

Batna2 University
Department of English

Course: CCL

Level: 1st Year LMD

Groups: 1/2/3

Semester 1/ Academic Year: 2021/2022

IV. The British Countryside

Britishness as a cultural identity has become surrounded by doubts and misgivings in recent years, partly because in a multicultural society it has begun to seem exclusive (to some), and it has been aggressively appropriated by the far right. Yet it is clear, from many markers, that a sense of Britishness stubbornly persists in millions of people, and that a very prominent component of this is a feeling for the countryside.

The British feel for the countryside is particular. Here it is not regarded, as in other nations, as merely an alternative to, or escape from, the town (although that is part of it). The landscape is seen as special, even unique, in itself: ideally a small-scale, intimate and unthreatening mix of the farmed and the wild, which is pretty and charming rather than grandiose and magnificent. And this landscape brings in its train promises of an alternative life: for some people, simple closeness to the natural world; for others, that of self-sufficiency and the cultivation of the smallholding; and for not a few, let it be said, the chance of joining the rural squirearchy.

But whatever the motivation, this aspiration for green fields and the village has deep roots: for centuries our countryside and its life have been venerated, not to say idealized, and it is in poetry that this has principally taken place. By the end of the 19th century "nature poetry" was a major theme in English literature. All of which essentially propose the same thing: that the natural world and rural life in Britain have a special claim upon our souls.

The Quiet Life: Alexander Pope

Happy the man whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,

Content to breath his native air

In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,

Whose flocks supply him with attire,

Whose trees in summer yield him shade,

In winter fire.

Blest who can unconcern'dly find

Hours, days and years slide soft away,

In health of body, peace of mind,

Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,

Together mixt; sweet recreation;

And innocence, which most does please

With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,

Thus unlamented let me die,

Steal from the world, and not a stone

Tell where I lie.

Assignment: Answer the following question

Do you think the countryside has the same value for other countries and more particularly for your country?