



NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
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THE IMPACT OF DETERIORATION ON RURAL LIFE IN ENGLAND AS REFLECTED
IN THE POEMS OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND GEORGE CRABBE.

MASTER'S THESIS

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LEFKOSA, T.R.N.C.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| A) LIFE IN RURAL ENGLAND BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION | 4 |
| B) CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION | 6 |
| C) THE LITERARY CLIMATE OF THE PERIOD | 10 |
| THE IMPACT OF DETERIORATION ON RURAL LIFE IN ENGLAND AS REFLECTED IN THE POEMS OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND GEORGE CRABBE | 13 |
| a) The Village scene | 15 |
| b) Peasants and their working life | 16 |
| c) Moral Values (Priest, Schoolmaster, and Doctor) | 21 |
| d) Losses Enforced by Industrialisation | 26 |
| CONCLUSION | 34 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 38 |

INTRODUCTION

The deterioration of the traditional English country life during the late 18th and early 19th centuries is a very important socio-economic subject which has left deep repercussions in English Literature. Many poets have written occasional poems but two 18th century poets, Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) and George Crabbe (1754-1832) have treated the subject extensively in two poems, each from different points of view. Goldsmith's idealisation of English rural life in "The Deserted Village" exaggerates the outcomes of the Industrial Revolution and condemns the effects of the Enclosure Acts upon the villagers. Crabbe on the other hand criticises poets of the time who paint an idyllic life of the peasants in 'The Village' instead of showing it with all its hardships and difficulties. In "The Borough", Crabbe extends his topic to look at what happened to these villagers in a realistic manner as in "The Village." He describes the malpractice of masters on those who had come down in the world especially, children. Obviously these masters took advantage of the opportunities provided to them by the unjust and porous structure of the legal system in existence at the time.

Though Crabbe and Goldsmith concentrate on the same subject matter in "The Deserted Village" and "The Village" they differ greatly in many other aspects of their writing.

Oliver Goldsmith is a forerunner to George Crabbe in poetry and in his idealisation of life in villages. he concentrates on rural simplicity with a warmth and tenderness which is some what domestic. This idealisation is closely connected with the world of legend and folktale, where associations with history play a major role. Furthermore, Rural simplicity is further emphasized by Goldsmith making use of the purity and harmony of peasant language in his use of the heroic couplets which are almost lyrical in sound and movement lacking rhetoric and formality.

George Crabbe, on the otherhand, is a far more realistic writer portraying ordinary everyday life of the villagers with its hardships and preferring the use of the word 'rustic' to 'villager'. His poems are like that of a short story except in verse but with elevated language which is not in harmony with the language used by the villagers. Furthermore, his poems closely reflect his own life; poverty and unhappiness of characters. Thus, this could be seen as Crabbe's attempt to come to terms with his past and also as an approach at self consciousness in his poetic identification between morality and nature. In doing so his cloak opens slightly at times to express some conventional points which are at the centre of his clerical ties. His use of the heroic couplets is somewhat different from Goldsmith's in that they are used with rhythms and rhymes.

No matter what their differences may be, their treatment of village life and villagers during the Industrial Revolution, which resulted in the abandonment of villages, is the same. Both are excellently equipped with shrewd observation expressed in differing ways. These differences cannot be referred to as good or bad, but rather, they may be regarded as signs of originality in their subjects, which are often a result of specific and inspired insight into the conditions of the time, gained through daily experiences as they shared feelings and prejudices with fellow citizens in their society who took part in the same events and who shared the same assumptions and experienced similar actions.

In order to get a clear picture of the works of Goldsmith and Crabbe, an understanding of the background of the period is essential, that is, what life in Rural England was like prior to the Industrial Revolution and the changes which had come about along with it. Also in taking a very brief look at the literary climate of the period a light will be shed on the works of these poets.

A) LIFE IN RURAL ENGLAND BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Agriculture was the main field of employment in England, employing about one third of the population. According to J. Dean this made up approximately sixty-eight percent of the families who were occupied wholly in agriculture, (Dean 1965:13-14). Others were occupied with small Domestic or Cottage Industries where cotton and wool were transformed into cloth. This type of industry enabled work to be undertaken within the limits and confines of ones home, in comfort and in leisure. Local tradesmen and craftsmen working with mainly primitive tools satisfied the needs of the villagers, and so, all the essential needs of the villagers were met in the village without any or minimal outside requirements. Thus, the country was a place where constant work was performed; from dawn to dusk and because the income of the villagers was hardly enough for hand to mouth the peasants lived in poverty and darkness.

One of the reasons for peasants being in poverty was due to the fact that transportation was inadequate. Goods produced at this time could not be traded widely, because of inadequate and underdeveloped transport systems. Slow transportation meant that produce like milk would go sour and fish would smell long before it reached its destination. Efficient and swift transportation was needed in the distribution and timely delivery of goods, if one was to make a sufficient, if any, profit from

this produce.

The system of land distribution was in the manner of 'Commons' in villages. Traditionally fields were divided into strips and each farmer was allocated a number of strips in different areas to cultivate or use as he pleased. A section of turf was left between each strip to separate and identify them. This method allowed each inhabitant of the village to work a number of strips. The produce and profit of which were his. This system of cultivation was not however easy, as a great deal of time was lost in both planting, caring and ploughing of the crops, since the farmer had to travel from one strip to the other, for the strips were often not in one complete block.

The peasants of England were thus free to move about as there was nothing to bind them to one area. They generally travelled from one village to the other according to where their skills were needed. The workforce was made up of skilled workmen such as mill wrights, wheel turners, black smiths, carpenters, canal builders and metal turners. This abundance of skilled workers turned out to be of great importance for England in the years to come, as its workforce was neither bound to any one area, and its make-up was one which was the essential base in the building, maintaining and working of new machinery in a modern industrial society, which was to be the shape England took in the future.

B) CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Towards the end of the century trade became more competitive and the needs of industry likewise became more pressing and difficult to meet. Village industry in cottages and houses was no longer productive enough. There was a need for change in organisation. The next sixty years from 1760 to 1820 witnessed changes in the customary ways of running industrial businesses. Work was no longer undertaken in homes and cottages uncontrolled by villagers, but rather, in a supervised manner in factories under the eye of the employer. This meant that villagers who previously worked in their homes had to give up their leisurely type of work to become workers in factories outside their homes under someone else's control, subject to strict rules.

Water also gained importance just at this time (1750's). James Brindley began a movement in the building of canals, and it was not long before canals became a means of transportation throughout England. A canal network enabled communication and trade between villages, towns and cities via barges which carried not only common everyday goods made in villages to be traded countrywide but also news from one area to the next. Water also became an important source of energy in the form of steam powered machines. James Hargreaves utilised it in his invention of the spinning-jenny which led to great developments in both spinning and weaving as well as making it impossible for the cotton industry to remain in cottages and homes as the new

machines were too bulky to be housed in cottages. Subsequently, agriculture also experienced changes brought about by new agricultural techniques and inventions which made farming much more productive than before. The Enclosure Acts enforced on the commons, meant that lands once owned by the village in the form of common grazing lands were fenced off and each villager received his share of fenced area in one piece. But, it was generally found that the peasant could not compete with the larger farmer who used the latest inventions and techniques. Within a short period of time he was forced to sell his land to private investors to become landless agricultural labourer or to drift into new towns in the hope of employment. It is sad to say that this period resulted in the small farmer becoming a rarity.

When the strips were done away with, farms became larger, producing far more food than they did during the open field system. It was in this period that Charles Viscount Townshend discovered improved methods of farming by experimenting on his Norfolk estate. He introduced turnips into his cultivation of crops and found that this provided both a better rotation of crops, and an increased supply of meat, as he could feed his cattle on turnips throughout winter.

Ploughs, reapers and thrashing machines were some of the agricultural machines invented at this period which made the work of the farmer easier and far more productive.

Thus after the 1850's agriculture became more efficient mainly due to developments in : 1) improved crop-growing methods; 2) advances in livestock breeding; and 3) the invention of new farm equipment:

It is a fact that. agriculture in England was advancing with numerous new technologies, but the matter had a darker and a sadder aspect to it. The traditional English village life was in danger of extinction. The new farming methods relying on the use of machinery left hundreds of thousands of village farm labourers unemployed and forced them to leave their village and move to large industrial centres in search of jobs in the newly established factories where working conditions were appalling.

With the introduction of big machines and factories there was an influx of people from the villages into new settlement areas where factories were established leaving behind them the small villages in solitaire deserted and abandoned. The peasants which once filled these villages with their cheery voices throughout the day as they performed their daily work, and after dark with their simple pleasures were nowhere to be found. The utterly desolate villages became unkempt reflecting the sadness of the countryside and those who once lived there in harmony and as one with nature to become workers in the ugly mass of industry. Gradually the number of hand workers who were once the backbone in the setting up and maintaining of factories and machines were phased out and deprived of their livelihood. The

development of the newly created industries with its increased flow of goods eventually lead to the emergence of a new wealthy middle class. This middle class assumed such importance that it influenced government decisions on political reforms providing better standards of living in a welfare state. There were, of course, workers who boisterously opposed the introduction of new machines as they became well aware that this would lead to either the eventual loss of a job or a lowering of wages. One such group was the 'Luddites' a group of workers who banded together in 1811 to oppose the use of industrial machines in the manufacture of cloth and lace. Though unsuccessful at the time, they gradually learnt how to take advantage of the wealth provided by these machines to demand higher wages. Later, after the Poor Law was passed in 1834 conditions in factories improved from mere slavery conditions with minimal wages to those which were respectable.

It is not surprising, therefore, that offences for which death penalties could be imposed also increased at this time, along with the rising crime rate due to the extremely low wages paid to starving field labourers and disheartened workers.

C. THE LITERARY CLIMATE OF THE PERIOD

The social changes which took place also played an important role in the Literary climate of the period influencing thoughts of Neo-Classicism to a gradual movement towards a Pre-Romantic view. Neo-Classicism is also known as the Augustan Age, taking its name from the Roman emperor Augustus during whose reign Latin Literature is believed to have reached its height. English authors of the period (1700-1750) placed great importance on the Romans and Greeks and it was a well known fact that when they considered history they only traced as far back as the Greeks and Romans and no further. With this belief in mind authors of this time thus tried to imitate and revitalise many of the philosophic and literary ideals of the period of Augustus. This was the belief that "life and literature should be guided by reason and common sense" thus aiming for balance and harmony in their writings. (World Book V6 p318)

Classicism therefore, emphasised that reason, was the law of life leaving no room for feelings. It required order, balance and simplicity; in order to achieve these, reason and logical analysis had to be stressed with a view to discovering what is universally true: good and beautiful.

Yet there were those writers who reflected the questions being posed by the public, about the substantiality of the theory being put into practice. They criticised the hypocritical ways of those in power in their sad attempts to achieve balance and harmony. Satire became the most common type of literature during this period and provided the authors with the means of instructing while entertaining. The leaders of this style of writing who undoubtedly come to mind are Jonathan Swift in prose and Alexander Pope in poetry. Swift ridiculed the hypocrisy of teachers and administrators of order in his works while Pope ridiculed the behaviour of the members of the aristocratic society with his distinctive use of heroic couplets. Most of the satire, however, was extremely bitter and personal and could not therefore be called reasonable.

In Neo-Classicism we witness a tie, a bondage, with the past, (reasons for which have been outlined above), especially those of the Greek and Roman values recuperated as models, for instance, the presence and importance of mythological characters as opposed to real true to life characters. Melancholy was another aspect: usually those which touched on the sympathies and caused pain seemed to dominate the period. So there were numerous poems about grave yards in search of the sadder aspects of life with "Grim Nature versus Melancholy" (p7 Lit in England) and worked closely with sparks of the supernatural firstly in the Novel.

The Pre-Romantics conceivably were a group of poets who had neither the Romantic views or styles nor those of the Classical age, but rather, a slight combination of both, somewhat like a rainbow connecting the two ages. These poets were distinct, and many of their works held evidence of awareness of social problems and the love of Nature with an appropriate quantity of exaggeration which became typical of English Romanticism. They were not tied to Augustan harmony and moderation to a great extent but employed their imagination to pour out their personal views of the world.

THE IMPACT OF THE DETERIORATION ON RURAL LIFE IN ENGLAND AS REFLECTED IN THE POEMS OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND GEORGE CRAEBE.

18th Century poets like Oliver Goldsmith and George Crabbe were strongly moved by the social changes which were taking place in the most important sector of their society: agriculture and rural life. These poets were extensively aware of their environment in which they acted and interacted and thus, could not remain unaffected by the turmoil of social and political changes which succeeded one another. In their attempts to come to terms with these changes, fruits of excellent quality were produced in which their deepest mental and emotional impulses were recorded. The subject matter and the treatment of all this proves firmly that which is dear to their hearts.

In "The Deserted Village" Goldsmith takes up the topic of declining English village life with a sense of sharp observation describing what villages were like before the Industrial Revolution and to what state they were reduced after it. Before the Industrial Revolution villagers were content and happy with what little they had:

"Seats of my youth, when every sport could please....
Where humble happiness endeared each scene:"

(11.6-8)

The bright, cheerful and innocent life of the villagers as depicted by Goldsmith is frowned upon by Crabbe, who criticizes poets like Goldsmith and their writings on the harmonious life of the villagers. Crabbe disliked pastoral poetry because he believed it to be a fiction, as poets never knew the real pain of the country people and, thus, he believed their poems were artificial, and imitations of the ancients (Virgil):

From Truth and Nature shall we stray,
Where Virgil, not where Francy, leads the way?
Yes, thus the Muses sing of happy swains,
Because the Muses never knew their pains."

(The Village; 11.19-22).

Instead Crabbe asserts strongly a more realistic view of rural life and simplicity in "The Village" and to a great extent, one which is much easier to accept:

"... I paint the cot,
As Truth will paint it, and as bards will not:
Nor you, ye poor, of lettered scorn complain.
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
O'ercome by labor, and bowed down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?"

(11.53-58).

During the course of the development of "The Deserted Village" and "The Village" we have the impression that both poets have strong sympathy for the villagers and their set of values. Villages contained characters and typical features described in detail, which were the blue prints of the typically rural representation which can be seen as having a universal and timeless significance. These become the themes of the poems. However totally opposite representations of rural life in villages are disclosed by the two poets Crabbe and Goldsmith:

a) The Village Scene

The perfectly balanced scene of a pretty village is unmistakably Goldsmith's, like a painting with no flaws.

"How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never - failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made:"

(11.9-14).

A perfect scene with everything that a peasant needs is included even the hawthorn bush conveniently at the dispense of lovers. For all its brightness of tone, this is thoroughly Augustan in its poetic texture of everything being balanced in an ordered society.

On a contradictory note, however, Crabbe is much more

"Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears:
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye:
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war:
There poppies, nodding, mock the hope of toil:
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil:"

(11.63-72).

Here the picture is much closer to life as anyone who has had even a distant connection with rural life may be willing to agree. The peasants have a thoroughly difficult time throughout their lives in trying to combat with nature every season in their never ending battle to obtain a good harvest from infertile land.

b) Peasants and their working life

Here again we have two conflicting ideas from our poets. Crabbe depicts most peasants to be lazy and drunken without putting in a good day's work:

"Draws from his plow the intoxicated swain:

Went only claimed the labor of the day.

But vice now steals his nightly rest away.

- Where are the swains, who, daily labor done,

With rural games played down the setting sun:"

(11.90-94).

He accuses them of being corrupt, robbing the land and smuggling:

"Where now are these? - Beneath you cliff they stand,

To show the freighted pinnace where to land:

To load the ready steed with guilty haste:

To fly in terror o'er the pathless waste

Or, when detected in their straggling course,

To foil their foes by cunning or by force:

Or, yeilding part (which equal knaves demand),

To gain a lawless passport through the land."

(11.101-108).

This sort of village society is being formed, justifiably as Crabbe states because honesty and hard work do not provide a humane living any more. There are, of-course, still a few hard working peasants to be found but these are living on the brink of starvation, like slaves bending under the strain of continuous work with little to show for it:

"Go, then! and see them rising with the sun.

Through a long course of daily toil to run:
See them beneath the dog star's raging heat.
When the knees tremble and the temples beat:
Behold them, leaning on their scythes, look o'er
The labor past, and toils to come explore:"

(11.142-147)

Their days pass as they linger on poverty thinking of problems
which never end and yet to be faced.

Quite the opposite is emphasised by Goldsmith who discloses
a life of ease, where the peasants are engaged in very little
work and yet are able to sustain a living, not a grand one, but
one which enables a moderate living:

"When every rood of ground maintained its man:
For him light labor spread her wholesome store.
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:"

(11.58-61)

The thought is extended to go beyond portraying ease of
rural life to imply that villagers work was not at all laborious.
In that, after a full day's work they could still find both the
time and the energy to participate in simple forms of enjoyment
under the shade of a big tree. The young participating and
competing in the games while the old observed:

"When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed:"

(11.16-20)

The thoroughly Augustan poetic texture of balance and antithesis in line 20 shows poetic sensibility by Goldsmith. The movement and the flow of ideas are both controlled by a mind which finds it natural to link all its perceptions and intuitions to a conscious rational order. We have here a pattern strongly Augustan in its use of balance, order, and antithesis.

Goldsmith's view, like those of others in his period (and even to some extent, like those of today) was that the country was idyllic and with the changes brought about we risked losing this paradise:

"Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain."

(11.1-2)

This idea is expressed from the very beginning of his poem and emphasized throughout with lines similar to these:

"How blest is he who crowns in shades like these.

A youth of labor with an age of ease"

(11.99-100)

The villagers are seen as having a life of contentment, working hard in their youth, and resting quietly in old age. The tenderness and warmth with which Goldsmith describes rural simplicity is intimacy of the highest form. His love and longing for a perfect rural life can best be described by the words "love is blind". Goldsmith's love for village life is so great that he is blind to the truths which surround peasants and their daily life, a situation so obvious to Crabbe:

"But these are scenes where Nature's niggard hand

Gave a spare portion to the famished land:

Hers is the fault, if here mankind complain

Of fruitless toil and labor spent in vain."

(11.131-134)

The riches and wealth of the land is only obtained by a few while most spend their lives slaving for no profitable means obtaining only pain and anguish which will accompany them in their old age or lead to an early death:

"See then alternate suns and showers engage,
And hoard up aches and anguish for their age: ...
Then own that labor may as fatal be
To these thy slaves, as thine excess to thee."

(ll.148-153)

The deliberate use of enjambement by Crabbe in line 152 stresses the fatality of the strain of rural life on peasants.

c) Moral Values (Priests, Schoolmaster and Doctor)

The priest who is symbolic of moral values in Christian societies plays an important role in English villages. The role of a conscientious priest who gave condolences and thereby strength to the villagers in their hour of despair to sustain their courage and thus to strive on is emphasized by Goldsmith. He was also a person who had influence over those who had come as disbelievers. Once inside the church they quickly changed their minds and remained to listen to his preaching. The beggars and wanderers all found comfort and safety within the church, where the priest treated them with hospitality and kindness, forgetting their faults and making them feel as equal and as worthy as those around them:

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride.
And even his failing learned to Virtue's side:
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all.
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies.
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allured to brighten worlds, and led the way."

(11.163-170).

Furthermore, the image is so immense that the priest is likened to a God on a mountain so high above the normal people that he possesses no human faults, he guides the peasants like a shepherd guides his herd and lights the correct road for them to follow:

"To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

(11.187-192)

Crabbe's indifference about the village priest is certainly apparent and he quotes from Goldsmith's poem "The Deserted Village" to show his indifference cynically:

"He. passing rich with forty pounds a year"?

And no: a shepherd of a difference stock:

And far, unlike him, feeds this little flock:

A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday's task

As much as God or man can fairly ask:

The rest he gives to loves and labors light.

To field the morning, and to feasts the night:"

(11.303-309).

A man who sees his duty to be only on Sundays spending the rest of his days doing light duties in the day and feasting in the night. Even his duty of blessing the dead is only performed on Sundays:

"The bell tolls late, the moping owl flies round,

Fear marks the flight and magnifies the sound:

The busy priest, detained by weightier care,

Defers his duty till the day of prayer:

And waiting long, the crowd retire distressed,

To think a poor man's bones should lie unblessed."

(11.341-346).

Sarcastically Crabbe criticizes the many priests who take advantage of their post and instead of setting an example for the presents morally by doing what is right they horrify them for their own comfort and well being. The personification of the owl (usually a symbol of evil) warrants the gloom of the moment.

as well a contempt for the priest.

Just as grimly the local doctor is unmasked to reveal a "pack" unworthy of his title. So shallow in character that he cringes when summoned to a peasant in need bedside very official, concerned and without sympathy for these peoples' troubles, only wanting to do the bare minimal and to treat as quick as he can:

"He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer:

In haste he seeks the bed where Misery lies.

Impatience marked in his averted eyes:

And, some reply he rushes on the door.

His drooping patient, long inured to pain,

and long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain:"

(ll.287-293)

The heroic couplet at the end of this quote is an example of Crabbe's terse expression in his description of types of false standards that were socially typical in England at the time. The moral issues and conflicts which people of moral stature embodied were critisized in a hypocritical manner by Crabbe.

Goldsmith, however, was blind to the injustices of these people. maybe because he had no real first hand experience in rural life and merely idealized what that life was like. The schoolmaster was thus, seen as a man with worldly knowledge who was severe but kind having the only fault of being educated and

always amazing the villagers with all he knew:

"The village all declared how much he knew:
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too:
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And even the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing too, the parson owned his skill.
For even though vanguished, he could argue still:
While words of learned length, and thundering sound.
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around:
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew."

(11.207-216)

There is, however, no mention of the schoolmaster attempting to pass on what he knew to the villagers.

The drinking house where villagers and passersby stopped and exchanged woes over a beer or discussed the politics of the day which became stale by the time it reached the village, in the silent presence of the maid who took away their cares for the moment with her kiss on their beer mugs, was another important landmark of the village as disclosed by Goldsmith:

"Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where gray beard Mirth and smiling Toil retired.
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.

Imagination fondly stoops to trace

The parlor splendors of that festive place:"

(11.221-226)

Community spirit was healthy and men had both the time and money to spend hours relaxing over a beer talking about other cares than that of farming.

d) Losses Enforced by Industrialization

The title "The Deserted Village" seems to have been used with a special purpose to set the scene, and after a general introduction we find the second stanza building up a negative picture of the desolation of villages with effective words further emphasized by alliteration in line 42 which not only strengthens what is being said but also stresses Goldsmith's concept for what has happened.

"Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn

Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn:

Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,

And desolation saddens all thy green:

One only master grasps the whole domain,

And half a tilage stints thy smiling plain:

No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,

But choked with sedges, works its weedy way:

Along thy glades, a solitary guest,

The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest:

Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies.
 And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers. in shapeless ruin all. 42
 And the long grass o'ertops the moldering wall.
 And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand.
 Far, far away thy children leave the land."

(11.35-50).

The iambic pentameter used throughout the poem is especially effective in this stanza (for example line 47) in stressing decay and desertion. The village is left in sad neglect for the trees and weeds to grow wildly, its inhabitants forced to immigrate to either foreign lands or to big cities in the hope of finding employment. The new owners of land, private investors, are belittled by Goldsmith, who sees them as "the tyrant". "master" then "the spoiler's hand" in a wonderful synecdoche:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
 Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
 Princess and lords may flourish, or may fade:
 A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
 When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

(11.51-56).

The intentional use of "ill" twice, is to emphasize the

deterioration of villages at the sake of industrial cities. More importantly with the departure of the village community the deeply rooted traditional rural virtues such as "Contented Toil", "Care", "Tenderness", "Piety", "Loyalty", "Love" and "Poetry" are also being lost:

"I see the rural Virtues leave the land...
Contented Toil, and hospitable Care,
And kind connubial Tenderness are there:
And Piety, with wishes placed above,
And steady Loyalty, and faithful Love:
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade:"

(ll. 398-408).

These rural characteristics that peasants were born with cannot be replaced and will be lost forever.

Goldsmith questions the logic behind such a move. Are our gains so great that we can forsake all this?

"Yet count our gains. This is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss..."

(ll. 273-275).

No says Goldsmith, this will lead to the downfall in country life and the loss of rural peasants.

"And even the bare-worn common is denied."

(11. 308).

Where the village peasants could once feed and graze their herd on, is now fenced leaving them with the only option of going into cities to seek their livelihood. What awaits them in the cities is degradation of the worst kind:

"If to the city sped - What waits him there?

To see profusion that he must not share;

To see ten thousand bareful arts combined

To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;

To see those joys the sons of pleasure know.

Extorted from his fellow creature's woe."

(11. 309-314).

Villagers become slaves to those who robbed them of their land, their labours only benefiting the rich, leaving them with the pains, in such misery and hunger that they had not known in their humble villages. At every turn seeing their fellow villagers in reck and ruin, forced to beg like dogs at the doors of their masters.

"Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled.

Near her betrayer's door she lays her head.



And pinched with cold. and shrinking from
the shower.

With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour"
(11.331-334)

Their hopes and ambitions of what they expected to find in
the city abandoning them to a life not even suited to animals.

These are the scenes which bring anguish to man and cause
him to curse the importance placed on money and luxury:

"O luxury! Thou cursed by Heaven's decree.
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasure only to destroy!
Kingdoms, by thee, to sickly greatness grow,
Boast of a florid vigor not their own.
At every draught more large and large they grow.
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe:
Till sapped their strength, and every part
unsound.
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round."
(11.385-394)

Crabbe's view of peasant life differs from Goldsmith's in
that he sees the deterioration as being inevitable because it was
already apparent in their life and did not occur as a result of
the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution only
speeded up what was to come:

"He once was chief in all the rustic trade:
 His steady hand the straightest furrow made:
 Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
 To find the triumphs of his youth allowed.
 A transient pleasure sparkles in his eyes:
 He hears and smiles, then thinks again and
 sighs:
 For now he journeys to his grave in pain:"

(11.188-195)

Alliteration lends weight further on, to the notion of the
 humdrum monotony of the institution commonly known as 'hard
 work':

"Why do I live, when I desire to be
 At once from life and life's long labour free?"

(11.206-207).

There is however, one point they agree on. Both Crabbe and
 Goldsmith denounce the evil that results when people place too
 much importance on money and luxury, resulting in even love being
 driven out by selfishness and materialism. Not only the rich but
 also by those who are poor or were poor for a great portion of
 their lives and thus knew the pain of living constantly in hope.
 Crabbe illustrates this view effectively in his poem "The
 Borough" which concentrates on a single character 'Peter Grimes'

who becomes a fisherman, a trade passed down from his father. Grimes' father was honest but died a poor man so he decides that he was not going to die the same death. In his attempts to become a wealthy man he decides to buy a boy to assist him in his stealing, as well as, satisfying his need to have someone to control:

"But no success could please his cruel soul.
He wished for one to trouble and control:
He wanted some obedient boy to stand
And bear the blow of his outrageous hand."
(11.53-56).

He does so and each of the three apprentices he punishes, starves, and beats sadistically, resulting in their eventual death:

".... some on hearing cries,
Said calmly, Grimes is at his exercise."
(11.77-78).

Crabbe is criticizing and condemning his own society which allows boys to be bound to cruel masters such as Grimes. He achieves this cleverly by using the word 'exercise' with a double meaning. Crabbe's didactic purpose is revealed here to express his view indirectly about the corruption and falsities of people in power and how the public chooses to be blind to all the

mistreatments which occur around them. His characters in general like Grimes, are typical of the period, the real and highly particularized recognition of an individual goes hand in hand with a keen sense of the socially typical, representing the general nature of people encompassing their moral issues and conflicts. Thus the didacticism about Crabbe's unmistakably moral interest is not narrow in any way. Though he writes in the eighteenth-century spirit his conviction that 'Nature' to which art is to be faithful to is itself the mighty container of moral law, thus one should not be tempted to distort the facts: the truth is an element for instruction in itself. In most of his tales "we can trace an explicit moral purpose, where the centre of interest shifts increasingly to the attempt to define the complexity of the moral issues involved, and with this there goes a corresponding increase in the complexity of poetic organization of the tale itself." (1)

1) Boris Ford, The New Pelican Guide to English Literature - From Blake to Byron, 1982 Northumberland Press Ltd. U.K. p.89.

CONCLUSION

Whether deterioration of Rural Life in England was a result of the Industrial Revolution, or that it was already on the decline is irrelevant. What is important is that there was deterioration. How was this recorded in the poems of the period and what social events could have effected the writings of these poems.

Firstly, the literary atmosphere during the end of the 18th century was purely Augustan - the almost unfailing attachment to the heroic couplet, antithesis, the use of conventional and highly artificial poetic diction in representing the subject matter always in a balanced, harmonious and orderly manner.

Secondly, socially Britain was in a transitional period during which her economy originally based on agriculture and domestic handicrafts took an industrial character. The introduction of mechanical improvements provoked an upheaval affecting the community at all levels. That is, the Industrial Revolution brought about a transformation in the cultural organization of the labour force which resulted in an immense social change.

Every culture is concerned with the defence of its established system of values. and the extent to which challenges by either individual members or a group are tolerated or welcomed is always limited. It is a long process involving both patience and conviction to prove to readers that what you are writing about is worthwhile.

Many poets were moved to an internal reflection of what they saw, including their own preconceptions and experiences. Their writings reflected these with the added effect of their own personalities integrated.

Goldsmith, likewise angered by what he thought to be limitations placed on rural life and peasants wrote a sympathetic poem "The Deserted Village" in which he idealises what rural life was like and how peasants were forced to leave their leisurely subsistence to one of continual hard work in a harsh and cruel city. The action which sprang originally from his temper, inclination, or indifference at the enclosure acts imposed on commons resulted in a totally idyllic pastoral poem. The poet's disapproval of what was happening reveals a personal disappointment and regret as he wanted to return and spend his final days in such a village when he retired from the congestion of urban life.

"I still had hopes my latest hours to crown.

Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down:
To husband out life's taper at the close.
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes. for pride attends us still.
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill.
Around my fire an evening group to draw.
And tell of all I felt. and all I saw:
And, as an hare whom hounds and horns pursue.
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew.
I still had hopes, my long vexations past.
Here to return - and die at home at last."

(ll.85-96)

Here he compares himself to a hare retiring from the chase which is an exaggerated way of using language, an element of the Romantic period.

Crabbe, on the other hand, has a more realistic outlook as he bases his views on factual evidence and is not at all inhibited by moral dissatisfaction, so that his portrayal of his surroundings is remarkably frank and comprehensive. This unsentimental clarity allows him to see not only the situations themselves, but also the motives behind them. His acute insight makes us feel certain that he knew what he was doing, largely because his poetry reflected to a great extent his own life. He was poor for many years, and thus, was well equipped to write about poverty and the poor using his insight to write long

descriptions of the life and problems of the poor people. Crabbe felt compelled to realistically describe life as he saw it in a continued attempt to relate his topics to the question of "poetic truth" and in doing so his awareness of all that was irrational and inexplicable in human behaviour became a robust determination to explore and understand it in his framework of values. This aspect of Crabbe's character belongs to the Romantics, the readiness to face and examine the non-rational in his own way.

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