's plays.

Finally it has been discovered a flimsy line that links Trevelyan to Shakespeare: both loved the out-door activities and they believed into the preservation of the natural beauty; both visualised in the history of the origins and its wild spaces the basis of the social structure; both studied literary and historical sources as an indivisible discipline of the education and both believed into the idea that only the union between old and new

generations could be the answer for passing the past traditions to the future generations.

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