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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Dominika Kubová se ve své práci zaměří na dílo britského básníka Johna Betjemana a topografické aspekty jeho tvorby. V úvodní části zmapuje úzký a citlivý vztah tohoto básníka ke krajině, jejím různým formám a architektuře. Na tomto základě provede detailní analýzu jeho básní s cílem vystopovat hlavní rysy Betjemanovy topografické vnímavosti, konkrétně povahu jeho vztahu k různým druhům míst, přírodě, městům, předměstím a budovám včetně sakrálních. Teoretickou část práce i analýzu podloží kombinací relevantních primárních a sekundárních zdrojů.

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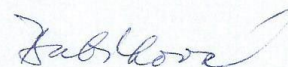
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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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## **ANNOTATION**

The aim of this bachelor paper is to provide an analysis of John Betjeman's poetry to trace topographical elements in his work. The first chapter provides a historical and cultural background concerning the shift from Victorian to post-war Britain, focusing on demographic changes in urban and rural life. Then, the transformation of Victorian and modern architecture is examined. The analytical part explores Betjeman's relation to different places, specifically to cities, suburbs and the countryside and his perception of architecture, especially ecclesiastical.

## **KEYWORDS**

John Betjeman, Victorian Britain, post-war Britain, place, landscape, architecture, poetry

## **ANOTACE**

Cílem této práce je analýza básnické tvorby Johna Betjemana a zmapovat tak topografické aspekty jeho díla. Úvodní kapitola stručně popisuje přechod Británie z Viktoriánského do poválečného období a zasazuje ho do historického a kulturního kontextu. Zde se práce zaměřuje především na demografické změny, které nastaly v městských a rurálních oblastech. Další část se věnuje rozdílu mezi Viktoriánskou a moderní architekturou. Analytická kapitola práce zkoumá Betjemanův vztah k různým druhům míst, zvláště pak k městům, předměstím a venkovu, a dále zkoumá také básníkův pohled na architekturu, a to především sakrální.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

John Betjeman, viktoriánská Británie, poválečná Británie, místo, krajina, architektura, poezie

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## INTRODUCTION

John Betjeman, one of the most popular modern English authors, was born in 1906 in Gospel Oak, London. He was beloved by the public, not only for his poetry but also for being a broadcaster for more than forty years when he shared his passion for churches, landscape and many other different things through the radio and television. Peter J. Lowe argues that Betjeman's poems include a sense of the "Englishness," as they depict cultural traditions and attitudes of the English nation. When the 1950s brought post-war modernization, Betjeman felt the urgency protect and preserve English culture that was almost lost as Britain went through significant changes in nearly every aspect of people's lives.<sup>1</sup> The aim of Betjeman was to make people remember all good values British nation once had, all flaws that needed to be repaired and the beauty of their country that needed to be seen. According to Derek Stanford, Betjeman is mainly considered as "a poet of place," as his poems are set in many different locations all over Britain.<sup>2</sup> From Cornwall to London, Betjeman filled his poems with vivid, colourful descriptions of various locations and mixed it with sentimental feelings, so the result was a poem evoking all kinds of deep emotions and showing strong bonds with certain places.

Stanford points out that all Betjeman's poems could be seen as autobiographical, as they represent "fragmentary flashes of the past, sudden trains and bursts of recollection, images returning to light from oblivion."<sup>3</sup> Those poems, which are not told by Betjeman himself, still keeps an autobiographical element in them, because describing certain places, time periods and people, Betjeman always puts his own strong feelings into his verses. Therefore, "the poems carry the mark of his affection."<sup>4</sup> Stanford suggests that they are mostly romantic love poems. Whether it is Betjeman's love for sacral architecture, the Victorian era or unspoiled nature, his heart is always there.<sup>5</sup>

This bachelor thesis consists of three parts. The first part examines the cultural and historical background of Victorian and post-war Britain. It focuses on demographic changes that significantly influenced not only the British society but also the face of the British landscape. The following part also provides the theoretical background, which consists

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<sup>1</sup> P. J. Lowe, "The Church as a Building and the Church as a Community in the Work of John Betjeman," *Christianity & literature* 57 (2008): 559.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Stanford, *John Betjeman: A Study* (London: Neville Spearman, 1961), 72.

<sup>3</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 30-31.



of an examination of the architecture of the Victorian and modern post-war period. It explains the massive transformation of architecture and a tremendous change in the public's taste.

The aim of the third chapter of the thesis is to analyse John Betjeman's poetry regarding his relation to different kinds of places and trace topographical elements in his work. The analytical part is divided into four subchapters, from which the first one deals with Betjeman's antipathy to modernization in the post-war era and his affection for the past. As the poet often looked to the past and described the old times vividly, he brought a sense of nostalgia and sentiment to the light. This part also argues that time and place is an equally important element in his poems and usually even qualify each other. The second subchapter examines Betjeman's ability to search and find beauty in such places like cities and suburbs, where no one else was able to see it. The poet also uses topographical elements in his poems as a tool to point out all flaws of the British society, such as snobbery or lack of taste. In the third subchapter, the focus is on sacral architecture, which plays a significant role in Betjeman's poetry. He praised churches not only for their glorious architecture but also for their function as a place summoning community. Therefore, a mission of many of his religious poems is to make the audience notice how beautiful can church be and how beautiful is to have faith. The last subchapter analyses Betjeman's admiration for nature, which can be mainly found in his poems about Cornwall.

The aim of the thesis is to examine Betjeman's relation to different places through analysing topographical aspects of his poetry. It clarifies the poet's opinion on cities, suburbs, churches, the countryside and modernization that has changed the face of the British landscape.

# 1 FROM VICTORIAN TO POST-WAR BRITAIN

To understand Victorian Britain, one must remember that it was an enormously long period of time, which began with the reign of young Queen Victoria in 1837. Therefore, the period brought many changes to almost every aspect of life, such as politics, law, economics and even society. One of those changes was connected to new innovating technologies, which have changed people's lives forever. In "*Daily Life in Victorian England*," Sally Mitchell explains such technological improvements and their influence on people:

Science, as well as invention, had an effect on both material condition and the way people thought about the world. Victorian scientific and technical achievements altered daily life in ways both large and small: vaccination against smallpox; chloroform for surgery; photography, suspension bridges, sewing machines, and safety matches; glass bottles and rubber nipples that could be sterilized to safely feed infants when nursing was impossible; the telegraph, telephone, and typewriter; railways, steamships, bicycles, buses, trams, subway trains, and (finally) automobiles; kerosene lamps, gaslights, and then electric lights; canned and frozen foods, rayon, X-ray photographs, and safety razors.<sup>6</sup>

An important innovation for the Victorian architecture was a new process, which could cheaply transform iron into steel, so new construction were built, including "long steel bridges"<sup>7</sup>, which could easily "carried rail lines across rivers and gorges that had previously formed impassable barriers."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, even architecture had been challenged more than ever before. Another altered thing was the urban life that was influenced by a development of public transportation. Before that, people had to walk everywhere, but now they had an opportunity to use buses or subway and it was easy to get to all parts of their city. The end of the Victorian era came with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and was followed by so-called Edwardian era, which lasted until the First World War in 1914.<sup>9</sup> The nineteenth century was a period of growth when the Industrial Revolution caused that Britain became a superpower and the largest world empire because of the colonization. Therefore, the twentieth century could be seen as a great disappointment caused by losing power, the disintegration of the British Empire, the Great Depression and two destructive world wars.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 71.

<sup>7</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 72.

<sup>8</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 72.

<sup>9</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 71-76.

<sup>10</sup> James Obelkevich and Peter Caterall, *Understanding Post-War British Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1-8.

The post-war years brought many other changes. In the 1950s, when the Second World War was gone, people were looking forward to brighter future as Britain started to recover from the economic crisis.<sup>11</sup> Every decade in post-war times brought another cultural change to the United Kingdom. James Obelkevich explains the culture of the 1960s:

Increased state patronage is important, but the crucial influences governing cultural developments of the 1960s were: a new openness to international influences; a relaxation in censorship; and expansion in all levels of education (which, for example, produced both new audiences for opera, and a crop of sophisticated feminist writers). Earlier educational reforms came to fruition at the beginning of the decade, with the emergence of such working-class writers as Alan Sillitoe, David Storey, Shelagh Delaney and Dennis Potter. All are important for producing novels and plays, but, more important, their works then provided the basis for films and television programmes.<sup>12</sup>

The 1950s and the 1960s could be seen as the decade of television entertainment and first commercials, which encouraged people to a materialistic lifestyle. They filled their houses with different devices, such as microwaves, trash compactors, and larger fridges. Materialism brought a tremendous change in the society, as Obelkevich points out that:

What previously had been luxuries for the rich—cars, refrigerators, televisions, overseas holidays—now were enjoyed by the majority of the population.<sup>13</sup>

While some people started to realize the foolishness of materialistic lifestyle in the 1970s and later in the 1980s, the majority of the British Society turned into one shopping crowd, looking up to celebrities. Following decades could be characterized by growing wealth and globalization.<sup>14</sup> The mood of today's Britain is captured by a British journalist Andrew Marr:

In the years since 1945, having escaped nuclear devastation, tyranny and economic collapse, we British have no reason to despair, or emigrate. In global terms, to be born British remains a wonderful stroke of luck.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Obelkevich, *Understanding Post-War British Society*, 1-8.

<sup>12</sup> Obelkevich, *Understanding Post-War British Society*, 185.

<sup>13</sup> Obelkevich, *Understanding Post-War British Society*, 141.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2009), 43-50.

<sup>15</sup> Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 852.

## 1.1 DEMOGRAPHY OF CITIES

After two world wars, the face of British landscape has remarkably changed. During the twentieth century, British society started to move to cities and increasingly popular suburbs. The analysis made by the Leadership Centre in London states that today, over 90 per cent of British people live in various cities and towns, despite the fact that about 85 per cent of the surface of Britain consists of vast countryside.<sup>16</sup> T. R. Gourvish argues that at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, “a top-heavy urban system dominated by London and the great cities of Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester,”<sup>17</sup> destroyed British rural society. The fact is that the country is still magnificently covered in field, hills, woods and mountains. According to Mark Clapson, from the University of Lancaster, “Britain is an urban nation with a rural heart.”<sup>18</sup>

The development of cities in Britain was highly influenced mostly by the Second World War, as they were among main targets of the Luftwaffe, German air force, whose aim was to interrupt production, kill civilians and also to destroy or, at least, weaken the morale of the nation. Especially after the Blitz in 1940, the government brought a plan for evacuation. Over four million of the British were relocated from the cities to relatively safer and calmer countryside. For many families, this shift was only temporary. Therefore, after the war, they moved back to their homes in the cities. The displacement of people was not the only consequence of the war. The aerial bombardment destroyed many British cities, which had to be rebuilt. The most affected was the capital. Huge areas of London were levelled to the ground, whether it was in the centre or the outer suburbs. Some other cities were damaged such as Belfast, Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry, Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow. Many historical and treasured buildings were destroyed too.<sup>19</sup> For example, very painful for the nation was the loss of the medieval heart of Coventry, where even the magnificent Coventry Cathedral was bombed. This aerial bombardment led to discomfort in British cities, and post-war reconstruction became a matter of urgency.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Leadership Centre, *State of the suburbs: An economic, social and environmental analysis of the English suburbs* (London: The Local Futures Group, 2009), accessed December 7, 2015. <http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/docs/suburbs.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> T. R. Gourvish and Alan O'Day, ed., *Later Victorian Britain, 1867-1900* (London: Macmillan Education, 1988), 36.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” in *A Companion to Contemporary Britain: 1939 - 2000*, ed. Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 59.

<sup>19</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 60-62.

<sup>20</sup> John Ray, *The Night Blitz: 1940-1941* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 2004), 99-105.

Mainly during the Victorian era, the middle-class people decided to leave their homes in city centres, and they changed it for larger and more separate houses with gardens, which were waiting for them in the suburbs. This exodus continued through the twentieth century.

The post-war reconstruction was based the New Towns Act of 1946, designed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom to create new towns.<sup>21</sup> This plan brought significant changes for the British landscape. The earliest new towns were designed as garden cities, which were planned by Sir Ebenezer Howard, the founder of Garden City movement. The movement produced two towns: Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City both located to the north of London. One of the ideas of this movement was to provide a “green belt”, an inviolable area around towns and cities, designed to prevent them from outward spreading. “Green belt” like this was for example created around London in 1935.<sup>22</sup>

Later new towns, such as Bracknell and Harlow, were intended to promote the idea of collective housing. A Labour government tried to present these areas as attractive places with a sense of social mixing. They were introduced as the best places for working and also for middle classes. By the end of the 1960s, these towns were filled with only working classes. The people from the middle class “preferred to own their houses rather than rent from the development corporation.”<sup>23</sup>

The reconstruction of British cities damaged by war was gradually completed through the 1950s and the 1960s. New plans for towns and cities were created and they included the rebuilding of city centres, new ideas for housing and new schemes for roads, which were adapted to growing enthusiasm for motor cars. In the 1950s, architects came up with the modern high-rise apartment blocks, which were seen as the solution to the growing population. Initially, British society believed that these blocks introduced an excellent idea for housing. They were seen as “a major, even heroic, improvement on the poky rows of huddled terraces from which so many working-class households wished to be liberated.”<sup>24</sup> However, many problems soon came to light. These houses had not only technical but also architectural shortcomings. Together with a general cultural preference for a “family house with a garden”<sup>25</sup>, many people started to hate their new homes.

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<sup>21</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 59.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Alexander, *Britain’s New Towns: Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 17-21.

<sup>23</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 63-64.

<sup>24</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 64.

<sup>25</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 64.

After only a few decades, the high-rise apartment blocks, such as the Hyde Park complex at Sheffield and the Red Road in Glasgow, were torn down and replaced by low-rise housing.<sup>26</sup>

## 1.2 DEMOGRAPHY OF SUBURBS

The process of suburbanization began in the nineteenth century and lasted through 1900 and 1939 when for example London tripled in size. Already in 1839 S. H. Brookers wrote:

An Englishmen when he first travels on the Continent particularly remarks ... on the comparatively small number of suburban villas which are seen in the vicinity of even the largest towns, and which form such a delightful feature in the landscape scenery of England. Par eminence, England becomes the country of suburban villas'.<sup>27</sup>

The suburbanization in England continued after the end of the Second World War and culminated in the 1980s and 1990s when people moved to suburbs not only for more comfortable housing but also for employment.<sup>28</sup>

Today, one half of British population live in suburbs, and the most heavily suburbanized country is England. According to the Leadership Centre in London, over 84 per cent of England's population live in suburbs.<sup>29</sup> After the Second World War, several social surveys found that "most people preferred a house to a flat."<sup>30</sup> The majority of people desire a house with a garden in suburbia. Particularly those with families preferred a spatial house to an apartment. Not only does suburbia provide children with more space and garden, but suburban areas are also considered much safer than inner cities, because the criminaility in suburbs was very low. Thanks to a mortgage loan, even people from the working class could afford living in suburbia. Therefore, suburbia was "no longer the preserve of the middle classes." The fact is that the intellectuals from the middle class were not very pleased by this. During the 1950s and the 1960s, it became a trend to quit the slums and areas with poor housing and to buy a new suburban house. People wanted to get out of busy, hectic dirty city

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<sup>26</sup> Clapson, "Cities, Suburbs, Countryside," 64-65.

<sup>27</sup> S. H. Brooks, *Designs for Cottage and Villa Architecture: Containing Plans, Elevations, Sections, Perspective Views, and Details, for the Erection of Cottages and Villas* (London: Thomas Kelly, 1839), 7.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Clapson, *Suburban Century: Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the United States* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003), 2.

<sup>29</sup> The Leadership Centre, *State of the suburbs*, accessed December 7, 2015.

<http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/docs/suburbs.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Clapson, "Cities, Suburbs, Countryside," 66.

centres. The ideal place to live was clean, safe, quiet suburbia with many green parks, open spaces, many shops and well-provided transport. Another advantage of life in suburbia was being very close to the countryside.<sup>31</sup>

The earlier suburbs from the Victorian era, the Edwardian era and interwar period, were changing. Later suburbs in the 1970s were much different. These areas were newly built together with employment parks, multiplex cinemas, restaurants and increasingly popular retail parks, which were full of shops, bookstores and large supermarkets. These leisure facilities were once a part of the city centre, but they moved closer to growing suburbs. Despite the fact that there are many anti-suburban critics, the high number of British suburbs proves that “the great majority of British people are better housed than at any period in the country’s history.”<sup>32</sup>

### **1.3 DEMOGRAPHY OF RURAL AREAS**

Britain is a country made up of many upland or lowland areas. The most beautiful British uplands are for example Northern England, south-west England, and also parts of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These areas are among the most natural places in the United Kingdom. Britain is still a country of an extensive field, and arable farming is still preserved, although it was greatly influenced by the introduction of mechanization. While “a variety of crops, notably cereals and vegetables, continue to be grown,”<sup>33</sup> since the 1960s, more common is “glasshouse production”, which is used by hypermarkets and garden centres. Despite all that, farming continued to decline and farmers became unemployed. Most of them tried to look for work. Therefore, they moved to towns and cities. On the contrary, the middle-classes moved from their towns to the villages “to pursue a rural dream.”<sup>34</sup>

As towns were growing and the process of suburbanization was at the peak, vast areas of once agricultural land were taken and turned into building plots. However, Clapson argues that it could be more serious.

It could certainly been worse, however, because the post-war countryside has been heavily protected. The National Parks Act of 1949, for example, preserved some of Britain’s finest landscapes while managing the impact of tourism. A

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<sup>31</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 65-66.

<sup>32</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 67-68.

<sup>33</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 68.

<sup>34</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 69-72.

range of voluntary organizations, including the National Trust, the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England and the Rambler's Association, each of which was in existence before 1939, continued to monitor the loss of rural and accessible land.<sup>35</sup>

The legislation prevented those rural areas from massive house-building, but even so the image of the countryside has changed. The main reason for it was a fast growing tourism, which started in the Victorian era. As reported by Michael Paterson, the Victorian times were referred as “an age of leisure.”<sup>36</sup> Thanks to better living standard and progressively improved working conditions, people could spend their money and time on their hobbies, sports and primarily on traveling. To travel was no longer only a privilege of upper classes. Anyone could afford cheap travels around Britain, which were provided by growing railway network. Paterson argues that the initial purpose of railways was to transport goods and products like milk, fruit, and vegetables to markets lying far away. Later, trains were used to transport materials such as stone, iron, slate, and clay. As a result, originally small neglected hamlets were expanding into towns and cities and gain their importance during the Industrial Revolution. In the second half of the nineteenth century, trains started to be used by passengers, and it was the seacoast, that became the most popular destination for them.<sup>37</sup> Sally Mitchells describes the first railway:

The first rail lines, used for hauling coal and other heavy freight, were built in the mid-1820s. Liverpool and Manchester were connected in 1830 by a regularly scheduled service that carried both people and goods. The great expansion, however, came in the 1840s, when passenger lines connecting most of England's towns and cities were built over a span of less than 10 years. The term *railway mania* is often used to describe the period between 1844 and 1848. It was virtually a gold rush: lines were projected, rights-of-way secured, shares issued, construction begun—and then, depending on the circumstances, the owners and stockholders either grew rich or lost all of their money when the line encountered some problem that kept it from being finished.<sup>38</sup>

According to John K. Walton, the railway contributed to “transforming old towns and creating new ones.”<sup>39</sup> Thanks to new trains, it was not a problem to get easily to the seacoast. The

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<sup>35</sup> Clapson, “Cities, Suburbs, Countryside,” 69.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Paterson, *A Brief History of life in Victorian Britain: A Social History of Queen Victoria's Reign* (London: Robinson, 2008), 298.

<sup>37</sup> Paterson, *A Brief History of life in Victorian Britain*, 154-157

<sup>38</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 73.

<sup>39</sup> John K. Walton, “The seaside resort: a British cultural export,” *History in Focus* 9 (2005): 1, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Sea/articles/walton.html>.



popularity of many Victorian seaside resorts, including Brighton, Torbay, Blackpool or Southend, continued to grow during the twentieth century until they were replaced by destinations abroad, mainly in Continental Europe. Walton claims:

It was not until the 1970s that competition from new kinds of holiday destination, together with changing tastes and expectations, began to damage what were by this time 'traditional' family holiday destinations.<sup>40</sup>

In conclusion, the face of the British landscape has always been highly influenced and tightly connected with the development of the British society. Places, where people live, reflect what people want, what they are going through and what they need. In the case of the United Kingdom, the society had to face the Industrial Revolution causing a rapid growth of cities and flow of people away from the countryside, and when they were tired of dirty and crowded cities, the suburbs were built. Then Britain experienced two world wars, and many cities became a target for frequent air attacks. As those destroyed places were recreated, the idea of collective housing started to be more favored. Another trend the landscape had to face was new road network for more popular motor cars and constantly growing suburbs. Since the 1970's until these days, the majority of the Brits choose life in suburbs, where they have everything they need, including large houses with gardens and all sorts of entertainment.

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<sup>40</sup> Walton, "The seaside resort", 1.

## 2 SHIFT FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN ARCHITECTURE

“Architecture is the only art you cannot escape.”<sup>41</sup>

People might find the way how to avoid music, paintings, sculptures and films, but architecture is something that surrounds them everywhere. As Gavin Stamp argues, “buildings have a profound effect on the way we live, work and feel.”<sup>42</sup> Architecture is a form of art, which reflects the way people live and also their always changing taste. It is important to understand that it has not only artistic but also historical value. Therefore, this chapter will examine the massive shift from the Victorian architecture to British post-war taste.

### 2.1 VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN ARCHITECTURE

Social changes have always influenced the landscape and even architecture. Therefore, an architectural style at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century was tremendously transformed due to the Industrial Revolution, which Alexander Clement called “the single most significant influential force in the development of Modernist design and architecture.”<sup>43</sup> This shift in architecture was mainly provided by the use of new materials, such as glass, steel and concrete, and advanced modern construction methods. The influence of the Industrial Revolution was also captured by Magali Sarfatti Larson in his work:

Experiments with new materials and technologies, with new building types and kinds of architectural commissions, prompted deeper changes in the conception of architecture than did all the formal novelties.<sup>44</sup>

John Betjeman points out that there was a battle in the Victorian architecture, which is famously known as the battle of styles. The fight started when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, and it was a competition between the Classical and the Gothic style of architecture.<sup>45</sup> Anne Bordeleau suggests that very influential neoclassical architect was Charles Robert Cockerell, who gained his education in countries such as Greece, Egypt

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<sup>41</sup> Gavin Stamp, *Anti-Ugly: Excursions in English Architecture and Design* (London: Aurum, 2013), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Stamp, *Anti-Ugly*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Clement, *Brutalism: Post-war British Architecture* (Ramsbury: Crowood, 2011), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Magali Sarfatti Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Façade: Architectural Change in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 21.

<sup>45</sup> John Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 75.

and Italian Sicily. Bordeleau suggests that Cockerell's most important project might be a classical design of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England, created around 1840.<sup>46</sup> Even though this museum is together with other classical buildings highly appreciated in the twenty-first century, in the mid-Victorian times, any style inspired by Greece, Turkey, Egypt or India was seen as something too flashy, stuffy and old-fashioned. Therefore, many Victorian architects preferred the Gothic. It was the ancient English style, which seemed to be more relevant to Britain than any Roman or Greek architecture. *A Pictorial History of English Architecture* suggests that as the years went, the Gothic was considered “the only honest style”<sup>47</sup> because it carried signs connected with Christianity. Such element is, for example, the pointed arch. According to John Betjeman, the aim of Gothic Revival architects was not to bring the Middle Ages back but to use Gothic elements and make them even greater and more astonishing than ever:

They did not want slavishly to copy the work of the Middle Ages – though it was better than copying pagan temples. ... They wanted to go on from where the Middle Ages left off, and to bring gospel to the slums of the new industrial cities.<sup>48</sup>

An excellent example of the Gothic Revival is the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens, in London, designed by Sir Gilbert Scott between 1863 and 1872.<sup>49</sup>

The architecture of the late Victorian period was greatly influenced by the use of electricity. Moreover, the beginning of 1900 brought an idea to let a new architectonic style represent the change in society or as Clements claims “embrace the spirit of the age.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, it was crucial to break from old traditions, which in this case meant breaking from “historicist ornamentation.”<sup>51</sup> Orientalist, Greek, and Roman styles were considered absurd because all of them have something common, and that is affection for ornamentation. According to Clement, the architects refused to decorate their buildings in Greek or Roman style and they rather preferred to use:

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<sup>46</sup> Anne Bordeleau, *Charles Robert Cockerell, Architect in Time: Reflections around Anachronistic Drawings*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 114.

<sup>47</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 76.

<sup>48</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 81.

<sup>49</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 83.

<sup>50</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 9.

... reinforced concrete structures which were entirely visible, reducing historical ornament to a minimum so that the exterior could reflect the inner structure rather than hiding it.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, during the Edwardian period from 1901 to the First World War,<sup>53</sup> mainly two types of houses were built. The first category is represented by private houses, which were famously designed by British architect Richard Norman Shaw. He created a new popular style called the English Queen Anne Revival.<sup>54</sup> Shaw was described by John Betjeman as someone who: “revolutionized English house building.”<sup>55</sup> Betjeman argues that Shaw’s houses looked much more original than any houses built before him, and furthermore, he explains the principle of Shaw’s originality:

His walls were strong and thick. His chimneys were often external features which soared up the walls like buttresses. Inside, his houses had deep embrasures, vast Tudor fireplaces, subtle changes of level, and broad, stout stairs. ... He liked to make his buildings suit their setting and purpose.<sup>56</sup>

According to W. Knight Sturges, the style of Norman Shaw was so unique and influential, that it spread not only all over Britain but it also reached the United States of America.<sup>57</sup> Shaw became famous for his spacious private houses, designed for higher classes.

For those, who could not afford large private residences, designed by prominent architects, there was a second type of a house, and that is a house in growing suburbs, which were more and more popular mainly due to the favorable location. Suburbs were close to the countryside with the fresh air but not too far from pulsating cities. In fact, late Victorian suburbs did not differ much from any other village.<sup>58</sup> Betjeman points out Surrey as an example of such suburbs:

Thus was Surrey populated with passable imitations of old farms, old cottages and small manor houses, Georgian or Tudor, by architects who had thoroughly

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<sup>52</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Alan O’Day, ed., *The Edwardian Age, Conflict and Stability 1900-1914* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), 3.

<sup>54</sup> W. Knight Sturges, “The Long Shadow of Norman Shaw,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 9 (1950): 15, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/987471>.

<sup>55</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 89.

<sup>56</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 89.

<sup>57</sup> Sturges, “The Long Shadow of Norman Shaw,” 16.

<sup>58</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 89-93.

learned under Scott, Street, and later under Shaw, the art of making a new house into a home instead of just a villa in a row.<sup>59</sup>

Houses built in suburbs, for example in Surrey, Cheshire, attached to Manchester and Liverpool, and Worcestershire, which is attached to Birmingham, were designed in the so-called Domestic Revival style. This architectural style was deeply inspired by the traditional English cottage.<sup>60</sup> Betjeman describes houses of the Domestic Revival:

Houses by these men and their many associates are always a delight to enter, however small. The doors are of seasoned wood, the windows do not admit draughts, handles and hinges are practical and strong. Fireplaces draw, light from the garden outside comes into the house till late. They are not all perfect and some of them are quirky, but they have character.<sup>61</sup>

## 2.2 POST-WAR ARCHITECTURE

The main change in post-war architecture was caused by a new type of architects and their training. The problem was that an architect had many new duties, such as town planning in new suburbs, sort of engineering to know how new systems of ventilation and heating work, and to all of this, an architect needed to be skilled in the business world. The young architects did not have a problem to learn these new practices, but Betjeman explains that “some architects were not so conscientious.” Moreover, in the 1930s, the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed an “Architects Registration Act,” whereby every architect had to be accepted by the Registration Council. Without the registration, no one could call himself and architect.<sup>62</sup>

The twentieth-century architecture was influenced by many schools, including the School of Architecture in Liverpool, which trained many leading architects such as Sir James Stirling or Lord Holford. Despite the growing tendency to see styles as “superficial” and contempt for the word “neo-Georgian,” the neo-Georgian school produced some magnificent buildings. The style could be characterized by symmetry and decorative elements. Architects like Adshead and Ramsey designed their buildings, such as the Duchy

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<sup>59</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 89.

<sup>60</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 89-90.

<sup>61</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 90.

<sup>62</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 97.

of Cornwall Estate in Kennington, in the Georgian style, but they adapted them for modern use.<sup>63</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century, the British society was divided into people welcoming new modern forms, while the other ones were still tight to old buildings in Victorian style and did not want to lose them. Therefore, modernist buildings were not easily accepted. Mauro F. Guillén explains what modernist architecture is:

“Modernist architecture is the child of industry and engineering. Its rise during the early twentieth century dovetailed with the spread of scientific management, historically the most controversial and influential approach to the organization of work. The modernist architects read about scientific management, thought of buildings as machines, embraced the ideas of waste reduction and order, used such notorious efficiency techniques as time-and-motion study, collaborated with industrialists and firms, and strived to turn architecture into a science driven by method, standardization, and planning.”<sup>64</sup>

Some people were not ready to break those bonds with certain places. Andrew Ballantyne points out that “The National Trust, a charity which conserves historic buildings, is now the UK’s largest landowner.” Feeling nostalgic and sentimental about places that people once knew will always be a current issue.<sup>65</sup>

Between 1945 and 1975, Europe including the United Kingdom had to face a dominant form of modern architecture called “Brutalism,”<sup>66</sup> which was also represented by Sir James Stirling. Alexander Clement described Brutalism in this way:

“It is characterized by large, sometimes monumental, forms brought together in a unified whole with heavy, often asymmetrical proportions. Where concrete was used it was usually unadorned and rough-cast, adding to its unfortunate reputation for evoking a bleak dystopian future.”<sup>67</sup>

In the beginning, new Brutalist designed mainly civic buildings, but in the 1960s their influence reached other areas of architecture, such as housing or educational and commercial buildings. The main trend brought by Brutalism was an adamant skeletal frame made of reinforced concrete. According to Clement, sometimes this modern style was used as “extension

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<sup>63</sup> Betjeman, *A Pictorial History of English Architecture*, 97-100.

<sup>64</sup> Mauro F. Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>65</sup> Andrew Ballantyne, ed., *Architecture: Modernism and After* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 22.

<sup>66</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 7.

<sup>67</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 7.

to an existing historic building.”<sup>68</sup> An example of such extension can be found in London, where the Guildhall was redesigned. Originally, it was one of the oldest building in the city, dating to the fifteenth century, but a part of the building was damaged during the aerial bombing in the Second World War. In 1974, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and his son completed their work on the extension of the building. Clement argues that the most typical brutalist element could be “an undulating canopy of angular concrete umbrellas supported by tapering beams, reflecting the Gothic detail of the medieval building connected to it.”<sup>69</sup>

Even though the British society might felt like their old traditions are slowly slipping away, their chapels and cathedrals were not forgotten. Many of these sacral building were rebuilt after the Blitz, but also, entirely new churches were commissioned.<sup>70</sup> The way how modern churches were designed is explained by Clement:

Changes in the shape of ecclesiastical building had already happened on the Continent so, in the spirit of rebirth, British faiths turned to Modernist architects to break with the traditional forms of Gothic and neo-Classical and the old internal templates. The same elements would be there but arranged in a way that sought to blend more readily with the way congregations use them and flow through them. This, in essence, was the new liturgical movement which had gained momentum in France after the building of Le Corbusier’s Notre Dame du Haut chapel at Ronchamp.<sup>71</sup>

Although the aesthetic quality of Brutalism has been widely discussed, in recent years in Britain, Brutalist buildings were revived as so-called Neo-Brutalism, which is now part of the architecture of the twenty-first century.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 32.

<sup>69</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 32-34.

<sup>70</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 141-147.

<sup>71</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 141.

<sup>72</sup> Clement, *Brutalism*, 155-156.

### 3 PLACE IN THE WORKS OF JOHN BETJEMAN

John Betjeman is widely considered as a poet of place. His unique ability to perceive the spirit of a place and his deep passion for architecture allowed him to create excellent poems which sensitively catch the atmosphere of different locations in the United Kingdom, especially in England. Betjeman's poems are nothing like simple descriptions of such locations or some buildings, but they deeply examine people's tight relations and bonds with those places, as Philip Irving Mitchell explains:

Much of Betjemans work as a poet, as an architectural critic, and as a preservationist grew out of love of place, but not simply place. Betjeman believed he wrote out of reverence for people and for the places bound up with them. Locale for him was not just spatial, but also social and historical.<sup>73</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to analyse topographical aspects of the poetry of John Betjeman. Firstly it focuses on poet's feelings connected to different places, including cities and suburbs. Secondly, this chapter draws attention to Betjeman's relationship to ecclesiastical architecture and his relation to the countryside, mainly Cornwall.

#### 3.1 IRRITABILITY OVER MODERNIZATION

Since the Victorian times, Britain has changed rapidly. While most of the people were settling in suburbs, another important thing that has changed was architecture. John Betjeman, with his "romantic sensibility regarding landscape and architecture,"<sup>74</sup> could not find any pleasure in new modernist style. In *Ghastly Good Taste*, he wrote: "So long as architecture remained in the hands of those that cared for it, no harm was done."<sup>75</sup> Betjeman believed that modern architecture of post-war Britain was something tasteless, lacking beauty, soul and tradition. However, it was not only architecture that concerned him. It was the new style of living. The problem of post-war times is that the world has become a hectic, chaotic place, where people are extremely busy, as they try to pursuit their careers and other dreams as fast as possible. In this mindless race, they forget to notice the world around them. One might say

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<sup>73</sup> Philip Irving Mitchell, "Love is Greater than Taste," *Christianity and Literature* 63 (2014): 258.

<sup>74</sup> Mitchell, "Love is Greater than Taste," 259.

<sup>75</sup> John Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste: Or, a Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of the English Architecture* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2008), 85.



that the mission of Betjeman's poetry was to make people stop, make them notice and experience the beauty that surrounds them. His poems search for something what British painter Paul Nash once called the "genius loci," also known as the spirit of place.<sup>76</sup>

Another essential part of the poetry of John Betjeman is an affection for the past, mainly for the Victorian and the Edwardian period, which he remembered from his childhood. Betjeman saw the past as something inspiring and educating. It is important not to forget the past because it is a crucial part of national identity. An example of Betjeman's poems celebrating and recalling the past is "Death of King George V," which describes the public image of the King, who embodied the old times that have changed forever. The poet reflects his undoubted nostalgic feeling about the past because the old era disappeared together with the king, as well as with good traditional values. The reader can easily visualize how the entertainment looked, as Betjeman mentions bird hunting, stamp collecting and for example horse riding.

Spirit of well-shot woodcock, partridge, snipe  
Flutter and bear him up the Norfolk sky:  
In that red house in a red mahogany book-case  
The stamp collection waits with mounts long dry.

The big blue eyes are shut which saw wrong clothing  
And favourite fields and coverts from a horse;  
Old men in country houses hear clocks ticking  
Over thick carpets with a deadened force;<sup>77</sup>

The final stanza of the poem depicts the public image of the king. He represented honesty, bravery, and other excellent virtues. In last lines, the collision of the old times and a new one are described. The king symbolizes the old days, and he could only "sit and stare" at the changes in modern time, where "new suburb stretched beyond the runway" and "a young man lands hatless from the air."<sup>78</sup>

Old men who never cheated, never doubted,  
Communicated monthly, sit and stare

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<sup>76</sup> Mitchell, "Love is Greater than Taste," 259.

<sup>77</sup> John Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman: selected by John Guest* (London: John Murray, 1978), 28.

<sup>78</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 28.

At the new suburb stretched beyond the runway  
Where a young man lands hatless from the air.<sup>79</sup>

Derek Stanford argues that in Betjeman's topographical poetry, "time and place qualify each other." His poems connected to certain places are at the same time attached to the period of time, as Stanford calls it "poems of place with the vintage-mark of time, ancient or modern, fairly set upon them."<sup>80</sup> An example is "In Westminster Abbey", which is set at the beginning of the Second World War and the period together with the place plays a crucial role in the poem. According to Stanford, in some Betjeman's poems, time and location might say two different things, and that creates an irony with a sense of pity or sadness.<sup>81</sup> Such pattern can be found in "On Seeing an Old Poet in the Café Royal." In the first stanza of the poem, the speaker comes to the Café Royal, a place he used to know very well, but it has changed. He does not recognize those modernistic lamps or even new foreign food like "Devilled chicken," and "Devilled whitebait. Everything seems little strange. There is a different spirit in this place, which makes the speaker feel nostalgic and maybe even little disappointed.

I saw him in the Café Royal,  
Very old and very grand.  
Modernistic shone the lamplight  
There in London's fairyland.  
'Devilled chicken. Devilled whitebait.  
Devil if I understand.<sup>82</sup>

The second final stanza uses personal names, which according to Stanford, "evoke a self-contained intimate world."<sup>83</sup> Those names in the poem do not represent an atmosphere of the place, but more likely an atmosphere of the certain period. In this poem, the poet asks: "Where is Oscar?/Where is Bosie?" He is referring to famous writer Oscar Wilde, who died in 1900 and his dear friend Bosie, while Wratishlaw, the third name in the poem, is referring to famous British poet Theodore Wratishlaw, who also lived in the Edwardian times.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, these names take the reader back to the nineteenth century and help to create an overall image of those times. The speaker does not recognize anyone in the Café that has

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<sup>79</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 28.

<sup>80</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 82-83.

<sup>81</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 82-83.

<sup>82</sup> John Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems* (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd, 2006), 166.

<sup>83</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 83.

<sup>84</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 82-83.

a new clientele. The last two lines bring a certain smell, which also evokes the Edwardian era because according to Clive James, Sen Sen was a breath-freshener used in that time.<sup>85</sup>

'Where is Oscar? Where is Bosie?  
Have I seen that man before?  
And the old one in the corner,  
Is it really Wratislaw?'  
Scent of Tutti-Frutti-Sen-Sen  
And cheroots upon the floor.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.2 RELATION TO CITIES AND SUBURBS

The earliest poetry of John Betjeman also included the poetry of town, mainly Oxford as well as London with its boroughs. In the nineteenth century, poetry concentrated principally on nature, but the twentieth century brought the city and the metropolis to the forefront.<sup>87</sup> Most Modernist poets connected the city with feelings of disenchantment, anxiety and hopelessness,<sup>88</sup> but Betjeman's poems celebrated its beauty. According to Stanford, "instead of cultivating our feeling for mountain, lake, and stream, the poet has discovered and uncovered for us the attractions and sights of the ordinary town: the charm railway stations, of non-conformist chapels, of parish churches, and Victorian houses."<sup>89</sup>

Most of Betjeman's poems describe places, which he knew well. Therefore, many of his works are based on his own memories and personal relations to particular buildings or areas.<sup>90</sup> A good example of a topographic poem about a place that Betjeman knew intimately is about Aberdeen Park and its St Saviour's church. Betjeman had a great topophilic affection for this spot for not only did his grandparents marry there in 1870, but it was also a place, where his father had married his mother in 1902.<sup>91</sup> At the beginning of the poem "St. Saviour's, Aberdeen Park, Highbury, London, N," the speaker takes us to a park, which is hidden from the boring "worn-out London," full of disturbing noises, drinking and smoking people

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<sup>85</sup> Clive James, "Product Placement in Modern Poetry: Glittering fragments in Cummings, Crane, Betjeman, and Seidel," *Poetry* 5 (2011), accessed February 02, 2016, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/article/241854>.

<sup>86</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 166.

<sup>87</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 73.

<sup>88</sup> David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar, ed., *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 403.

<sup>89</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 72.

<sup>90</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Mark Mason, "John Betjeman's Highbury," *Highbury Community News*, February, 2004, 1.

and busy shops, and described as "alight". The poem demonstrates Betjeman's ability to find beauty and peace even in such places as hectic heavy-urban cities. For the poet, this park is a place where he can escape from the wild world. In this stanza, the speaker introduces us to "a great Victorian church," that is "tall, unbroken and bright:"

Stop the trolley-bus, stop! And here, where the roads unite  
Of weariest worn-out London — no cigarettes, no beer,  
No repairs undertaken, nothing in stock — alight;  
For over the waste of willow-herb, look at her, sailing clear,  
A great Victorian church, tall, unbroken and bright  
In a sun that's setting in Willesden and saturating us here.<sup>92</sup>

The second stanza is filled with a sentimental feeling when the speaker remembers his parents: "these were the streets they knew," but those streets have changed a lot. The only thing that remains the same is the church, but it is now surrounded by "tall neglected houses divided into flats." The speaker is carried away to the idyllic past as he sees his parents going to "matins," a service of morning prayer or to evening service, called an "evensong."<sup>93</sup>

These were the streets they knew; and I, by descent, belong  
To these tall neglected houses divided into flats.  
Only the church remains, where carriages used to throng  
And my mother stepped out in flounces and my father stepped out in  
spats  
To shadowy stained-glass matins or gas-lit evensong  
And back in a country quiet with doffing of chimney hats.<sup>94</sup>

The poet believes that Aberdeen Park lost its beauty, and he regrets what has happened to London and its once magnificent and glorious architecture from the Victorian Era.<sup>95</sup> As demonstrated, the characteristic feature of Betjeman's poetry about places, shown in "Death of King George V" and "St. Saviour's, Aberdeen Park, Highbury, London, N," is a nostalgic feeling and idealizing the past. Svetlana Boym explains that "nostalgia forges connections between the individual and the nation, 'between personal and collective memory.'"<sup>96</sup> Betjeman had a tendency to write about his most beautiful memories, which he described with a sense

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<sup>92</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 69.

<sup>93</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 69.

<sup>94</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 69.

<sup>95</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 69.

<sup>96</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic, 2001), 54.

of a sentiment, particularly from the times of his childhood in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>97</sup>

Later in his career, Betjeman concentrated more on the poetry of suburbs.<sup>98</sup> The typical 1970's suburb was built together with retail parks, large supermarkets, restaurants and multiplex cinemas, but these places gained no admiration, not even by Betjeman.<sup>99</sup> In 1970, Betjeman wrote in *Ghastly Good Taste*: "Nearly all the suburbs and centres of towns are badly planned. Steel, concrete, glass and plywood have made a new era in building."<sup>100</sup> He suggests that an architect today must be a town planner, sort of engineer and also a good business man. Therefore, architecture is simply too big job for one man. The poet asks: "Where has English architectural talent disappeared?"<sup>101</sup>

Betjeman's respect belongs to earlier suburbs from the Victorian Era, which could be described as the village-type suburb. These suburbs, such as Surrey, were built on a border between the countryside and town, so people could enjoy green hills, smell flowers and trees and still be close to their jobs in the city and all its advantages. According to Stanford, Betjeman loved places, where "the green belts and the built-up areas meet - those last out-posts of pastoral stillness falling before the advance of brick."<sup>102</sup>

Betjeman's taste for suburbs is shown in a poem called "Middlesex." The main character of this poem is Elaine, who is hurrying from work in crowded London to her quieter home in suburbs - "out into the outskirts edges." Even though the poem begins with a slight cheerfulness, it has a bitter mood. The final line of this stanza describes speaker's disappointment by modern suburbs of London, which replaced once "rural Middlesex."<sup>103</sup>

Gaily into Ruislip Gardens  
Runs the red electric train  
With a thousand Ta's and Pardon's  
Daintily alights Elaine;  
Hurries down the concrete station  
With a frown concentration  
Out into the outskirts edges  
Where a few surviving hedges

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<sup>97</sup> Bevis Hillier, *Betjeman: the Biography* (London: John Murray, 2006), 4-6.

<sup>98</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 73.

<sup>99</sup> Mark Clapson, "Cities, Suburbs, Countryside," in *A Companion to Contemporary Britain: 1939 - 2000*, ed. Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 65-66.

<sup>100</sup> Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste*, 110.

<sup>101</sup> Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste*, 111.

<sup>102</sup> Stanford, *John Betjeman*, 73.

<sup>103</sup> Mustafa Mubarak Pathan, ed., "The Poet as Translator: The Poetic Vision of John Betjeman," *International Journal of English Language and Translation Studies* 1 (2013): 183-195.

Keep alive our lost Elysium – rural Middlesex again.<sup>104</sup>

The next stanza deals with a recollection of the past when the speaker claims "Gentle Brent, I used to know you."/"Recollect the elm-trees misty and the footpaths climbing twisty." He remembers the image of the old Brent and its beauty.<sup>105</sup>

Gentle Brent, I used to know you  
Wandering Wembley-wards at will,  
Now what change your waters show you  
In the meadowlands you fill!  
Recollect the elm-trees misty  
And the footpaths climbing twisty  
Under cedar-shaded palings,  
Low laburnum-leaned-on railings  
Out of Northolt on and upward to the heights of Harrow hill.<sup>106</sup>

The speaker in the final stanza recalls old Victorian times when he talks about "taverns for the bona fide,"/"cockney singer, cockney shooters." The poem is an example of Betjeman's feeling of "nostalgia for the vanished world of his childhood and vintage London."<sup>107</sup>

Parish of enormous hayfields  
Perivale stood all alone,  
And from Greenford scent of mayfields  
Most enticingly was blown  
Over market gardens tidy,  
Taverns for the bona fide,  
Cockney singers, cockney shooters,  
Murray Poshes, Lupin Pooters,  
Long in Kensal Green and Highgate silent under soot and stone.<sup>108</sup>

Although "Middlesex" has a slightly negative tone when the speaker feels nostalgic and pity for old Middlesex, there is not more aggressive and for some even offensive Betjeman's poem than "Slough." In first two stanzas, the poet urges the bombs to fall on Slough and destroy it once for all so that people could breathe. Slough is an awful place for Betjeman, as he exclaims: "Swarm over, Death!" There is no grass anymore because it is a built-up area with hideous modern architecture. The place evokes the typical image of materialistic society,

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<sup>104</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 87.

<sup>105</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 87.

<sup>106</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 87.

<sup>107</sup> John Press, *John Betjeman* (Essex:Longman Group Ltd.,1974), 38.

<sup>108</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 87.

which instead of enjoying fresh air stays in “air-conditioned, bright canteens,” where people do not enjoy fresh and quality food, but they are perfectly satisfied with tinned one.

Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough!  
It isn't fit for humans now,  
There isn't grass to graze a cow.  
Swarm over, Death!

Come, bombs and blow to smithereens  
Those air -conditioned, bright canteens,  
Tinned fruit, tinned meat, tinned milk, tinned beans,  
Tinned minds, tinned breath.<sup>109</sup>

The poet gets even further, as he describes typical inhabitants of Slough. A local man is pictured as someone with “repulsive“ physical appearance and even worse personality. He is described as a man who always cheats, but at the same time, it works for him because he does not have to face any consequences.

And get that man with double chin  
Who'll always cheat and always win,  
Who washes his repulsive skin  
In women's tears:

And smash his desk of polished oak  
And smash his hands so used to stroke  
And stop his boring dirty joke  
And make him yell.<sup>110</sup>

In the next stanzas, the poet talks about “the bald young clerks,“ saying that it is not their fault, that they are not normal. The point is that people can not be normal or sane when they have no experience with the real beauty of nature, as they only know “the birdsong from the radio.” According to the speaker, “They’ve tasted Hell,” so living in such place like Slough will leave its marks on people.

But spare the bald young clerks who add  
The profits of the stinking cad;  
It's not their fault that they are mad,  
They've tasted Hell.

It's not their fault they do not know  
The birdsong from the radio,  
It's not their fault they often go

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<sup>109</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 24.

<sup>110</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 24.

## To Maidenhead<sup>111</sup>

The last stanza repeats poet's wish to destroy Slough or even remove it once for all so that the grass would grow there, and the earth would be healed. Therefore, the place would get another chance to find its spirit and show its beauty.

Come, friendly bombs and fall on Slough  
To get it ready for the plough.  
The cabbages are coming now;  
The earth exhales.<sup>112</sup>

### 3.3 ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE

As an Anglo-Catholic, John Betjeman placed many of his poems into cathedrals, chapels or local parish churches. Bevis Hillier explains that Betjeman's passion and enthusiasm for sacral architecture started in his childhood when he enjoyed so-called church-hunting during long summers in Cornwall.<sup>113</sup> Not only did Betjeman admire the architecture and the building itself, but he also recognised and appreciated the unique power of churches to summon the community. According to Kevin J. Gardner, Betjeman saw a church as a place that brings people from towns and villages together "to a shared unity of purpose."<sup>114</sup> This communal function is depicted for example in "Verses Turned." The poem is about a village in Oxfordshire, where people are summoned by "the peal of a single church bell", which "draws an entire parish into spiritual and social communion."<sup>115</sup>

A single bell with plaintive strokes  
Pleads louder than the stirring oaks  
The leafless lanes along.  
(...) It calls the choirboys from their tea  
And villagers, the two or three,  
Damp down the kitchen fire,  
Let out the cat, and up the lane  
Go paddling through the gentle rain  
Of misty Oxfordshire.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 24-25.

<sup>112</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 25.

<sup>113</sup> Bevis Hillier, *Betjeman: the Biography* (London: John Murray, 2006), 16-20.

<sup>114</sup> Kevin J. Gardner, "Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman," *Christianity & literature* 53 (2004): 366.

<sup>115</sup> Gardner, "Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman," 366.

<sup>116</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 295.



According to Gardner, Betjeman believed that “community is threatened when the Church is threatened,” and he saw the Church as something that “breathes life into a society.”<sup>117</sup> During the Second World War, many churches were destroyed or damaged in the Blitz. In *Oxford History Of the Christian Church*, Keith Robbins points out that German bombs caused that, for example in London, Coventry and Liverpool, “hallowed ecclesiastical landmarks had simply disappeared.”<sup>118</sup> Therefore, damaged churches needed to be rebuilt, but there was a struggle between a modern version of churches and the traditional one when the building carried “the nation’s architectural heritage.” Not everyone like Betjeman saw the value of Victorian architecture, so many of old parishes were simply demolished. That is why John Betjeman decided to use his public voice to save many sacral buildings, including the Church of St. Katherine, for which “Verses Turned” was written. This church needed a restoration and Betjeman was persuaded that it deserves to be saved as he writes in the last stanza:

And must the building fall?  
Not while we love the church and live  
And of our charity will give  
Our much, our more, our all.<sup>119</sup>

In *Love is Greater than Taste*, Philip Irving Mitchell describes what churches meant to John Betjeman:

The loss of craft and beauty and human-sized living all result from loss of parish and church. Without a vision of the eternal, Betjeman contends, there can be no tradition of craft nor any loyalty to a place and past. [...] English history has moved from "religious unity" to a "reasoned unity;" then to a "stranger order" in industrialism, and finally to a great loss that can be overturned only with "a new order and another Christendom."<sup>120</sup>

Betjeman saw the Church as an integral part of Englishness, and he felt that with losing churches, one loses the sense for national pride and traditions. The damage of sacral architecture in the Second World War was not the only problem that the Church had to face. Although the faith in Britain was still strong after wars, people visited churches

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<sup>117</sup> Gardner, “Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman,” 368.

<sup>118</sup> Keith Robbins, *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales: the Christian Church 1900-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 294.

<sup>119</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 297.

<sup>120</sup> Mitchell, “Love is Greater than Taste,” 13.

less and less and according to Betjeman, it caused a loss of communal spirit. Peter J. Lowe explains that as a modern style of living became more and more intense, Betjeman viewed churches even more valuable.<sup>121</sup> For him, it was a place tightly attached to the national past, which was challenged in modern times as he once said: “the old churches of England are the story of England.”<sup>122</sup> Lowe argues that Betjeman saw the church as an “evidence of the continuity of faith in a changing world.”<sup>123</sup> There is also an interesting pattern in old English villages because their churches are usually located in their heart. The location points out that the faith was “at the heart of the villagers' lives.”<sup>124</sup> Therefore, it was crucial for Betjeman to preserve and save such places and he hoped that he manage it through evoking sentimental feelings in his poems.

This sentimental attachment to English churches also appears in “Sunday Morning, King’s Cambridge”, although here the poem has more positive spirit as the poet uses vivid, colourful description of King's College Chapel. Gardner points out that the poem is “ablaze with color.”<sup>125</sup> The first stanza depicts “the spiritually overwhelming aesthetics of the building.”<sup>126</sup>

File into yellow candle light, fair choristers of King’s  
 Lost in the shadowy silence of canopied Renaissance stalls  
 In blazing glass above the dark glow skies and thrones and wings  
 Blue, ruby, gold and green between the whiteness of the walls  
 And with what rich precision the stonework soars and springs  
 To fountain out a spreading vault – a shower that never falls.<sup>127</sup>

In the second stanza, the poet does not pay attention to the service anymore, but he imagines being outside of the chapel, looking at its plaster covered with ivy and watching trees. Even in this stanza, Betjeman uses a variety of colours which make the reader feel the spirit of the place and feel the glory of King’s College Chapel. He believed that churches are beautiful, and people should take time and notice the beauty. That is why even this poem gets to slightly romantic or even idealised feeling:

The white of windy Cambridge courts, the cobbles brown and dry,  
 The gold of plaster Gothic with ivy overgrown,

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<sup>121</sup> Lowe, “The Church as a Building and the Church as a Community in the Work of John Betjeman,” 563.

<sup>122</sup> Lowe, “The Church as a Building and the Church as a Community in the Work of John Betjeman,” 563.

<sup>123</sup> Lowe, “The Church as a Building and the Church as a Community in the Work of John Betjeman,” 580.

<sup>124</sup> Lowe, “The Church as a Building and the Church as a Community in the Work of John Betjeman,” 572.

<sup>125</sup> Gardner, “Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman,” 362.

<sup>126</sup> Gardner, “Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman,” 362.

<sup>127</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 298.

The apple-red, the silver fronts, the wide green flats and high,  
The yellowing elm-trees circled out on islands of their own –  
Oh, here behold all colours change that catch the flying sky  
To waves of pearly light that heave along the shafted stone.<sup>128</sup>

The third final stanza mentions many tombs that are preserved in churches all over East Anglia, which Gardner describes as “the effigies of the deceased captured for eternity in postures of prayer.”<sup>129</sup>

In far East Anglian churches, the clasped hands lying long  
Recumbent on sepulchral slabs or effigied in brass  
Buttress with prayer this vaulted roof so white and light and strong  
And countless congregations as the generations pass  
Join choir and great crowned organ case, in centuries of song  
To praise Eternity contained in Time and coloured glass.<sup>130</sup>

In this poem, Betjeman does not use his fabled irony or satire, and he does not even question the faith. “Sunday Morning, King’s Cambridge” is a joyful celebration of the Church, its traditions and the beauty of having faith. The poet gracefully catches the spirit of the place, which in this case evokes the presence of God.

However, the presence of God is not only in architecturally beautiful cathedrals or glorious churches. Although Betjeman truly admired such architecture, he was able to find God even in much less beautiful, magnificent churches. He captured the spirit of such place in “A Lincolnshire Church,” where the church is, accordingly to Gardner, “historically and architecturally insignificant.”<sup>131</sup> The reader does not even know a name of that church. The important thing is that despite its simplistic look, there is a sacrament in the church. This poem is also another example of a church that had to fight against a quickly changing world, but, unlike the Church of St. Katherine, it might lose the battle.

Cathedral Glass” in the windows,  
A roof of unsuitable slate -  
Restored with a vengeance, for certain,  
About eighteen-eighty-eight.  
The door swung easily open  
(Unlocked, for these parts, is odd)

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<sup>128</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 298-299.

<sup>129</sup> Gardner, “Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman,” 362.

<sup>130</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 299.

<sup>131</sup> Gardner, “Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman,” 369.

And there on the South aisle altar  
Is the tabernacle of God.<sup>132</sup>

The point is that Betjeman believed that even if the popularity of the Church is declining, it plays a major role in people's lives. He suggests that it is a place where people can hide from the busy, chaotic world. They can clear their thoughts and concentrate on something deeper and more meaningful.<sup>133</sup>

A slightly different poem set in the Church is "In Westminster Abbey," which Gardner considers as Betjeman's "most savage satires."<sup>134</sup> It has very critical and satirical tone. The poem is set at the beginning of the Second World War in Westminster Abbey, in the heart of London. It is written in a form of a monologue of an upper-class woman, who came to the Abbey to pray. This character represents the whole upper class and its flaws. From the first stanza, the reader immediately recognises to which class the woman probably belongs, as she wears gloves and uses Latin expression for an organ in the church.

Let me take this other glove off  
As the vox humana swells,  
And the beauteous fields of Eden  
Bask beneath the Abbey bells.  
Here, where England's statesmen lie,  
Listen to a lady's cry.<sup>135</sup>

In the second stanza, she continues to pray and she asks God to fight against the Germans, because she believes that in this war, God is on Britain's side. Moreover, the reader learns about her self-centeredness as she wants to be the one who survives the war, even if there would be casualties on the other side.

Gracious Lord, oh bomb the Germans,  
Spare their women for Thy Sake,  
And if that is not too easy  
We will pardon Thy Mistake.  
But, gracious Lord, whate'er shall be,  
Don't let anyone bomb me.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 281.

<sup>133</sup> Lowe, "The Church as a Building and the Church as a Community in the Work of John Betjeman," 574.

<sup>134</sup> Gardner, "Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman," 363.

<sup>135</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 49.

<sup>136</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 49.

The next stanza shows how proud the woman is of the British Empire and its forces. Even though she prays for those men who fight for Britain, all she cares about in the end is the whites, because, in her opinion, they are racially superior to men from colonies, such as Jamaica.

Keep our Empire undismembered  
Guide our Forces by Thy Hand,  
Gallant blacks from far Jamaica,  
Honduras and Togoland;  
Protect them Lord in all their fights,  
And, even more, protect the whites.<sup>137</sup>

The poem continues in the same satirical mood, describing flaws of the upper class. Gardner argues that: “the poem does not mourn a lost faith so much as it excoriates a spiritually lazy nation.”<sup>138</sup> Betjeman thought that snobbery and hypocrisy might hurt England more than anything else.

### 3.4 PERCEPTION OF NATURE

While maintaining an unfailing admiration for particular cities and towns, Betjeman’s heart belonged to the seashore of Cornwall and its magnificent atmosphere. There, according to the biographer Bevis Hillier, the roots of Betjeman's passion for architecture can be found. In his childhood, the Betjeman family used to switch busy, crowded London for Trebetherick in Cornwall every summer.<sup>139</sup>

The county of Cornwall, the most westerly part of England, boasts rocky seashore and harsh nature accompanied by the strong Celtic spirit of Cornish people. It is told that until one has lived in Cornwall for at least thirty years, one remains a so-called "furriner." There has always been a strong sense of pride in being local. Cornwall has always been a favorite holiday resort.<sup>140</sup> In his prose about Cornwall, Betjeman claims that the visitors "were mostly fishermen, golfers and artists,"<sup>141</sup> who came to appreciate Cornish picaresque

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<sup>137</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 49.

<sup>138</sup> Gardner, "Anglicanism and the Poetry of John Betjeman," 364.

<sup>139</sup> Hillier, *Betjeman*, 17-19.

<sup>140</sup> Denys Val Baker, "Cornwall and the Cornish Language," *The Irish Monthly* 965 (1954): 16-20, accessed January 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20516683>.

<sup>141</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 194.

landscape, the sea and the fresh air, which could not be found in the cities. He also argues that "all this tourist industry brought prosperity and security to Cornwall."<sup>142</sup>

However, the old and beautiful Cornwall has changed. The Electricity Board covered Cornish fields and villages with wires, which Betjeman described as "ill-sited" and "clumsily arranged."<sup>143</sup> Another change of landscape was brought by new roads, which have been widened for the motor-cars. Therefore, many buildings have been taken down to make space for the progress.<sup>144</sup> How Betjeman felt about the change is depicted in the last sentence of his prose, where he wrote: "It is a consolation that no one yet has discovered how to build houses in the sea."<sup>145</sup> Betjeman devoted many poems to the county of Cornwall because for him Cornwall represented a symbol of wild nature, which is mercifully not spoiled or damaged by man. In his poem called "Cornish Cliffs," Betjeman's enthusiasm for the county is apparent from the first verses.

Those moments, tasted once and never done,  
Of long surf breaking in the mid-day sun.  
A far-off blow-hole booming like a gun-<sup>146</sup>

In the next stanza, the description of land gets even more vivid and colourful, when the poet sensitively depicts all kinds of coastal plants and material, such as "gorse," "primroses" and "the slate," which are typical for Cornwall. It is here that the romantic timbre in his voice can be heard – Betjeman preferred the wild and savage over the tamed type of landscape. Here it surfaces explicitly:

And gorse turns tawny orange, seen beside  
Pale drifts of primroses cascading wide  
To where the slate falls sheer into the tide.<sup>147</sup>

Betjeman finds the beauty in wild plants and harsh seashore, which naturally belongs to the place, rather than in "gardened Surrey," which is modified by humans and where the flowers and shrubs are organized and planned. Although Betjeman liked Surrey with its Victorian houses, he would always choose the countryside over suburbs.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 194-195.

<sup>143</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 196.

<sup>144</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 196.

<sup>145</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 197.

<sup>146</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 439.

<sup>147</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 440.

<sup>148</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 440.

More than in gardened Surrey, nature spills  
A wealth of heather, kidney-vetch and squills  
Over these long-defended Cornish hills.<sup>149</sup>

In the final stanza, the poet describes the place as sparsely populated. From the way Betjeman describes picaresque Cornwall, with "everlasting ocean rolls," we can tell that he has only admiration and love for the place. The poem gets the romantic tone as he idealize the place and feels its beautiful spirit. Betjeman preferred areas, which were not crowded and filled with different inventions from the progressive era. He preferred unspoiled nature with a fresh air view on the sea.<sup>150</sup>

Small fields and tellymasts and wires and poles  
With, as the everlasting ocean rolls,  
Two chapels built for half a hundred souls.<sup>151</sup>

Although Betjeman's poem "Treberick" is also full of typical Cornish plants, materials and moreover animals, the poem is not about lamenting the loss of nature or the old face of Cornwall. The poet describes a place that he knew well as a child, so in "Treberick," he takes us back to those days when he and his friends enjoyed their time by the sea, and they were happy. In the first stanza, Betjeman recalls favourite picnics on the beach, and he creates a vivid image of the place as he mentions growing thrift, strong wind and iconic Cornish cliffs. The poet gets even into a deeper description as he remembers all details about such days, recalling "sand in the sandwiches, / wasps in the tea, / Sun on our bathing-dresses heavy with the wet."

We used to picnic where the thrift  
Grew deep and tufted to the edge;  
We saw the yellow foam flakes drift  
In trembling sponges on the ledge  
Below us, till the wind would lift  
Them up the cliff and o'er the hedge.  
Sand in the sandwiches, wasps in the tea,  
Sun on our bathing dresses heavy with the wet,  
Squelch of the bladder-wrack waiting for the sea,  
Fleas around the tamarisk, an early cigarette.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 440.

<sup>150</sup> Hillier, *Betjeman*, 178.

<sup>151</sup> Betjeman, *John Betjeman Collected Poems*, 441.

<sup>152</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 34.

The next stanza brings a storm. Betjeman creates a vivid image of the storm and rain by playing with lights and shadows and using many colours, describing black slate and golden sand turning brown. In this part of the poem, Betjeman also recalls another detail, such as clothes that he and his friend were wearing and how it felt to be in such storm. At this point, the reader can understand that the poem is an intimate personal memory when Betjeman mentions personal names of his friends.

But when a storm was at its height,  
And feathery slate was black in rain,  
And tamarisks were hung with light  
And golden sand was brown again,  
Spring tide and blizzard would unite  
And sea come flooding up the lane.  
Waves full of treasure then were roaring up the beach,  
Ropes round our mackintoshes, waders warm and dry,  
We waited for the wreckage to come swirling into reach,  
Ralph, Vasey, Alistair, Bidly, John and I.<sup>153</sup>

The final stanza still deals with the storm, now describing the water more vividly, as the poet calls it being “in a water-world“ and mentioning “rain and blizzard, sea and spray.“ Many local names of Cornish places are used, such as Greenway and St Enodoc, which creates an even more intimate image of Cornwall, and it shows that the poet was almost local.

Then roller into roller curled  
And thundered down the rocky bay,  
And we were in a water world  
Of rain and blizzard, sea and spray,  
And one against the other hurled  
We struggled round to Greenaway.  
Blesséd be St Enodoc, blesséd be the wave,  
Blesséd be the springy turf, we pray, pray to thee,  
Ask for our children all happy days you gave  
To Ralph, Vasey, Alistair, Bidly, John and me.<sup>154</sup>

“Trebetherick” has a very romantic tone because while someone might see a dangerous storm and unpleasant cold rain, Betjeman describes it in such breathtaking, beautiful and charming way that the reader wants to be there and experience it on his own.

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<sup>153</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 34.

<sup>154</sup> Betjeman, *The Best of Betjeman*, 35.



## CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis was focused on analysing John Betjeman's relation to different places in Britain and his opinion on modern times. For the analysis, ten of his poems were selected, and the aim was to find and examine topographical elements in them.

The first and the second chapter provided a theoretical background for the analysis. The first chapter explained the cultural and historical context of the change of Victorian and post-war Britain. The focus is on demographic changes in cities, suburbs and rural areas, as they are crucial to understanding the development of British landscape. The landscape has changed tremendously, as the Victorians faced the Industrial Revolution. While the cities were more and more crowded, people moved to quieter suburbs, which were even more popular after the Second World War. The post-war era was marked by a shift in the British society to materialism, which influenced all aspects of people's lives. The second chapter explains the difference between Victorian and modern architecture and provides all kinds of styles that were popular in that period.

The analysis shows that John Betjeman had an affection for the past, which he mostly idealized. His aversion to modern lifestyle, reflected in modern architecture, was accompanied by a sense of nostalgia and sentiment, which were present in most of his poems. Although Betjeman idealized the past, he did not want to get back to it. In his opinion, people should look at the past, be inspired by it and learn something from it. He also saw the past as a fundamental part of national identity, thus it should not be forgotten. The negative attitude towards modernization and the affection for the past was analysed in two poems: "Death of King George V" and "On Seeing an Old Poet in the Café Royal." Both poems shows sentimental and nostalgic tone, where the poet misses the good old times.

Then, Betjeman's poetry of town is examined by provided analysis of "St. Saviour's, Aberdeen Park, Highbury, London, N." In this case, the poem has more personal tone, as Betjeman usually used his own memories as a subject for his poems. More importantly, this poem shows Betjeman's talent for finding beauty and peace even in crowded, noisy city like London. Even though, the poet admires the architecture of the Victorian Church, he reminds the reader that it is a bond with place that makes it significant. He believed that old buildings and other places carry people's stories, whether it is the story important for the nation or only for one person. Betjeman saw the spirit of place and reminded people that it is a crucial part of their identity.

Next part analyses the poet's attitude toward different kinds of suburbs, as he was disappointed by modern suburbs, built with retail parks and offices. While the poem called "Middlesex" is concerned with lamenting the loss of old rural Middlesex, the true disgust is shown in "Slough." Betjeman used Slough as an example of hideous modern place, where people are brain-washed, as their monotonous lives lack any excitement or beauty.

The third part of the analytical chapter is focused on ecclesiastical architecture in Betjeman's poems, where he praises the ability of church to summon people together. Therefore, church is understood as a fundamental part of communities. Such role of church is analysed in "Verses Turned," where people are summoned by church bell. Betjeman argues that it is important for people to be united and share something. According to the poet, the Church is the best place for developing a sense for community.

As other buildings and places, the church is also an integral part of national past and national identity. Betjeman made a great effort to save old churches from demolition, because he believed that with the loss of the church, people lose a small piece of their national history and their bonds to the home country are weakened. Although in "Sunday Morning, King's Cambridge" the poet celebrates sacral architecture and vividly describes the beauty of the church by playing with colours and a light, the essential spirit of the place is the presence of God. Therefore, "A Lincolnshire Church," which is built and decorated in very modest way, is equally beautiful to the glorious King's College Chapel. Even in the church in Lincolnshire there is a spirit and one can feel the God. Betjeman also see a church as a place where people can hear their thoughts. It is such a peaceful place that everything goes quiet and calm and people can see things clearly.

Kind of exceptional poem set in a church is "In Westminster Abbey," which has rather critical and satirical tone. Here, the faith is not pure, but it is overshadowed by snobbery and hypocrisy. The main character is praying for herself and for her fortune, but at the same time she lacks humbleness and willingness to do something in return.

The last part of this thesis examines the poet's attitude towards nature by analysing two poems connected to Cornwall, as Betjeman sees it as the place with the most beautiful wild nature in England. "Cornish Cliffs" and "Trebetherick" are both filled with sentiment and slightly romantic tone, when the poet delightfully depicts the beauty of Cornwall with a great affection. Betjeman's feelings and deep bonds to the place are more than obvious. Again, he uses vivid colours and the light and shadow to create a living image of a place that was dear to his heart. His admiration belongs to the Cornish picaresque landscape, which is not affected by man and keeps its wild, pure spirit.

Therefore, John Betjeman can be perceived as a nostalgic and sensitive poet, who had a gift to see beauty in the world. Not only did he find it in astonishing nature and graceful cathedrals, but he also saw it in forgotten churches and hidden places, where no one else would expect it. Through using delicate colours and evoking deep emotions, Betjeman managed to finely depict the spirit of place. Although his poems are filled with nostalgic feeling and admiration for the past, Betjeman teaches people to live in the present by noticing the world around them. The poet believed that, especially in modern times, when people's lives are busy and hasty, it is crucial to understand that without seeing the beauty and experiencing deep emotions, it is not living, but only surviving. Equally important is the Presence of God in people's lives and he believes that they can find it in church. Betjeman teaches people how to cherish the past and find the beauty and meaning of life in the present.

## RESUMÉ

Hlavním cílem této bakalářské práce je vystopovat topografické prvky v díle britského básníka Johna Betjemana, a zmapovat tak jeho úzký vztah k různým druhům míst. Analýza je zaměřena nejen na básnickovy pocity, jako například pocit nostalgie a tendenci k idealizaci minulosti, ale také na jeho postoj vůči modernímu způsobu života a moderní architektuře.

John Betjeman je jedním nejvýznamnějších anglických básníků druhé poloviny 20. století. Za jeho doby byl velice oblíben především svým vlastním národem, a to nejen pro jeho často duchaplné satirické básně, ale i pro jeho kariéru v mediálním průmyslu, kdy byl po více jak 40 let součástí televizního a rádiového vysílání a mohl tak své postoje a názory šířit mezi široké publikum. Přestože Betjemanova hlavní tvorba má své počátky ve 30. a 40. letech 20. století, básník je znám pro svůj hluboký obdiv viktoriánské éry, a proto se teoretická část této práce zabývá nejen poválečnou Británií, ale také Británií za vlády královny Viktorie.

Úvodní kapitola má za cíl seznámit čtenáře s historickým a kulturním pozadím viktoriánské a poválečné Británie, a poukázat tak na četné změny, které v těchto obdobích nastaly. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována změnám demografickým, a to především v oblastech městských, předměstských a rurálních, které hluboce ovlivnily vývoj britské krajiny.

V 19. století byla příčinou obrovských změn průmyslová revoluce, která zásadně proměnila nejen krajinu, ale i společnost. Tato revoluce nejvíce ovlivnila rurální oblasti Británie, kde kvůli stále se rozvíjející mechanizaci zemědělci přicházeli o práci a byli tak nuceni odstěhovat se do měst. Města se začínala rychle rozrůstat a jejich populace ze nepřestávala zvětšovat. Například Londýn se rozrostl na svoji trojnásobnou velikost a další města jako Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, nezůstávala pozadu.

Pozitivní změnu pro vesnické oblasti přinesla rostoucí obliba v cestování. Díky vyšší životní úrovni a pomalu se zlepšujícím pracovním podmínkám, Britové získali více času a prostředků na zábavu. S novou rozvinutou železniční sítí se lidé snadno dostali do všech koutů Británie, kdy se nejoblíbenější destinací stalo její pobřeží. Tyto přímořské oblasti, jako například Brighton či Blackpool, začaly díky obrovskému přílivu turistů bohatnout a postupně se rozvíjet.

Během druhé světové války bylo mnoho lidí nuceno opustit své domovy ve městě a odsunout se na bezpečnější venkov. Města byla totiž cílem útoků německého letectva, kterému se podařilo zasáhnout ta největší a nejvýznamnější centra britských měst, včetně centra

Londýna, Coventry a Liverpoolu. Po válce byla započata rekonstrukce těchto zničených budov, která byla dokončena až během 60. let.

Přes své počátky ve viktoriánské Anglii, suburbanizace se dostala na vrchol právě v poválečných letech. Město bylo najednou vnímáno jako přeplněné, špinavé místo, zcela nevhodné pro rodinný život. Lidé se tak hromadně stěhovali na proslulá předměstí, kde našli vytoužený klid a pohodu. Velkou výhodou předměstí byla jejich lokace, jelikož se nacházela na hranici s venkovskou přírodou a zároveň zůstala v relativní blízkosti měst. Původní viktoriánská předměstí měla zcela jiný charakter než předměstí z druhé poloviny 20. století. Viktoriáni totiž stavěli své předměstské domy ve vesnickém stylu, kdy domy byly celkem rozsáhlé, obklopené zahradou. Mezi nimi byla spousta volného prostoru a celá oblast tak byla příjemným a krásným místem pro život. Nicméně 70. léta přinesla nový trend ve formě předměstí, které bylo obklopeno zábavními a nákupními centry, multikiny a restauracemi. V této podobě zůstávají předměstí v Británii dodnes.

Druhá kapitola této práce se zaměřuje na to, jak se změnil vkus ohledně architektury v Británii. Již zmíněná průmyslová revoluce zasáhla právě i do oblasti architektury, kdy začaly být využívány nové materiály, jako například ocel a beton, a také se stavěly zdokonalené konstrukce budov. Viktoriánské období se vyznačovalo tkzv. "bitvou stylů." Jednalo se o smyšlený souboj mezi neoklasicismem a neogotikou. Zatímco neoklasicismus byl inspirován řeckou, římskou, egyptskou, tureckou a indickou architekturou, neogotika vycházela ze středověké Anglie. V průběhu dalších let byly pak budovy v klasicistickém stylu čím dál více vnímány jako příliš honosné a zbytečně přezdobené.

Velkou změnu pak přineslo období poválečné, jelikož architekti zcela změnili svůj přístup ke své práci. Podle mnoha kritiků moderní architektury došlo k tomu, že moderní budovy postrádají duši a jsou stavěny jen pro svůj účel. Ačkoli moderní architekti se snažili vyhybat klasickým stylům, našli se i tací, kteří objevili inspiraci například v georgiánském stylu ze 17. století, který je inspiroval především svou asymetrií a dekorativními prvky. Příkladem takové budovy je Duchy of Cornwall Estate v Kenningtonu. Nejvlivnějším stylem 20. století ale byl styl nazývaný „brutalismus“. Ten má své počátky ve 40. letech a je znám pro využití betonu a zvýrazněnou konstrukci a pro své mohutné prvky.

Teoretická část je zakončena zmínkou o architektuře sakrální, neboť i kostely a významné katedrály byly zasaženy německým letectvem během války. Některé budovy potřebovaly pouze rekonstrukci, ale mnoho jich také bylo zcela zničeno. Nenávratné škody například zasáhly katedrálu v Coventry. Nicméně v poválečné době se také začaly stavět kostely zcela nové, na místech, kde dříve žádné nebyly. Tyto sakrální budovy pak byly

navrhnuty především v moderním stylu, což v Británii vyvolalo jasný nesouhlas zastánců tradiční architektury. Jedním z nich byl i John Betjeman, jehož postoji nejen k moderní architektuře, ale také k celkové moderní době, je analyzován v následující kapitole.

Rozbor básní Johna Betjemana je rozdělen do čtyř hlavních částí. První z nich se zabývá básnickovou reakcí na modernizaci Británie v poválečném období. Betjeman totiž pohrdal novým uspěchaným životním stylem, kdy se lidé neustále za něčím ženou, ať už je to kariéra nebo peníze. Svět se stal hektickým a rušným místem. Problém je, že lidé zapomněli jak žít v přítomnosti a nemají ani čas všimnout si světa a jeho krásy kolem sebe. Básník se snažil tuto krásu zachytit a přimnout ji tak těm, kteří ji neviděli. Na moderní svět Betjeman nejčastěji reagoval útekem do minulosti a nostalgickým vzpomínáním na to, jak britský národ kdysi žil a jaké hodnoty zastával. Minulost je tak nedílnou součástí národní identity. Nostlagické rozvzpomínání na událost, která zasáhla celý národ, je znázorněno v básni *Death of King George V.* Báseň pojednává o smrti krále Jiřího V., kdy Betjeman věří, že s králem odešli i staré dobré časy. Je zde zmíněno několik typických zálib, které tyto časy charakterizují, a to například sbírání známek, lovení ptáků či jízda na koni. Podstatná ale je postava krále, který podle básníka ztělesňoval nejlepší mravní hodnoty a cnosti, například statečnost a čestnost. Tato báseň má i jemný satirický nádech, když Betjeman zmiňuje, že dnes by král nemohl věřit vlastním očím a velice by se divil, kdyby viděl dnešní Británii zastavěnou moderními předměstími.

Následující báseň s názvem *Seeing an Old Poet in the Café Royal* je dalším důkazem Betjemanova častého návratu do minulosti, nicméně tato báseň se jeví osobnější, neboť pojednává o tom, jak básník přichází do své kdysi oblíbené kavárny, ale skoro nic tu už nepoznává. Změnila se výzdoba, jídlo a dokonce i klientela. Pro básníka je toto zjištění zklamáním a celá báseň má poměrně smutný nostalgický nádech.

Návrat do minulosti je častým jevem v Betjemanových básních, který je doprovázen pocitem nostalgie. Básník tedy projevuje lítost nad koncem starých časů, které podle něj bývaly tak skvostné.

Další část kapitoly byla zaměřena na básníkův vztah k městům a různým druhům předměstí. Poezie z 19. století měla ve zvyku opěvovat přírodu, zatímco poezie 20. století se nově zaměřila na města. Nicméně většina básníků z období modernizmu se potýkala s pocitem úzkosti, strachu a celkové nechuti k městskému způsobu života. Betjeman dělal pravý opak. Básník měl totiž jedinečnou schopnost najít půvab i v místech, kde by ho nikdo jiný nečekal. Ať už se jednalo o vlakové stanice, či skrytá městská zákoutí, Betjeman dokázal pečlivě zachytit atmosféru a ducha různých míst.

Betjeman měl především ve zvyku velebit ty části města, které pro něj měly hlubší osobní význam. Tento jev je ukázán na rozboru básně *St. Saviour's, Aberdeen Park, Highbury, London, N*, jejíž děj se točí kolem londýnského viktoriánského kostela. Tento kostel je pro Betemana obzvlášť významný, neboť zde byli oddáni nejen jeho prarodiče, ale i rodiče, jejichž svatbu si ve své mysli básník přehrává. Zobrazen je nejen stesk pro rodičích, ale opět také po starých časech, kdy lidé chodili do kostela na ranní i večerní motlidbu. Báseň tak získává sentimentální nádech, a to také proto, že místo, kde kostel stojí, se zásadně změnilo. Dříve tato stavba zcela vyčnívala, ale dnes je obklopena ještě vyššími budovami, které jsou zanedbané a nejedná se o vkusnou architekturu.

Ne vždy však Betjeman při popisu místa vycházel z osobních vzpomínek. V případě popisu předměstí spíše vycházel ze svého citu pro dobrý vkus a z odporu k modernímu stylu. Básník měl v oblibě předměstí z viktoriánské éry, která se stavila na hranici s vesnickou oblastí a byla tak obklopena zelenými kopci a rozkvetlými loukami. Nicméně vyjadřoval odpor nad typem předměstí, které se začalo rozvíjet v 70. letech 20. století. Namísto přírody totiž tato předměstí byla obklíčena nákupními a zábavními centry s ještě rozlehlejším parkovištěm pro tisíce zákazníků. Betjemanův vkus je zobrazen v básni *Middlesex*, ve které se hlavní postava Elaine vrací přelidněným vlakem z práce domů na předměstí. Báseň zcela jasně ukazuje Betjemanovu nelibost v moderních londýnských předměstích a lítost nad ztrátou kdysi překrásného venkovského Middlesexu.

Nicméně daleko drastičtější a mnohem satiričtější je báseň *Slough*, kde Betjeman zcela nekompromisně vyjadřuje hluboký odpor nad tímto moderním místem. Básník si přeje, aby bylo toto místo zasaženo bombami, které by Slough smazaly z mapy. Tato báseň je nejen kritikou místa, kde není ani kousek přírody, ale také jeho místních obyvatel. Jako typický místní je zde popsán muž, odpudivého vzhledu s ještě odpudivější povahou, neboť je hrubý, hlučný a neustále podvádí. Většina dalších obyvatel jsou pak úředníci, kteří se stravují v ohavné jídelně bezduchým konzervovaným jídlem. Básník je v postatě lituje, protože zpěv ptáků slyšeli jen z rádia a nikdy se nemohli nadechnout čerstvého vzduchu. Betjeman zde satiricky poukazuje na to, jak může být člověk ovlivněn místem, ve kterém žije. Báseň končí Betemanovým přáním, aby Slough bylo projednou zbořeno a uvolnilo tak místo polím, díky kterým by mohla země konečně zase dýchat.

Třetí část kapitoly se soustředí na básníkův vztah k sakrální architektuře, jelikož je pro něj velice významná a často se v jeho tvorbě objevuje. Betjeman se o kostely začal zajímat již jako dítě, kdy na svém kole objížděl různě kostely v Cornwallu, v dospělosti se pak zaměřil na sakrální památky v Londýně. Básníkův obdiv patřil především sakrálním budovám,

kteře byly postaveny v gotickém nebo klasicismém stylu, obzvláště pak měl slabost pro kostely z doby viktoriánské. Nejenže obdivoval jejich architekturu, ale především miloval jejich atmosféru. Ve svých básních často poukazoval na přínos kostela pro komunitu, protože je to místo, které svolává lidi dohromady. Tento jev je analyzován v básni *Verses Turned*, ve které vyzvání kostelní zvon a tak svolává vesničany, kteří všeho okamžitě nechají a spěchají do kostela.

Betjeman psal básně o sakrálních budovách nejen proto, že je obdivoval, ale také proto, že je chtěl chránit. Jak již bylo zmíněno v teoretické části, velká spousta kostelů a katedrál se stala obětí německých leteckých útoků v období druhé světové války. Byla tedy nutná rekonstrukce takto poškozených budov. Mnoho jich ale také bylo zbouráno nebo přestaveno v moderním stylu, který se vzdaloval viktoriánské architektuře. Pro Betjemana byla ztráta kostela zároveň ztrátou části národní historie a národních tradic. Proto například již zmiňovanou báseň *Verses Turned* Betjeman napsal na podporu potřebné rekonstrukce kostela svaté Kateřiny. Kostel je tedy chápán jako důležitý prvek v historii národa, na který by se nemělo zapomínat.

Báseň *Sunday Morning, King's Cambridge* velice citlivě zachycuje atmosféru kaple při bohoslužbě. Betjeman si v této básni velkolepě zahrává se světlem a barvami, čímž dodává místu zcela jedinečný tón. Báseň začíná popisem nádherné architektury v kapli, kdy se pak během bohoslužby básník myslí zatoulává pryč z kaple. V duchu si přehrává detaily okolí budovy, včetně venkovní omítky a stromů, které u kaple rostou. Zde dostává báseň poměrně romantický a sentimentální nádech. Betjeman pečlivě zachytil ducha tohoto místa, který nespočívá jen v překrásné architektuře, ale nachází se tam i něco navíc. Je to Boží přítomnost, která je tou nenahraditelnou součástí tohoto místa.

Podle Betjemana je možné naleznout Boží přítomnost i v méně skvostných kostelích, o kterých mnoho lidí neví. Takový kostel je zachycen v básni *A Lincolnshire Church*, kde vůbec není podstatná fyzická krása budovy, ale půvab místa je založen na přítomnosti Boha. Pro básníka je také kostel místem, kam člověk může chodit přemýšlet, jelikož tam nalezne ticho a klid, a zřetelně tak slyší své myšlenky. Je to zároveň jakési útočiště před rušným a hektickým okolním světem.

Poměrně jiný nádech má báseň *In Westminster Abbey*, která je otevřenou kritikou především aristokratické třídy. Báseň je psána ve formě monologu a je zasazena do období druhé světové války, kdy se žena vyššího původu modlí k Bohu ve Westminsterském opatství. Ve své motlitbě vyjadřuje své přání aby Bůh zasáhl do války a poslal ničivé bomby na německý národ, a ať už se nakonec Bůh rozhodne jakkoliv, má to být hlavně ona a její jmění, kdo přežije



válku. Je tedy jasné, že se žena zajímá více o sebe a své peníze, než aby se slitovala nad oběťmi války. Báseň pak pokračuje tím, že žena žádá ochranu jak pro britské vojáky, tak i vojáky z kolonií, nakonec ale dodává, že hlavní prioritou by měla být záchrana bílých lidí. Je zřejmé, že obyvatelé kolonií, jako například lidé z Jamajky, jsou pro tuto ženu podřadným druhem. Celá báseň je tedy zobrazením sobetství a pokrytectví britských vyšších tříd a je zde i vyjádřen pocit nadřazenosti, a to zejména rasové.

Závěrečná, čtvrtá část této práce se zabývá vztahem básníka k přírodě. Tento vztah je analyzován na základě Betjemanova postoje ke Cornwallu, jelikož právě zde přírodu nachází. Cornwall, který se nalézá na východním pobřeží Anglie, byl oblíbenou letní destinací Betjemanovy rodiny, a proto ho s tímto krajem poutá mnoho vzpomínek z dětství. Ve svých básních se zaměřuje na malebnou cornwallskou krajinu, která je pro něj symbolem divoké přírody. Jeho báseň s názvem *Cornish Cliffs* zobrazuje přírodní krásy Cornwallu, pro jejichž vykreslení Betjeman popisuje několik druhů rostlin, například prvosenky, hlodáš nebo vřes, které jsou pro kraj typické. I tato báseň pak dostává romantický nádech, protože básník přírodu popisuje s velikou vášní a citem. Pro něj není krásnější pocit, než stát na cornwallském pobřeží, pozorovat moře, poslouchat ptačí píseň a cítit čerstvý vzduch provoněný květinami. Tato divoká příroda, která si zachovala svoji tvář má pro Betjemana daleko větší hodnotu než uměle vytvořené zahrady, například v Surrey.

Básník byl často znepokojen tím, jak moc se Cornwall kvůli zásahu člověka změnil. Zatímco si z dětství pamatuje řídké osídlený kraj, který byl pospojován malými cestičkami, a kde převládala čistá neporušená příroda, během poválečné rekonstrukce se v tomto kraji začaly stavět široké silnice pro stále populárnější automobily a mnoho budov bylo nenávratně zbořeno, aby udělaly prostor pro moderní zástavbu.

V básni *Trebetherick*, která se také odehrává v Cornwallu, se Betjeman vrací zpátky do svých dětských vzpomínek. Báseň se odehrává na pláži, kde si Betjeman užívá piknik se svými přáteli. Opět zde vytváří živý, barvitý popis místa, ve kterém zahrnuje krásy cornwallské přírody. Básník si vybavuje vzpomínky s přesnými detaily. Čtenáře tak upozorňuje na silný vítr, který roznášel písek až do svačín, vosy, které rády létaly na čaj, a ztěžklé mokré oblečení, které se po plavání v moři sušilo na slunci. Dále jsou pak v básni citlivě využity barvy, a to při popisu bouřky a deště, který zbarvuje písek ze zlaté barvy do hněda a břidlici do černa. Právě citlivým vykreslováním těchto drobných detailů dostávají Betjemanovi popisy místa daleko větší a hlubší charakter a takto zachycená duše místa je pak předána čtenáři, který získává pocit, že se na onom určitém místě sám nachází. *Trebetherick* je tedy další ukázkou Betjemanova romantického a nostalgického postoje, v tomto případě, vůči přírodě.

Výsledkem celé práce je tedy zjištění, že hlavním topografickým prvkem básní Johna Betjemana je pocit nostalgie, kdy básník postrádá staré časy a touží po návratu původních mravních hodnot. Někdy pátrá ve své vlastní osobní minulosti a jindy se vrací do událostí v minulosti, které jsou podstatné pro celý národ. Nejčastěji se vrací do doby viktoriánské nebo edwardské, kterou si pamatuje z jeho dětství. Ať už jsou Betjemanovy básně sentimentální a nostalgické nebo satirické a ironické, vždy mají společný element, a tím jsou básníkovi osobní pocity. Obzvláště citlivý popis místa je pak zobrazen v básních, které se odehrávají na prahu kostelů, katedrál a kaplí, kde je podle Betjemana duchem místa samotná Boží přítomnost. Básník často využívá velice názorný popis místa, který vytváří s procítěným použitím barev, zachycením světla a stínů a zobrazením těch nejmenších detailů, které pak společně vytváří celkový obraz. Betjeman je tak velice vnímavým básníkem, který má jedinečnou schopnost zachytit nejen ducha místa, ale i jeho krásu, kterou pak předává svým čtenářům.

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