

GOSPELS AND GRIT: WORK AND LABOUR FROM THOMAS CARLYLE TO
GEORGE ORWELL

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines a group of writers from Thomas Carlyle to Joseph Conrad to George Orwell. Though Orwell receives the majority of coverage, my argument has to do with the group: its character, or the attitudes these figures share that can justify the grouping. Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell mostly, but also many other Victorians and post-Victorians (though, importantly, not the 'high' Modernists), preach the Gospel of Work. In turn, they vilify work rationalization, implicitly condemn the theory of disutility, and rage against economism. They extol the intrinsic value of work and imagine a moral economy. But these same thinkers deal pragmatically with the specific, concrete, historical conditions of modern work: with such practical issues as wages. 'Inside the Whale' of rationalism they struggle, but they also concede to the reality and size of the beast.

The expression of that pragmatism, however, is kept far away from the Gospel of Work. The latter is treated as a point of transcendence, a refuge to withdraw into and thus bypass the real properties of society. In the texts I examine, the contradictions between a pragmatic concession to modern economic modes or relations and sermons on Work remain non-dialectical: neither of the two discourses is qualified or challenged by its opposite. They exist side by side, on paths set for a collision, but they do not encounter each other. Orwell epitomizes the split because he swings harder, faster, and farther than those before him between claiming the unqualified abstract and negotiating the problematic concrete, between representing work as subjectively good and objectively perverted.

I make three major but interconnected arguments: one, about the anti-rationalist or anti-utilitarian tradition; two, about the relationship between economic theory and culture; and three, the most important, about the rifts, impasses, or glitches between moral and pragmatic work. I argue that those spaces primarily signify attitudes toward class, praxis, and moralism.

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Introduction

Preliminaries

I’m not sure if Uriah Heep ought to be exculpated for his passive-aggressive and fishy villainy because he was taught “from nine o’clock to eleven, that labour was a curse; and from eleven o’clock to one, that it was a blessing and a cheerfulness, and a dignity, and I don’t know what all” (Dickens, *Copperfield* 829). Uriah’s teachers, after all, were only reproducing a dichotomous and checkered history of European work. The lesson generally proceeds as follows. The ancient Greeks considered work a curse, a necessary evil unfortunate for slaves but antithetical to contemplation. Later, Medieval Christians followed them and the ancient Hebrews by also calling work a curse. Work was necessary because of original sin or to atone for original sin and score points towards salvation. It was treated as a punishing corrective to the body’s urges. Luther and Calvin, however, began investing work with all sorts of value, though paradoxically advocating effort and renouncing the material gain that effort accrued. By the nineteenth century work had been lifted to the status of a Gospel and heralded as a blessing. Yet even then, if we are to believe Uriah, besides the epithet that ‘Satan finds work for idle hands’ the idea lingered that ‘in the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat bread.’

The Victorian idea of work, following the ambiguous history of work suggested in the cursory survey above, was also and mostly split on secular grounds, making the ways work was conceived, perceived, approached, and defined more radically divided than at any other period of time. The paradox inherited from early Protestantism, which treats work – the origin of economies and social organizations – as a fiat to withdraw from the economic society, was only amplified as work was sanctified as a moral imperative, a substitute for religious skepticism, while rationalism¹ in work, economic ideology, and society in general was becoming widespread. On the one hand, the most ardent and admired cultural critics and the most popular

¹ On pages 26-30 I include a glossary of the terms, such as rationalism and capital ‘W’ Work, I use in a special manner.

mythologies promulgated work as a value in itself. Full engagement was said to entrain self-definition, stabilize and satisfy the ego, form and affirm it, generate well-being, foster a sense of fulfillment and individuation, and lead to harmonious social integration. Though the idea that work constructs identity is far from a metaphysical notion, it retained its religious and especially Protestant overtones of signifying virtue, of dignifying or ennobling the practitioner no matter how humble its nature might be. Intrinsically valuable, independent of its product, and embedded in non-economic imperatives, or part of the 'moral economy,' it was also said to nurture ideas of mutual obligation and leave behind beauty, the integral workmanship of the craftsperson. The hard worker is morally superior to the idler, the craftsperson more trustworthy than the careless. Passages in life and adulthood are marked and certified by Work. More than anything, the nineteenth-century Gospel of Work was written to counter economic, rationalistic thinking: to provide alternative concepts to self-interest and maximizing not found in the rising science of economics. Work as a way of life, for its own sake, was not an activity circumscribed by paychecks, contracts, or time.

On the other hand, the rationalization of work in the nineteenth century, widespread industrialism, and the redefinition of work into a purely economic context, as the means for extrinsic gain, transformed work into and *assumed* work were a curse. Subsequently, the same critics and popular discourses idealizing work had to vilify it in its prevailing shape. What we today call de-skilling, repetition, boredom, degradation, and alienation; clock-work over task-based work and the systemization of conduct; the growing separation between manual and mental labour, the division of labour, and the fragmentation of knowledge about production; the demarcation of 'work' and 'life' (with the relations of production, however, continuing to be imprinted on and to organize life outside of the workplace); the instrumentalizing of worker into or as subordinate to machine; and the ideological diffusion of the theory of disutility – all fitting under the rubric of rationalism – could not be a blessing or lead to well-being. For traditionalist thinkers reacting to modernity, for Thomas Carlyle then, Joseph Conrad and George Orwell later, the rationalization of work made it a curse. For them this brand of work was contrary to both

intrinsic satisfaction and the hard toil producing sweat on the brow: for them it was exploitation and perversion. I refer to it, judged in this way, as *labour*, though I maintain that 'labour' has other meanings as well. Nothing in this bifurcation of the Gospel of Work and the censure of labour is inherently a paradox or a *prima facie* contradiction. Only the treatment of all work as if outside the realm of labour, necessity, or economics in general – when extracted or represented as if extractable from society – leads to paradoxes.

The Victorian Gospel of Work, with roots in Romantic critiques of industrialism and their various histories in eighteenth-century German and French thought, should not be confused with the rhetoric of a work ethic found in utilitarian schools and echoed by capitalists profiting from industrial activity. Nor should it be reduced to Puritanism or a Protestant work ethic, though echoes of both can be found in it. The historical trajectory of Puritanism and Protestantism is more directly oriented towards the world of competitive business and individual success than it is to a largely conservative anti-utilitarian ethic. The work ethic of the rising managerial and capitalist class, generally speaking, was concocted only to motivate factory workers, mitigate guilt for the profits low wages generate (a rationalization of its own), or to defend its own success and present a moral and cultural challenge to a befuddled aristocracy. Even if the Gospel of Work provided crucial support for employers, as it continues to do today, the utilitarian concept of work (not to mention the work itself) had nothing to do with intrinsic value. Accepting the tenets of classical economics, and especially the hedonist account of human nature underlying the theory of disutility, employers accepted that work was undesirable and intrinsically unrewarding, that wages buy out disutility. Under normative economic theory, wages justify egregious working conditions as workers are *supposed* to despise work. Instead of encouraging the obstinacy of the craftsperson periodically idealized by the Gospel of Work, extrinsic rewards were offered to induce obedience to the industrial subdivision of labour, to scientific and hierarchical management, to work rationalization. For the bourgeois themselves, compartmentalizing their ideas concerning industrial work, work meant individual striving for success, deferred gratification, diligence, punctuality, and the strict division and primacy of

public work over private life and earned over inherited income. Insofar as it promotes the value of work (for dubious reasons) and assumes that, by nature, 'man' only works in order to afford leisure (the theory of disutility), its contradictions are more blatant, twisted, and ideologically-loaded than the incongruities I focus on in this study between moral Work and economic labour. There are, however, many points of contact between the bourgeois, managerial, or capitalist work ethics and the Gospel of Work. The bourgeois valuation of both Work and labour, as one might say, further complicates and expands the multiple, competing concepts of work in this period. Though I concentrate on a dichotomy between Work and labour, and the assumptions buried in an undialectical approach to Work and economics, I try to recognize and incorporate the many meanings surrounding modern work.

Before stating the argument of this project explicitly and in full, I want to clarify my approach to two other matters underlining the literary response to the rationalization of work. Rationalized work produces and reproduces rationalism in society while simultaneously being produced and reproduced by rationalism in society as a whole. Rationalism in work and society cannot be treated as if isolated or isolable from each other. I am not overly interested in the chicken and egg question of which came first. The state of alienation where one feels that the dominant mode of existence is external to oneself is not unique to the workplace alone and a state of mind held outside of a workplace can bleed into a job site, and aggravate, compensate for, or remain unaffected by employment dissatisfactions. Donald Lowe in *The History of Bourgeois Perception* (1982) argues that the factory system made it so "the rationality of economic action could prevail across space and time," that work rationalization greased the way for rationalism to become *the* way of knowing the world (20). But the world also shaped the factory. The theory of market rationality, that if restrictions on the market are minimized it will operate with maximum rationality (efficiency) and produce the maximum of utility, also spreads out into the realm of social relations, redefining 'freedom' to include subordination and making people identifiable in terms of their economic function. The children of *homo rationalis* and *homo economicus* turned the entire world into a linear system of input and output and argued that

if everyone sought their own interests and was free to do so, and acted on an innate capitalist urge, then society would develop to its maximum at its maximum speed. Politics became grafted onto the economic, and culture became a byproduct of the rationalist pursuit of self-interest. But politics, culture, and society are not passive agents. Furthermore, we should not treat the world as if every part of it has strictly conformed to a non-stop totalitarian rationalism for the last one hundred and fifty years. If in this study I place too much emphasis on the way in which economic rationalism and work rationalization affect culture and freedom and not vice versa, it is only because I assume reciprocity and discern the need to focus more on the effects of comprehensible structures.

Finally, in this study I assume and wish to confirm that meanings are given to work in specific historical realities. No piece of work has intrinsic meaning and no definition of work is ever fixed or static. The distinction between leisure and work, for example, is not inherent in an activity, say fishing or gardening, but in the context in which it is carried out. In fact, outside the economic frame, it is next to impossible to conclude where work ends and non-work begins. What constitutes 'work' is ordered by values and institutions emerging out of historical and dynamic conjunctures where infrastructure; organization, tools, time involved, geographical space, and remuneration (if any); class, gender, age, community, and ethnicity; and personal history or subjective outlook come into play. It is just as illusory to think of a double, split definition of work, paid or unpaid, as to think of a unitary one. As with definitions of work, the value of an activity includes what those involved take that activity to be. The value will depend upon specific circumstances and be interpreted differently by different people. But even if those circumstances and interpretations are endless, as they are, the activity is never stripped of its political content, for there is political content in assigning work intrinsic value or measuring it solely by its extrinsic rewards – just as labeling an activity as work or non-work involves extra-personal judgments and has political reverberations (or expresses political interests). I am not so haughty and culturally monolithic as to be entirely satisfied asserting that subjectively rewarding work can be objectively degrading. I only insist that work always has a moral and an economic

or political dimension. To assume that 'work' equals payment is to have adopted the dominant values of capitalist society, that 'work' is paid labour and paid labour fixes social identity. To assume work is a supra-economic blessing is in itself to live secluded in the realm of freedom. A work ethic or satisfying work under such definitions becomes associated only with unpaid activity and the definition of labour as a disutility, as unsatisfying work necessary for pay and the wherewithal to live, gains acceptance.

Argument

In this study I am looking at a group of writers from Thomas Carlyle to Joseph Conrad to George Orwell. Though Orwell receives the majority of coverage, my main argument has to do with the group, its character, or the attitudes these figures share that can justify the grouping. Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell mostly, but also many other Victorians and post-Victorians (though, importantly, not the 'high' Modernists), preach the Gospel of Work and vilify work rationalization, praise activity and implicitly condemn the theory of disutility, and extol the value of effort and rage against economism. These same thinkers, I maintain, have a *B*-side, a side dealing pragmatically with labour and modern working conditions, largely in order to propose piecemeal reforms. When addressing the specific, concrete, historical, objective conditions of modern work, these writers mediate on behalf of those who labour, insisting on 'sound economics,' on fair wages and regulated working conditions. 'Inside the Whale' of rationalism they struggle, but they also concede to the reality and the size of the beast. Though the character of the struggle often stems from a conservative or reactionary, organicist (hierarchical) or authoritarian ideology, it is important not to dismiss its equally labourist, reformist orientation and the close proximity between that orientation and the immediate struggles of the working class. This pragmatic discourse reflects what Walter Houghton called the English "PRACTICAL BENT of mind":

deep respect for facts, pragmatic skill in the adaptation of means to ends, a ready appeal to common sense – and therefore, negatively, an indifference to abstract speculation and

imaginative perception. (110)

The expression of that pragmatic bent, however, is kept far and away from the Gospel of Work, even when the two discourses are in the same book, on the same page, or in the same paragraph. The Gospel of Work is treated as a point of transcendence, a mythical moral economy to withdraw into and thus bypass the real properties of society. In the texts I examine, the contradictions between a pragmatic concession to modern economic modes and relations, to labour, and sermons on the Gospel of Work remain non-dialectical: neither of the two discourses is qualified or challenged by its opposite. They exist side by side, or on paths set for a collision, but they do not encounter each other. One, responding to economics, accepts and negotiates labour; the other, responding to economism, to the exaggerated application of economic laws to every nook and cranny of society, idealizes Work.² As antinomies they rest peacefully, but unless kept separated, the dialectic suppressed by isolating one from the other, they would either cancel each other out or undermine the cautious gradualism of the reformist strategies and the distant utopianism of the Gospel. The unified apotheosis of Work promulgated at one moment is thus cut off from the historical denial of that inviolability at another by the British 'practical bent of mind.' The potentially catastrophic collision between Work and economics is displaced by a series of structural dislocations and discursive dissonances. On the one side is the Gospel of Work, the ultimate expression of non-rationalism; on the other side is a pragmatic arbitration of rationalism, of the real conditions and economic imperatives which are part and parcel with labour.

It is one thing for the discourse of Work to conceive of labour, work rationalization and economism, as its opposite, as exploitative and perverted, an unforgivable and nonnegotiable rationalism locked into a maximizing ideology. But it is another to treat economics and the realm of necessity as opposing terms to Work. The complete division between economics, the historical society, and Work, an ethical estrangement from society, is fundamentally dissimilar to and much more problematic than the ancient or classical division of contemplation and necessity.

² Again, I clarify and justify my need for specialized terms such as Work and labour on pages 26-30.

As with contemplation, Work can only take place in the realm of freedom, as if outside of an economic context – but work is the very foundation of the economic context. Withdrawing into plain and simple work, made possible by the undialectical split between Work and labour, leads to the paradox of advocating and representing the intrinsic values of Work in the conditions of industrial labour and the context of necessity (or of instrumental rationalism), to overlooking class when class – working-class and bourgeois experience and perception – is most relevant. I do not deny that Carlyle, Conrad, or Orwell will point out the need to interconnect the Ideal and the real. I maintain, however, that moral Work and pragmatic labour, the Ideal and the real, are not brought together in a way which would allow a dialectical and polemical confluence.

The dualism I am describing between Work and labour has many forms. The list below is incomplete; it provides examples of how I express the disjunction or describes some of the shapes that the disjunction actually takes. This set of opposites is not meant to either confirm or challenge binary structures, but rather to offer ways of considering a split in the perception of work: the discontinuous thought, discourse, and representations of a particular group of English writers as they react to work rationalization.

<u>Non-Rationalism and Work</u>	<u>Rationalism and Labour</u>
Work	Economics
Homo Faber	Homo Economicus or Homo Laborans
Realm of Freedom	Realm of Maximizing or Realm of Necessity
Idealism	Materialism
Moralism	Pragmatism
Form	Reform
Finality	Conditionality
Totality	Variability
Withdrawal	Concession
Abstractness	Concreteness
Generality	Specificity
Intransitiveness	Transitiveness
Art	Sociology
'Culture'	'Society'
A Priori	A Posteriori
Wisdom	Logic
Subjectivity	Objectivity

"the essence of praxis
consists in annulling *that*
indifference of form towards
content."

Lukács, *History and Class*
Consciousness.

The subjects of my study are not locked into polarized habits of mind, but they do oscillate between withdrawing into Work and its world and cautiously prosing on issues surrounding labour, namely economics. The glitches and silences in their texts, the fissures which emerge out of the division between Work and labour, point to a disengaged moralism: the idea that the individual can and must overcome the prevailing social formation. If a worker gleans the values of Work from labour periodically represented as unremitting, ubiquitous rationalism – in need of economic reform – then it is as if the worker's volition has enabled a withdrawal from objective reality to the quarantined hallowedness of Work by exploiting the division between Work and labour. This worker works as if independently of economic rationalism. In other words, the space between Work and labour evidences the ordering and writing of subjectivity as if disconnected from the production process, even though that process is often written as an all-determining rationalism, the 'real' only to be whittled away at through prudent gradualism. Work becomes simply an act of the will, performed for its own sake, and the issues of economic need and necessity, not to mention structure, are compartmentalized as if Work and economics were entirely unrelated. The split and the lack of any middle ground between the split ensures that the problems raised by the impasse between a Gospel of Work and a sociology of labour do not surface.

This belief in the sanctity of the inner, inviolable self, which I call *moral individualism* for reasons given below, corresponds in many ways to Protestantism and the ideology of self-sufficiency. But to be clear, it is not an individualism which ratifies the rationalist doctrine of self-interest. According to classical and neo-classical economic theory, the maximizing economic agent, sanctioned by the title of a rational agent, is driven by self-love. The moral individual is driven to withdrawal. Still, the way in which the stable, uncomplicated bourgeois ego in that mythology, the 'self-made man,' is said to create an unselfish society because he has recourse to an inviolate *caritas* is suspiciously similar to the isolated, integral, autonomous self stepping at will from the rationalist world in which he or she participates into the world of Work. Both narratives might be read as versions of a *Tom Jones*, noble-by-birth story, claiming the

moral high-ground of an innate goodness. But the moral individual is governed by a deeper meaning of self-sufficiency than the rationalist maximizing which lies behind bourgeois individualism. Work in itself, for reasons that are non-economic and even counter-economic, is considered sufficient.

The mythology of moral individualism, however, inextricably bound to male-centred ideologies of toughness, of persevering through harsh conditions, nonetheless treats Work (work) as if separate from its context and its effects. Work is removed from the world of rationalized labour and modern economics, the exploitation of labour and capitalist gain. Workers are told to perform sacred Work in the conditions of labour, when their labour power, represented as the intrinsic value of Gospelized Work, generates extrinsic profits for capitalists. The paradox of withdrawal, treating work as the means to evade, surpass, or transcend rationalism, can come close to sanctioning back-door exploitation. The intermittent denial of labour, rationalized work or the economic function of work, also denies or dismisses necessity. Economic need becomes swept up with counter-Work, greed, or economic bamboozling. The utopian outlook would obviate the same pragmatic economics which dominate during the intermittent denials of Work. That pragmatism, the discourse of labour, also has its attendant narratological configuration, what I call *pragmatic realism*. The pragmatic realist negotiates his or her day-to-day existence 'inside the whale' without reference to the non-economic rewards underlined by the Gospel of Work. Steady employment, wages, and a decent standard of living are all that his or her labour represents. Referring to Carlyle and the critique of capitalism in *Past and Present*, Georg Lukács identifies the schizophrenia of the Carlylean subject – pragmatic realist and moral individual – I try to understand. He argues that,

In such accounts it is shown, on the one hand, that it is not possible to be human in bourgeois society, and, on the other hand, that man as he exists is opposed without mediation – or what amounts to the same thing, through the mediations of metaphysics and myth – to this non-existence of the human (whether this is thought of as something in the past, the future or merely an imperative). (*History* 190)

Pragmatic realism does not always go so far as to insist on the impossibility of humanity under rationalism, but it does concede to, work within, the conditions of labour. Moral individualism does not always 'oppose this non-existence of the human.' More often than not, it simply ignores, bypasses, surpasses, or is otherwise cut off from pragmatic realism.

That the idealization of work reaches its zenith at the very moment when industrialization loomed largest, when the machinic systems of work rationalization threatened to become the values of the economic and social world, is both understandable and remarkable. Such a threat would provoke a reactionary outcry, the retreat into a traditional world; but validating a rhetoric of the intrinsic value of activity and duty when the only available work for the working class, for those who were actually doing work, was void of any potentially intrinsic value demands scrutiny. The tendency to buffer moral Work from the exigencies of labour is not peculiar to England: Emerson, the transcendentalists, and Tolstoy do the same. What is startling about the English situation is that it took place at the height of industrialism, in the most soot-soaked streets. To withdraw into hard effort, into mind-numbing and exhaustive toil, can be read as a noble gesture to overturn modern capitalist relations, to turn back time. But such an entreaty also greases the machines of rationalization in a way that withdrawing into something non-corporeal or entirely bohemian does not. Only the discursive split between Work and labour saves the writers examined in this study from condoning rationalist economics, the very system they castigate when upon the Work pedestal, the Work high horse. When valorizing work, the experiential features of labour are concealed in the same way that bourgeois and liberal ideologies conceal the labour of the working classes in order to insist on the naturalness and ethicalness of middle-class ascendancy. In both bourgeois and moral representations of work, volunteerism, hobbies, and appeals to intransitive work – "'Work.' Not work at this or that – but, Work" – occur at an astonishing rate. But the writers in my study, as opposed to ideologically bourgeois writers, just as vehemently as they valorize Work, rage against labour, rationalized work. I am not interested in flogging the Work high horse, but in understanding the implications, effects, and significance of dividing moral Work from economic labour,

generalizations from specifics, or vision from action. I am interested in the different and often contradictory arguments my writers raise about Work and labour according to or depending on the class they are addressing or considering.

The most devastating effect of the split between Work and labour might be that it forgoes or precludes praxis. With Work and labour coexisting side by side on an undialectical, non-confrontational chasm, the union of ideal value and real action can never take place. Though the discourses of Work and labour would wipe out the coherent totality of Work or the piecemeal reform of pragmatism if the two were brought into dialectics, the clash between the approaches, values, and assumptions of each would also admit a utopian movement towards reform or a reform movement towards totalized ends. The split is ironic and especially sad because Work itself, the source of the ideal value, involves real action of its own. In the following pages I do not rely on any one general theory. I assume, however, that the basic model of Marxist historiography, material dialectics, would be more than appropriately applied to the antinomies of Work and pragmatic labour.



In this study I am interested in work as represented in English prose and fiction between approximately 1843 and 1949, from Carlyle's *Past and Present* to Orwell's last essays and novels. The dates are not arbitrary for they encompass the beginning and the apex of a marked pattern, though its character can be found outside of those dates. In this study, I make three major but interconnected arguments: one, about the anti-rationalist or anti-utilitarian tradition; two, about the relationship between economic theory and culture; and three, the most important, about the non-dialectical division between Work and labour. By the anti-rationalist tradition I am referring to an inheritance from Romanticism and the visionary, traditionalist reaction to industrialism and economism born in the Victorian period. Its thinkers are violently opposed to rationalism in work or society: to impersonal theories or laws, to systematic controls, to statistics, to specialization, and to the ordering of the world into a functionalized, calculable, consistent means towards a substantially unclear but maximized end. I refer to this tradition –

and more precisely to the undialectical rift between discourses of anti-rationalism and pragmatism which it creates and distinguishes it – as *English cultural socialism*, a term adapted from Bernard Crick who uses ‘English socialism’ to describe George Orwell’s ethical, anti-theoretical, non-Marxian, libertarian socialism. In fact, many Orwell scholars allude to Orwell’s central place in a distinctly English socialist tradition: George Woodcock argues that its chief characteristic is that it looks back in time to shape its values (*Crystal* 234); Stephen Ingle relates it to a suspicion of intellectuals and the overvaluation of intellectual work (*Political* 95). Orwell also epitomizes the tradition by combining radical strands of reactionaryism and socialism, calling himself a ‘Tory anarchist,’ by generally blurring political orientations, and by maintaining peculiarly Victorian moral and pragmatic sensibilities. Marxists tend to dismiss the tradition as Arcadian or brotherhood nostalgia or identify it at best as “a preliminary form of a socialist critique” (Lukács, *Theory* 19). Lukács is referring to Carlyle’s *Past and Present*, implicitly denying the tenableness of a prolonged “romantic anti-capitalism” and of a coherent socialist tradition outside of the Marxist fold. Though the term ‘socialism’ might raise some eyebrows when applied to Joseph Conrad and the more conservative thinkers I discuss, I use it partly to challenge the way in which the critical community fixes writers into categories, playing on the fact that a major attribute of anti-rationalism is its comfort with inconsistencies.

But included in the defence of inconsistency is the confirmation of the totally independent worker, not merely the anti-rationalist refusal to see human beings as predictable or mechanistic. Even though the English ‘cultural socialists’ I study oscillate between defending moral and pragmatic conceptions of work, they tend to represent individuals as idiosyncratic: inviolate because they are not affected by the affective, violating world. I have called this moral individualism. I wish only to historicize the apparatus allowing for the representation of such independent individuals in the midst of rationalism – the dualism of Work and economics – believing myself that constructivist theories are often themselves hyper-rationalistic. I feel the same frustration today that E. P. Thompson expressed over twenty years ago, which might be a

characteristic of the British tradition of cultural studies and related no doubt to the anti-rationalism it interprets:

We are *structured* by social relations, *spoken* by pre-given linguistic structures, *thought* by ideologies, *dreamed* by myths, *gendered* by patriarchal sexual norms, bonded by affective obligations, *cultured* by *mentalités*, *acted* by history's script. None of these ideas is, in origin, absurd, and some rest upon substantial additions to knowledge. But all slip, at a certain point, from sense to absurdity, and, in their sum, all arrive at a common terminus of unfreedom. Structuralism (the terminus of the absurd) is the ultimate product of self-alienated reason . . . in which all human projects . . . appear to stand *outside* of men, to stand *against* them, as objective things, as the "Other" which, in its own turn, moves men around as things. In the old days, the Other was then named "God" or Fate. Today it has been christened anew as Structure. (*Poverty* 345)

So much more true in the age of post-structuralism. Thompson goes on to argue that theories of determinism "are the product of an overly-rational mind; they offer an explanation in terms of mystified rationality for *non-rational* or *irrational* behaviour and belief, whose sources may not be educed from reason" (*Poverty* 357). Indeed it is an impossibly academic business to assume that we can know when workers *should* be subjectively alienated, when they suffer from false consciousness because they gain something resembling the values of Work from labour. Tutored by Freudians, Marxists who argue that there is a vampiric relationship between capital and labour, that the labourer / victim is complicit with or in some way wills and enjoys the capitalist / vampire's parasitical bite, enjoys surrendering selfhood to the system, should realize that their point of view sounds incredibly full-bellied. For all of its romanticism, English socialism tends to keep an eye on the need for labourers to make a wage. Still every social critic – including those of English cultural socialism – is aware of the world's effect on its inhabitants. I argue that the foremost characteristic of English cultural socialism is a split between a discourse of Work and the development of a gritty, political, and pragmatic socialism. The way in which it isolates Work from economics allows for the representation of moral, independent individuals in the midst of immoral and deterministic worlds. In the history of English cultural socialism is a

ferocious anti-rationalist bent but also the famous British pragmatic one. It is a history of not connecting its moral and practicable instincts, despite initiating the dogma of 'only connect.'

The second objective of this study is to show that there is some direct correspondence between a prevailing economic theory and culture, though, again, I am not especially interested in proving which came first. All the economic theories taking precedence in the period I am discussing adopted a model of rationalism which assumed human beings are naturally driven to maximize their self-interest. The reaction to it from the anti-rationalist tradition of English cultural socialism is negative to say the least. But in these sections of my study I am interested in showing the fusion of specific economic theories and society, the formation of economic cultures, which provoke the protest. Classical and Neo-Classical economics, political economy, and economic schools and disciplines which rose simultaneously with the rise of quantifiable labour all define the maximization of self-interest as normative or 'rational.' Modern decision or rational choice theory continues to disregard non-maximizing economic activity, what is dismissively referred to as 'satisficing': it is not considered a rational choice. Economists who follow the classical schools are generally willing to admit that satisficing takes place, but do not include it in their models.³ I argue that the models themselves have an impact on culture, on the behaviour of economic agents: that theories are normative as well as descriptive. The economic theories I investigate, themselves shaped by dynamic cultures – from technology to politics to the arts – generate, shape, develop, and legitimize theories of *homo economicus* which neuter subversive ideas about social organizations and privilege the importance of economic man, his reason, in order to justify and serve the ascendant or dominant capitalist class. I am interested in the ways in which English cultural socialism reacts to rationalist theories, especially through the anti-rationalist concept of work for work's sake and its defence of working-class culture. But I am also interested in the ways it comes to terms with rationalism and concedes to rationalist theory in order to respond to immediate crises.

³ See, for example, chapters 4 and 14 of George Stigler's *The Theory of Price* (1942).

The economic theories I examine, hedonist at root, consider it axiomatic that people prefer leisure to work (why wages are called 'compensation'). They cannot account for the desire to work for non-economic reasons, the widespread resistance to retirement, or the non-employment activity we might do with zeal – housekeeping, childrearing, volunteering, or gardening and such – but wouldn't do for pay. They cannot account for the fact that there is no relationship between the amount of disutility, the degree of undesirability in the work activity, and the size of the economic reward. By arguing that work is a disutility they deny that the context, structure, or organization of work is the disutility. They also argue that a rationalized workplace is acceptably alienating. These theories refuse to accept that people act non-rationally, without self-interest, without a goal: that people buy flowers for the hell of it. If we do, it is deemed a second order activity. Finally, they deny that ideology and collective forces manufacture desire (the leisure which supposedly drives us unwillingly to work), work ethics, or the maximizing strategies and conduct of economic agents. Economic agents might strategize, but such strategies are governed by patterns of perception and action indoctrinated into the agents by culture, to which economic theory is a large and weighty contributor.

The third objective of this study, to theorize on a set of disjunctures under the rubric of Work and labour and to contextualize two distinct discourses which displace and would deform each other, I have already described. I disagree with Fredric Jameson that "the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social conditions" (*Political* 79), but only insofar as one is more likely to find a lacuna than a 'solution' (however forced) to those social contradictions, at least in the texts and contexts in which I am engaged. It is not my intention to argue that those in the tradition of English cultural socialism never dialectically contrast Work and labour. Even Orwell, who I will argue epitomizes cultural socialism, has moments where he writes dialectically. He more than most also seems to recognize the contradiction in his approach: that 'George Orwell' was born of a tension, that "A humanitarian is always a hypocrite" (*CEJL* 2: 218). But Orwell, for the most part, swings harder and faster

between Gospelizing work and pragmatically addressing labour than those who shaped the tradition of cultural socialism before him. Perhaps more fervently than most of his predecessors, he also articulates a belief in moral change, that one has to change or perfect oneself before one changes or perfects the world, or despite the increasingly imperfect world. What makes Orwell so strange, why he epitomizes English cultural socialism, is that he, swinging in the opposite direction, also redresses that very aspect of moralism, as in his essay on Dickens, and because he virtually personifies defeatism or what I have called pragmatic realism.

I hope, then, not only to contribute ideas to the growing discipline of 'work studies' from the perspective of a literary student but also to contribute to studies on Carlyle, Conrad, Orwell, and the Victorian and Modern literary periods in general from the perspective of an interdisciplinary work studies. The main subject of my study is not George Orwell, but the creation of 'George Orwell' from the tradition of cultural socialism. In other words, the main subject is the group itself – through the grouping I develop a theory of work. Raymond Williams finds Orwell "genuinely baffling until one finds the key to the paradox," and I too wish to "describe" the "paradox of Orwell" (*Culture* 279). Williams argues a "paradox of the exile," and I will argue the paradox of Work, a paradox of withdrawal that is quite different in its ramifications than exile. Since I look at a series of writers whose lives and writings interconnect, all of who seem to follow Lenin's dictum that the participant is the only true observer, I am also examining Work and labour with regard to their class attitudes and the different perceptual habits and frequencies of the classes.

I am particularly interested in the discursive shift that takes place according to the social class the group is addressing or considering. On the one hand, the working class is related to the pleasures and virtues of Work. On the other hand, the middle class is told about or scolded because of the conditions of labour. The Gospel of Work is undoubtedly delivered to the middle class as well, but not in the same manner or with the same persistence as it is packaged for the working class. The middle class sermonizes unto itself its own variation of the Gospel. The working class, it seems, enjoys a special knowledge of Work, but is particularly oblivious to the

world of labour. The specific discourse of labour reserved for the middle class or paternalistically uttered when observing the working class from a distance – as opposed to participating in working-class culture – denies or negates the possibility of Work.

The scope of this project is large, covering many years, many theories, and many writers. But not all theories of work are addressed and not every writer who fits into my model is discussed. I wish to show a tendency, a pattern, an approach to Work and labour that forms what I think is a unique and curious oscillation steeped in structural questions. I discuss gender and work, and nationalism and work, but in only a cursory manner. I hardly touch upon ethnicity or colonialism and work, or intellectual work, all huge subjects in themselves. I proceed inductively, using specific texts to construct a general theory. I do not think my theory ought to be treated as a comprehensive model and I do not do so myself. I try to follow the form of my own critique and dialectically oppose the specific texts I analyze to the general theory I then follow.

Theoretical Background

The main theories and definitions of work informing this study have been unabashedly borrowed, simplified, and reworked from, primarily, Hannah Arendt, Raymond Williams, and Max Weber in order to fit my own needs. In Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958), she provides a definition of 'labour' as activity directed to satisfy biological needs and 'work' as producing objects which outlast the productive activity and which lend continuity to existence. They form the basis of my use of the terms, though I use 'Work' and Arendt uses 'labour' to denote self-objectification (Marx's concept of alienation is based on the idea that the worker feels lost when the self-imprinted object is taken away from him or her, the creator) and the way that the cycle of toil and rest can be a trans-economic, intrinsically-rewarding sensation. Still, her social critique and the anti-rationalism I focus on both lament the disappearance of 'work' products, products transcending consumption. Arendt writes,

The industrial revolution has replaced all workmanship with labour, and the result has been that the things of the modern world have become labour products whose natural fate is to be consumed, instead of work products which are there to be used. (*Human* 124)

More explicitly than her, I use 'labour' (outside of its meaning as the antithesis of satisfying work) to mean economic activity (she uses 'labour' to mean answering necessity and ensuring survival, but not necessarily in an economic context) and use 'Work' to refer to activity understood to be intrinsically satisfying and treated as if outside of an economic context.

My definitions of Work and labour also correspond with Raymond Williams's analysis, in his eponymous book, of how 'culture and society' have been misdefined. 'Work' I associate with his understanding of the misused word 'culture,' suggesting that it is a most significant example of such an attitude towards 'culture':

an abstraction and an absolute: an emergence which, in a very complex way, merges two general responses – first, the recognition of the practical separation of certain moral and intellectual activities from the driven impetus of a new kind of [industrial] society; second, the emphasis of these activities, as a court of human appeal, to be set over the processes of practical social judgment and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative . . . Further . . . in the formation of the meanings of *culture*, an evident reference back to an area of personal and apparently private experience, which was notably to affect the meaning and practice of art. (xviii)

I treat 'Work' as almost synonymous with Williams's critique of 'culture'; that is, a point of transcendence from the nitty-gritty reality of economic life. The fascinating aspect of work, however, albeit represented as Work, and unlike 'culture' per se, is that it is the root and substructure of economic reality. I also argue that, while holding 'Work' in abeyance, the writers of English cultural socialism also tackle 'society,' economic reality and the realm of necessity. Like Williams, I believe that a general theory of work (his is a general theory of culture) should include grasping the relations between Work and labour (or culture and society) as *a whole way of life*.

I agree with Terry Eagleton (another critic who figures prominently in my study) that *Culture and Society* (1958) takes the

Romantic 'radical-conservative' lineage of nineteenth-century England – and extract[s] from it those 'radical' elements which could be ingrafted into a 'socialist humanism.' . . . [*Culture and Society*] thus paradoxically reproduced the nineteenth-century bourgeois exploitation of Romantic 'radical-conservative' ideology for its own ends – only this time the ends in question were socialist. And it could do so, of course, because the working-class movement is as a matter of historical fact deeply infected with the Carlylean and Ruskinian ideology in question. It was a matter of the book *rediscovering* that tradition, offering it as a richly moral and symbolic heritage to an ideologically impoverished labour movement, just as in nineteenth-century England that tradition became available as an ideological crutch to the industrial bourgeoisie.

But I cannot agree with him that the 'radical elements,' moral work

– tradition, community, organicism, growth, wholeness, continuity, and so on – were interlocked with the equally corporatist, evolutionary discourse of Labourism, so that the organicism of the one language reproduced and elaborated the organicism of the other. (*Criticism* 25)

Williams, very aware and critical of the reactionary character of the tradition, argues that culture, as art, was conceived in opposition to society and Labourism. The Labourism Eagleton dismisses, betraying an affiliation to a transcendental culture of his own, is what I refer to as pragmatic economics and it is a complex – corporatist and conservative at points, reformist and activist at others – mixture of right and left-wingery, but nonetheless saturated in 'society.' In terms of the tradition Williams identifies, it is kept compartmentalized from the discourse of culture (or Work). If Williams was "haunted by an uncertain nostalgia for the 'organic,'" and if "'Wholeness,' 'natural growth,' [and] 'total process' are keystones of the book's entire conceptual structure" (*Criticism* 40) to the point where the abstractions overwhelm, then *Culture and Society* would only be called *Culture*. Incidentally, one might hope that wholeness, natural growth, and total process are not dismissed as only reactionary. They are, as Williams suggests,

“an essential preparation for socialist theory, and for the more general attention to a ‘whole way of life’” (145).

From Weber I am borrowing a concept of rationalism.⁴ Weber uses the term broadly, but his distinction between formal and substantial rationality is central to my discussion of anti-rationalism. In Weber’s sense, an action is deemed formally rational if it is an efficacious means to a premeditated end and is governed solely by that end. I follow his use of the term “substantive rationality” to identify rationality from the point of view of an ethical end, which entails ethical means. From the point of view of formal rationality, equality, fraternity, community, and job satisfaction are non- or even irrational values. Modern, formal rationalism emphasizes a doctrine of instrumentality, systemization, and quantitative pursuit. It abolishes religious and customary restraints but stresses impersonal legal controls over any deviancy which might interfere with the predictability of society. Society is to passively await the benefits supposed to accompany the maximizing of personal wealth. It means economic preoccupation, ascetic self-control, and technological control over nature. Rationalism goes hand in hand with the model of free-market exchange: the deliberate pursuit of individual gain without interruption from the field of ethics, the restraint of emotions, the confusion of caprice, the ambitionless continuity of tradition, or the ‘irrationality’ of ideology.

In my study, rationalism is also an approach to work where work is only the means to production and extrinsic maximizing or compensation. Workers are often the means themselves, a paradigm keeping formal rationality irreconcilably at odds with substantive rationality. Economic rationalism may have begun in the eighteenth or even the seventeenth century, but it was not until the growth of the study of political economy in the nineteenth century that it became systematically accepted. Although Weber introduces the work ethic as part of the trend towards rationalism and the rationalization of work, the work ethic in English cultural socialism

⁴ I have little to say about Weber’s or Tawney’s theses on the relationship between Protestantism and the origins of capitalism, though the idea of a unitary work ethic seems too monolithic and the idea of its determining power seems too isolated to support their theories on the origins of capitalism. Though I will argue that Protestantism plays a part in the origins and schizoid development of English cultural socialism, the Gospel of Work (and capitalism) would have risen and did rise independently of a Protestant ethic.

is formally non-rational. It has nothing to do with extrinsically oriented strategies of exchange. It is substantively rational in that it is first and foremost to engender a moral end, personal stability, or community commitment: it expresses a traditionalistic resistance to the rationalization of work. Weber thinks only of the capitalist, the 'self-made man,' when he links rationalism to *the* work ethic. Such a unitary work ethic, however, is not likely even within the capitalist class or its understood Protestant / Puritan innovators.

As a sociologist, Weber simply reports on modern rationalization. But one is not remaining entirely neutral if one sees capitalist rationalism as an "abomination to every system of fraternal ethics" (*Economy* 1: 637). Weber's concern was over the disjunction between formal and substantive rationality; i.e., a modern indifference to substantive ends. Still, Weber only challenges unchecked rationalism. He recognizes the benefits of modernizing and the futility of acting as if the overturning of modernity would ipso facto increase human happiness, justice, and comfort. English cultural socialism and especially Orwell makes the same recognition, but the compliance to and rejection of modern rationalism is not organized by an attempt to explain it as with Weber's thesis, but rather emerges out of a Victorian and traditional ethos deeply engaged with modernity. The result is a hard division between moral Work and economic labour.

Weber's analysis of rationalism best lends itself to my thesis in its intersection with Marx. Marxists generally hold that the rationality of individual economic agents attempting to maximize profits conflicts with what is rational for the capitalist system as a whole (Glyn 107). Private ownership inevitably leads to the malfunctioning of capitalism itself. Weber emphasizes that what is formally rational for economic agents is not rational for those same agents in terms of their lives as a whole. The 'early Marx,' who looms throughout my pages, approaches rationalism from both a structural and a moral perspective. If I at points seem antagonistic towards Marx it is only because any discussion involving Work and labour has to respond to him and move outwards from him. His criticism of Hegel's 'universal notion of work' (and of non-materialism in general) could model for my criticism of the withdrawal into the Gospel of Work common to English cultural socialism. His concept of alienation (essentialist, for one has to be

alienated *from* something and for Marx it is the species essence, *homo faber*), the estrangement of people in competition with one another or of people separated from the products they invest themselves into, could model for my criticism of pragmatism. That alienation is endemic to the relations of private property, to the division of labour, to the stupefaction of the industrial worker, and to bourgeois instrumentalism, goes far to dialectically oppose Work and labour, to confront Work with labour. His inversion of the intellectual hierarchy between thought and action, the model of materialist dialectics, is implicit in my critique of a lack of praxis and dialectics in English cultural socialism. His assertion that it is not (individual) reason but (communal) work that distinguishes human and animal (and subsequently that there is a need to separate work from private rewards and turn it into an end in itself) is behind my sympathy for the anti-rationalist tradition. His critique of political economy – that it shapes, accelerates, and legitimizes industry and not only theorizes upon it – is central to my argument about the relation of theory to economic behaviour, as is some of his work on the ideological content of morality, a product and reflection of social structure. My critique of the failure to ‘only connect’ the passion and the prose, the Ideal and the real, in so much of English literature ultimately comes from Marx’s insistence to see society in a dialectic totality.

Hannah Arendt criticizes Marx on the basis

that in all stages of his work he defines man as an *animal laborans* and then leads him into a society in which this greatest and most human power is no longer necessary. We are left with the rather distressing alternative between productive slavery and unproductive freedom. (*Human* 105)⁵

⁵ Arendt questions the ‘contradictions’ in Marx’s thought as follows:

If labour is the most human and most productive of man’s activities, what will happen when, after the revolution, ‘labour is abolished’ in the ‘realm of freedom,’ when man has succeeded in emancipating himself from it? What productive and what essentially human activity will be left? If violence is the midwife of history, and violent action therefore the most dignified of all forms of human action, what will happen when, after the conclusion of class struggle and the disappearance of the state, no violence will even be possible? How will men be able to act at all in a meaningful, authentic way? Finally, when philosophy has been both realized and abolished, in the future society, what kind of thought will be left? (“Tradition” 27)

Such criticism is unfounded because Marx does not define man as *animal laborans* but as *homo faber* reduced to *animal laborans*. Marx was looking forward to a time when economic necessity would no longer be the reason we work, not to a time when people no longer work. In *The German Ideology* (1846), he imagines when everyone would be free "to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner" (*Reader* 160). Behind Marx's future society, in fact, is not idleness, but the productivist illusion common to the age he inhabited, the assumption that society under the realm of freedom would see more material production than all previous societies, that social and material progress were twinborn. Still, the young, visionary Marx does not let go of economics when articulating the promises of Work, always seeing Work and labour as clashing, contradicting forces.

My grievance with Marx in this study has to do with his abandoning a model of Work as he moved towards *Capital* (1867). Though alienation from intrinsically oriented Work is always implicit in his later writings, he more and more treated work in a narrowly economic sense, as solely a matter of labour power and so forth. He implicitly contradicts himself by suggesting all morality is sheer ideology and bourgeois mystification. 'Morality,' for the young Marx, includes non-alienating Work. By taking for granted that the economic was a first order activity given to fixed laws, his ideas mirror the political economy of his day. I am not suggesting that Marx-as-scientist was unimportant. Ron Bellamy makes the point that Ricardo shows a lack of a scientific curiosity by accepting the idea that capitalists get the profits of labour power as a matter of course. But since "science requires an answer to the question: why and how do they get it" and Marx asked that question through his queries into labour power and surplus value, Marx was the better scientist (44). My complaint is that Marx the scientist divorces himself from Marx the moralist, creating a separation remarkably similar to the one central to English cultural socialism, except that Marx retreats into abstract economics, not abstract Work. E. P. Thompson suggests that Marx's economism, and the treatment of "Marxism as Science," places Marx and Marxism besides Utilitarians, Malthusians, Positivists, Fabians, and structuralist-functionalists

(*Poverty* 360). All fetishize science, but in the case of Marx and Marxism, this undermines the anti-rationalism in work and economics that the Marxist state would be based upon.

Georg Lukács might provide the needed link between anti-rationalism and economics, between the spiritual ideal and the real, between Marxism as a religion and as a science – a conflation enabling praxis. Terry Eagleton links Lukács's anti-scientism to Raymond Williams, to the emotionally driven cry for a synthesis of culture and society, though not appreciating that they share a "theoretical idealism" and "aesthetic predilections" (*Criticism* 36). Lukács emphasizes the different ways classes relate to objects and reality. The worker sees the object as knowable, as a process, as something built (in turn leading to a consciousness of the world, to history as something built). The bourgeois sees the object as a mystery, as static, as if capitalism itself was eternal (a "rationalism," Fredric Jameson adds, that "can assimilate everything but the ultimate questions of purpose and origins" [*Form* 185-86]). Lukács ties life experience to perception in such a way as to suggest that vital art and meaningful notions of culture, even notions of Work, express a social process at every level. Behind my critique of the separation of Work and society lies his theory of art and society, just as his analysis of reification informs my own anti-rationalism.



I am limiting my study to a critique of the rationalism emerging out of nineteenth-century industrialism and economism, but rationalism is to be found well before that. Though Ruskin castigated Renaissance rationalism, today the Enlightenment receives the brunt of the attack. Implicit in my study, then, though by no means central to it, is a critique of the Enlightenment. I follow, in this critique, Horkheimer and Adorno:

The prognosis of the related conversion of enlightenment into positivism, the myth of things as they actually are . . . and that which is inimical to the spirit, has been overwhelmingly confirmed. (x)

That the Enlightenment brought on an 'administered world' can be seen in a hodgepodge of changes leading into the nineteenth century. The development of a linear, highly-regulated and

rule-governed menu or the specialized rooms which replaced large medieval halls (McClintock 182), for example, can and have been attributed to the Enlightenment fetish for structure. Barthes and Foucault have argued that rational management led to the ordering of everything from religion to the body and sexuality. Victorian liberals such as Leslie Stephen, in *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876), and John Morley, in *Critical Miscellanies* (1886), approvingly trace Enlightenment skepticism to laissez-faire doctrine, ratifying the rationalism (whether it be in work, human reason, or the free market) at the core of the ideas.

At the same time, Gerald Graff correctly argues that

The 'reason' of most classical, Renaissance, and Enlightenment thinkers is moral and evaluative *and* objective. It bears little resemblance to the value-free, instrumental, purely calculative reason of positivistic science and industrial engineering. This change in the concept of reason reflects a transformation of the structures of social authority in which reason (and other concepts denoting authority) seem, in the eyes of many, to have been objectified. (28)

I am not joining the bandwagon demonizing the Enlightenment. 'Man' was thought to have an unalterable nature well before it. Anthropocentrism, as an alternative to a God-centred universe, is in itself quite defensible, as long as it is the valuation of reason and not rationalism (or solipsism). Centres are also in themselves far from inherently evil. Marx implies that work is the centre of 'man,' a social species. And many have connoted that work, or making things and seeing in oneself the power to make things, is a healthy centre for human beings, insofar as it was the first step towards breaking a slavery to mysticism and gods (as the makers of all things).

Terminology

As I have already implied, I find it absolutely necessary to fashion my own vocabulary by using certain words and phrases in a specific, narrow manner. In order to be as clear, precise, and understood as possible I am providing an up-front glossary. I will be consistent in my use of these terms unless otherwise indicated.

Work: Capital 'W' Work refers to intrinsically satisfying work, albeit hard and demanding: to the Gospel of Work or Carlylean Work. It refers to work which is said to be good in its own right, performed for its own sake, for 'wellbeing' or other non-economic incentives. It implies a non-historical, non-specific, almost transcendental experience – although as work it is a very real and historical, concrete, and involved one. It signifies a withdrawal into an inviolate world kept isolated from the world of economics. It is identity fixing, ego stabilizing, and community-bonding activity. It often has aesthetically pleasing rewards and suggests a qualitative, individuated aspect in the work process. But production is not its central value, whereas effort for effort's sake is. A lower case 'work' refers to activity which is not necessarily marked by either intrinsic or extrinsic rewards in order to suggest that the values associated with Work (or labour) are constructed, not inherent in the activity itself. Upper case Work is the activity performed by *homo faber*.

Labour: Refers to work performed for extrinsic or economic reasons, work which is important for its instrumental utility. In one sense (Arendt's), I use it to suggest what is necessary to sustain life, but in another sense I want to suggest that it is the opposite of Work. In this sense, it refers to dissatisfying or industrial work: quantitative, boring, repetitive, and alienating. When performed by the middle class for economic reasons (the realm of gain), it is the activity of *homo economicus*. When performed by the working class for economic reasons (the realm of necessity), but in alienating conditions, it is the activity of *homo laborans*. Labour is work under the criteria of rationalism, the *real*.

* * *

Moralism: Though an unpopular word today in academic circles, I find it nicely applies to the nineteenth-century concept of Work. Moralism belongs to the idea of Work and its values: moral work is Work, that which transcends rationalism. More specifically, I use it to identify the tendency to believe in the individual's need and ability to change – change oneself, not the world – despite the context of rationalist work, to supersede economics or work rationalization. It implies, as Woodcock said of Orwell and Orwell said of Dickens, that a moral and not a

structural problem belies England. Moralism also implies a generalizing and abstracting *modus operandi*.

Pragmatism: I do not use pragmatism in William James's sense or for that matter in any philosophical sense. I use it to refer to a non-philosophical negotiation with the world of labour, to specific and concrete responses to the demands of the immediate economic world. In English cultural socialism, it can be linked to reform and gradualism.

* * *

Culture: Though I use the term in its modern sense as a set of activities and beliefs shared by a particular group of people, I also use it to identify the utopian world created by compartmentalizing labour and the need for pragmatism. I rely on Williams's analysis of the word in order to suggest a transcendent order appalled by and withdrawn from the everyday practices of society.

Society: Again I use the word in its dictionary definition, but I also use it, in Williams's sense, as the opposite of 'culture.' In this way it has associations with labour, just as culture has associations with Work.

* * *

Rationalism: I use rationalism to mean the overextended application of formal (in Weber's sense, see above) rationality in the economic, political, social, or private realm. There can be religious and non-religious rationalism, its basis being that human reason, not empirical data, leads to truth. To act rationally is to act on the basis of knowledge and it is not what I mean by *rationalism*: **rationalism** refers to a calculating, instrumentalizing orientation with the outside world. Rationality is a huge concept rooted in Greek philosophy, but I use *rationalism* to identify the idea that to *maximize* the means to an end (and to disregard the end) *is* human reason. As Williams explains in *Keywords* (1976), the nineteenth-century "Idealist use of Reason as the transcendent power of grasping first principles" was met with the utilitarian attempt to appropriate the word in order to defend its own principles (211-12). I use the word in its appropriated sense. I am also interested in the relationship between **work rationalization** and

rationalism in society and the reciprocal way in which they familiarize functionalism in discourse and social interaction. **Work rationalization**, or **rationalized work**, is work geared toward quantitative production using systematic mechanisms such as the division of labour: in this way it constitutes the realm of labour. It is important to point out that work rationalization was not born with the invention of a machine or the articulations of one Adam Smith in the pin factory. Work rationalization, the division of labour for example, was present at its own making. But until the acceptance of rationalism, work rationalization was not organized to the point of human alienation or held as a value in itself. Economic rationalism is the maximizing of self-interested gain for the sake of gain: in this way, the way of *homo economicus*, it is also in the realm of labour. It can be, I am very willing to admit, when it comes to the necessity of extrinsic gain, a matter of pragmatic economics. I use rationalism to emphasize the exaggerated belief in specialized, linear, formal procedures at the expense of substantive, Work values.

Non-rationalism or **Anti-rationalism**: As the realm of Work, it refers to the contrary of rationalism. It is non-instrumental activity emphasizing substantive rationality (the ends as opposed to the means). The term ought not to be confused in any way with the irrational.

* * *

Moral individualism: I use the term to refer to the representation of Work as wrested from labour (from rationalized, alienating work and the world of economics). Gleaning Work from a non-Work context implies the individual, subjectivity, is impervious to objective conditions: that the individual has the internal resources to nullify what is often represented as a dehumanizing environment or to reverse the effect of that environment through an individuated assertion of will. I also use **intransitive moralism** to refer to this phenomenon in order to emphasize that the labour turned into Work has to be and is stripped of its object, its specific nature. I sometimes use **self-sufficient moralism** in place of moral individualism to insist that displacing labour for Work also involves a refusal of economic rationalism, of maximizing. Being impervious to the outside world implies a belief in self-reliance, but it also implies that the values of the inside

world are antithetical to the maximizing rationalism, the instrumental character, of *homo economicus*.

Pragmatic realism: The term will be applied when the writers I examine admit or concede to the world of labour. At such intervals, the concept of Work is either ignored or, in Orwell's case, ridiculed. The idea of pragmatic realism, insofar as it elaborates on the idea of 'labour' and is the flipside of moral individualism, becomes most important when discussing Orwell's fiction. I use it only sparingly until the chapter 'George Orwell Revisited.'

* * *

English cultural socialism: A term I use to identify a line of thinkers who Gospelize Work but pragmatically negotiate labour. In this group I identify many thinkers, the most important in their eras being Thomas Carlyle, Joseph Conrad, and George Orwell. Orwell epitomizes all that which took place in English cultural socialism before him. I have borrowed the term from Bernard Crick's essay on George Orwell, "English socialism" (1988). He points out that

A characteristic of English socialism, in contrast to Marxist socialism, has been to recognize that there are some areas of life which have to be preserved from politics . . .

Only an English socialist could talk, as Morris, Tawney, and Orwell did, about the importance of privacy in the good life. (16)

I have added 'cultural' to the term in order to emphasize that the ground preserved from politics (economics, I would suggest) constitutes a withdrawal from society in the way that Williams shows that 'culture' was used as an oppositional term to 'society,' to transcend society, in the tradition of writers he identifies (and the writers I refer to are often the same as his). As Crick argues, there are two distinct sides to English (cultural) socialism:

On the one hand a sensibility and perception that is close to observable experience and intensely practical, but on the other hand Pilgrim with his eyes raised towards Zion, head-in-the-air while feet necessarily tramp through the slough of Despond and Vanity Fair. But perhaps only the plodding Pilgrim could sustain the idealistic Pilgrim through the hard work and daily disappointment that gradualism is heir to. (19)

I am interested in the undialectical gulf between the sides and the assumptions which lie latent between them.

Methodology

I begin with a chapter on Orwell's prose and finish with a chapter on his fiction. Beginning with Orwell, I can discuss English cultural socialism as an anthropologist might, with the composite item (Orwell's prose) of a hundred years of influence enlarged and exaggerated in front of me. I then go back to historicize the formation of the lineage that led to 'Orwell.' I hope to contribute something to both Orwellian criticism and to the study of the historical development of the idea of work. I end by returning to Orwell, not in order to show differences between his prose and fiction, but to come full circle and revisit my argument about the formation of 'George Orwell' after an examination of his intellectual influences and their contexts: of Carlyle, Victorian approaches to work, Conrad, and Modern approaches to work. Though I jump between examining individual writers and the periods of writing they belong to, I never proceed as if obliged to linear time. I treat Arnold as a Modern and Kipling as a Victorian and include them respectively in those chapters because I argue that Arnold's attitude is Modern and Kipling's is Victorian. Though by no means do I avoid 'canonical' texts, as with my approach to chronology I move freely inside and outside the canon, discussing Jewsbury or Eliot when they are relevant. I discuss these writers not only because they are relevant, but also, I'll freely admit, because they are familiar to me. I don't want to get hung up on discussions of linearity or the canon. My sections on women's work and on historically prevailing economic theories are too short, for they are subjects deserving books of their own. The focus of my study is mostly literary: literary responses to the Gospel of Work and the rationalization of labour. As a sort of appendix to each of the chapters on a particular writer, I include a short section on the language of work (on Carlyle's discourse of Work, for example). My intent here is to understand from that language the tensions, inconsistencies, and conventions in the attitudes toward work and to analyze how style and subject matter correspond or contradict. Finally, I say again that I

am not attempting a survey on work, or on work and literature, nor am I claiming that my theory about Work and labour is applicable to every British piece of written word between 1843 and 1949. Rather, I am attempting to identify and contextualize a tendency, not a movement, at the intersection of conflicting historical forces.

George Orwell

Introduction

Of all the critics seeking to identify the inconsistencies in George Orwell's life and writings, including both his apologists and adversaries, few point out that an author of a column entitled "As I Please" would intentionally flaunt antinomies. George Woodcock, who understands Orwell well, is an exception. He thinks Orwell "tended to glory in his contradictions and in the unsystematic nature of his thought" (*Crystal* 55). Head-spinning inconsistencies, so much the more audacious for being very clearly stated, preclude automatic allegiances to Orwell the man, forcing discussion to organize itself over ideas, perhaps over the idea of 'Orwell.' But Woodcock also reads the inconsistencies as a "shift in his attitude which took place whenever the subject moved from the abstract and general to the concrete and personal" (*Crystal* 56). The implication is that Orwell's contradictory style gets away from him, that it is deeply rooted in an epistemological discontinuity. Dan Jacobson has recently reformulated Woodcock's analysis of an a priori / a posteriori shift by noting that Orwell, when generalizing, ridicules homosexuals, vegetarians, and middle-class intellectuals, for example, but supports "them in directly *political* terms" (4). Most critics can agree that guided by a private code of action, Orwell defends individuals persecuted by organized factions even as he derides what they represent. That is, he thinks differently depending on his proximity to people and events.

When speaking in abstract terms Orwell resists the strictures of rationalism – rejecting technology, depicting work as a good in itself and money as the root of all evil, defying authority, and attesting to the sanctity of tradition. When speaking in concrete terms he concedes to rationalism – admitting the necessity of technology, ridiculing the representation of work as anything but a means to satisfy economic need, and money as anything but the root of all good, defending authority, and vilifying a romanticized past. In this chapter I try to show that the contradiction in Orwell's prose, especially in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), between Gospelizing Work and pragmatically negotiating labour,

between vision and revision, is never brought into dialectics and remains unresolved. The gap allows Orwell to withdraw into a landscape of inviolate Work, which, in its turn, creates the paradox of locating a transcendental order in Work (work) and initiates moral individualism, the self-determination of reality. Orwell's withdrawal from society (from economics and the real conditions of labour) into the communal values of Work, represented through a ragged collection of idiosyncratic independents, follows from the division of Work from labour. Williams describes Orwell's refuge from the real world as self-exile, as finding "virtue" "in an assertion of independence" (*Culture* 279). Though I agree with him that Orwell defines himself against society, in his chapter on Orwell in *Culture and Society* Williams downplays the fact that Orwell was, on the other hand, also very much involved with 'society,' the day-to-day economic struggles of the poor and working class. In this chapter I hope to show a concentrated expression of the bi-polarizing impulse common to English cultural socialism as it reacts to the structural clampdown on the meanings – and therefore the actual form – of work.

I realize, however, that there is a danger in partitioning Orwell's thoughts between Work and labour, between a vehement non-rationalism and a pragmatic concession to rationalism. First, though it may be true that he denies *rationalism*, he never abandons reason, promotes mysticism, or psychologizes for a return to behaviour guided by instinct. Second, when I say he concedes to rationalism, I do not mean to imply that he abandons fraternal ethics or endorses free-market economics, far from it. In that 'concession' is Orwell's engagement with, and most often a reaction against, capitalist rationalization. But it is a reaction from 'inside the whale' as opposed to a denial of or a withdrawal from the modern world. Third, to argue that only his resignation to rationalism, his cynicism towards work ethics for example, is a 'concrete' response to the modern organization of work, or society, is to imply that his resistance to it is merely an antiquated, utopian idealism. His resistance to rationalism is only utopian insofar as it is not opposed to his pragmatism. Negotiating the terms of rationalized work does not own a monopoly on the down-to-earth. Orwell the work theorist is clearly right to argue that the unemployed need work for non-economic reasons. He also says that the unemployed need only

money. These views compete under the single category of the 'concrete,' the real needs of a particular individual. To apply the abstract / concrete distinction unconditionally and suggest that only arbitrating the details of labour is *real* would be to ratify the assumption that the resistance to a rationalization of work is not 'useful,' a utilitarian and capitalist tautology. This would be to prejudge Orwell's contradictions from a fully rationalist point of view. It is also to dismiss the relevance of the contradiction.

At the same time, the distinction between Work and labour, moralism and pragmatism, is fundamental to any analysis of Orwell's contradictory attitudes. Most critics point out an inconsistency. For Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton Orwell's "double vision" (*Orwell* 19), or the "tensions and contradictions" (*Exiles* 86) in his work, reveal the untenable assumptions of his conservatism. For Daphne Patai he is not merely contradictory, but "equally simplistic and extreme at each end of the spectrum" (7). For Richard Hoggart the "contradictory mixture" includes a "toughness in manner" and a 'warm,' 'gentle' tolerance ("Introduction" 37). Beatrix Campbell comes close to my own formulation of the dualism when she concludes that "Orwell moves between these great moral virtues and the private common sense morality of decency" (218). Alok Rai identifies a "schizoid affiliation" to middle-class literati and their notions of aesthetic value and an aesthetic and moral bond with the people he wrote about (31). In a similar way, Stephen Ingle argues that Orwell "continuously switches from identifying with the poor and writing about society from their point of view to identifying with 'society' and writing about the poor as a social problem" (*Political* 25). Some critics judge Orwell's writings by the standards of coherency, treating the contradictions in themselves as evidence of artistic and theoretical failure. More often than not this comes across as purely evaluative and formalist, ideological and self-defensive attempts to expose inauthenticity, dishonesty, or a lack of decency and deflate what Orwell's popularity might represent.

Orwell's vacillations go beyond the quasi-aristocratic, individualistic whimsicality of a title such as "As I Please," the general / concrete split, or the superficial vagaries coincident with non-partisanship. Neither can the cause of the contradictions be reduced to a various

occupational history or his interaction with different social classes. Orwell was a revolutionary and a traditionalist; a radical and a conservative; an ironist and a sentimentalist; he wore political labels and was anti-sectarian; he was a propagandist of feel-good optimism, a hater of Jeremiahs, and a gloomy pessimist; "dominator and dominated" (Williams, *Orwell* 19); authoritarian and rebel; a moralist who believed change begins with the individual and a socialist who contributed to a theory of constructivism; synchronic and diachronic; a liberal and liberalism's critic; and finally, a humanist and someone who envisioned the ultimate collapse of human subjectivity. Orwell's thought was both inside and outside the whale: caught between history, specificity, and variability on the one hand and the desperate plea for the final knowledge of 'culture' on the other. The paradox of Orwell's inconsistency is best seen as he rocks back and forth between adopting a Romantic vision of Work and integrating himself into a pragmatic labourism. Both attitudes can be seen as defending and legitimizing, but also ready to shape and define a bifurcated working-class culture, yet in their divergence either exalt work as if innocent of its purpose, origin, and effects or reduce it to its instrumental purposes, origins, and effects.

Before demonstrating this divergence with reference to Orwell's prose I should point out that it is also impossible to simply bypass the defence of inconstancy in that prose. Instead of claiming that contradictions vitiate his thought (which I do not), or that a "deficiency resides in the fact that he was not a theoretician" (Kubal 50; see also Williams, *Orwell* 27; and Karl, *Reader's* 159), we should accept Orwell's "perfect horror of a dictatorship of theorists" and "absurdly consistent" *intégristes* (*CEJL* 1: 532; *Road* 156). Inconsistency is still the best weapon against accusations of ideological prescriptions. Whether 'ideology' means systematic partisanship, a cultural worldview, or mystified tractability, inconsistency eats into the basic idea of conformity. It is also a tool which checks idealizing, the dream of a utopian wellness, for it provides a reminder of the specificity and complexity of any human situation. In this study the inconsistent has special relevance as it is the product of Work, displaying individualized thought, just as Ruskin claims inconstant Gothic architecture displays a non-mechanical, non-rationalist, free expression of the worker's independence. Variation, again, is in itself irreverent towards

systemization. Orwell condemns theory as grossly totalizing; as imposing on and limiting human behaviour (not merely analyzing it) for the sake of neatness and a latent rationalism; as experientially void; casuistic; impotently discursive; elitist; alienating; and private (empiricism would be public). For Orwell, any categorical allegiance, philosophical or ideological absolute, any organizing grid (any organization), or any orthodoxy creates sectarian values elevating the sect over the circumstance. Theory itself rationalizes, it thematizes, reducing centrifugal elements to calculable exigencies and distorting spontaneous irregularities into the logical and predictable forms of an organizing principle. Orwell treats theory as Ruskin treats rationalized work. By (ex)claiming that "only the 'educated' man . . . knows how to be a bigot" (*Road* 156), Orwell may idealize the working class and his own autodidactic independence, but he also situates himself primarily as a moralist against organized morality. Education for Orwell paradoxically engenders both ideological partisanship and freewheeling relativism, both of which preclude argumentation and pragmatic activism.

The blatant Orwellian contradiction asserts an independence of mind even as he admits that he has internalized middle-class values. He twists the tension between his affiliation to working-class values and his filiation to the middle class into a proud contradiction that galvanizes and reconfirms autonomy or the ability to think outside class prescriptions. Yet, even when taking into account his objection to the "absurdly consistent," Orwell, to an extent greater than his predecessors in the tradition of English cultural socialism, vacillates between hard and firm approaches to Work and labour. His traditionalistic link to a moral conception of Work is loudly pronounced, especially considering the poverty-ridden time in which he wrote. But Orwell, with a sociologist's eye for detail, also outlines the value of work as a means to make money, period. Though a vaguely discernible sense that Eric Blair was comfortable constructing a Janus-faced George Orwell might provide an out against both formalist and politically-mandated critiques of the contradiction, the flagrant split between Work and labour is itself consistent with the two strains of thought which frame or underlie English cultural socialism.

The Narrative of Work

*It is the pride
of the drudge.*

Whether or not Orwell began to believe that decency was particular to the working class because his parents forbade contact with it, was somehow related to the desire to expiate the guilt of Burma, or if the belief originated in Paris, London, or Wigan, he certainly represents its members as possessing special virtues. His portrait of Wigan shows the drudgery of work in an industrial town, especially the impossible hardship of mining, the physical decay of the workers, the degradation of menial work and poverty, and the economic stress accompanying unemployment. Yet these images are of a piece with a celebration of Work and an insistence on the moral superiority of the working class partly because they maintain dignity, humanity, volition, a sense of domesticity and community, and an overall 'basic decency' while shuffling through the ugliness of industrialism. Labour and Work are effectively isolated.

At various points, mining in *The Road to Wigan Pier* represents working-class Work. Mining matches endurance and *dureté* against great odds, involves an organic setting, and allows for a confrontation with the basic elements. One of the basic concepts of Work to which Orwell subscribes is that Work occurs when a subject encounters something outside himself or herself from the natural world which first withstands and then yields to effort. There is joy in Work because one feels victorious in overcoming the resistance offered by the external object. The environmentalism central to the concept of Work is not only based on an aesthetic reaction to industrialism, but also on the idea that the subject is in a state of dependence on nature as it provides the objects which are the source of his or her joy (Applebaum 462).¹ Mining has a special place in the arts (Zola, Lawrence) because it is central to both labour and Work: it was the keystone to industrial development but is also rich in metaphorical or figurative potential. The image of mining, more visibly than in other occupations, opens up to a display of symbolic self-determination, the hammering-out of identity through a physical encounter with nature.

¹Herbert Applebaum has a complete description of this (Adriano Tilgher's) and other definitions of work in his helpful survey *The Concept of Work* (1992).

Orwell's miner seems to "complete himself in a world that he has created" (Marx, *Reader* 76). Working the miners become "hammered iron statues" (21). The grueling, back-breaking conditions they endure, conditions which are rightly a fact of labour, become the opportunity to show how tough and virile the workers are, how stable and decent because they can and do 'take it.' I am not suggesting that physical work does not confirm a sense of identity demanded by either external (cultural) or internal forces. People look for hard work outside of their employment all the time, especially if their employment doesn't allow them the opportunity to use their hands. But Orwell's narrative of Work, confirming the miner's physical and moral strength – "the arms and belly muscles of steel" and "the extraordinary courtesy and good nature" (31, 65) – displaces the case he makes about the conditions the miners endure as labourers.

By emphasizing the "most noble bodies," the "splendor of their bodies," and by representing the polite, patient, kind humanity of the miners – "the people, not the scenery" (21, 32, 65-66) – Orwell counters the Marxist dictum that alienation occurs in harsh, alienating conditions or when the worker is robbed of the product created and the right to control the productive activity.² His miners have the capacity to resist alienation, a capacity which seemingly comes from the work itself. For both Marx and Orwell alienation is the opposite and negation of self-realization because the worker cannot "affirm himself in his work." Work thus becomes labour, "not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labour*"; "not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to [the labourer]" (Marx, *Reader* 74). Neither Marx nor Orwell is distinguishing between biological needs and cultural prescriptions, between needs and norms. At other times, both identify the philosophy behind the intrinsic need to Work as the machinations of the ruling class. The concept of alienation presupposes an internal, natural need

² Marxists have come to recognize the deficiency in insisting that objectively alienating conditions, labour working for capital, always alienate. Michael Burawoy, a Marxist, could almost be explicating Orwell when he writes that "following Marx, twentieth-century Marxism has too often and too easily reduced wage labourers to objects of manipulation; to commodities bought and sold in the market; to abstractions incapable of resistance; to victims of the inexorable forces of capitalist accumulation; to carriers, agents, or supports of social relations. It has been left to industrial sociology to restore the subjective moment of labour, to challenge the idea of a subjectless subject" (*Consent* 77).

to work. If there was not that need, alienated workers ought to reconcile themselves to alienating work, quit protesting except for increased wages and job security, and renounce any desire for better working conditions and work-fulfillment. The difference between Marx's and Orwell's attitudes toward work is that the latter represents intrinsically valuable, self-realizing Work, without the worker being duped or suffering adaptation, in a rationalist / capitalist economic system, and Marx does not. Orwell, in fact, often points his blaming finger at Marxist-Socialism instead of at the managers and owners of the mines who profit from exploiting the vestiges or accoutrements of Work in the conditions of labour. At other times, describing in detail the low standard of living; the cruelty of the slumlords; the Corporate houses; the haughty middle-class discrimination which deprecates the miners on a daily basis; the impossible, unsafe, monotonous, and dehumanizing labour that the miners do for the benefit of others; and the 'system' in general, he adopts a unified discourse of labour. His indebtedness to *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), or at least his genealogical ties to Engels's classic, underscores a suspicion of Work. But he treats the effects of the 'system,' of infrastructures and superstructures alike, of economics itself, as something foreign *to the workers*. Every time Orwell shows a "pang of envy for [the miners'] toughness" (20) and represents their steadfast decency or the artisanship of their Work, their elaborate and specialized skills, he separates the miners from their labour.

Reflecting on the working class, representing it from the outside, Orwell adopts an analytical, specific, labour-oriented discourse that refutes or dismisses the concept of Work. But when adjacent to the working class, when attempting to share its experiences, he embraces a generalizing discourse of Work. His critique of working conditions is not made when in close proximity to the working class. Orwell's worker can then be instinctively decent despite the work environment. It is as if he is a moral Worker first and a paid employee, a wage earner and a labourer, a distant second – and even then, only through Orwell's mediation. Even when Orwell recognizes the rationalized economic structure, argues that the workers are underpaid and that the work is over-taxing, the Workers he represents don't complain. Orwell's discourse of labour, spoken on behalf of the miners, is cut off from the representation of the miners who

Work. They are mute when it comes to low wages, unfair treatment, or unsafe working conditions. The reader is forced to accept that the miners, insofar as they are at all conscious of it, view the roughness of their work as only confirming a manliness or resoluteness of character, that hard work is their lot, or that they ought to have a very humble sense of self-entitlement. There is little evidence, on the contrary, to suggest that the working class ever in fact embraced this isolated idea of Work. In fact, never in John Burnett's collection of working-class journals does a miner or for that matter a housemaid refer to the internal rewards of Work. Union members are especially notorious for downplaying Work. Jack Barbash reports that "there probably is not a single [union] that refers to the 'work ethic'" (197). Though Orwell would probably respond by saying that a union member is not the right person to survey, that the unemployed would have a different answer, his miners act as if above and beyond the realm of need, or as if dependent upon an external (and paternal) voice to deal with the messy economic matters. (Orwell's tendency to protect the workers from hard economics explains his chivalric, indeed his erotic language when describing the miners – a language reminiscent of a man admiring a woman's impeccable beauty.)

Besides denying that the miners might have an interest in their own labour, Orwell fails to express that "there are economic conditions for the awareness of economic conditions" (Bourdieu 56). Pierre Bourdieu's "old-fashioned peasant" and his "sub-proletariat" share a good deal in common with Orwell's working-class worker, especially in their traditionalistic resistance to rationalism. But in Bourdieu's anthropological reading of working-class activity he argues that

It is only because profitable work is closed to them that the sub-proletarians renounce economic satisfaction and fall back on occupations whose principal, if not exclusive, function is merely to provide justification in the eyes of the group. Everything takes place as if they were forced by circumstances to dissociate work from its economic result, to understand it not so much in relation to its product as in opposition to non-work. (42)

Orwell's working class also dissociates work from its economic context and creates codes which measure success in non-economic terms. But Orwell does not offer an explanation of working-class culture and behaviour that references economics. In fact, he offers no reason for working-class traditionalism that cannot be attributed to super-historical virtues. If indeed the miners were focused on Work to the point of being ignorant of their labour, then, according to Bourdieu, there would be economic forces driving that preoccupation with Work. Orwell also recognizes the forces that generate or indeed attempt to cultivate Work instincts (or, alternately, that neuter a consciousness of labour), but not when immersed in working-class culture.

It is not my intention to assert that the miners could not be content and unmystified: I only want to establish that the narrative of Work Orwell creates for them is divided from *Orwell's* discourse of labour. The miners Orwell depicts were carefully selected not to reveal signs of alienation and to embody the non-rationalized values he sought to promote. Both Raymond Williams and Kay Ekevall, independently, point out that many of the miners Orwell represents were in fact socialists, if not confirmed Marxists (*Orwell* 51; Wadhams 59). Orwell's miners are not representative and mining is not a sociologically accurate overview of the work which takes place in an industrial town if only because of the unique strength of their union (Crick, *Life* 291; Hoggart, "Introduction" 39). The miners' interest in the *labour* they do, their economic negotiating, is not represented in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. But in its physicality, its demand for total engagement, its social usefulness, its community, its demand for 'manly' strength, its direct involvement with the land and solid materials, and in the image of self-realization it confirms, mining encapsulates non-rationalized Work, an idea Orwell needs to isolate and protect. Mining also provides a sharp contrast to the economic maximizing of bourgeois work or the cerebral work of the intelligentsia. That Orwell includes himself in the latter effete group, saying "if there is one type of man to whom I do feel myself inferior, it is a coal-miner" (*Road* 102), ought not to detract from the central point that physical, non-rationalized Work for Orwell is *real* work. Despite being slightly disingenuous (the reader is constantly reminded that the writer's authority comes from his proximity to the work), by

dissociating himself from the working class and the Work it does, Orwell confirms the moral superiority of non-rationalist, Carlylean Work with proper biographical humility and shelters Work from his own critique of labour.



Despite Orwell's expressed attempts not to idealize the working class, the absence of any mimetic representation of violence in the home or the pub, for example, as opposed to the diegetic references to its toughness and what its members would do to interfering middle-class observers, undermines that effort. Orwell means to validate a specific kind of English socialism, a 'cultural socialism' which clings to non-rationalist, organicist, and traditionalist values – such as an emotional, visceral understanding of the difference between right and wrong. He contrasts the 'self-made man' with only "a talent for making money" (*Road* 101) to the working class in order to show that the values of non-rationalism belong to the working class. Frederick Karl argues that Orwell turns the structure of the nineteenth-century *bildungsroman*, especially as mastered by Dickens, "upside-down" (*Reader's* 147). (If not strictly of that genre, Orwell's prose is certainly concerned with the education or development of a central figure, most often Orwell himself.) Instead of the moral growth of the hero corresponding to economic improvement, verifying the bourgeois code of self-starting industriousness and frugality, Orwell shows the decency of those who do not grow socially or financially. In fact, he reserves a particularly vicious invective for those of the working class who attempt social mobility – in spite of his Dickensian belief in effort, the will, and the individual (we are better off to distinguish the Orwell of *The Road to Wigan Pier* from the later Orwell of *Nineteen-Eighty Four*). The miners resist bourgeoisification partly because of their geographical distance from the urban entrappings of fast-paced commercialism and partly because of the work that they do, work that in itself satisfies their needs and furnishes its own substantive justification. By representing a working class indifferent to making money, and in order to discredit bourgeois desire, he has it validate Work. Orwell's working class lives qualitatively; a rationalized conception of work – whether

that means economic maximizing (or even 'satisficing') or acknowledging the conditions they work in – is alien to the best of them.

In *Down and Out* he suggests that society "despises" the tramps only because they do not make money and "Money has become the grand test of virtue" (155). Society is rationalized, judging its subjects by their capacity for "profitable" activity. But Orwell counters the notion that 'work' is only paid work and that paid employment is the only source of value. It is important not to blow off this notion as mere ideology or mythology. Patrick Joyce, a work theorist who recognizes that the meanings of work are historic or "socially produced," still accepts that "At all levels of skill, even the lowest, work may denote special meanings, such as those to do with rites of passage, with handling danger, and with testing identity . . . workers in 'menial' jobs may attach the utmost significance to their work" (14, 22). But there can only be therapy or satisfaction in hard work if all other things, economic things, are right. At this point I am only describing the length to which Orwell goes in order to resist rationalism. In other sections of his writing he concedes to the everyday world, arguing that tramps tramp only because they cannot find paid work, and that they are ready to fill the imperative of earning a living and taking "a respectable place in society" (184).

Nonetheless, Orwell insists that tramping is "work" (Work) and as such it equips tramps with morality, with a basic decency. In *Down and Out* he describes the abject conditions of poverty and the decency flourishing within those conditions by segregating a discourse of Work from one of labour, just as the workers of *The Road to Wigan Pier* are immune to their surroundings. The "envious" tramp with a "jackal's character" is nevertheless "a good fellow, generous by nature and capable of sharing his last crust with a friend" (136). Throughout the text Orwell manages to find a code of decency – camaraderie, generosity – among the decay. This code is inextricably interwoven with the survival of 'character' or personal identity. No matter how debilitating poverty, underemployment, or degrading work may be, *Down and Out* represents highly individuated, non-rationalistic, and idiosyncratic 'characters' connected by a common code of 'decency.' Bozo, the screever (sidewalk painter), asserts, "that poverty did not

matter" (147), that with the moral and spiritual (or psychological) confirmation of a willed work ethic he could survive the indifferent world. He may be an "exceptional man" but it is precisely that quality which Orwell admires and which constitutes moral individualism. Those who break the code are secretly bourgeois or merely ideological fundamentalists: Jules, who hates work and sounds like Paul Lafargue, echoes the worst kind of Marxist rhetoric. Maintaining a personal identity, the more eccentric or non-rational the more personalized, is to maintain decency, as if selfhood is a moral virtue in itself. The code nourishes both a sense of individuality and solidarity. When Boris gets work he walks three kilometers after a twelve hour shift, says to Orwell "we're saved," shares his food, and makes plans to steal more for them the following day. When Orwell receives some money while tramping with Paddy, he is overcome by an instinctive urge to share it. Later, when Paddy finds some money, he does the same (48-49, 161, 166).

Nevertheless, it is a provisional code that can be subordinated to the demands of necessity. At least at one point in *Down and Out*, Work and labour do clash. Orwell's "first lesson in *plongeur* morality" is to drop his scruples while interacting with "quite merciless" employers and learn that he cannot "afford a sense of honour" (53-54). Instead of a clash, however, most of the time when he describes the actual nature of the work taking place, the discourse of Work abruptly disappears, is sealed off at the introduction of labour, or politely stands by. At other times, when describing the working class as a participant, Work dominates. The point of *Down and Out* is not that abject conditions make for abject morality or that middle-class notions of the sanguine worker easily crack when tested. The point is that self-imposed regulating codes of behaviour survive: one for *plongeurs*, one for cooks, one for waiters, one for tramps. *Down and Out* is a history of Orwell's initiation into various codes, the idea of the code itself amounting to inviolate Work, to individual morality sustaining group morality and vice versa. The workers who abuse each other at work, drink and sing together at the end of the shift. Reprising cliché imagery of an earthy, rough and ready, carnivalistic working-class fraternal code does its part to attempt the reconstruction of an age when workers did not consider their labour solely as a commodity, or a rationalized activity, but as a self-defining, community

building expression of meaningful living. The work itself, the endless hours spent dripping in slime while scrubbing pots for the bourgeois, is swept up into a folkloric tradition of vague resistance and dissent: a snub against economic activity and the rationalisms behind it.

Part of Orwell's subscription to the act of physical work in itself stems from a quasi-Puritan, post-Protestant tradition. His anti-hedonism, his fear of centralized power, and his championing of the underdog also relate to a Protestant heritage. When Orwell identifies Dickens as being "part of the English puritan tradition, which is not dead even at this day," he is certainly, as Woodcock first noted, demonstrating similarities between Dickens and himself. Is it Dickens or Orwell "who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open"? Who is a "liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls"? (*CEJL*, 1: 429, 460). Alan Sandison argues that this is the image of Protestant individualism, the heretic. Orwell, says Sandison, "out-Protestants the Protestants" insofar as he disparages half-hearted commitment, avoids institutions and prefers simple truths, favours self-sufficiency, and believes that work in conjunction with the physical world is the means to, if not a spiritual end, a non-rationalized end (6). But Orwell's celebration of the folksy rough-and-tumble habits of working-class culture suggests that his ethos was also made up from traditions far removed from Puritanism and Protestantism. Protestantism, according to Weber and Tawney, also lends itself to individual ambition and the cult of success. The Work glorified by Orwell and English cultural socialism, preached especially to the working class but also seen as particular to the working class, is certainly not. It is in as many ways antagonistic towards Protestantism and the course of its development as it resembles Protestantism.



The images of camaraderie also incorporate and endorse a tradition of male bonding which functions to ratify Orwell's nostalgia for an understood rigidity in gender roles. I will discuss issues surrounding Orwell's androcentricism later, treating it in the meantime as a symptom of his traditionalism and his traditionalism as an aspect of his resistance to rationalism,

especially work rationalization. *The Road to Wigan Pier*, however, is less about work and socialism than unemployment. Yet interpolated between documenting the economic conditions of the 1930s and emphasizing that work is the means to obtain the wherewithal needed to live, Orwell represents work with a Carlylean belief in intrinsic value. He states: "Cease to use your hands, and you have lopped off a huge chunk of your consciousness" (173). This not only echoes Carlyle's belief that physical work is the expression of an independent human spirit and the means to secure psychological stability, but also echoes his rhetoric. In response to the efforts made to combat unemployment (occupational centres),³ Orwell suggests that a man be allowed the opportunity of "using his hands and making furniture and so forth for his own home"; he proposes to give the unemployed "a patch of ground and free tools" so they might "have the chance to grow vegetables for their families" (75). Even if one disregards the fact that carpentry and gardening were two of Orwell's most cherished and sought after pastimes (Crick, *Life* 411), the opportunity for simple, physical, self-governed Work represents a traditional, independent, and essentially ideal life attainable for the unemployed, for those outside the sphere of rationalized work.

By suggesting that the moral and psychological effects of unemployment are "far worse than any hardship" (77), worse, that is, than financial burdens or the struggles endemic to poverty (which, of course, Orwell had experienced), Orwell again offers a temple of Work as an asylum from the realm of necessity. By no means do I mean to belittle the psychological effects of unemployment. Rather, I wish only to point out the problematic consequences of dividing moralism and pragmatism, in this case having the unemployed define work in other terms than employment. The unemployed individual "needs work and usually looks for it, though he may not call it work." 'He,' apparently adopting the Conradian view that Orwell also shares, recognizes that "life has got to be lived largely in terms of effort" (173). At this point, 'he' ignores or can ignore that life, certainly when unemployed, is lived in terms of needs. The

³ Orwell is "torn both ways" over the centres: his anti-rationalist side rejects the notion as liberalist planning, answering all social problems through organization, or as a means to prevent working-class consciousness; his pragmatic side recognizes that something immediate and concrete need be done.

unemployed in the London of the 1930s might question the usefulness of a 'patch of ground and free tools.' Orwell is right to answer his own question of "what is work and what is not work?" by suggesting that one person's work is another person's leisure. But the separation of the psychological from the economic effects of unemployment is a permutation of the disjunctive schism between Work and labour that reinforces self-sufficient moralism at the expense of the unemployed Orwell means to support.

Orwell, offering gardening to the unemployed, also means to curb the definition of work as exclusively an instrument for economic gain. He reproduces John Beevers's hyper-rationalized approach to work in order to take the stuffing out of it. Beevers writes:

It is so damn silly to cry out about the civilizing effects of work in the fields and farmyards as against that done in a big locomotive works or an automobile factory. Work is a nuisance. We work because we have to and all work is done to provide us with leisure and the means of spending that leisure as enjoyably as possible. (168)

Beevers's attitude is hedonistic and bourgeois. Again, according to a

Hedonist account of human nature, which underlies utilitarianism and classical economics . . . the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the sole motive forces of human life. Work involves painful exertion and the deferral of gratification, we undertake it only because we are forced to, as a means to satisfy our [external] needs. (Sayers 723)

Orwell resists the gap between private (leisure) and public (work) selfhood. He resists the idea that work is a burden. He resists the idea that life is about the pursuit of pleasure and that work is a mere means, not 'life.' From this Carlylean or Conradian attitude towards Work, Orwell challenges rationalized definitions of work that restrict it to pure marketable production, to exchange, or to the means to ensure consumption. But in doing so he makes Work an opposing term to economic activity, an especially problematic tendency when addressing unemployment.



Orwell also ridicules Beevers because the latter “claims, or rather screams, that he is thoroughly at home in the modern mechanized world” (168). Orwell is clearly not. Orwell’s adulation of the home and the family is another expression of a traditionalism fundamental to his concept of Work. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he draws together patriarchal, communal, familial, and non-rational values, Work values, by representing an inviolate working-class home. Woodcock is correct to identify the relationship between Orwell’s vision of an ideal home and stock Victorian scenes of blissful domestic life (*Crystal* 63). Actually, both Orwell’s workers and Woodcock’s Victorians wax nostalgic over a pastoral retreat where “the old communal way of life has not yet broken up, tradition is still strong and almost everyone has a family” (*Road* 71). I am thinking especially of Esther and Allan Woodcourt’s cottage getaway in *Bleak House*, but one can find examples in Richardson, Wells, T. S. Eliot, and many others from the seventeenth century onwards. The difference between the pastoral trope and Orwell’s retreat is that Orwell escapes from the speed and transience of an encroaching modernity but remains in industrial Lancashire. This is not the only instance in which he appropriates middle-class Victorian values and re-locates them in the working class of the twentieth century. And this is not the only instance in which Work and labour exist side by side without recognizing each other’s existence, without being embroiled in conflict.

Many things have been said about the romanticized working-class home in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, most of them have been appropriately critical. Here again is the home:

In a working-class home – I am not thinking at the moment of the unemployed, but of comparatively prosperous homes – you breathe a warm, decent, deeply human atmosphere which it is not so easy to find elsewhere. I should say that a manual worker, if he is in steady work and drawing good wages – an ‘if’ which gets bigger and bigger – has a better chance of being happy than an ‘educated’ man. His home life seems to fall more naturally into a sane and comely shape. I have often been struck by the peculiar easy completeness, the perfect symmetry as it were, of a working-class interior at its best. Especially on winter evenings after tea, when the fire glows in the open range and dances mirrored in the steel fender, when Father, in shirt-sleeves, sits in the rocking chair at one

side of the fire reading the racing finals, and Mother sits on the other with her sewing, and the children are happy with a pennorth of mint humbugs, and the dog lolls roasting himself on the rag mat – it is a good place to be in, provided that you can be not only in it but sufficiently *of* it to be taken for granted.

This scene is still reduplicated in a majority of English homes . . . (*Road* 104-105)

Bernard Crick's defence of this scene, on the basis that it illustrates "fraternal virtues which contrast vividly with both middle-class acquisitiveness, competitiveness and propriety and with the restless power-hungry arrogance of the intellectuals" (*Life* 288), correctly identifies Orwell's resistance to rationalism, but does not actually examine the scene itself. Lisa Jardine and Julian Swindells point out that the scene "wipes women from the landscape of class, poverty and struggle" (188). Woodcock calls it "impossibly idyllic" (*Crystal* 65). The sentimentality and unreality of the scene is hardly mitigated by the stipulation that the man must be in work, that it underlines the effects of unemployment. Here, as in most of Orwell's writings, the representation of the ideal is completely cut off from his political and critical discourse. As Crick says, the home is meant to censure the ambitions of the middle class (this is one way to read 'completeness'), but the contrast between the appeals to permanence (another way to read 'completeness') and the stated intention of the book to expose the hardships and insufferable conditions of the working class, including their living conditions, augments the problematics of splitting moralism from pragmatism, giving the moral individual a physical sanctuary. Orwell's home obviates change at both abstract and concrete levels of work. The same is true for Orwell's direct aggrandizement of Work: both Work and the concept of the working-class nuclear family remain entirely isolated from history and politics, from time and technology, from labour.

Orwell's working class is remarkably similar to Richard Hoggart's traditional working class in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957). Both Orwell and Hoggart emphasize cozy warm homes with well-defined gender and age roles. Hoggart characterizes working-class culture as stressing tightly knit communities, solidarity, and home cooking. It is replete with emotional life, gregariousness, rituals, superstitions but common sense, and anti-intellectualism. Because the

working class adopts a general "acceptance of life as hard, with nothing to be done about it," they seek immediate gratifications, have their "sights fixed at a short distance" (78, 77). Hoggart's working class do not save money or plan out their lives. Nor do they have a "pressing sense of the larger situation" (86). Neither Hoggart's nor Orwell's working class, absorbed in custom and traditional living, have any consciousness of the world of labour except to passively accept the idea that life is based on struggle. If that is evidence of a pragmatic side, and it is only insofar as it entails a suspicion of "principles over practice" (Hoggart, *Uses* 79), working-class 'pragmatism' is suffused in defeatism. There is no sense of injustice within the working class itself, no sense of economics beyond short-term consumption and the need to endure. There is also no sense of the ideological formation of its consciousness in Hoggart's or Orwell's commentaries. In Orwell's case, working-class traditionalism is represented as an alternative to bourgeois acquisitiveness to the point where his working class become oblivious to or would deny its own economic conditions, precisely what is taking place in his representation of the 'average' working-class home. At other times, Orwell starkly represents those conditions and will remark that there are other long-term economic conditions which create the Work-related ideology that 'life is a struggle' – and that capitalist agents embrace the ideology for their own ends – but not when he blankets himself in working-class culture and is bent on juxtaposing it to middle-class ascendancy or its preoccupation with economics.

Even the representation of the new "monstrously inhuman," "ruthless and soulless" homes and *gesellschaft* social organizations built for the miners, disrupting and destroying "communal life" (*Road* 63-64), does not bring together moralism and modernity in such a way as they would clash. Just as I do not suggest that the juxtaposition of Work to alienating work is always and necessarily part of the disjunctive split between the exaltation of an ideal tradition (which includes the vilification of the spoilt real) and a pragmatic approach to the real, I don't think contrasting traditional homes and communities to rationalized homes and planned neighbourhoods constitutes a contradiction. Without the contradiction there is not even the possibility of a dialectic. The distinction between the *gemeinschaft* and the *gesellschaft*, between

a spontaneously arising, organic and harmonious community and a rationally developed, mechanistic and impersonal society, is one central to English cultural socialism as it confronts and repudiates rationalization. Yet none of the writers in the tradition, despite their grandiose ideas about *gemeinschaft* communities, mutual obligations, and the communal values generated by Work would ever conceive of or favour a 'Blithedale' commune. Their pragmatic, anti-romantic sides would, in fact, deflate any gesture of easy social harmony. But Orwell's response to the *gesellschaft* is not necessarily 'pragmatic.' In *The Road to Wigan Pier* and in some of his shorter essays, Orwell draws on the distance the pub is from a newly-built *gesellschaft* organization in order to demonstrate that the "trend of the age is away from creative communal amusements and towards solitary mechanical ones" (*CEJL* 3: 43). In "The Moon Under Water" (1943), he describes his favorite pub's architecture as "uncompromisingly Victorian," with plenty of "woodwork" and the "solid comfortable ugliness of the nineteenth century" (*CEJL* 3: 45). The pub – the social organization – he desires is working-class Victorian à la *Punch* or Cruikshank, it is not a pragmatic response to the whale of rationalism.

In the pragmatic 'mode,' Orwell lists the benefits and argues in favour of "rationalizing the interiors of our houses" with machines. Here he looks forward to machines that would make for "very little work" (*CEJL* 3: 330). It is a completely different attitude then the one shown by fearing a future of "no manual labour," every household thing cold and made of rubber (*Road* 105). In that section of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "poverty" is listed among dogs and big families as a traditional thing of value disappearing in the rationalized world:

In that age when there is no manual labour and everyone is 'educated,' it is hardly likely that Father will still be a rough man with enlarged hands who likes to sit in shirt-sleeves and says 'Ah wur coomin' oop street.' And there won't be a coal fire in the grate, only some kind of invisible heater. The furniture will be made of rubber, glass, and steel. If there are still such things as evening papers there will certainly be no racing news in them, for gambling will be meaningless in a world where there is no poverty and the horse will have vanished from the face of the earth. Dogs, too, will have been suppressed

on grounds of hygiene. And there won't be so many children, either, if the birth-controllers have their way. (105)

This is not his political, pragmatic 'mode' which addresses the problems of labour. Orwell may not romanticize poverty, but he invests in images of struggle and hardship the capacity to signify anti-rationalist value, a strategy which contradicts his more concrete side that details the ills of poverty in order to suggest ways to cope or to initiate a critique of underlying structures. In the 1945 "As I Please" article where he accepts 'rationalizing,' he is searching for practical solutions to the labour involved in "washing up":

Like sweeping, scrubbing and dusting, it is of its nature an uncreative and life-wasting job. You cannot make an art out of it as you can out of cooking or gardening. What, then, is to be done about it? Well, this whole problem of housework has three possible solutions. One is to simplify our way of living very greatly; another is to assume, as our ancestors did, that life on earth is inherently miserable, and that it is entirely natural for the average woman to be a broken-down drudge at the age of thirty; and the other is to devote as much intelligence to rationalizing the interiors of our houses as we have devoted to transport and communications.

I fancy we shall choose the third alternative. (*CEJL* 3: 330)

When in his Work, non-rationalist, moral 'mode,' Orwell will explicitly make the case to simplify, as he does describing the working-class home in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, or he will adopt the Conradian position that life is inherently hard and tragic, as in his representation of the miners' attitude towards their lives. The world of Work, of non-rationalism, competes for space with the world of labour, the need to pragmatically respond to labour, but without confrontation.

Not unexpectedly, the traditional home in *The Road to Wigan Pier* is directly related to Work. Both represent qualitative living, not quantitative pursuit, and a refuge away from the alienating and atomizing effects of rationalization. Patrick Joyce confirms that by the late nineteenth century, as "Satisfactions and needs were increasingly identified as coming out of non-work time . . . the cult of the family and home became established" (24). As the assent to economic rationalization became naturalized, the home and work were more and more

differentiated. But for Orwell, the values generated and needs satisfied in the home are exactly the same as those generated and satisfied by Work. What he says about the working-class home corresponds to what he says about Work.

Orwell's home is also designed to equate the sanctity of homelife, the notion that "the Englishman's home is his castle," to liberty (*CEJL* 3: 11-12). Connecting the home and freedom argues that property, ownership, and privacy form the basis of freedom and individuality. Orwell's equation is less a valorization of private property than it is a valuation of an establishment that supposedly separates individuals from consensual habits, just as non-rationalized Work supposedly promotes self-realized and personal identity. But the image of a home with "sane" and "perfect symmetry" appeals to order and hierarchy, not liberty, or at least not liberty for all. The representation of the home with the man firmly lionized by his having employment echoes Engels's concept of the family in capitalism. Engels writes, "As wealth increased, it . . . gave the man a more important status in the family than the woman" and in "the family, [the man] is the bourgeois; the wife represents the proletariat" ("Origin" 735, 744). The difference is that whereas Engels condemns a Victorian middle-class family, Orwell condones a working-class one. For Engels, "the last remnants of male domination in the proletariat home have lost all foundation" because there is "no stimulus whatever here to assert male domination" ("Origin" 742).⁴ Orwell and Engels are involved in very different kinds of idealization. Orwell superimposes middle-class Victorian imagery onto the twentieth century working-class home in order to recover rigid Victorian morality and epistemology and locate them in the working class, the class which is to model for his brand of socialism.

Orwell, though by no means in dialogue with Engels, is also counteracting the heavily ascetic Marxist assumption that the working class has been led to "moral ruin" (Engels,

⁴The Engels of the earlier *The Condition of the Working Class in England* has a view of women and the family which better corresponds with Orwell's. In "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State" (1884), working-class women at work disrupt patriarchy; in the *Condition* (1845), a working-class woman at work "breaks up the family" (165). When Engels suggests that a wife at work and an unemployed husband is a "reversal of all relations within the family" (*Condition* 167), he assumes the same given system of relations that Orwell means to make normative through his home.

Condition 71). Basically, Marxists take this position because they believe that with capitalism so with its conscripted constituents: "it is not possible for a single human sentiment or opinion to remain untainted" (Engels, *Condition* 275). According to rhetorical convention, working-class homes in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* reflect their occupants. Engels observed "decency" but emphasizes squalor. Orwell, though not consistently, meets squalor and emphasizes decency. Whereas Engels represents the effects of 'the system,' Orwell represents moral individualism, the individual rising above that system.

What Orwell admires in the working-class home, why the middle class "can learn a great deal" from it (*Road* 103), is its resistance to change, or that it is less susceptible to change (it is not clear that the working classes play an active role in preserving their culture). Orwell's working class is closer to the Gospel of Work than any other class. Its values are the values of Work, from a lack of whining when faced with rough work, an instinct to sacrifice themselves or at least approach a task with as much effort as possible, to an enthusiasm for home life and traditional morality. Finishing up his description of the home he says, "our age has not been altogether a bad one to live in" (*Road* 105). 'Our age' is not 1937, the year of *The Road to Wigan Pier*. It is apparently not an era of rationalism but a largely imagined Victorian age of Work. But Orwell is also very much integrated into the real politics of his age. As an observer, from an analytical point of view, he represents the working class as only labouring because of necessity, insisting that those would be the reasonable parameters of its thought, that pragmatics is simple decency. Under that *modus vivendi* – a manner of living based on practical compromise – Orwell treats Work as baloney, as a mystification, blinding ideology which attempts to mitigate a consciousness of extrinsic, economic needs.

Still, Orwell's attraction to the working class comes down to his understanding that it is "generally more conservative than the bourgeoisie" (*Road* 114). Orwell's conservatism is a strange, unsteady creature that irks conservatives. In general, it relates to his traditionalism and a reluctance to accept rationalization and modernization. This makes for an odd confluence of ideational habits, but one typical of English cultural socialism. To resist rationalism is to

combine conservative and non-conformist ideas. I said earlier that Orwell is more likely to resist rationalism when speaking generally and abstractly than when speaking personally and concretely. Paradoxically, when Orwell distances himself from working-class culture, when he speaks analytically about the specific, day-to-day lives of the working class from an economic point of view, he also speaks in 'personal' terms. When he speaks as if in or *of* the working class, he speaks in general and abstract terms. Orwell is a 'conservative' when he speaks in a general mode, and a reformist when he speaks in personal terms. When he speaks in personal terms is also when he thinks inside the whale of rationalism. The identity he creates for himself is the exact opposite of the so-called armchair Marxist or parlor-room rebel who is anti-conformist in theory, when speaking generally, and vacant in practice.



It is with Work that Orwell best expresses his nostalgia for traditional things and his rejection and denial of the positivistic, quantitative, impersonal, and functional aspects of rationalism. Modern rationalism begins or is always coincident with an approach to work for work is the means to the fetishized, maximizing end. Rationalized work, if not setting the stage for functionalism in society, for utilitarianism and economism, for systematizing in thought, is in collusion with other clinical rationalisms (scientism, positivism, business). Yet it is with work that we see the other side of Orwell's dual habit of mind, the side that pushes away Romantic images and concepts of Work and deals pragmatically with the terms of a rationalist social order. Orwell demonstrates a degree of faith in the intrinsic value of Work and the work ethic that needs to isolate Work from the issues surrounding labour, the realm of necessity and the real. But he also maintains that one cannot separate work from external necessity and to do so would be to perpetuate a sham myth that romanticizes work for the benefit of the ruling class and conceals the inexorable realities of the rationalized world which the working class have to accept. Richard Rees identifies this competing loyalty as different Orwells, the "rationalist Orwell, the tenacious heir of eighteenth-century *Éclaircissement*," and the "romantic" Orwell, "a lover of the past . . . of old-fashioned customs and old-fashioned people" (6). The 'different

Orwells' are best identified at sites in which non-economic (moral, psychological, social) and economic imperatives would clash, should clash, but do not. Rather, a disjunctive, either / or split between moralism and pragmatism precludes a truly dialectical confrontation.

The Discourse of Labour

A job of work

Contrary to his representation of Work, a dissimilar Orwell argues that the last word on work has to consider survival, "the really basic thing" (*Road* 82). Much of *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Down and Out* is thus devoted to nutrition rather than abstractions, notes on shelters rather than general ethics. He elides the concept that the worker needs work for its intrinsic value by saying that the stigmatization hovering over the unemployed is entirely socially constructed (*Road* 78). He insists that modern work is tolerable if "your spare time is your own" (*CEJL* 3: 12), differentiating a leisure-self from a work-self and confirming the idea that work is a disutility, or acceptable as one. At one point in *Down and Out*, he identifies a 'solution' to pauperism, the social apparatuses which would allow the homeless to lead a "settled life." Though other parts of the text are by no means a defence of nomadism, the invocation to bourgeois stability jars against the idiosyncratic portraits of the tramps – the dignity of their social marginality, the legitimacy of the effort they give and the work they do, their community and their spirit of sharing, and their prerogative to impish, anti-social peccadilloes. He derides the work ethic, the sanguine attitude which steadfastly posits that the cure for social or psychological ailments is to "get our shoulders to the wheel." He calls it "pernicious rubbish" (*Road* 141). He cannot separate the act of work from the act of paid employment. In "Charles Dickens" (1940), Orwell understands that when Dickens's Snodgrass "'purchased and cultivated a small farm, more for occupation than profit'" it is not "work" but a "sort of radiant idleness" (*CEJL* 1: 446). This is an altered Orwell, not the one who equates rough hands to self-realization and idealizes the miners because they are economically disinterested. This is an Orwell engaged in concrete economic realities, who is only concerned with the struggle against the specific but

inevitable aspects of the rationalized world, not the struggle against economism or a general and inevitable struggle with life, given 'life is a struggle.' It is a reformist Orwell who calls for "better wages and shorter hours and nobody bossing you about . . . justice and common decency" (*Road* 154). Long-run considerations are suspect if there is no immediate effect or benefit. By no means do I wish to imply that by yielding to material relations Orwell wrongly apostatizes. The desire to seek immediate economic justice is in itself a solidly ethical motivation. Pragmatic realism, to resign oneself to the whale of rationalism (such as with Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* [1936], or the 'common stock' in general) is only as problematical as its isolation.

Still, the mandate of immediate reform in itself is in striking contrast to Orwell's non-rationalist ideas about Work. In *Down and Out* he protests that only "comfortably situated people" would claim that "work in itself is good" (106). The rhetoric of work as its own end allows for the capitalist class to reap the benefits from the workers' surplus value, it increases the surplus. Turning a full 180° from his own idealization of work, he argues that the dominant social voices "have made a sort of fetish of manual work." The ruling capitalist class calls "hard and disagreeable" work "honest" in order to mobilize the workers to endure their agenda (*Down* 104). That agenda is to cultivate power, not necessarily for economic gain (and here this Orwell differs from the Marxist tradition). The issues of power will be dealt with elsewhere; here I only want to emphasize Orwell's dual habit of mind.

Orwell epitomizes English cultural socialism not because he splits Work and the realm of necessity – that is, I argue, central to it – but because when he turns towards economics and pragmatics, he actually mocks the concept of Work and the moralism surrounding it. In "The English Tradition" (1944), Orwell contends the work ethic is "forced upon the working class" in order to "get more out of him [the working man] for less money" (*CEJL* 3: 10). In contrast to the representations of a morally fit working-class, in a 1944 "As I Please" article he writes "that this business about the moral superiority of the poor is one of the deadliest forms of escapism the ruling class have evolved." The article is brilliant, but it contradicts all of what we have seen in

Orwell's attitude towards Work. The ruling class, by means of the popular media, convinces the working public that as a result of their poverty "you are superior to your oppressors" (*CEJL* 3: 197). The rich man in popular art is always the 'bad' man. Orwell calls the formula whereby the good poor man defeats the rich bad man a

sublimation of the class struggle. So long as you can dream of yourself as a 'strong hard-working garage hand' giving some moneyed crook a sock on the jaw, the *real* facts can be forgotten. That is a cleverer dodge than wealth fantasy. (*CEJL* 3:198)

But we have seen in *The Road to Wigan Pier* and in *Down and Out* that Orwell himself idealizes the manual worker – the strong hard-working hand – and represents Work as a source of identity and pride. He even invests poverty with a moral cachet. Despite the fact that the restaurant workers are "underpaid workmen" drinking in order to compensate for abject working conditions, there is the "pride of the drudge." Enjoying the "frantic" restaurant work, Orwell insists that a "sense of honour" accompanies "the man who is equal to no matter what quantity of work" (*Down* 70). The 'pride of the drudge' is not represented as inurement or ideology: it is a thrill, a non-rational emotion. But Orwell also describes a lack or an impossibility of pride when working in degrading conditions. The employees at the Hotel X who "take a genuine pride in their work" are the same ones who only provide "an imitation of good service" (67, 71), as they themselves proliferate filth. The Work ethic, the pride of the drudge, manifesting itself when Orwell participates among the working class, is at best a private affair. An employee might Work, but that is an individual matter; the employees are labourers, and labour is a self-estranging activity excluding pride. The shift from labour to Work allows subjectivity, the moral individual, to be preserved. Still, Orwell's alliance to Work always ends abruptly. Distanced from the people and the events, observing the working class critically, identifying immediate needs, relating minute details through charts and diagrams, and addressing wages, expenses, and standards of living, he denies and derides Work. The two distinct and competing systems of thought and discourse, his disjunctive reasoning and the hard and fast swing within it, the change in attitude depending upon his proximity to the working class, the way in which he strictly

disavows any value that might inhere in work when he addresses labour in its economic details, and the huge gap between a mimetic representation of Work and a diegetic analysis of economic conditions amount to an extreme configuration of cultural socialism.



Part of the reason why Orwell feels “contentment” as a *plongeur* is that it is accompanied by admission into a solidarity, a ‘scene,’ or a boys’ club.⁵ The feeling is also relative to the devastating poverty he previously endured. But the stupefying work and lifestyle of restaurant work – wash, bistro, sleep – nonetheless satisfies. Comparing himself, a Worker, to an exhausted “well-fed beast” (*Down* 81) has greater implications than the Hardy-esque tropes of ‘the harder the work the heavier the sleep’ and ‘time off is enjoyed when there is little of it.’ The goodness of physical labour is problematic in that in a non-dialectical relationship with pragmatism it sweeps in a program for the working classes to remain uneducated, economically obtuse (whether it’s abstract or concrete economics), and incapable of autonomy: to remain virtually unconscious. This is exactly the dupe he accuses the ruling class of perpetuating. Though Orwell calls him who raises his consciousness while continuing to work, “one of the finest types of man we have” (*Road* 143), Work and education are emphatically polarized. He echoes Carlyle’s admiration for the “stupid,” “thickest-skinned,” and conservative John Bull threatening the feeble Man of Theory (*Past* 159-66). The boy is “manly” and “happy” because he chooses “real work,” and the man is “unmanly,” “sickly and debilitated,” because he chooses to study (*Road* 104). Orwell follows the formula whereby intellectualization fosters rationality, a disenchantment with non-scientific claims to knowledge. Gone are the *feelings* of morality and intrinsic Work satisfaction. He also privileges manual work which brings about intellectual

⁵Despite the fact that a ‘boys’ club’ of workers existed, Orwell marginalizes or ignores women’s work to a greater extent than that ‘club’ may have. Daphne Patai’s devastating critique on Orwell’s male-centredness fills in the gaps. The only unfortunate side effect of her statistical attack on the discrepancy between Orwell’s lack of female workers and their historical participation is that it makes it appear as if misogyny was specific to Orwell’s representation. Still, though Orwell is alternately sympathetic and empathetic to subordinated workers, women do not seem to figure in his text. The equalization of social roles taking place after work (when *plongeurs* and cooks drink together) is an aspect of working-class life he admires, but it does not include women.

limitations because he understands the manual worker will retain a *basic* 'decency,' be weary of new ideas, and will not harbour secret desires to accumulate power if he remains simple.

For Orwell, any social advancement in a rationalized economic and political structure is cause for suspicion. Reflecting on his experiences in Burma, he says,

At that time failure seemed to me to be the only virtue. Every suspicion of self-advancement, even to 'succeed' in life to the extent of making a few hundreds a year, seemed to me spiritually ugly, a species of bullying. (*Road* 130)

Though Orwell's pragmatic realist is cleared of that suspicion, Orwell himself developed an unflinching support for the underdog as long as he remained the underdog. Contentment with social position, satisfying needs and not maximizing gains, are qualities he sees in or projects onto the English working class. Because the impetus to maximize financial gains is the same as the drive to maximize power, he amplifies his already substantial rhetoric of satisfying needs, the rhetoric of non-rationalist Work. If England is not to fall to fascism, Work for Work's sake. Only the educated, the rationalist, and the ambitious can abstract the irrationality of fascism into something that looks decent. His often harsh attitude towards Marxists stems from his understanding that they had no mechanism to account for the psychological network that desires power or to internally check their own motives. By claiming that the working classes were better off uneducated and at Work, Orwell was also expressing a fear of its "bourgeoisification." The Dickens novel goes "wrong" when it abandons traditional values and professes the "gospel according to Smiles." Orwell speaks of *David Copperfield*'s last chapters as vitiated "by the cult of success" (*CEJL* 1: 458); self-aggrandizement and self-helping bucanerism are not to be part of the working-class ethos, of a cultural socialism. The rags to riches story is best to collapse before the riches, as it does in Orwell's stories.

Raymond Williams for one would not be satisfied with this answer to Orwell's valorization of the supposed simplicity or intellectual shortcomings of the working class. He would probably be unsatisfied with Crick's analysis of an Orwell who "never seemed to ask too much of ordinary people" as well (*Life* 19). (Though if Crick is hinting at a paternalistic attitude

towards the working class, he may in fact be quite close to Williams's view of Orwell.) Williams argues that Orwell saw the working class as "stupid, strong, and kind" – proles incapable of shaping their own future. Orwell says as much when he argues that the middle class is necessary to lead them into a new society. The model for this society is a working-class, not a middle-class culture, with a working-class attitude towards Work. Despite some sadness accompanying his belief that the working class cannot write their own future, he does not see that it is his own rhetoric of a content and uneducated working class which insists on its dependency and lack of revolutionary initiative.

The problems of treating Work as a welcomed agent of stupefaction are all the more complex because Orwell himself underwrites the unwelcomed consequences of servility and stupefaction, of work that gets workers "trapped by a routine which makes thought impossible" (*Down* 104). The thrilling adventure of Work and the satisfied exhaustion it offers is laid aside and in its place is the argument that the "instinct to perpetuate useless work is, at bottom, simply fear of the mob" (*Down* 106). Nothing has changed in the nature of the work which once brought pride, but now it is labour, a tool for social engineering, and deemed "useless." In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell suggests that unemployment centres are

a device to keep the unemployed quiet and give them the illusion that something is being done for them. Undoubtedly that is the underlying motive. Keep a man busy mending boots and he is less likely to read the *Daily Worker*. (74)

Later Orwell rages against temperance societies and in *Down and Out* against the Salvation Army for bribing the desperate and hungry with bits of food in return for their pacification, humility, servility, and abdication of a right to overthrow systems of repression (including those very societies). He shows how the unemployed are taught to blame themselves for being out of work whereas in reality unemployment is endemic to capitalism (*Road* 76-77). He pulverizes the middle-class myth that the poor have grown accustomed to menial work, that they "don't mind that kind of thing" (*Road* 56). Finally, he says that if it is not the institutions of the social net which "press a working man down into a *passive* role" (*Road* 43), it is the working class who

internalize the idioms which paint it as deservedly servile. Tramps especially become "docile," allowing themselves to be repeatedly swindled.

These are critiques that disappear during the representation of Work, the kind of work which denies introspection and reflection, the kind of Carlylean work he endorses at other times. On the one hand, the capitalist class is seen to strip away any pleasure or intrinsic benefit in work by overworking labourers with humiliating and useless work in order that the "mob" becomes a stupefied "flock" and in order for labourers to learn that work is a drudgery, the first premise of classical economic theory. On the other hand, Orwell shows that demanding, even burdensome and stupefying Work is a good in itself. Orwell never advocates for working class servility, recklessly promotes an intransitive 'duty,' or calls for a dumb acceptance of harsh working conditions. But Orwell inherited certain ideas from the Victorian idealization of Work that clash with the rationalized world in which he found himself. The suppression of that potential dialectic is the central feature of cultural socialism. Orwell writes about character, about individuals being individuals in a setting that disallows individuals – a setting which he underlines. The contradiction between moral Work and the effects of rationalist labour is never resolved. The lack of any real tension between the two allows for moral individualism, turning labour into Work.

Work and Manliness

A Mary Ann

In this chapter I have made reference to Orwell's attitude towards women and his linking of Work and masculinity. That Orwell was male-centred is "almost too obvious now for comment" (Jardine 117). My interest is in the manner in which Orwell's male-centredness relates to his resistance to rationalism. Since a gender ideology mediates his representations of non-rationalized Work, that male-centredness must be related in some way to Work. It does not follow that rationalized work is gender neutral.

Daphne Patai correctly identifies *Down and Out* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* as “narratives of a process of masculine self-affirmation” (54). Boris and Mario are admired for their soldierly approaches to poverty and over-taxing work, and the miners are stronger – not management more culpable – for facing life-threatening dangers. Orwell also celebrates in working-class culture the idea that a worker can work all day and have all the more energy for doing so. The Arabs in *Down and Out* are “lucky men” because they “had the power of working all day and drinking all night” (81). When he is bonding with the working class, Work and manliness become synonymous. But when Orwell discusses issues surrounding labour he dismisses the mythology that a difficult life corresponds to sexual strength. The two “great evil[s]” of a tramp’s life are “enforced idleness” and the loss of the “sexual impulse” (*Down* 181; see also 136). Relating the loss of sexual energy to poverty counters Zolaesque romanticism and operates to undo the myth of lower-class sexual stamina. A non-repressed libido (a close proximity to nature) is supposed to compensate for or complement a lack of worldly goods (also a close proximity to nature) and suggest an advantage over the bourgeois who care too much about appearances for any sexual pleasure. Orwell’s analysis also counters the Marxist idea, used to warrant their asceticism, that the lower classes “concentrate their whole energy” on sex, thereby guaranteeing an unconsciousness of their class position (Engels, *Condition* 153). When observing the working class from an outsider’s point of view, a position that is amenable to the world of labour, he deflates the idea that being of the lower class engenders good sex.

Notwithstanding the argument that poverty amounts to a loss of the sexual appetite, Orwell prefers the exclusion of women from men’s lives. Feeling pleased because he had been called ‘mate’ for the first time by one tramp who recognizes another, he immediately comments that women “shudder away” from the poor because of their appearance. He had just expressed enjoyment about having that appearance (*Down* 115). Not only are men the centre of all activity, all reality, but Orwell is not even comfortable with women on the margins. The non-rational tradition, the tradition Orwell paints as a working-class tradition, pivots on patriarchy. Because rationalism or capitalism, in theory, would bypass any regard for gender (or ethnicity),

maximizing profit overriding all prejudice (the idea that economics, the free market, is blind), anti-rationalism digs deeper into traditional patriarchy. Resisting the dehumanizing effects of an advanced rationalization of work becomes a resistance to the largely imagined sissifying effects of modernity.

Orwell's fear of softness was deep. When he initially speaks of the emasculating effects of poverty, of his own experience, he moves the narrative from the first to the second person (*Down* 15-18). Moreover, it is likely that he entrenched himself in the harsh climate of the Hebrides when he was very ill because it represented to him the opportunity to get stronger. It is more likely than the theory that Orwell's trip was part of a suicidal impulse or a masochistic streak. He deliberately sought hardship to prove to himself that he could 'stand it' and because he believed it would make him stronger. His tramping was in fact part of a continuous attempt to satisfy a psychological need or an existential calling to test himself in extreme situations. Yet, the affirmation of self based on toughness contradicts his stand against the 'survival of the fittest' mentality which dominated laissez-faire capitalism, power politics, and imperialism (*CEJL* 4: 27). His machismo, an attitude inseparably linked to Work, is mitigated when he thinks in concrete political terms, the terms of 'labour.'

But Orwell admires physical work because it prevents men from getting 'soft.' He fetishizes the miner's "toughness," how they "look and work as though they were made of iron" (*Road* 21). Though Orwell would never indulge in the kind of soft/female/mine – hard/male/worker imagery or any of the kinds of phallogentric imagery which came so easily to Lawrence (he often expresses distaste for Lawrentian imagery),⁶ he does share Lawrence's awe of the ostensibly transcendental, subsequently structuralist, connections between archetypes, the earth, and 'naturally' prescribed human roles. Though he admits that it "seems a little unfair" that an unemployed man would not help with the housework, he uses the 'fact' that both husbands and wives "feel that a man would lose his manhood if, merely because he was out of

⁶See, for example, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (147) or his 1945 "Review" of *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (*CEJL* 4: 32). Orwell, in contrast to Lawrence, also shudders at any mobilization of the "savage combative instincts" (*CEJL* 4: 41).

work, he developed into a 'Mary Ann,'" to naturalize gendered relations (*Road* 73). Apart from being tautological and speaking of those relations as if sanctioned by commonsense, Orwell ignores that what ought to be at issue are not the 'facts' but the factors which create those feelings and perpetuate those states of relations.

By revisiting Lancashire, Beatrix Campbell discovered that Orwell in his day suppressed the participation of women in the workforce, in fact suppressing history – relations of production, social hierarchies, social constructions and attempts to challenge those constructions, and so on. She also argues that, "the equation between work and masculinity depends on an exclusion – women" (99). Orwell's exclusion of women is not accidental. Orwell, however, does represent women working and women in poverty. The portraits of female workers are made with feelings of authentic – patriarchal and paternal to be sure, but genuine – sadness, indignation, and concern. Emmie works for starvation wages in a mill only to return to the "bondage" of housework (*Road* 11). The 'slum-girl' sees Orwell and makes Orwell see in himself that the greatest difference between them is that he can escape the "drudgery" and she cannot (*Road* 16-17). The housewife of Lancashire is always "muddling among an infinity of jobs" (*Road* 52). He replaces a "horribly bullied" female dishwasher (*Down* 62). But such representations only illustrate victimization: they do not insist that the women also need to realize themselves through effort, confrontation, and activity. Orwell never idealizes the workplace – it is a rationalized site. The male worker is idealized; he is non-rational (he works because work is a good in itself, using the separation between Work and labour as if to turn labour into Work). The female worker is a victim of rationalization, not a hero despite of it, not engaged in an ennobling struggle against it: she cannot be the moral individual. Orwell can sympathize with the working woman, but simply cannot empathize with her.

Work and Technology

The Swindle of 'Progress'

The linking of Work and identity, manliness, is bound to be followed by a censure of technical 'progress.' It also follows that Orwell would connect the mechanistic historical narrative of socialist doctrine, the "pea-and-thimble trick" of dialectical reasoning, to a faith in machine technology (*Road* 155). Socialism, according to Orwell, is yoked to a "completely mechanized, immensely organized" rational thought-machine (*Road* 165). Orwell's primary complaint with Marxism is that it is mere economism: an overemphasized, cold, rationalist scientism and the child, however recalcitrant, of classical political economy. When submerged in a discourse of labour, his complaint against Marxism was that lost in abstract economics it had no direct effect on workers' lives.⁷ Poverty, unemployment, or the specific conditions that the working class were forced to endure were not abstract issues nor could they wait for capitalism to self-destruct or demise through attrition before they were properly addressed. In other words, the established left was just too rationalistic in every way except in its failure to deal directly with the rationalized world. The identity born of competing cultures of reformism and Work embodies a socialism developed with Marxism (and the later Marx) standing only, if at all, at the fringes.

But when Orwell says that "the Socialist is always in favour of mechanization, rationalization, modernization" (*Road* 176), he is speaking of the nuts and bolts machines which sever humans from the need to Work. Machines "frustrate the human need for effort and creation" (*Road* 176). The demise of *homo faber* means nothing short of the demise of humankind. Carlyle's interjection is the same as Orwell's: "human things do require to have . . . some soul in them" (*Past* 190). But for Orwell "machine-civilization *is here*, and it can only be criticized from the inside, because all of us are inside it" (*Road* 192). Only "romantic fools" and "the he-man" attempt to live outside of the rationalized world. The contradictions fueled by his

⁷ When Orwell says "A humanitarian is always a hypocrite" (*CEJL* 2: 218), he is referring to left-wingers whose ability to intellectualize depends upon, in a most basic way, the hard labour of miners or those who produce the means for modern comforts.

resistance to rationalism while inside the rationalist whale, contradictions between abstract and concrete points of view, between traditionalism and pragmatism, Work and labour, are never as evident as they are in Orwell's attitudes toward the machine.

Orwell's argument with machines is that they make "a fully human life impossible" (*Road* 167). Again we are asked to reduce 'human' to 'man.' Orwell repeatedly associates machines with the making of softness and physical, *real* work with "monstrous men with chests like barrels and mustaches like the wings of eagles" (*Road* 88). He asks "Where are the monstrous men?" in what appears to be an attempt to echo Yeatsian machismo, imagery, and the poet's glorification of the past via a lamentation of the genetic deterioration of the male physique in the present. Sharing with Yeats a fear of "some frightful subhuman depth of softness and helplessness" (*Road* 176), a yearning for a previous age, for manliness, for things natural and handcrafted, and for the soil (especially of a particular country), perhaps contributed to Orwell's rather soft criticism of him.⁸ Orwell's forgiving attitude towards Yeats, and modernism in general, relates to a mutual appreciation of traditional systems of order, cultural stasis, a tough and neatly violent past, and a dislike of new, urban things.

The binary Orwell creates excludes any admission of degrees: either the man is "safe and soft" or "brave and hard" and life ought to be "harder instead of softer" (*Road* 170, 184). Peter Stearns points out that the coal mine was "one of the real tests of nineteenth-century masculinity" (39). Not only would men be drawn to mining because of its relatively secure pay, the strong union, or the lack of alternatives in a mining town – three items Orwell fails to mention in *The Road to Wigan Pier* – but they would also pursue mining because it provided a challenge by which notions of masculinity could be tested. Stearns also argues that mechanization lightened the tasks demanded of the physical labourer, but heightened the rigidity and importance of gender roles because men feeling bossed around by employers, and now machines, tried to preserve their threatened masculinities more aggressively outside of the

⁸ Conor Cruise O'Brien argues that Orwell seems ready to apologize for Yeats in his essay on him, that he "implies a degree of innocence in Yeats which cannot be reasonably postulated" (42).

workplace. Orwell fears and predicts just the opposite, that when work becomes easier men will become less manly in all situations. Instead of seeking alternatives to the 'test' of work in their leisure activities, they would seek safer lifestyles, they would seek "safer cars" and so on. This is an appeal to moral individualism, for men to express their manliness at all times – while the attributes of manliness are reduced to violent self-determination (as with mining), to hardness, and to the rejection of softness – because it is becoming increasingly impossible to do so.

The implied attack on women and the feminization of the world is coupled with an explicit one on socialism, for socialism is accused of encouraging all forms of mechanization. Orwell's attack on socialism is so angry that it is easy to forget that he is arguing in favour of it. In order to attract the decent, traditional, machine-resisting working class, socialism has to lose its misguided legacy of mechanization, and embrace the values of Work. But Orwell also attacks socialism by way of a typically Marxist-socialist argument: the dangers behind technology come down to the public's inurement to the rightness of technology. Mechanization is to be resisted because it infiltrates and overtakes subjectivity. Mining or tramping, non-rationalized Work, keeps the worker shielded from internalizing automatism. Not so, just the opposite, with mechanization. Though Orwell derives his critique from the tradition of Carlyle, who also complained about "the Age of Machinery in every outward and inward sense of that word" ("Signs" 226), and though the content of that critique is usually based on a conservative rejection of modernity, the form of it is radically left wing. Orwell points out that the shortcoming of Victorian critiques of industrialization, such as Dickens's *Hard Times*, is that they were located in moral and aesthetic values, because industrialization was "cruel and ugly" (*Road* 167). At times, Orwell's anti-rationalism generates moral and aesthetic judgments as well. At other times, he admits the reality of modern rationality and bases his criticism of it and modern work environments on immediate issues such as wages and safety. But he also echoes Lukácsian criticism, that rational mechanization extends into the worker's 'soul,' reordering subjectivity and rendering it 'reified' (*History* 87-103). He does not use materialist terminology and his criticism is based on a belief in a vitalistic individual rather than a deterministic infrastructure,

but the force of his argument is towards identifying and circumscribing a construction of consciousness. The problem with machines is not that they are “ugly” but that they produce “warped lives” (*Road* 97).

Thus when faced with a “job of work” the modern “habit of mind” (*Road* 180, 182) is to look to technology. The trend towards making life safe has the “status of an instinct.” Not only does technology mean technocrats and an elite class of experts, but it also allows for the conditions in which individuals blindly begin to follow leaders. By extension, people automatically repeat what they hear, be it a ‘worn-out metaphor’ or a slogan inculcated through a megaphone. “Mechanization has itself become a machine,” whose primary function is to be “habit-forming” (*Road* 182, 178), to overtake subjectivity for the sake of overtaking subjectivity. At the same time, he fears the machine because it cuts individuals off from the time when hardship was endured and people knew that life was laborious (*Road* 180). This is profound traditionalism, close to a Puritan ontology mixed with a Conradian sense of the human tragedy. It petrifies Work absolutely and forever as non-amenable to the arbitrations of labour. Since Socialism aligns itself with the machine, the true working-class reaction will be a “spiritual recoil from Socialism” (*Road* 164). The ‘spirit’ comes from Victorian epistemology; Orwell again is attempting to marry the working class to a distinctly nineteenth-century refusal of rationalism. He fears the machine because it undermines craftsmanship and manliness, because it ushers in a “paradise of little fat men” (*Road* 169), because it means a society oriented towards the consumer and not producers,⁹ and because it cuts one “off from the chance of working – that is, of living” (*Road* 173).

But Orwell has to accept that the “machine has come to stay” (*Road* 178). The Orwell who concerns himself with concrete, material problems and not abstract and moral ones, recognizes that machines make for greater economic freedom and safer conditions. In any case,

⁹I examine the shift from the productivist ethic of the Victorians (of Marx, Mill, and classical economics) to a twentieth-century consumerist ethic of neo-classical economics in the chapter on modern work. The greatest parallel between this shift and the on-going entrenchment of rationalism is the increasing dismissal of the non-economic relevance of work.

the machine is here, it “has got to be accepted” (*Road* 178). Regardless that it ought to be accepted “grudgingly and suspiciously” – he is not a Luddite – in order to have an impact on how the machine is used Orwell cannot simply dismiss it. In “Inside the Whale” (1940), itself a defence or apology for pragmatic realism, he criticizes Lawrence on the grounds that “what he is demanding is a movement away from our mechanized civilization, which is not going to happen, and which he knows is not going to happen” (*CEJL* 1: 507). At the end of *The Road to Wigan Pier* he throws a spanner into that work by saying,

if you give me to understand that in some subtle way I am an inferior person because I have never worked with my hands, you will only succeed in antagonizing me. (201)

He even adopts the cynical overtones of the twentieth-century rationalist when he pursues the anachronistic place of the call to Work in the modern age:

Deliberately to revert to primitive methods to use archaic tools, to put silly little difficulties in your own way, would be a piece of dilettantism, of pretty-pretty arty and craftiness. It would be like solemnly sitting down to eat your dinner with stone implements. Revert to handwork in a machine age, and you are back in Ye Olde Tea Shoppe or the Tudor villa with the sham beams tacked to the wall. (*Road* 175-76)

Orwell negotiates rationalism, and derides Work, because he is taking into account the daily routines of the modern. The two sides of Orwell, the one glorifying Work and the other coming to terms with labour, are not forced to confront each other. Against the “frightful debauchery of taste that has already been effected by a century of mechanization,” the “fish-and-chip standard” of the lower classes, is the recognition that a cheap consumer goods “compensates you for a great deal” (*Road* 179, 79-80). Orwell rejected the idea of the cultural improvement or education of the working class, which liberals from George Eliot to Jeremy Bentham have used as a direct refusal to recognize working-class ‘society’ as ‘culture.’ But rationalisms meet and confirm each other when he says that “cheap palliatives” have the beneficial effect of placating the masses into rejecting “insurrections,” beneficial because insurrection only means being massacred by the police (*Road* 80). These are the same cheap goods, lottery tickets, and what-

have-yous that the ruling class uses to “hold the unemployed down” (*Road* 80-81). The two contradictory positions exist side by side because they are never dialectically opposed. In a discourse of Work, he rants against the cheap goods produced under the tactics of rationalism, quantity over quality. But when under a discourse of labour, he moderates his confrontational tactics and goes along with the short-term benefits accrued by the fast production of consumer goods because the working class would and do appreciate a *real* – concrete and tangible – change, a *substantially* improved standard of living. Under such a position, capital and business make enormous profits and wealth continues to be unfairly distributed; such a concession, in fact, as with the ‘growth agreement’ between labour unions and capital, the labour / business truce, allows for capital (and capitalism) to renew itself and even gain ethical credibility. But Orwell looks toward the immediate and real conditions of the worker, the lower class, the underdog – an aspect of the tradition of English cultural socialism he more than all others stood hard by – as much as he embraces the rarified rejection of capitalism which looks toward Work.



Orwell argues that behind socialism’s dependence on mechanization lies a desire for an “ordered world, an efficient world,” and “liberty and efficiency must pull in opposite directions” (*Road* 166; *CEJL* 4: 49). Yet Orwell himself sees the need for them both. Rejecting education or slandering the elites for power worshipping follows from an anti-authoritarian impulse that also contributes to his suspicion of established organizations, of governments, and of partisanship. Still expiating guilt for his role in Burma, he dislikes police. He hated the trend in philosophy to attack weakness, regarding it as a symptom of fascism. In an article on Jack London, Orwell saw a “Fascist streak” in his precursor’s admiration of “toughness wherever he found it.” But if London’s exaltation of “struggle, toughness, survival – shows which way his inclinations pointed,” towards “fascism” (*CEJL* 4: 25, 27), what do we say of Orwell who uses these themes as the starting point for so much of his prose? Not only did he fear ‘softness,’ he also defended authority, discipline, tough laws, and a tougher enforcement of them. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* he argues that, “In any state of society where crime can be profitable you have got

to have a harsh criminal law and administer it ruthlessly" (*Road* 128). Though Orwell often treats efficiency as a moral imperative, a predictable legal system is the keystone to a rationalist economic order. In order to achieve optimum efficiency, capitalist enterprise requires the disciplined control of the population (Weber, *Economy* 2: 1394). It is also easy to detect, though again it does not necessarily betray a concession to rationalism, a lineage to Carlyle, Ruskin, Conrad, and Shaw insofar as Orwell seems nostalgic for a ruling class that rules. One factor – common to English cultural socialism – which might mitigate the inconsistencies between his collusion with authority and his defiant disposition is Orwell's belief in mutualism, that everyone ought to do a share of work. Another might be that rules, order, and discipline are alien only to the privileged classes and Orwell, embracing working-class customs, would want to avoid sounding like an intellectual poser glibly discounting all the authority he relies upon as a matter of course. At the same time, the disjunction between a down-to-earth realism which calls for clearly manifested social authorities and a non-rationalist, shoot-for-the-moon optimism which sympathizes with anarchism is reducible only to non-dialectics: a non-rationalist sensibility fully engaged in a rationalized world, but attempting to isolate itself from that world.



Orwell was a nostalgist forcing himself to face harsh modern realities. Those realities offered no support for his hypertrophied traditionalism, but could not be ignored or denied, only compartmentalized. Contradictions occur frequently because he adamantly documents life 'inside the whale' of rationalism but had charged into it, and thus saw it, with a great deal of Victorian moralism and Work sentimentalism in tact. One final example: speaking in general terms, in idealist terms, Orwell admonishes the working classes for a diet that "rejects good food almost automatically" (*Road* 89). But answering the question of why it is that the lower classes do not eat better he changes his position: "the point is that no ordinary human being is ever going to do such a thing" (*Road* 86). Orwell rarely moralizes against the lower classes and makes every attempt to accommodate their culture intact, though it often goes against the grain of his own culture. Bad dietary habits, however, cause harm to workers. When hearing about an

institution designed to teach the lower classes about nutrition and the best way to organize on a limited budget, he is "torn both ways" (*Road* 89) – and not for the first time.

The ongoing contest and crossover between a refusal of rationalism and a pragmatic acceptance of it, primarily a contest over the nature of work, comes out more clearly in Orwell's writing than at any other point in English cultural socialism because there is always the sense that Eric Blair was shaping George Orwell by reflecting on a contradictory history. Underlying Orwell's antagonism towards socialism is that it is "glued to economic facts," that it is impersonal, trans-individualized, scientific, rationalized. It assumes "man has no soul" or character or idiosyncratic vigour (*Road* 188). But "poverty is poverty" (*Road* 201): immediate material realities must guide any sociology, economics, or politics. The impulse to step in and out of the whale is not reducible to Orwell's personal history. Rather it is an intensified expression of the contradiction proceeding from the transition between non-rationalized views of Work and a rationalist economy, a contradictory position which began with the Victorians. That position is at the origins of English cultural socialism. In the next chapter, after a brief section on Orwell's language, I explore what I think are at the roots of that brand of socialism, Carlyle and his Gospel of Work, but also the way in which he, Carlyle, in a secondary discourse, comes to terms with work rationalization.

Orwell and the Language of Labour

The purpose of these short appendices on Orwell, Carlyle, and Conrad is to show that the tensions and inconsistencies in their representations of work have a counterpart in their language, rhetoric, and style. Since so much has been written on Orwell's language (and Carlyle's, and Conrad's), I only focus on it in relation to work. I argue that if there is a gap between the treatment of labour and Work, 'between the scientific point of view of the historian and the moral point of view of the prophet,' to use Edmund Wilson's famous phrase, it ought to materialize in style. Yet this formal split between a grammar of labour and an aesthetic of Work is never as pronounced as the thematic split between the negotiation of labour and the apotheosis of Work. Orwell's style, for example – concrete, specific, and direct – nearly always has the attributes of a pragmatic approach to labour, and Carlyle's style – deductive, generalizing, and sermonizing – nearly always has the attributes of a Gospelized approach to Work. But though the shift in rhetorical character is minuscule compared to the thematic shift, it nonetheless exists, evidencing not only a split in attitude, knowledge, and social history, but also cracks in the premeditated persona of the writer.

For Orwell, encountering the concrete is a value in itself. If the sections of *Down and Out* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* that deride Work and negotiate labour or economic circumstance argue any one thing it is the value of the specific and material. His prose style, famously lucid, non-jargonistic, precise, and direct, imitates and amplifies his focus on the concrete. He insists on using words that "point to any discoverable object" (*CEJL* 4: 132). The themes of anti-intellectualism, empiricism, pragmatic politics, confrontation, and the everyday lives of everyday people are all paralleled in the stylistic emphasis on physical detail, journalistic fact, and demotic bluntness. His style conveys the importance of having a direct impact and if it does not necessarily suggest the virtues of physical or material acts in themselves, it accents the importance of discussing concrete and immediate social, economic, or political facts. Orwell uses mostly short, exclamatory, basic words and avoids euphemisms and grandiose words: he describes things as 'good' or 'bad' and 'right' or 'wrong.' The violence or abrasiveness of his

rhetoric, its urgency, its transitiveness, straightforwardness and unapologetic detail, correspond to recognizing the inexorable world of labour.

The diction and the rhythm of his sentences are informal but not particularly casual: they abide to laws of clarity and hypotactic syntax. Typically, Orwell begins a passage with a personal experience, places it in a sequential and causal narrative, and then develops an argument based on the description. He undoubtedly would have rejected Marcuse's dictum that language constantly employing images "militates against the development and expression of *concepts*" (*One* 95). Orwell presents detailed and elaborate images and then develops them into purportedly objective or sociological snapshots of the day-to-day experiences of the working and lower-middle class, focusing on minute-by-minute accounts of their labour, unemployment, and street life. He uses description as a way into prescription and pragmatic criticisms. His social critique is often made through a personalized attack on an identifiable enemy or wrongdoer. George Woodcock notes that Orwell's concrete point of view also forms the basis of his literary criticism. Orwell, he suggests, "can never resist thinking of another writer as a person and trying to see him in his mind's eye" (*Crystal* 332). Orwell finds in Dickens an "impressionistic touch" because Dickens, he thought, did not have a firm grasp on how people make a living (*CEJL* 1: 443-45). He *saw* Dickens living comfortably. Grounded in the realism of pragmatic labour or economic necessity, Orwell sought concreteness in his images and language. His rhetoric, for rhetoric it is, punctuated with statistics, appeals to 'transparent' veracity, specific and itemized 'case studies,' statements of historical data, and the anti-theoretical materialism of prices, wages, living conditions and so on, repeats the step-by-step, piecemeal reformism of Orwell's pragmatic negotiation with labour.

Orwell's language of labour would be frustrated by suspicions that representation cannot be objective or made from neutral ground with neutral language. Orwell defends objective truth, first and foremost, to insist on a distinction between language which leads to equivocal, duplicitous argument and graphic, gritty language which leads to pointed argument, assertions of injustice (that injustice or cruelty truly occur), and a changeable object. In "Why I Write"

(1947), Orwell maintains that his “starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice” (*CEJL* 1: 6). Objectivity does not mean suspending one’s biases or suppressing the urge to editorialize and argue a point of view. Objectivity in Orwell’s school of thought means disclosing your objective to your audience (and yourself) and, as he said several times before *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, that $2 + 2 = 4$. Using numbers or an equation to express the case for empirical truths speaks to the non-essentialist, non-Carlylean character of his truths and the centrality of Orwell’s pragmatic, liberalist, or near-utilitarian inclinations. The idea that truths can be independent of language and are not merely the function of the rest of one’s beliefs is an essential presupposition for the pragmatic reformer who sees things politically.

Orwell’s language is not only political; it is grounded in *realpolitik*. His main argument against unnecessarily complicated, abstract language and particularly nomenclature, apart from alienating ‘everyday people,’ is that power-mongers and the politically or ideologically orthodox use it to deny brutal truths. Nearly everything Orwell said about the political content of language, from Newspeak to how language will construct “your thoughts for you” (*CEJL* 4: 135) to Professor Laski’s pomp, has the left wing’s flirtation with totalitarianism and Russia as a definite point of reference. Still one of the most important critics of “the automatic way in which people go on repeating certain phrases” (*CEJL* 3: 145), his argument that language precedes knowledge does not contradict his argument that language can express clear truths when it itself is clear. Because he thought politically before he thought aesthetically (or historically), he feared how language could create meanings as opposed to being tantalized by the fact. His argument about the politics of language, despite the emphasis on precision, directness, and rules, expresses the same kind of support for a linguistic subversion of and dissent from centralized systems of discourse as Bakhtin’s theory of the novel articulates.



On the other side of Orwell’s logical categorizing and bottom-line utility scrutinizing is his high valuation of aesthetic language. I will not argue that Orwell slips into purple passages when discussing *Work* and its attendant moralism, or even when discussing his love of nature

and dislike of technology. He is more likely, however, to qualify, hesitate, circumscribe, specify, and be characteristically Orwellian when he speaks about economic matters than when he apotheosizes Work. When negotiating labour he refers to statistics, makes charts, and lists the incomes and expenses of the working class. He takes account of the minute details of their experiences as a social scientist might. He also grudgingly accepts technology and rejects, for example, Morris's romanticism. But when speaking from an involved, generalizing perspective that embraces Work (and wholly rejects machine production), he follows Carlyle and Conrad in rejecting statistics, scientific facts, and compromises.

Woodcock reproduces three passages from Orwell's prose and fiction to show that Orwell progresses towards a greater and greater degree of blunt, unadorned, political (or labour-centred) diction as he matures as a writer. His point is valid and confirmed by Orwell himself who wrote in 1947, "of late years I have tried to write less picturesquely and more exactly" (*CEJL* 1: 7). As Orwell matured as a writer he spent less time directly participating in working-class culture and thus spoke less in a language of Work. One can, however, notice a shift in tone and style when looking at two passages from the same text or written in the same year. Here are two scenes from *Down and Out*. In the first, Orwell is a participant, celebrating working-class culture and the accoutrements of Work (the camaraderie that follows 'the pride of the drudge'). The second example is of Orwell summing up his social experiment.

The brick-floored room, fifteen feet square, was packed with twenty people, and the air dim with smoke. The noise was deafening, for everyone was either talking at the top of his voice or singing. Sometimes it was just a confused din of voices; sometimes everyone would burst out together in the same song – the 'Marseillaise,' or the 'Internationale,' or 'Madelon,' or 'Les Fraises et les Framboises.' Azaya, a great clumping peasant girl who worked fourteen hours a day in a glass factory, sang a song about, "*Il a perdu ses pantelons, tout en dansant le Charleston.*" Her friend Marinette, a thin, dark Corsican girl of obstinate virtue, tied her knees together and danced the *danse du ventre*. The old Rougiers wandered in and out, cadging drinks and trying to tell a long, involved story about someone who had once cheated them over a bedstead. R.,

cadaverous and silent, sat in his corner quietly boozing. Charlie, drunk, half danced, half staggered to and fro with a glass of sham absinthe balanced in one fat hand, pinching the women's breasts and declaiming poetry. People played darts and diced for drinks. Manuel, a Spaniard, dragged the girls to the bar and shook the dice-box against their bellies, for luck. Madame F. stood at the bar rapidly pouring *chopines* of wine through the pewter funnel, with a wet dishcloth always handy, because every man in the room tried to make love to her. Two children, bastards of big Louis the bricklayer, sat in a corner sharing a glass of *sirop*. Everyone was very happy, overwhelmingly certain that the world was a good place and we a notable set of people. (82-83)

This is description for description's sake. It is deliberately atmospheric and visual: half sentimental, half sensationalist, and probably a quarter factual. Insofar as there is an objective in this passage, it is to enjoy the setting. The sentences are elaborate, the diction less than plain. Nearly every noun is modified by an expressive adjective. Compare it to the language of labour:

To sum up. A *plongeur* is a slave, and a wasted slave, doing stupid and unnecessary work. He is kept at work, ultimately, because of a vague feeling that he would be dangerous if he had leisure. And educated people, who should be on his side, acquiesce in the process, because they know nothing about him and consequently are afraid of him. I say this of the *plongeur* because it is his case I have been considering; it would apply equally to numberless other types of worker. These are only my ideas about the basic facts of a *plongeur's* life, made without reference to immediate economic questions, and no doubt largely platitudes. I present them as a sample of the thoughts that are put into one's head by working in an hotel. (108)

The sentences are shorter, the diction more terse, direct, analytical, and dressed down. It is especially important to note that he *had* explicitly referred to immediate economic questions but denies it in order to emphasize the shortcomings of a non-sociological point of view. In this passage Orwell appeals to reportage, objectivity, and to the impossibility of the grand, omniscient vision (the kind of vision he has in the earlier passage). One might also examine the linguistic shifts in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, from lyrical passages on the miners' strength and the gushing descriptions of working-class homes to statistical passages on unemployment, and the

standard of living in Lancashire. Orwell writes differently about the working class and its culture depending on his proximity to it, on whether or not he directly experiences it. Even in "Such, Such Were the Joys" (1947), which comes relatively late in his career, Orwell oscillates between elaborately descriptive passages couched in narrative – when caught up in the moment of representing his childhood – and argumentative statements in response to those scenes – analytical observations about the effects of childhood or the point of reminiscing.

Still, the split is not exact or final: Orwell's style favours the concrete and precise, which is an attribute of negotiating labour, not a feature of intransitive Work. Even the whimsical "A Nice Cup of Tea" (1946) proceeds in a methodic and orderly fashion. It includes a list of "eleven rules" on how to make a nice cup, making it is easy to forget that the point of the whimsicality is to censure utilitarian writing (*CEJL* 3: 41). The split seems larger than it actually is, however, because Orwell himself frequently commented on it (or on variations of it). In "Why I Write" (1947) he wrote:

I write because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. But I could not do the work of writing a book, or even a long magazine article, if it were not also an aesthetic experience . . . So long as I remain alive and well I shall continue to feel strongly about prose style, to love the surface of the earth, and to take pleasure in solid objects and scraps of useless information. It is of no use trying to suppress that side of myself. (*CEJL* 1: 6)

John Rodden thus talks about Orwell's "split self" (175) and Simon Dentith identifies "varying emphases in the course of [Orwell's] writing, allowing him at one time to praise good writing as an independent value, and at other times to suggest that he sees it as no more than a frill tacked onto the real business of getting the meaning across" (205). In *Orwell* (1971), Raymond Williams, following the argument of *Culture and Society*, argues that Orwell shifts between thinking that all important writing is a form of journalism or pamphleteerism and praising it precisely for its lack of utility. Orwell, he suggests, was caught in the struggle which defines English cultural history between writing *about* something, as Orwell would put it, and the

'higher' art for art's sake movement which desired to distinguish itself from utilitarianism and commodification – between 'society' and 'culture' (29-40). Williams and the others are not wrong, though I think it is important to point out, as I do in my formulation of this divide as determined by an oppositional approach to labour and Work, that Orwell primarily favoured what he called 'political' language. Carlyle, who I will argue also oscillates between poles of labour and Work, favours the other side, the side of Work. The difference between the two writers is one of degree, or sides, not of kind. Both of them embrace a discourse, the language of labour or the language of Work, without squaring off one lexicon against the other.

Thomas Carlyle

Introduction

Orwell's publisher, Victor Gollancz, commissioned *The Road to Wigan Pier* as a sequel to *Down and Out* which would tackle unemployment instead of tramps (Crick, *Life* 279). Despite Gollancz's socialist predilections, this was in effect asking Orwell to write a 'Condition of England' book and participate in a very middle-class, basically liberalist tradition. After engaging with or considering the lower classes, the convention is for the writer to inveigh against life in industrial regions on moral and political grounds by converging vivid description with urgent, but usually moderate prescription. Thomas Carlyle gave birth to it and inadvertently coined the phrase 'Condition of England' ("Chartism" 168); *Past and Present* (1843) and "Chartism" (1839) also adumbrate the grittiness which Realism and Naturalism would inject into the form. Carlyle, not a liberal, spoke with a directness about the gravity of England's condition which was more attuned to Victorian sensibilities than the self-exiled, hyper-subjective Romantics before him. For that reason, his voice has become synonymous with the convention and with the inception of social criticism in the modern age.

Orwell never admired that voice, the style, the power worshipping, the authoritarianism, or Carlyle's brands of conservatism and nationalism. Yet both writers precipitate support from the political left and right, a detail of more than trivial importance. They both promote activism, but are suspicious of radical action; appeal to tradition, manliness, and simplicity; are ironists but not cynics; belong to a very English group of social reformers who argue the need to "Descend where you will into the lower class" (*Past* 9); oscillate between speaking on abstract and concrete matters; and write about the virtues of Work in periods of high unemployment and job insecurity. They both complain that governments, official institutions, 'extreme' social critics, and modern societies in general lack "soul." Thus they both are reluctant to come to terms with modernity, retreating to and ensconcing themselves in conservatism, idealism, or nature. Yet they both, in alternate discourses, grudgingly accept modern society and seek its reform.

But again, Orwell did not admire Carlyle. The trajectory from an outspoken Carlyle to an outspoken Orwell, himself brimming with Victorian values, reveals a shift in foundational assumptions about final and conditional knowledge, though the basic division between moralism and pragmatism remains firmly intact. At the same time that Carlyle's rhetoric of Work is final, complete, and evangelical, a great deal of interpretive work, circumspection, and equivocation – a discourse of labour – takes place as well. In this chapter I am again looking at a non-dialectic division between Work and labour and a treatment of Work as if divorced from its content, context, and details.



Carlyle's attitude towards work is pronounced through a tension between final and contingent knowledge. The division parallels the tension in Orwell's thought between the abstract and concrete, between a romantic vision and pragmatic reformism: they are forms of the dualism, the isolated strands of thought, which give English cultural socialism its shape. Carlyle speaks of Work as if with a single vision of it, of *the* work ethic, of the opportunity for self-realization, and of non-economic imperatives. But he also recognizes class, class struggle, wages, Corn Laws, and the need for legislation almost as if he recognized a difference between 'Work' and 'labour' – almost as if he accepted, with Orwell, that the idea of any final determination is unfeasible when measured against concrete experience. Carlyle's treatment of Work will be the subject of the first section of this chapter. I will develop it in the following sections by examining the double theses embedded in *Past and Present*. A simultaneous but undialectical confirmation of spiritual and material values, of 'culture' and 'society,' or of *homo faber* and *homo economicus* sets up a tremulous balancing act for the (S)age. In his a priori, intransitive, generalizing voice, Carlyle echoes both humanistic and theistic doctrine, interchangeable despite their original opposition. In his concrete, transitive voice he subordinates human nature to a human condition, philosophy to history, and the Gospel of Work to the matter of wages.

The non-dialectical allegiance to spiritual (moral) and material (pragmatic) values finds Carlyle objecting to the domination of political economy and the spiritual malaise of the age, but embracing industry. Though Carlyle denies it, industry is genealogically tied to political economy, rationalized work to rationalism. The moral Carlyle attempts not only to re-introduce feudalistic working relationships and disengage industry from political economy, but to re-appropriate the concept of 'rationalism' from the clutch of economics. This ends in him assigning rationality to spiritualism, an act only possible in an era dominated by the language of instrumental reason. At times, Carlyle seems as if he would be the last Victorian to embrace 'rationalism' or its language, but when illustrating the validity of life beyond the economic, he frequently adopts the terms most convenient to political economy and most credible in a vaguely secular society seeking the certainty of non-contingent *temporal* knowledge.

A Philosophy of Work

For the Unseen

Carlyle's philosophy of work in the 1840s resembles the Marx of the same period. Both conceive humankind in relation to material activity: in willed work human beings objectify or project themselves onto a creation and thus become real and knowable to themselves in a sense which exceeds basic materiality (corporeality). Both reject the dichotomy which forever separates materialism from essentialism. The idea that work initiates a process of reciprocal alteration, the subject alters the world and the world alters the subject, firmly establishes the place of history in philosophy. They both would overturn the philosophical tradition assuming the primacy of contemplation over activity. Marx and Carlyle, then, contribute to the secularization of the age, countering the idea that what humans do will never equal what the *Kosmos* will do – that which exists in eternity or beyond history. They also agree that industry manifests *homo faber*, that returning to a premachinic golden age is both impossible and undesirable, but that the relations and conditions of production in contractional / exchange systems alienate individuals from themselves and each other.

They differ insofar as Marx emphasizes the idea that work offers humankind the opportunity to prove itself as a "species being" whereas Carlyle stresses that "a man perfects himself by working" (Rosenberg, *Seventh* 60-61; Carlyle, *Past* 196). Jonathan Mendilow argues that in *Sartor Resartus* (1833) Carlyle treats work only as an enabling activity for a private regime (120). Work is Teufelsdröckh's answer to personal and spiritual problems, such as depression and doubt. Even if Carlyle's despondency was brought on by an anomic epidemic and self-help is a public medicine, work's agency confirms selfhood regardless of society. *Past and Present* manifests an awakened public consciousness. To an extent, the shift parallels Marx's reworking of Hegel. According to Hegel, saturated in Idealism, work is not a specific economic activity but the way in which the self shapes the world under the guidance of the spirit: a middle point between 'man' and the world. For him "alienation" or self-objectification is the end of philosophy's interest in work. For Marx, "self-objectification" is the starting point of philosophy. In history, objectification becomes "alienation" and "estrangement," a reification largely endogenous to capitalism. Even though Carlyle's emphasis in *Past and Present* is elsewhere, on Work as a good in itself and on final knowledge, he pulls himself towards a materialistic theory and concrete subject matter. But only to an extent: the discourse of labour can be found only in pockets, compartmentalized and ghettoized.

A greater difference between Marx's and Carlyle's philosophies of work would be that work providing a mirror to selfhood, for Carlyle, also reflects the worker's bond to a cosmic, anti-historical determination. Philosophically, Carlyle is somewhere between Hegel and Marx. Marx sees history as the interplay of economics with other forces; Carlyle sees history as the interplay of the cosmos with other forces (including economics). As a result, Carlyle pushes himself away from material and towards axiological theory. In Carlyle, ethics govern social relations (and modes of production): modes of production do not govern ethics (or social relations). Conclusive, universal ethics are readable, he says; they are simply not being heeded.



Carlyle's interpretation of work is principally anagogic. Beyond giving it a literal (production), allegorical (self-objectification), and moral (therapeutic and socially valuable) reading, he invests it with mystical and spiritual meanings. Productive work is "appointed by the Universe" (*Past* 144) to bridge subject and object, the individual and the pantheistic external. The paradox in locating a transcendental order in work (albeit represented as Work) has a near parallel in archetypal / structural criticism and the paradox inherent in locating anagogic mysticism by the way of a very scientific orientation. Carlyle answers Victorian doubt with a philosophy of Work. Religion takes faith. Work demands that same faith because before work there is no way to know the object being worked upon. Work seems to be "impossible" for the object of work is "as yet a No-thing": one performs work "for the Unseen" (*Past* 205).

For Carlyle, the religion of Work is not contrary to material history. Through Work subject and object are grafted together, with the individual's part in a World Spirit becoming knowable because located in the material object of his or her work. Eloise Behnken points out that this is proto-existentialist reasoning insofar as the spirit cannot know itself unless it is translated into external works – i.e., existence precedes essence (27). Though it is true that with Carlyle action precedes knowledge, the subject does not *create* selfhood or a purpose, she or he *finds* them. As with Hegel, the spirit is historical because human forces can and do frustrate it: history delays its predestined course. In Calvinist theology the Elect work because success at work is a sign of providential approval. Carlyle's Calvinist upbringing reappears in the idea of a world spirit vaguely dependent upon (or at least not independent of) human history. Through Work universal meanings and transcendental laws demonstrate themselves. Carlyle mixes the traditional idea of truth as revelation and the modern, productional idea that knowledge is limited to what humans make. Work compensates for the absence of God, but also manifests God's presence, "bodies forth the form of Things Unseen" (*Past* 205), in its elaboration of the ontological experience.

Both sides of this paradox lead towards a unified vision of Work as compulsory activity for spiritual gain. Carlyle compounds other paradigmatic meanings in his representation of

work, such as the expressing of cultural and national identity, but the point is that despite obstacles, he forges a coherent, final theory of Work: a deus ex machina in the playing out of a moral universe.



The greatest threat to that vision of Work is industrial capitalism and the social relations it produces. Marxists tend to argue that any intrinsic value gained from work is coterminous with the mode of production and the organization of working relations. Sociologists sometimes object to this formula by documenting subjective aberrations. Most work theorists today more and more treat aberrations as the norm. But all are suspicious of the promotion of work that takes place irrespective of its content and purpose. Carlyle's Gospel of Work is undoubtedly disturbed by industrialism, a word he coined in order to differentiate between an acceptable social fact (industry) and an unacceptable, asocial way of life. He speaks of "Genuine Work," of a golden age before the "Steam-Demon has yet risen smoking into being" (*Past* 71), and implicitly distinguishes between work in the realm of freedom and work in the realm of necessity. Yet Carlyle was not anti-industry, nor does he speak at length about the deplorable conditions in mines and factories (especially in comparison to Engels, his contemporary). In 1842, a particularly gruesome parliamentary blue book made working conditions, not work, the subject of public scrutiny (Altick x). In 1843, with *Past and Present*, Carlyle moves toward re-cloaking work.

Many Victorians were able to make the super-philosophical distinction between 'labour' and 'work,' even if they never articulated it as fully or as clearly as Hannah Arendt. In Arendt's *philosophical* distinction between labour and work, 'labour' denotes activity which satisfies biological need, sustains life, whereas 'work' organizes a social environment and aestheticizes. Her *super-philosophical* corollary is that labour in modernity is activity performed solely for extrinsic gain, money. 'Work' becomes the activity of the hobbyist, the craftsman, or the artist: it is that which both Carlyle and Arendt lament is being subsumed by a culture of labour. But in an industrial society, 'labour' first and foremost means factory and machine work, the

activity of the 'working class,' and that which results in alienation. Carlyle's frequent failure to discriminate between labour and Work appears as a refusal to acknowledge industrial working conditions. It appears as an attempt to mobilize society towards productivity and to level class interests into bourgeois interests. Such a society could purport to achieve the coherency and solidarity previously thought unique to Christianity.¹ Carlyle insists the aristocracy, the Captains of Industry, *and* labourers Work. That amounts to insisting labourers toil for extrinsic gain only, while defending low wages by affirming that work's reward is intrinsic ('labour' is not a good in itself). Though Carlyle argues in favour of fair wages and for better (paternalistic) working relations, he is ignoring or deluding labourers when he declares, "Work, and therein have wellbeing" (*Past* 201). He is asking the labourer to find within himself the strength to glean the intrinsic values of Work from intrinsically (and extrinsically, the two are rarely separable) valueless labour. He desires the psychic health of labourers only insofar as it corresponds to social stability and precludes social and industrial disobedience. Besides "Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse," and "Despair," Work also stills the labourer against "Indignation" (*Past* 196). He attacks Chartism and the nascent movement of working-class protest (as opposed to artisanal protest), especially because it focused on wages and piecemeal reforms but was not headed by an intellectual vanguard. He slyly censures the negotiation of wages by conflating it with the calculation of statistics, a rationalist enterprise. He suggests that wages "are but one preliminary item" leading to well-being, just as a utilitarian fetish of numbers is an incomplete and over-exaggerated explanation of what constitutes human motivation, justice, or happiness ("Chartism" 172). Carlyle speaks of Work as if it too did not contribute to labour, to the economic gain of capital or to the industrial conditions considered deplorable in his own day. The labourer would have needed an enormous moral – self-shaping – reservoir to accrue well-being. Carlyle, in a period of blatant industrial tyranny, assures all sectors of society that "No man oppresses thee . . . from all men thou art emancipated: but from Thyself" (*Past* 216-17). This is not the same

¹Gertrude Himmelfarb notes that before industry became widespread in urban England, it had "been the poor who were blessed, who were of the kingdom of God. Modernity had changed that. Work was now salvation" (206).

Carlyle who argues, “without proper wages there can be no well-being” (“Signs” 186) and who is enraged by ‘injustice.’

By prescribing an almost unqualified therapy of Work and a uniform imperative, Carlyle preaches Work to labourers. He adopts a completely different discourse, one deploring how work has become laborious, when addressing the middle class or the aristocracy. By dividing a discussion of work from the issues of class he effectively wars against working-class consciousness and the need for reform. When he admits “how much better fed, clothed, lodged and in all outward respects accommodated men now are, or might be, by a given quantity of labour” – obviously referring to the working class – it is from the point of view of a moralist complaint against the accompanying “internal and spiritual” decay (“Signs” 227). In other words, instead of seeing the pragmatic value of food or clothes as Orwell would, regardless if they are mass-produced, he sees little victories in the working-class standard of living as contributing to the overall greed of the age. Regarding work, the only clear distinction he makes is between Mammonism and ‘noble’ or ‘true’ Work. The latter is “sacred” “were it but true hand-labour” because it posits faith in the Unseen (*Past* 202). Assembly-line work cannot be ‘true’ in that sense and labour does not have the opportunity to Mammonize, to hoard wealth. The negation of labour, of working conditions, expresses a steadfast commitment to categorical over conditional knowledge. Beyond that, by relating labour to blessedness, Carlyle validates obscene working conditions and the kind of alienation which accompanies the sub-division of labour and profits the capitalist class. It is indeed troubling that the idolization and subsequent mythology of work, largely motivated by Carlyle, proceeds simultaneously to industrialism.

Such ironic timing, however, does not necessarily indicate bourgeois machinations. The celebration of Work’s intrinsic values is an implicit challenge to industrialism, a posting of its shortcomings, even if it is imminently redundant and highly suspicious. To collapse Work and labour into a sanctified Work is to confront and defy utilitarianism, *its* non-contingent, foundationalist assumptions and their cultural implications, and *its* objective to collapse all Work into labour, thereby arresting all meaningful satisfaction until after labour. Utilitarianism

imposes a narrow definition on work: it is all labour, disutility. Carlyle does the same, but offers the opposite one which defines all labour as Work.

Political economy also identifies satisfactions and intrinsic needs as coming from beyond paid employment. Its parameters limit the cultural context in which activity, time, identity, and status (or subject-position) are defined and regulated, either as work or non-work. Political economy makes a distinction between work and non-work (for example, a hobby) that is not inherent in the activity itself but solely in the act of payment. Carlyle attempts to refashion the cultural contexts toward what inheres in the action. He attempts to elide the binaries set up by political economy between work and non-work, labour and craft, or extrinsic and intrinsic need. The result is a unified vision of Work at a historical moment which ought to be impossible for a social critic with Carlyle's specific knowledge.



Before examining Carlyle's recourse to both teleology and practicality, I want to consider his aggrandizement of the Abbot Samson's work.

The story of the Abbot provides a model for aristocracies, governments, and managers – for individual husbands and entire societies. Alternatively, it provides a critique of modern relations of production. To begin with, however, as R. E. Pahl makes clear, “there was no pre-industrial golden age of satisfying work” (“Introduction” 9). Reproducing the myth of Merrie England underlies an attempt to synchronize modernity with an invariant and thus ‘superior’ past. It underlies an attempt to check the ever transforming present by referring to an ‘established’ (“invented”) tradition (Hobsbawm 1-9). In Carlyle's parable, the Abbot creates an “ordered world” out of “chaos” through vigilance, a mission mentality, discipline, asceticism, and thrift. All his methods are a product of ‘the work ethic.’ Although it appears as a ruling class or managerial ideology in which the worker internalizes a mandate to sacrifice his or her labour power for the ‘greater good’ of the company, as it certainly does today with every

manager's motivational discourse circulating around it, Carlyle's work ethic emphasizes commitment by owners, managers, and workers alike.²

Undoubtedly sensing a movement away from social organicism in the contemporary present, Carlyle paints a picture of cohesion and molecular harmony in the past. The Abbot's order is not mechanically controlled from the outside, but emotionally driven from within. He has a "thoughtful sternness, a sorrowful pity: but there is a terrible flash of anger in him" (*Past* 96). The picture is framed by a patriarchal and feudalistic nostalgia for paternalistic work relations. Elsewhere in *Past and Present* he speaks of the lost bonds of guardianship that "Gurth born thrall of Cedric" (244) had enjoyed and in "Signs of the Times" (1829), Carlyle demands that governments operate as a "father" (233). The Abbot's demeanor and energy, meanwhile, imply a critique of the aloof, passive, and unproductive habits endemic to aristocratic property owners. Antonio Gramsci also speaks of a "European tradition" of aristocracies "with no essential function" and thus "purely parasitic": "pensioners of economic history" (281). He notes that in the United States even the richest millionaire maintains the pioneering, active spirit despite having no financial need (305). In some ways this is a different spirit than the one Carlyle wants to re-kindle in the European aristocracy, the universally sanctioned paternal spirit. But the subtext behind Carlyle's criticisms of a "Phantom Aristocracy . . . not in the least conscious that it has any work longer to do" (*Past* 142) juxtaposes the spirit of active capital to passive property and it is not accidental. By attempting to synthesize divine fiats, organic and hierarchical communities, and economic projects Carlyle reflects, but also contributes to the rise of a competition-oriented nationalistic consciousness. Orwell shows the imprint of Carlylean nationalism when he argues that the English people "must breed faster, work harder, and probably live more simply." But in the same article, "The English People" (1944), Orwell also

²The 'flexible capitalism' of today in which corporate workers are expected to tolerate fragmented and short-term 'projects' seems to be an attempt to erase the idea of commitment from the concept of a work ethic once and for all. The Harvard School of Business currently tells its students to work from the 'outside' as consultants, as opposed to looking for a place of work (Sennett 25).

shows his difference to the Gospelizing Carlyle by arguing that the English should not listen "to those who tell them that the England of the past can return" (*CEJL* 3: 37).

The story of the Abbot, however, is far from being a manifesto on the virtues of capitalist England. Under political economy the idle aristocracy elude criticism. If work is associated only with economic incentives, with disutility and no intrinsic or social benefit, then wealth excuses idleness. Under the theory of political economy only the poor and unemployed are charged with the opprobrium of idleness. Moreover, the cooperation in the Abbot's workplace is a criticism of laissez-faire just as the representation of authority and obedience is a calling and model for active managements and peaceful workers. The monastery also contradicts the hedonistic underpinnings of utilitarianism by demonstrating that a society functions best when it refuses to treat work merely as a means to secure pleasure. In the abbey, 'work' and 'life' are not confined activities. But the most significant criticism of all political economy is the correlation of spiritual and economic order. Before the Abbot arrives, the abbey is in spiritual and economic turmoil. The success ensuing from the blurring of theology, good economy, morality, productivity, diligence, spirituality, bookkeeping, ritual, efficiency, and faith is a snub against the strict demarcation (and privileging) of *homo economicus* by political economy from the plurality of what constitutes humankind in any of its activities. Eternal laws, for the economically astute and triumphant Abbot, are always "interpenetrating the whole of Life" (*Past* 72). Economic savvy can go hand in hand with Work, but only when it is made not to contradict the concept of Work.

However, considering the asceticism and obedience pressed upon the monks, the workers, their "whole of life" is somewhat limited. That which seems to be or is represented as a diligent work ethic, a self-effacing absorption in a task, can always be the product of a worker's fear of employer tyranny – a line that neither the Abbot nor Carlyle has problems crossing. In "Chartism" Carlyle represents not only the violence of the working-class movement, but also the awakening of their class-consciousness as a crisis. He shares the trans-historical, traditional, tragic sensibility often accompanying a belief in Work. To be human, *homo faber*, is to Work, to

struggle, to face self-defining challenges and not to negotiate the details of labour. For *homo faber*, struggle is a moral issue. But the idea that "All men submit to toil, to disappointment, to unhappiness; it is their lot here" ("Chartism" 188) can easily be shaped into a defence of worker self-denial or of the indefensible wages and working conditions which produce unhappiness. Again, Carlyle does not seem to hesitate from transgressing the line between inevitable toil and domination. The working class might agree that the world is tragic, but as the pragmatic Orwell would point out – that is, from a remote, analytical perspective – they come to that idea from an economic point of view, from the point of view of being dominated. The emergence of a rationalist economic theory, the rise of the bourgeois, and the proliferation of religious skepticism had made for the *theoretical* possibility of the end to controlled systems of authority. But the institutionalized religious revival was immediate, powerful, and saturated with appeals to authority and duty. Carlyle's non-institutionalized religious zeal contributed to the evangelical spirit. Carlyle witnessed the factory becoming a place of order, discipline, regularity, and authority that could act to substitute any understood absence of transcendental law. His doctrine of Work allows for that substitution by insisting on Work's wholesale domination of social relationships so that the hierarchies in the workplace would be reproduced outside of it. At the same time, his Gospel of Work counteracts political economy by guaranteeing stability in accordance with universal truth, an order sufficiently authoritative, though moral as well. Both approaches amount to validating liberalist notions of progress through free (but autocratic) industry.

Positive change, as the example of the Abbot is meant to demonstrate, comes from 'above.' Carlyle approves of the Abbot's stubborn unruliness but insists that the subordinates, even as they themselves become artisanal, remain obedient. The entire notion that human beings are social beings is predicated on a directive to obey "God-made superiors" (*Past* 283). Ironically, one of the reasons Orwell rejects Carlyle is the same reason why he rejects Marxists, that they overlook the fact that power corrupts even good men. Orwell's pragmatic side would also contest the way in which Carlyle offers no mechanism to find or develop such benevolent

leaders. Carlyle assigns mental functions to owners and managers, those who “*can* articulate,” whereas “almost stupid” must labour (*Past* 23). That is, definitive character ratifies the functional division of labour rather than being determined by the conditions and fact of that division. E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), which shows that the union movement in England began with artisans and not ‘proletarians,’ brings out a major contradiction in Carlyle’s attitude towards work. Carlyle would recreate labourers into Workers, artisans. But he would restrict their obstinacy, their trade-union-mindedness, which follows. In other words, he desires workers to counteract political economy, but needs labourers to get on with the business of production at hand. He delivers two distinct Gospels of Work. He instructs the middle-class Captains of Industry to Work and be obstinate; he instructs the workers to Work and be submissive.

The Gospel of Work

A small Poet every Worker is.

The apportioning of historical relations to intuited eternal law is in step with the always-present temptation to withdraw that Carlyle inherits from the Romantics. But instead of granting poetry or art the authority to confirm that intuition or to express the spirit which industrialism was threatening as the Romantics do, Williams’s ‘culture,’ Carlyle invests in a transcendental idea of Work: “a small Poet every Worker is” (*Past* 205). Work becomes the validation of that which was, as Chris Vanden Bossche says, “absent from or even destroyed by newly dominant discourses like political economy” (vii). But work, to pick up Williams’s argument in *Culture and Society*, becomes independent; it gets separated from everyday political life, just as the Romantics treat art (or ‘culture’) as if in a “superior reality,” a different realm than the organization of ‘society.’ In that way, Work and political economy, or Work and labour, become unrelated items – the Benthamite nods in approval, and political economy reaches its privileged position of the ‘real’ and ‘rational.’³ Williams is surely not wrong when he says that the “idea of

³Arendt’s model of labour ≠ work ≠ (political) activity articulates a classical distinction between work, labour, and ‘society.’ She argues that against action or ‘society’ is the “conviction of *homo faber* that a man’s products may be

culture as the whole way of living of a people receives in Carlyle a marked new emphasis.” But the emphasis is on a spiritualized idea of work, which in a much more immediate way than ‘culture’ or art is interfused with ‘society.’ Work (Williams says “culture”) is “the ground of his attack on Industrialism: that a society, properly so called, is composed of very much more than economic relationships” (*Culture* 83). The Worker (Williams says “the artist”) becomes a “special kind of person” (*Culture* 43), divorced from the problems of labour or ‘society.’ Ironically, by attempting to make Work / culture a ‘whole way of living,’ Carlyle routinely dislodges it from the discourses of economic and social theory. That is, he dehistoricizes, withdraws into, and finalizes Work.

Carlyle’s temple of Work periodically extends into a clear rejection of political reform. Not only does eternal law obviate political action, but any systematic school of interpretation or etiological solution dislocates the concept of reform, of reforming the conditions of production. Carlyle judges society against “Eternal Facts,” a heuristic ‘reality’ that transcends change and reveals the inadequacies change brings to the contemporary world. To say that the narrative of *Past and Present* is a longitudinal material history would be to concede that Carlyle’s solutions to contemporary problems are anachronistic. History at best is the pejorative details of essential law. Solutions to its waywardness from the predestined course lie in the unfettering of that law rather than in “bursts of Parliamentary eloquence” (*Past* 19).

Carlyle was also a moralist, as was Orwell, and as such thought that one had to change oneself before one reformed the world. Believing that a moral and not a structural problem haunted England, he derides reform as ‘Morrison’s Pills.’ Paradoxically, all measures for reform

more – and not only more lasting – than he is himself, as well as the *animal laborans*’ firm belief that life is the highest of all goods. Both, therefore, are, strictly speaking, unpolitical, and will incline to denounce action and speech as idleness, idle busybodyness and idle talk, and generally will judge public activities in terms of their usefulness to supposedly higher ends – to make the world more useful and more beautiful in the case of *homo faber*, to make life easier and longer in the case of *animal laborans*” (*Human* 208). ‘Society,’ in turn, disregards or undervalues work (art). The *vita contemplativa* rejects work, labour, and ‘society.’ Though the modern age has overturned the classical ranking of contemplation and action, albeit towards individual action (‘labour’), the conventional distinction between thought and labour (the mind as opposed to the body, the ‘natural’ functions of the classes) continues into the current corporate age with the strict cultural division of time into non-work (the weekend) and labour, leisure and labour, or ‘culture’ (Arendt’s ‘work’) and routine (her ‘labour’).

are equally untenable because they are partial. Carlyle may call for massive change, but without falsifiable reforms the only means to implement change would be through revolution, a course he specifically censures. Orwell was right to challenge Carlyle as an “intellectual.” A social critic’s refusal to specify social policy discloses intellectual detachment (Rosenberg, *Seventh* 35). However, offering overarching, non-contingent criticisms and few practical, if incomplete or temporary ideas that would necessitate political action – deferring to absolute law – is nonetheless political.

Carlyle dismisses political activity but is unmistakably political in a different way when he argues that the wages “of every noble Work do yet lie in Heaven or else Nowhere,” and certainly not in “Owen’s Labour-bank” (*Past* 203, 204). He does not believe that toil under Mammonism provides its own rewards, but because he attempts to satisfy a Victorian epistemological desire for closure by appealing to final knowledge, he holds in abeyance the historical contexts which at other times receive his unmitigated wrath. Strategy or otherwise, the result is political. The idea that “money alone is *not* the representative either of man’s success in the world, or of man’s duties to man” (*Past* 179) strikes out against political economy and supports the cause of labour by integrating it with the case for Work, notwithstanding the suspicion it may justifiably arouse from the point of view of labourers. But “the brave man has to give his Life away”; “Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness”; and “Who art thou that complainest of thy life of toil? Complain not” (*Past* 204, 197, 202) are absurd and dangerous sentiments which surreptitiously transform ‘final knowledge’ into silence.

The Grammar of Labour

*That question of
work and wages*

Carlyle writes on the borderline between unmediated intuition and conditionality, universal wisdom and social fact, or ‘cultural’ disinterest and pragmatic commitment. There is a second side to Carlyle, a side which is transitive, concrete, historical, reformist, and modern. As

with Orwell, critics find that Carlyle "combines attitudes generally held to be antithetical" (Rosenberg, *Carlyle* 116) and oscillates between dealing in generalities and constructive politics. At this point I will examine the side of Carlyle which admits knowledge cannot be enclosed but must rather integrate itself with day-to-day political life in such a way as to necessitate involvement: the kind of gritty, bread-and-butter perspective that also dominates Orwell's pragmatic side.

Faced with an England on the brink of widespread violence, Carlyle calls for specific types of reform. As Corn Laws drove up the price of bread, Poor Laws and workhouses made for more corruption than what they replaced, angry Chartists gathered, parasitic aristocracies withdrew, and the industrial sector found Mammon, England's future was quite clearly either in reform or violence. In *Past and Present* Carlyle proposes government legislation to regulate and inspect factories, mines, wages, and bureaucracies; in addition, he proposes they establish control over sanitation, emigration, pollution, education, and housing. These are, by his own standards, Morrison's Pills. Still, he stands against the Corn Laws and for some of the more moderate objectives of Chartism. He cautiously suggests that workers could become part owners with "permanent interests" in their manufacturing companies. Though they would be without real, comparative agency in relation to the Captains of Industry, the idea is to allow for labour's bargaining power even in periods of a surplus labour force. Carlyle advocates for governments to enforce feudalistic systems of management in order to remove workers from the uncertainty of the market. In "Chartism" he outlines a plan for "Universal Education" and "general Emigration" (228-38). He would also introduce recreational parks for the working-class family and frequently repeats a "Fair day's-wages for a fair day's-work," a very political stance indeed as it was also the slogan of the craft-unions (Perkin 232). These are significant arguments to make in the 1840s when it was increasingly understood that humanitarian projects could be left to volunteers and were not the responsibility of government (Brantlinger 2). Addressing the middle class, speaking on behalf of but not to the working class, he considers issues surrounding labour, issues which preclude trumpeting Work.

Carlyle bids government to address “that question of work and wages,” not the “Wealth of Nations, Supply-and-demand and such” (*Past* 26). Yet he also gets his own hands dirty in the macroeconomic mud by advising British manufacturers to “*equal-sell*” rather than undersell their goods (*Past* 184). The idea is that if the textile industry were to ‘satisfy,’ not maximize profits, it might stabilize the market and thus wages as well. This is a far cry from an intransitive entreaty to Work and for industrial decency. Again in “Chartism” he attacks “Paralytic Radicalism,” or those who assume “nothing whatever can be done in it by man, who has simply to sit still, and look wistfully to ‘time and general laws’” (227). Finally, as Williams points out, Carlyle’s disparagement of democracy was “a most relevant criticism” of the influence or “political arrangement” of laissez-faire (*Culture* 80).

Unlike Arendt, Carlyle does not distinguish between action and work. Both entail that the subject transcends himself or herself by interacting with an environment. This is one of the meanings behind his appeal to “Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself . . . know what thou canst work at” (*Past* 196). Though he mystifies and depoliticizes action by conflating it with Work (work as a social activity but also as an interaction with the cosmos), his emphasis is on a lack of self-interest and thus is a direct attack on the utilitarian ethic. If a conservative like G. K. Chesterton finds fault with Carlyle for coming to terms with industrialism, because he “never contradicted the whole trend of the age as Cobbett did” (23), one might conclude that Carlyle, like Orwell, recognizes that history cannot simply be undone through attrition or nostalgia. Though involvement in contemporary social debate, besides jarring against the Gospel of Work, is only “in partial conflict with bourgeois hegemony,” as Terry Eagleton argues, because it “seeks to accommodate itself within it,” objections to such involvement also demand scrutiny – especially as an all-or-nothing approach has proven itself to be quite accommodating to the ruling class. Eagleton makes it next to impossible for the members of the “Culture and Society tradition,” shy of revolutionary action as they are and intermittently addressing specific historical contexts as they do, to engage in any social criticism whatsoever. If their “labourist ideologies” capitulate to “bourgeois state power,” their “Romantic” ideologies preserve “it by

displacing political analysis to a moralist and idealist critique of its worst 'human' effects" (*Criticism* 102). Help us out here.



By and large, however, Eagleton is right: Carlyle backs reform because it promises wealth for England. The emigration he favours means a developed commonwealth and thus increased trade. The Captains of Industry would revitalize the economy and challenge foreign competitors. England "shall be well" if it works "better than all people" (*Past* 185). The manorial principles Carlyle wishes industry to adopt would fraternize the factory floor but they would also enforce the ideology which holds that the interests of labour and capital are the same, thereby precluding unrest and ensuring production. Building parks for labouring families is an "excellent investment" because it would discourage "mutiny" (*Past* 276). Once when Carlyle suggests that a fair day's-wage is necessary, he notes that it keeps "your worker alive that he may work more" (*Past* 203).

Carlyle also fails, for the most part, to document the details of his activist 'program' and, in general, obfuscates his reformist proposals by yoking them to inevitability. Any "philosophy of praxis" posits historically-determined relations because they are the only ones changeable (Gramsci 133). Williams understands that "Carlyle is for practical beginnings," but that he retracts from pragmatism because he considers it essentially inadequate (*Culture* 81-82). In order for work to be an effective therapy it must be meaningful, the type of Work which brings self-objectification, not alienation. Carlyle never suggests, as did Morris, how factory work could be changed in order to foster that necessary sense of creation which occasions salutary effects.

Carlyle has two very different attitudes towards work. To the working class he urges the need to work for work's sake and to all other classes he urges the need to reform the condition of work. The tendency to alter one's attitude towards work depending on one's proximity to the working class or one's consideration of them is common to Orwell and indeed all English cultural socialism. While Orwell is up close to and sharing experiences with the working class

he associates them to the world of Work; when he reflects upon his experiences, distancing himself from them, he discusses the working class in terms of its labour – their wages, expenses, and so on. Carlyle, when reaching out to or taking account of the working class – “Awake, ye noble Workers . . . It is to you I call” (*Past* 271) – or more specifically when proselytizing to his middle-class readers the best way to consider, speak to, or treat the working class, he speaks intransitively, unconditionally about the virtues of Work. When appealing to the majority audience of *Past and Present*, the middle class, he raises issues surrounding labour. When he does preach Work to the middle and upper classes he advocates artisanal obstinacy, pride, and independence; to the working class he recommends subservience and self-deprecation. The two discourses of Work and labour never confront each other because they are addressed in different directions.

Sometimes Carlyle attempts to include both reform and transcendence, to lend reformism the authority of corresponding to a moral universe. In “Signs of the Times,” discussing the Ideal and the Real, he argues that

To define the limits of these two departments of man’s activity, which work into one another, and by means of one another, so intricately and inseparably, were by its nature an impossible attempt. Their relative importance, even to the wisest mind, will vary in different times, according to the special wants and dispositions of those times. Meanwhile, it seems clear enough that only the right co-ordination of the two, and the vigorous forwarding of *both*, does our true line of action lie. Undue cultivation of the inward or Dynamical province leads to idle, visionary, impracticable courses, and especially in rude eras, to Superstition and Fanaticism . . . Undue cultivation of the outward, again, though less immediately prejudicial, and even for the time productive of many palpable benefits, must, in the long-run, by destroying Moral Force, which is the parent of all other Force, prove not less certainly, and perhaps still more hopelessly, pernicious. This, we take it, is the grand characteristic of our age. (237-38)

But Carlyle, as with Mathew Arnold here pre-echoed, would only conflate the Ideal and the Real within bourgeois circles. In fact, seeing a non-contest between the ideal and the real assumes

identical class interests or uniform ideals and 'reals.' The resolution and union he imagines, or the injection of Moral Force he prescribes, is premised on disregarding what is real for the working class, and what might be ideal for them, and on bypassing the most salient and *real* conflict that divides Work from labour – bypassing the conflict between Work and labour. Occasionally, as in *Past and Present*, he interrupts his political discourse on, for example, the need for permanent labour contracts by appealing to 'higher values' – "I am for permanence in all things" (277) – but so much transcendental rhetoric suffuses *Past and Present* and is generally kept so far apart from the details of labour, that critics such as Gertrude Himmelfarb can "wonder how Carlyle proposed to operate an industrial system without some cash-payment mechanism" (206) even though he is quite straightforward when discussing the minute intricacies of wages.

Carlyle's reformism is ultimately vague and limited. Philip Rosenberg argues that readers are drawn towards doing, not withdrawal (*Seventh* 21). But doing what? – Carlylean Work is predominantly intransitive and in any case, unaffected by the dominant character of work in that period. An anonymous reviewer in 1843 criticized Carlyle for reducing social problems to that which can be "attributed solely to the want of a right spirit in the breasts of capitalists" (also Orwell's criticism of Dickens and Woodcock's criticism of Orwell), but concludes by softening that criticism in light of the *fact* that the "object" of *Past and Present* is "a well-conducted scheme of emigration" (Trela 144). It is arguably not. The critic was closer to the mark with his first observation. *Past and Present* conveys the idea of practical activity; it is just not clear of what kind it ought to be. Carlyle is not disingenuous when he says that the "Ideal always has to grow in the Real" (*Past* 63). Only he represents the Ideal and the Real without forcing them into a dialectical confrontation: a confrontation which would undermine the Gospel of Work and the business of reform.

Carlyle and Industrialism

Ultimate genuine Aristocracy

Outside of the culture / society dichotomy is Carlyle's acceptance of industrialism. Production was part of Victorian culture. Though Carlyle condemns uncontrolled mechanization and the "proposition of utility as the source of value" (Williams, *Culture* 63), and even though his almost Manichaeian worldview divides phenomena into the consummate blessed and the pragmatically reformable, he does not assume a permanent rift between 'cultivation and civilization.' But he never mixes spiritual, Ideal values together with an industrialist, entrepreneurial idea of society in such a way as to dialectically oppose them, which I argue is in fact to segregate them. Carlyle reads points of continuity between creativity and industrial expansion and even between *homo faber* and *homo economicus*. Society had only to restore the proper balance between the spiritual and the material, to ordain hieratic leaders, and to channel individual interests into the interests of the nation. The role of government was to ensure the practice of individual morality. At the bottom of Carlyle's thought is the idea that *complete* human beings change institutions and not vice versa. With only an improvement of the "moral-sense," Plugson of Undershot can fulfill his destined role in the "Ultimate genuine Aristocracy" (*Past* 193-4). The anti-capitalism of Carlyle and most of early nineteenth-century social consciousness is marked and profound, but it is in response to particular crises thought repairable through an awakened moral sense; it is not a condemnation of industrialization, but of the fetishization of industry into an isolated activity independent of all 'cultural' activity and, in turn, into a business mentality. Still, Lukács is right to argue that there are two Carlyles: one who denies it is "possible to be human in bourgeois society," who maintains that "what morality we have takes the shape of Ambition" ("Signs" 243), and the other who asserts that "man as he exists is opposed without mediation . . . to this non-existence of the human" (*History* 190), who claims that people have never been guided by "Profit and loss, for any visible, finite, object; but always feel some invisible and infinite one" ("Signs" 235).

Contrasting it to Dilettantism, Carlyle welcomes Mammonism, Plugson, "anything we are in earnest about . . . were it even work at making money" (*Past* 148). His attitude towards Mammonism explains why he could become so popular a figure in bourgeois England. Mammonism is attuned to nature insofar as it embraces work, needing only to augment its instincts with selflessness or a national consciousness in order to fall into "the inflexible Course of Things" (*Past* 290). Because he argues that industry is compatible with universal law, Carlyle presses himself into thinking that it would not need to be regulated by human law. It is "above all by their own shrewd sense [that the Captains of Industry will be] kept in perpetual communion with the fact of things, [and] will assuredly reform themselves" (*Past* 179). Still, at the same time that Carlyle would allow industry the freedom to balance morality and profit, he would introduce a "law-precept" because it had failed to do just that (*Past* 208). But by making the Captains of Industry the heroes of *Past and Present*, "virtually the Captains of the World" (*Past* 268), and relegating blame for the condition of England to a temporary moral failure, Carlyle ultimately confirms free enterprise. In the long run, that is, those who control the industrial development of England will enroll themselves into the 'Course of Things.'

Labourers must also participate in this course, but would be "forced to find out the right path, and to walk thereon" (*Past* 211-12). Carlyle is modernizing and totalizing Calvinism: taking it out of a denominational context, resituating it on class lines, and rebuilding it as to vehemently shepherd a national flock. Labourers only lack the technology unique to the new 'greater Elect,' the Captains of Industry, to find their "task set by God" and a "definite field in which to work," Weber's summation of the 'calling' (*Protestant* 29). Commentators from Froude onward have outlined Carlyle's lingering Calvinism, but the ideas of a predestined social function and a vanguard of industrial captains proceed from it, St. Simonism, German Idealism, and, less abstractly, nationalism and the desire to defend the industrial grade.

This is not to say that Carlyle's acceptance of industry entrains a capitulation to the central arguments of political economy. He treats the yoking of it to utilitarianism as accidental. The validating of their present-day industry and denigrating of the business which surrounds it is

a basic contradiction, rarely approached dialectically, which vitiates the thought of many nineteenth-century socially-conscious writers and will be taken up in the next chapter. For Carlyle, utilitarianism, an economically centred, rationalized mode of social functioning, supplants the normative mode of society, albeit industrial. A proper society refuses to treat economic laws in isolation from value-giving imperatives. For Carlyle this means that the relations of production, economically centered relations, are necessarily reified by a value-giving society (or cosmos). His argument with economic reasoning was that it erases all paternalistic, feudalistic, and moralistic relations within inevitable social hierarchies.

The reformist discourse of *Past and Present* could illustrate that material impulses alone do not dictate behaviour and, equally, that political economy cannot resolve crises in day-to-day relations. But the first priority for Carlyle is always to refer to absolute laws, inevitable hierarchies, because the contest in the nineteenth century between capitalism and 'culture' was being waged in terms of final truths. 'Freedom,' as Kenneth Burke confirms, was appropriated by early capitalists as "the God term" (God being wholly free) and used synonymously with "humanism, laissez-faire, free markets, price systems, industrialism, [and] capitalism" (350-54). Carlyle is so adamant to banish laissez-faire that he correlates all principles of freedom to "Atheism" and economic individualism. Thus, utilitarianism replaces an inflexible moral authority setting universal interests as its goal with an egotistical "freedom": the "'Liberty to die by starvation'" (*Past* 211). Political economy in any form circumscribes or rewrites relationships outside of any absolute standard and into (theoretically) variable relationships based on the relativity of exchange value, but it does not override the idea of 'final knowledge.' It claims that all relationships, all phenomena, have a functional basis or at least can be explained in terms of instrumentality (or a lack thereof). The unknown, the difficult, and the unsystematic become problems to be resolved through rationality, science, and the finalizability of knowledge. As political economy proceeds, vitalistic concepts of a superadded life force are explained away in 'positive' terms (positivism), and spiritual values, art, and the humanities are relegated

(notwithstanding that they relegate themselves, at least in public declarations) to the useless, superficial end of a bourgeois-artist split.

Political economy asserts that the 'rational impulses' of *homo economicus* are the final laws governing human behaviour. A society ruled by the precepts of political economy is no less based on absolutism than Carlyle's ideal society, but it "alters the base of domination by gradually replacing personal dependence . . . with dependence on the 'objective order of things'" (Marcuse, *One* 144) as established by the 'rational' economic laws of a free market. I quote Marcuse because his work shows how industrial rationality and social theory merge into a fixed and final "instrumentalist horizon of thought." It immediately follows that "rationality is a political process" (*One* 165, 168).

Carlyle and Rationalism

*This is not Theology,
this is Arithmetic.*

Carlyle attacks skeptical-rationalism with a vengeance. It fosters solipsism, self-centredness, materialism, secularism, liberalism, the "din of triumphant Law-logic" (*Past* 15), and contractionalist thought (or the "rationalistic tendency to hypostatize society" [Rosenberg, *Seventh* 55]). Rationalism emphasizes a clear division between reason and intuition, the objective and subjective, thought and feeling, utility and art, economics and specializations, work and leisure, *etc.* Carlyle understands political economy as the discourse creating the division; that until its widespread acceptance practicality and imagination, facticity and intuition, *etc.*, were not oppositional terms but free to intertwine. The juxtaposition of rational and intuited (or traditional) knowledge is doubly a false opposition because rational knowledge is never purely objective (nor subjective); i.e., it has its tradition (or ideology).

Rationalism is at the root of liberalism, insofar as individuals are said to reach conclusions through independent inquiry (and that no one using rationalism will vary in their conclusions). It rejects empiricism and relying on nature for knowledge: it assumes reason is an independent source of knowledge and the very substance of reality. Its activity is deliberately

directed towards a premeditated end and governed only by that purpose. The Rationalist-liberalist therefore rejects authority that is not its own, tradition, systems of faith, or any other potential impedimenta. It is easy to see why Carlyle would reject it wholesale.

But he does not. Carlyle adopts a discourse of rationality, even as he attempts non-contingent or final knowledge. In his pragmatic 'mode,' where a concession to modern rationalism, to technical advances, might be somewhat expected, he again vindicates it, though distinguishing between the rationalist design of industry and injustice. However, he is more likely to appeal to rationality as a property of the metaphysical. He does not rely on an argument of faith, insisting rather that eternal laws are knowable, if not to the empiricist then to the rationalist. Besides affirming the link between asceticism and rationalism (the irrationality of creatureliness, *etc.*), Carlyle attempts to wrest and rescue the language of rationality from political economy because it was the lingua franca of Enlightened Victorian epistemology. Even though rationality as the pursuit of ends is antithetical to his moralism, all evaluations being equally non-rational, he adopts its logic, its language, and demands to see its evidence. That is, in order to show that rationality is not fixed forever by a stipulated convention as political economy would have it, Carlyle points to the 'Facts' of eternal law, the "practical apex" of hero-worship, the "rational giant" embedded in the Gospel of Work, the "irrational" aspects of Mammonism and the "rational soul of it not yet awakened," and the "Book-Keeping" of the "Mother-Destinies;" he claims that his philosophy "is not Theology, [it] is Arithmetic" (*Past* 39, 171, 207, 190, 229). The examples are so numerous that it is highly unlikely he is merely or always using sarcasm to deflate the pretensions of utilitarianism.

At times, Carlyle takes part in the industrialist's adoption of rationality, insisting that the "immethodic," "waste" and "Disorder," be transformed into the "methodic, regulated . . . obedient and productive" (*Past* 201). That he surrenders the term 'freedom' but subverts political economy's presumption of a privileged affiliation to 'rationality' captures a distinct allegiance to industrial production. He also fights for 'rationality' because the public, and he himself, encouraged by political economy, apotheosize it, paradoxically giving it the status of a

religion. Carlyle's universe and its eternal laws are nothing if not rational. His conquering heroes, national leaders (industrial captains and inventors), governing World-Urge, and vitalistic universal laws assert the rationality of history (despite his belief in its meshed thickness).⁴ In terms of later twentieth-century thought, Carlyle often seems to be plugging into the irrational. But to argue 'might is right' because only a rational universe would give the 'right' strength enough to succeed is not entirely different from a neo-liberalist doctrine which merely substitutes 'market' for 'universe.' For Carlyle, political economy and laissez-faire are temporary glitches in rationality. He saw that modern rationality under utilitarianism meant the marginalization of ethics, irrationality, chaos: that what is is not right. In Marcuse's words, "Contrasted with the fantastic and insane aspects of its rationality, the realm of the irrational becomes the home of the really rational – of the ideas which may 'promote the art of life'" (*One* 247).

Political Economy and Utilitarianism

Victims of a misguided and perverted humanity
(Lord Brougham, 1841, on advocates for factory reform)

Utilitarians, Benthamites, and Political Economists claim a special connection to rationality and its language. Before turning to the Victorians in the next chapter, I want to outline the rise of nineteenth-century economics into prominence and the development of *homo economicus rationale* into the standard measure of human character.

The word 'economy' originally described the management of households. As working relations became rationalized with the shift from feudal to contractual systems, 'economy' came to designate public, non-personal exchange systems. At that time, "economy emerged as a distinct discourse that could become the foundation for other discourses" (Vanden Bossche 5) and in turn, other non-economic practices (moral, social, and even psychological: capitalism creates its own distinct psychosis). Adam Smith was the first in Britain to adopt and unfold the

⁴Hegel's historiography also challenges the possibility of linear development while simultaneously maintaining "the rational necessary course of the World-Spirit" (10). Both Hegel and Carlyle are trying to dissociate 'progress through process' from 'becoming.'

concept of laissez-faire from French Physiocrats.⁵ In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Smith represents the division of labour as a principle of social cooperation, whether it occurs on the factory floor or in the market place. Though Smith was a moralist, his economic theory posits a self-sufficient system: labour competes to sell itself and merchants compete to sell goods in a self-regulating system. Liberals would later object to any external, social or political, interference in the realm of the economic. It was thought that such a self-enclosed, self-adjusting system would develop its own ethics and values (no one promoting laissez-faire economics ever argued that it was value-free) according to the laws of supply and demand, private property, and market rationality.

Yet immediately after economic science proposed that the market was best left isolated, utilitarian and Benthamite rationalism treated it as having greater moral and social reach. Political economy maintained its ethical laws need only be generated and organized from within. But there can be no ethical law with 'market rationality,' the idea that minimizing the influence of non-market factors in exchange systems will ensure the system operates with maximum rationality (efficiency in the pursuit of ends). Utilitarianism inferred this and then stepped in to say that if society wished to be rational, economic law must govern social and moral law.

Utilitarianism is an economized moral theory. Every action is judged by its consequence and no action is ever right or wrong in itself. Consequences are judged by their ability to bring about the greatest happiness to the greatest number, a principle adopted from political economy's 'market rationality.' A free market is said to produce the most rational effects, the maximum of utility. Alasdair MacIntyre argues that "Bentham did not flinch from the notion that he *was* assigning a new status to moral rules" (60). To integrate the ideas that an action ought to be judged by its end, if it maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain, and that 'freedom' (the absence of regulation) is essential to maximization with the idea of the greatest happiness of the greatest number is to impose specific, class-driven interests on the aggregate. Every class represents its

⁵At this point my interest in Smith and early economic theory is only with the growth and influence of an economic epistemology.

interests as the common interest, the rational interest. The class which most successfully imposes its rationality on the epistemological habits of the other classes becomes the ruling class. By representing economic theory as moral theory, conflating economics and ethics, middle-class liberals, the rising economic power in the nineteenth century, could shape a unitary notion of morality that would require all of society to collaborate in the pursuit of its own ends. That is, the Bourgeois could organize a social theory basically declaring that ascendancy independently reached needs no justification (though state laws ensure cooperation from the rest of society). The liberalist assumption of or insistence on a harmony of interests, an essential sameness, is the effect of an initial spirit of competitiveness. Laissez-faire precedes and is the foundation of the greatest happiness principle. Other moral systems were thought to be vitiated by superstitions, a lack of self-dependency, unpredictability, and incalculability. The idea of right and wrong in the nineteenth century slid into that of efficiency, of the productive and unproductive, but with all the discursive authority of a moral imperative coupled with the bourgeois assertion of a special, technical claim to rationality.

Carlyle understood utilitarianism was “sanctioned by able computations of Profit and Loss” (*Past* 139). He also understood that behind its rationalism lay the idea of ‘Progress.’ He is among a select few who, if inconsistently, could distinguish between ‘Progress’ as an ideology and ‘Becoming’ as a philosophy. That he read the modern day notion of Hell as “Not succeeding, of not making money, fame, or some other figure in the world” (*Past* 148) is in some ways simply theological and spiritual and in some other ways simply traditional (lamenting that business, advertising, and profit-seeking had replaced craft, quality, and care). In still another way, however, he is resisting the fetishization of economics and ‘Progress.’ But Carlyle endorses industrial progress almost as urgently as he demands entelechy. He combines various strands of Victorian developmentalist belief with a refusal to passively accept the visible direction of the development. But he does not dialectically oppose his Gospel of Work to his negotiation with labour. In other words, Carlyle stands silently – and the irony cannot be missed

– at a point where Qualification rudely interrupts the even flow of Final Knowledge: a break, signally, between labour and Work.

Carlyle and the Rhetoric of Work

It is not unusual for critics to refer to Carlyle's style as dense, "grotesquely inflated" (Levine 47), deliberately unconventional, circuitous, or "tantrum prose" (Frye 328): it is all that and more. His prose dramatizes an attack on political economy and its language of instrumental rationality and utility (methodical, systematic, impersonal, exact, non-emotional, and 'functional' diction). In order to antagonize the language of rationality he combines the topoi, tropes, and conventions of the sermon, the romance, and the epic. Carlyle's style also simulates good Work; it is the language of action and creation as opposed to rule-governed, mechanical production. When he speaks against "jargon" he is pointing to technical and business language and when he speaks against "ornamental" prose he is pointing to commercialism and the discourses of advertising. Both Carlyle and Orwell call for "earnest" speech and both find political significance in the use of language. Carlyle says, self-consciously of course, the "kind of Speech in a man betokens the kind of Action you will get from him" (*Past* 153). As historians, Orwell and Carlyle are conspicuously anti-scientific, but rather moralistic, prophetic, and opinionated. The comparison between the two writers, however, ought not to be taken too far. In speaking on work, Carlyle's language also picks up all the corollaries of Carlylean Work, creating authoritative, violent, religious, and universal tones which can be perceived in Orwell but are mitigated by his demotic idiom and his deferment to specificity and variability, the struggle with the absolute declaration.

Carlyle's language and the attitude it conveys remain fairly consistent as he shifts from lambasting concrete labour to glorifying abstract Work, though a more substantial change in tone occurs when he moves from that heightened discourse to a discourse which negotiates labour and speaks on behalf of, not to the working class. Still, the change even then is hardly dramatic or unmistakable. Orwell's style heavily favours a nitty-gritty discussion of labour: he very rarely adopts an elevated, intransitive Work discourse even when he speaks as a participant and generalizes about the Work and culture of the working class. The exact inverse situation holds

true in Carlyle's case. Carlyle, and the same goes for Ruskin, is somewhat incapable of writing guarded, even-keeled, detached, and non-universalizing prose. He rarely adopts the subjunctive mood or conditional tense even when discussing economic policy. (For example, he does not say 'emigration would resolve the problem of a labour surplus.') Rather he sticks to the imperative and descriptive: "Canadian Forests stand unfelled, boundless Plains and Prairies unbroken with the plough" ("Chartism" 237). The exaggerated use of capitalization (exaggerated in a time when the upper case was used frequently), italicized words, superlatives, ("feeblest, trivialest" [*Past* 159]), inculcation, accusation, and the compounded Biblical references keep his rhetoric at an exhaustingly intense pitch. His performative utterances, verbal nouns, exclamatory phrases, alliterative diction, and repetitious rhythms – "Dalai-Lamaism, even Dalai-Lamaism, one rejoices to discover, may be worth its victuals" ("Chartism" 205) – underline his defence of action (or motion) and his belief that writing itself, his job, is Work. His distrust of statistics and logic, when it isn't explicit, emerges in his use of coinage, narrative, and chaotic syntax. The convoluted sentence construction acts as if to continuously interrupt and redirect cause and effect sequences and reasoning. I have already shown that Carlyle contradicts these appeals to the language of Work by referencing a "rational giant" and the "practical apex" of hero-worshipping – "This is not theology, this is Arithmetic" (*Past* 171, 39, 229). But even when he borrows the antiseptic or scientific terminology of calm consideration he does not become coolly analytical. Rather, he maintains the unabashedly dogmatic, pigheaded, passionate, explosive, original-for-its-own-sake, and meticulous (but never mechanical) craftsmanship of the artisan.

Some of the more characteristic examples of Carlylese include constant hypostatizing, personifying, and labeling. As with Orwell, Carlyle favours things over words. If Orwell tries to achieve the status of a tangible thing in his prose – through precision, clarity, and directness – Carlyle does the same through the density of his prose, as if in its entanglements his prose collects weight and becomes material. Personified – and it's fair to assume that Carlyle would think of his writing as a kind of character who has mass and achieves action – *Past and Present*, for example, would be a bully:

How one loves to see the burly figure of him, this thick-skinned, seemingly opaque, perhaps sulky, almost stupid Man of Practice, pitted against some light adroit Man of Theory . . . The cloudy-browed, thick-soled, opaque Practicality, with no logic-utterance, in silence mainly, with here and there a low grunt or growl, has in him what transcends all logic-utterance: a Congruity with the Unuttered. (160-161)

Carlyle's bully, his Mr. Bull, might be illiterate and silent whereas *Past and Present* personified would be articulate to the point of splitting eardrums, but Carlyle flirts self-consciously with stupidity in the bald, bulldozing directness and aplomb of his discourse. Such a pose is not self-deprecating when one's "stupidity is wiser than their [politicians', reformers' *et al*] wisdom" (162). At the same time, Carlyle without doubt praises the absolute moron, the "ox" who never complains about working conditions, because the "slow" man is a prerequisite for a return to feudalistic hierarchies and elites. One of the consequences of bringing the serf – the man "insensible to logic" (163) – back to life is that the serf, and by extension the working class, does not negotiate his, or its, labour. Carlyle writes archaically in order to downplay the need for economic negotiation: *Past and Present*, then, lords above the mute English workingman.

The authority in Carlyle's voice might act as a reminder that Carlyle's discourse is not so much playful as it is 'Workful.' Today we tend to associate play with spontaneity, creativity, freedom, and innovation while we associate work with routine and circumscribed activity. But for Carlyle, Work represents what we today call 'play,' with the added emphasis on the rules involved. In fact, Work for him is 'playful,' and his style is fittingly playful, in Johan Huizinga's sense of the word: spontaneous but disciplined, creative but heavily structured, and, moreover, indicative of a kind of contest or a challenge. Carlylean Work corresponds to Huizinga's 'play' insofar as it accommodates rules and subordination on the one hand and (artisanal) autonomy, stubbornness, independence, and a challenge to utilitarian (or bourgeois) order on the other.

Carlyle's rejection of the utilitarian fetish for mechanical structures may have led him to Gospelize work, but it is nonetheless remarkable that he writes about Work in such an abstract manner. Carlyle's preference for concrete things does not extend into his representation of

actual work. Statistics may lack 'soul,' but work is never an intransitive experience: one always works at something. Carlyle ignores the context, content, and effects of work – "Work, and therein have wellbeing" – as he glorifies it; that is, when directly appealing to the working classes to keep on working and to deny the injustice they suffer. When he addresses the middle class, Utilitarians, and Unworking Aristocracy, the intransitive mood hardens into vivid descriptions of what work had in fact become (what I call 'labour'). At that point Carlyle explodes upon those same injustices. Elaine Scarry argues that language expressing the abstract comes easily, that the abstract accommodates language, whereas language expressing the concrete and immediate "can seem inappropriately quick and cavalier" (3). It is possible, I would think, for the exact opposite to be true. A contract between an employer and an employee, suffused in legalese, is hardly 'quick.' However, language expressing the abstract does come easier to at least Carlyle who needed to add metaphysical ideals to material ideas in order to introduce an economic materialism that would accommodate the unshakeable hierarchy and order of feudalism. He could not have argued for a return to feudalistic systems by referring to pragmatism or the finer points of economic history.

Even so, Carlyle conspicuously minimizes the language of labour, the specific and almost pedantic language of the reformer. He adopts the rhetoric of Work when addressing the working class. He shifts that discourse to one that berates the upper and middle classes when speaking on what they have done to Work – but the language of Work is still active at these points. When discussing economics – emigration and education policies, wages, Corn laws – he does not shift to the language of economics as might be expected. It is possible to detect a slight decrease in the impulsiveness of his diction, but he certainly does not resort to numbers, hard facts, or the political tones we hear in Orwell when he discusses everyday life from an observer's perspective. Carlyle, the Writer / Worker, is permanently a participant. This is not to say that a shift in attitude or subject matter is in any way less dramatic than in Orwell, but only that Carlyle, to a much greater extent than Orwell, does not struggle with his absolutism, that he does not see it as being at odds with his economic and social mandate. He was more at home in the

language of Work than the language of labour because the everyday life he envisioned includes the systems of absolutism (absolute authority, order, and so forth) that were amenable to his language of Work.

Victorian Work

Introduction

Although coupled with the purportedly autonomous system of political economy, rationalist economics offered itself to nineteenth-century society as an organizing principle. The basic themes of *The Wealth of Nations* – the division of labour (most importantly between work and the home), “self-love” as the primary motive power, liberty, and the sanction of an “invisible hand” – have applications that reach far beyond the market. Smith, as I have said, does not sever economics from other branches of social philosophy or treat questions of exchange solely on the basis of rationalized calculation. But with the ascension of market culture in the nineteenth century and the concurrent emergence of a new societal consciousness, agents of economism (the exaggerated application of economic reasoning to all areas of thought) moved to define society in accordance with the principles of rationalist self-interest. The urban, modern social structure was conceived as a byproduct of inviolable economic laws.

The introduction of economics as a model of (for) social behaviour meant more than freedom of contract, minimum taxation and tariff, and a rationale for individualism, competition, and acquisitiveness: more than the policies of the Manchester School. Economism is the idiom of maximizing. In terms of production, industry is further rationalized into a linear, accountable process of cost and profit, input and output. The purely economic organization of manufacturing fragments the work process, reduces workers’ control over it, and alters the meaning of work from being a dynamic process tied to non-economic factors (loyalties, intrinsic satisfactions) to revolving around the calculation of quantifiable, static objects (the workers, their output, and their pay). Economism reaches politics as a liberalism shored up by the paradoxically twin values of science and freedom. John Locke’s marriage of protected property (land) and individuality is overwhelmingly confirmed. In the juridical realm, it means laws to protect economic action and property. But the deepest effect of economism occurs by way of a template for society, restricting consciousness, at the very least, to the contours of rationalist values. The

cultural work of rationalism cannot be underestimated, though it is not as easily quantifiable as paid labour. Public character is expected to conform to the logic of an instrumentalist practice, the systematic pursuit of self-advantage that respects others only in competition or function. Instead of acting the same way economically as in normative relations, the assumption and expectation of pre-capitalist economics, *homo economicus* is presumed to rationalize as a matter of course. By way of its extension beyond economics, 'rationalism' (maximizing efficiency in the pursuit of maximized ends) formed Victorian 'reason' (common sense). Raymond Williams shows that the Victorians carved out a new use for **rationality** to distinguish it completely and forever from *emotion* and *feeling* (*Keywords* 213). Benthamism or utilitarianism were only the most pronounced arrangements of economics circulating as a widespread social philosophy.

The advocates of an economic culture did not assume, however, that all society was rational. Economics was a first-order principle, but not all activity was categorized under purposeful logic and maximized utility. Instead, economic thought reinforced a system of oppositions under a rubric of rationalisms and non-rationalisms. Under the aegis of economism, divisions were hardened between:

cognition/feeling objective/subjective	business/friendship logic/spirit	public/private active/passive
things/words numbers/words	science/art Science/Humanities	hard/soft male/female
labour/Work paid time/free time ¹	applied science/ideas inventions/abstractions	fact/opinion model/story

The immediate consequence of dividing the world into disjunctive, either / or indices is that it restricts any interaction between the concepts (such as friendly business). Limiting the imagination to strict alternatives also hypostatizes both ends of the opposition. The result is the strict division of 'sides' – a masculine side and a feminine side – which only ratifies non-variable, non-dialectical constructions of thought. Society emerges as being composed of static

¹In *Great Expectations* (1860-1), Wemmick has a drawbridge separating his home from the world of work.

types, even if the individual subject performs more than one role. To make final the separation between rationalist and non-rationalist constructs is also to place a premium on the former. This is evidenced in part by the emotional clampdown for which the Victorian period is uniquely famed. English cultural socialism was not determined by economism (except as a reaction to it) and though affected by a binary ideology, placed its stock in non-rationalism.

'Rationalism' is an empty, floating signifier: a *rationalization*. Rational choice theorists today argue that individuated agents calculate utility in order to maximize if not the possession of material goods, then social status (as in Veblen's conspicuous consumption) or something else. One can always be said to be 'after something,' to be motivated by self-interest, if evidence is selected after the fact and in accordance with elastic definitions. That is the point of rationalist economics: to show that self-interested gain is the only motivation and that society exists or must exist in order to organize gain. The economic estimation of rationalism is a self-validating principle which is only internally consistent. Genocide can be reconciled with rationalism if it is said to be calculated in order to maximize results. Carlyle understands that the "counting-up and estimating [of] men's motives [as] adjustments of Profit and Loss, to guide them to their true advantage" is untenable because "those same 'motives' are so innumerable, and so variable in every individual, that no really useful conclusion can ever be drawn from their enumeration" ("Signs" 234). Economism, on the other hand, associates rationalism only with maximizing self-interest, acting *for* and *by* oneself, and splitting formal from substantial rationality so that the pursuit of an end might be named rational even if the end is not.

The construction of *homo economicus*, man as maximalist, as M. H. Dobb pointed out in 1937, is "a description of how the system worked *ipso facto* [which] became a presumption as to how it should be allowed to work" (quoted in Bellamy 43). By evolving *homo economicus* into dominance and marginalizing non-rationalized behaviour, nineteenth-century economism restricted the imaginative order. It is that restriction which, by and large, the socially conscious movement in Victorian writing challenges. But not all writers who disagree with the description of how the system works (the definition of man as a self-interested maximalist) disagree that the

system should be allowed to work that way. The fine, untrodden line between the denial of rationalism's content and effects and the acceptance or negotiation of its form and activities is a permutation of the specifically English socialism that separates Work and labour and of the paradox which locates a transcendental order in work. The anti-utilitarian literature of the Victorian period continues to assign a special knowledge of Work to the working class and reserve the world of labour and economic negotiation for itself, the middle class. Following Carlyle, it observes two Gospels of Work: a middle-class Gospel of ascendancy through thrift, perseverance, and effort (Carlyle's obstinacy) and a working-class Gospel of endurance (Carlyle's subordination). But it also separates representations of middle-class moral Work, and its attending values, from the certification of that same class' own unique access to economic acumen and its business or industrial imperatives. In this chapter, I am interested in the way in which the incursion of rationalism and the spread of economic theory into a form of social engineering was recognized, resisted (especially against representations of *homo faber*), and endorsed.

The Reaction to Economism (or The Anti-Utilitarian Tradition)

Married! married!! The ignorance of the first principles of Political Economy
Dickens *The Chimes*

Dickens's *The Chimes* (1844) directly responds to economism, specifically a June 1844 review of *A Christmas Carol* (1843) in *The Westminster Review*. The critic asked, "who went without turkey and punch in order that Bob Cratchit might get them – for unless there were turkeys and punch in surplus, someone must go without" (quoted in Russell, *Novelist* 13). In *The Chimes*, Mr. Filer reprimands Trotty Veck for eating tripe, "the least economical . . . article of consumption," by saying, "You snatch your tripe . . . out of the mouths of widows and orphans" (100, 101). In concert, the Benthamite Filer, the unnamed conservative (who repeats that the "good old times" were vastly superior to anything "now-a-days"), and Alderman Cute (who would jail the suicidal and dispossessed) pessimistically allot every action to a value and seek a predictable regularity in behaviour. Filer's Gradgrindery, his facts and Malthusian logic, most

obviously exemplifies the genre of hard, utilitarian rationalism. But nearly every righteous, rigid, all-knowing would-be-disciplinarian in Dickens's worlds borrows something from the rationalism of the age.

In contrast to characters claiming systematic knowledge are self-effacing doers such as Little Dorrit and Esther Summerson. Will Fern and Stephen Blackpool are Carlylean workers trying to realize themselves against, respectively, Do-Nothingism and Mammonism: ultimately against societies built upon utilitarian rationalism. But by juxtaposing Joseph Bowley's false Carlylese, his call to "feel the Dignity of Labour" and "exercise your self-denial" (*Chimes* 111), to Will Fern's readiness and gratitude for genuine paternalism, Dickens gestures that it is only the lack of sincerity in work relations which precludes worker 'realization' and warrants scrutiny. He parodies what at other times he promotes (the Dignity of Labour and exercising of self-control) because his invective is almost uniformly directed at self-absorbed and delusional manipulations of evidently fine economic systems. Dickens's insistence on "a change of spirit rather than a change of structure" (Orwell, *CEJL* 1: 427), what Orwell and so many others find objectionable, expresses a liberal nostalgia for a 'moral economy,' albeit now capitalist. The line between liberalism and conservatism is here quite thin. G. B. Shaw points out that Dickens "adopts the idealized Toryism of Carlyle and Ruskin, in which the aristocracy are the masters and superiors of the people" ("Hard" 338). In its treatment of the working class, the anti-utilitarian tradition is as conservative and reactionary as it is liberal and bourgeois.

Dickens, in other words, does not turn a blind eye to the propagation of Economic Man, but his ideal role for the working class, to Work, is not the same role that reformers / leaders are to have, which is to control the conditions of labour. Shaw continues to observe that, "Nowhere does he appeal to the working classes to take their fate into their own hands and try the democratic plan" ("Hard" 338). In *Hard Times* (1854), it is a variation of the working class, the circus folk unaffected by the world of labour, who know about, who live, who have *mastered*, and who can impart the value of non-rationalism. The circus members are not represented as 'working class' by the standards of labour. They are not seen to earn wages or do not make a

living in industrial conditions; but they are working class insofar as they belong to a class. Sharing the carnivalesque camaraderie of Orwell's bistro workers, and the simple 'decency' of all his workers, they have special insights into the world of non-rational Work. Again, that knowledge of Work, that working-class endowment of an anti-utilitarian consciousness, acts as if to preclude an economic consciousness. When the middle class demonstrates its anti-utilitarianism, it does not forgo economic knowledge or activity – it just compartmentalizes them.

From within the circus tent, with their knowledge, economism, the view that "the whole social system is a question of self-interest" (218), appears as completely unnatural, an insufficient summary of human vitality, and an attempt to dull the moral imagination. Igor Webb, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and many, many others criticize Dickens for making the circus literally and figuratively peripheral to the factory, making play and work or fancy and fact unrelated items (Webb 96; Himmelfarb 477). The structure and central metaphor of the book, however, is somewhat misleading. If the failing of Coketown is an all-intrusive utilitarianism, Dickens is probably not suggesting that spontaneity has its time and place. Rather, he represents play as a de-homogenizing supplement to rationalist organizations and thought. In any case, Sleary's circus shows up on "the neutral ground upon the outskirts of town, which was neither town nor country" (8), and it is Coketown's rationalists who insist on severing it from their turf. Gradgrind tells Sissy that if she comes with him, "it is understood that you communicate no more with any of your friends who are here present" (29). Dickens's comment that Mr. Gradgrind only "overdoes" "reason," that "by dint of his going his way and my going mine, we shall meet at last in some halfway house" (*Letters* 354), is not backsliding. As in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) before it and *Howards End* (1910) after it, there is a sense in *Hard Times* that the circus and the Utilitarians need to *only connect* in order to facilitate real social restructuring. As it is overrun with rationalist thought, Coketown needs to connect with circus thought.

The connection between the "wisdom of the Heart" and the "wisdom of the Head," however, which Gradgrind comes to see as the source of true value (170), is never written in the

terms of a potential conflict. Though *caritas* and efficiency are set up as hard alternatives to each other – “the Good Samaritan was a Bad Economist” – the conflation of moral decency and pragmatic expediency, apparently, would proceed without ripples. Moralism and pragmatism are effectively compartmentalized. The values associated with Sissy Jupe are not in the end in conflict with or antithetical to Gradgrindery, but rather amenable to it and vice versa. The easy unity of an oppositional set of values which do not fully cohere, as with the non-conflict between Work and labour, gives way to or is symptomatic of self-sufficient moralism. Even in *Hard Times*, a novel which perhaps more than any other in Dickens’s canon demonstrates the effects of systems and isms on subjectivity, the galvanizing of the final morality of man is simply a matter of awakening to instinct and holding the once ubiquitous systems, systemization itself, in abeyance.

Dickens also entreats for compromise when regarding political economy, finding it to be “a mere skeleton unless it has a little human covering and filling out” (“On Strike” 381). In *Dombey and Son* (1848), a story treating finance as *Hard Times* treats industry, Mr. Dombey is to be forgiven for his monomania because “vices are sometimes only virtues carried to excess” (914). Industry is not censured in *Hard Times*, only the seepage of work rationalization into social relations (what Lukács calls reification) and the repulsive aesthetic residue of production. Stephen’s problems arise from his wife and his union, not his job. By ignoring the process of industrial production in his most industrial novel, Dickens argues the non-relationship between industrial (rationalized) work and the widespread instrumentalizing or rationalizing of human relations which he despises. Having fallen into the pit, when Stephen does address working conditions, not his own but mining conditions, he downplays any potential conflict between morality and economy which would arise by pointing his finger at rationalist industry. He had read about,

as onny one might read, fro’ the men that works in pits, in which they ha’ pray’n and pray’n the lawmakers for Christ’s sake not to let their work be murder to ‘em, but to spare ‘em for th’ wives and children that they loves as well as gentlefolk loves theirs.

When it were in work, it killed wi'out need; when 'tis let alone, it kills wi'out need. See how we die an' no need, one way an' another – in a muddle – every day.

Amazingly, for someone like Bounderby is responsible for and rich because of the mine, he says his piece “without any anger against any one. Merely as the truth” (207). Even Dickens's ‘pragmatism’ tends to or attempts to devoid itself of political content.

Dickens writes for the individual underdog and against unionism, equating unionism and utilitarianism as equally dangerous to human relationships. He correlates rationalist economics and amorality, but also confirms that industrial interests are collected, national interests: that the “interests” of masters, men and the entire nation “must be understood as identical” (“On Strike” 381). With Gaskell, Disraeli, Eliot, and Kingsley he treats industry, commerce, and ambition ambiguously, as either vulgar or noble depending on the motivation, the degree of self-interest or goodwill behind the activity. They all fashion a social ethic which discourages egotism to be compatible with work ethics, career ethics, and progress ethics which quietly elevate individuals into prosperity. Myopic rationalism and industrialism are censured but the alternative validation of traditional morality stays clear of the imperative to produce. Discourses of Work (or anti-utilitarianism) and labour are altered in order to keep moral issues removed from the world of industry, the world that enabled the ascendancy of the middle class. Without a hard division between economic and ‘human’ values, labour and the imaginative (decontextualized) realm of Work, the ensuing dialectics would topple both the appeal to pragmatism and moralism.



The readiness to see a non-affinity between business, the rationalization of human relations, and industrial production, the rationalization of work, testifies not only to a wall between moral and pragmatic investigation but also to a delight in modern inventions. The classic formula for the Victorian novel that involved itself with the ‘Condition of England question’ recognizes business as an anti-social activity per se, but accepts that the social effects of industry depend upon the state of the individual factory. Industry itself was exonerated and removed from the reproduction of human relationships and character. It is not the industrial

mode or the subsequent relations of production which lead to John Barton's 'monsterish' brutality, for example, but ultimately a cognitive "misunderstanding." In *Mary Barton* (1848), the refusal of unions to accept and a "want of inclination" of capitalists (Mr. Carson) to demonstrate the parallel interests between the classes, or the law of supply and demand, suffice to explain the antagonism between employee and employer. The failure lies in not teaching the laws of political economy (which is precisely Gaskell's project, despite her claim in the "Preface" not to know those laws). The failure to communicate circles back to a lack of understanding and brotherliness. It is also important to note that John Barton has a first-rate attitude towards Work but becomes disoriented and violent when he attempts to approach issues surrounding his own labour.

On the one hand, the assertion that human (moral, social) relations will remain fluid, free, and beyond instrumentalist rationality regardless of economic roles is a prescription to keep the systems of *homo economicus* from overwhelming all aspects of life (in and out of the factory). On the other hand, with that assertion the writer denies social conditioning, neglects to situate the roles which do exist, and sustains the assumption that there are universal wisdoms and collective interests behind the profit motive. But from dislocating class issues it does not follow that Gaskell, for example, was insensitive to the problems of industry. In *North and South* (1855), Thornton awakes to the need for employers to transcend the cash-nexus, but also concedes that strikes are an inherent feature of industrialism. In *Cranford* (1853), Gaskell turns entirely against political economy, striking out at its principles of maximization and self-interest. Economic relations in the community of females, or of 'female principles,' run on mutual respect, moderate ambition, and the pursuit of *modest* happiness. Financial exchanges defy the laws of political economy, undermining Smith's famous definition of society. Smith wrote:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love. (*Wealth* 27)

Miss Matty's teashop provides subsistence and satisfaction, despite the fact that she gives away goods and refuses to compete with Mr. Johnson (who then sends her clients). In light of the trust she shows the coal men by not weighing their deliveries, they give her excess amounts. (Mary's constantly suspicious father is skimmed of a thousand pounds per year.) Men, but specifically political economists, have been removed from Gaskell's utopia. Still, it is a utopia and the practical problems surrounding the rationalization of work which Gaskell tackles in *North and South* remain as unrepresentable as the business which undoubtedly surrounds Sleary's circus. The finality of the moral act is not represented as if in conflict with pragmatism, or with the economic society in general, but besides it, removed from it, or beyond it.

Even when Gaskell apologizes for political economy, she is not its publicist as is Harriet Martineau. Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1834) judge all social events from an economic viewpoint. She didactically tells the working class to resign itself to the economic laws of supply and demand, wages, rent, scarcity, and hardship. According to Malthusian logic, governmental or philanthropic interference in the market produces only additional suffering for all. She has what Karl Polanyi calls a "mystical readiness to accept the social consequences of economic improvement, whatever they might be" (33). She thinks in terms of a visual rationality that considers productivity to be a real value in itself, sure to absolve any injudicious side effect. Her work is extreme, but characterizing unions as parasites and emphasizing the benefits of working-class obedience to employers, or telling the working class to Work while explaining political economy to the middle class, are common features of the 'industrial novel,' including Gaskell's.

But Gaskell's place in the history of cultural reactions to economism is much closer to J. S. Mill. Mill protests against the one-sidedness of economic reasoning, not that it is intrinsically flawed. In Mill's words, the shortcoming of the utilitarian perspective, of Benthamism, was that it was "cut off" from "many of the most natural and strongest feelings of human nature" ("Bentham" 96). Gaskell's use of the 'only connect' theme in *North and South*, to marry emotional to industrial (and business) values, in some ways dramatizes Mill's critique of

Bentham, which would marry Coleridge to Bentham. Terry Eagleton reads Mill “mechanistically harnessing Coleridge to Bentham” as one of the “palpable instances” of the “Culture and Society tradition,” containing a Romantic, humanist, and “idealist critique of bourgeois social relations, coupled with a consecration of the rights of capital” (*Criticism* 103, 102). Eagleton is largely right, though Mill’s desire to introduce some non-rationalism into Benthamism is much more emotionally wrenching than mechanistic. Mill’s tempering of his uncle’s entire legacy was – though not simply – a tremulous rebellion against his own childhood education. It is interesting that he called Bentham “essentially a boy,” as if intersecting with the values surrounding non-rationalism, such as play, made Mill a grown-up (“Bentham” 125).



Whereas Mill apologizes for utilitarianism, Gaskell primarily backs industry. In *North and South*, industrialists “defy the old limits of possibility.” The text, subsequently, attempts to squeeze out some excitement for those “anticipated triumphs over all inanimate matter,” though these are not its most memorable moments (217). Ruskin and Morris represent a much more radical wing of the anti-utilitarian tradition organized around Work in contradistinction to industry. Their near machine-breaking attitudes protest the reduction of ‘value’ to wages, of aesthetics to utility, and of craft to mechanics. Before critiquing their texts, it must be remembered that they were up against the uber-rationalist / industrialist propaganda of the day. Andrew Ure, for example, in *The Philosophy of Manufacturers* (1835) recommends “training human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work and to identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton” (quoted in Meakin 22). Not unexpectedly, Bentham also carried rationalist doctrine into the matter of work, arguing in *Deontology* (1814-31) that “labour considered in the character of an end, without any view to any thing else, is a sort of desire that seems scarcely to have place in the human breast; yet, if considered in the character of a means . . . Love of labour is a contradiction” (quoted in Thomas 10-11). Ruskin and Morris, effectively in a debate over the nature of work, respond by idealizing Work and vilifying labour.

In a pre-Marxian theory of alienation, Ruskin argues a direct correspondence between seamless production and the enslavement of the producer, the worker. In the *Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) Marx says that “the more refined his product the more crude and misshapen the worker” (*Early* 123). Both writers contrast *homo faber* to the emergent *homo industrialis* in order to target the economic base behind and within the mode of production. Ruskin especially saw industrialism – rationalized, mass production – and market culture as turning workers into the working dead and eliminating the intrinsic values occasioned by Work. Arguing that labourers “have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure” (“Gothic” 149), he pinpoints the defence of degrading work central to political economy and its theory of disutility. Work and selfhood for Ruskin (as well as for Marx and Carlyle) are directly linked: Work effects a process of endless self-conversion, of reworked subjectivity. Not only does each and every worker produce and express difference, but the individual worker avoids personal homogeneity, stagnation, over time. Labour, producing sameness, destroys the opportunity for self-development and autonomy, control and skill. For Ruskin, industrialism also makes the world ugly, which he equates to banishing Truth or God. Art is work which expresses pleasure or freedom in the work process, and a universal sublime. Insofar as art can only be as good as the society in which it is created, Ruskin’s aesthetic theory, he allows Metaphysics and materialism and culture and infrastructure to meet, an enormously important direction for cultural socialism.

But as with Carlyle before him, Ruskin treats Work as a refuge to withdraw into, eliding at those points the reformism, the recognition of class struggle, or the understanding of the government’s role which appears elsewhere in his writing. Instead of seeing a confrontation at the intersection of Work and labour, he posits, as Carlyle does, that “with brave people the work is first and the fee second” (*Crown* 36). The working classes are always those brave people. Vilifying labour, he treats efficiency as a moral concept: efficiency becomes a matter of ‘organic’ hierarchies, elites, and nobility. His conservatism, explicit in his attitudes toward leaders and an inflexible, class and gender based organization of society, essentially confirms a

societal division of labour as opposed to a manufacturing division of labour. If *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3), which in some ways is the Victorian social climber's textbook to art and architecture, guides the middle and upper classes toward admiring the recalcitrance and manly or savage independence of the worker, Ruskin reserves an entirely different discourse for the working class. The first lecture in *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), "Work," was initially a speech addressed to factory workers in Camberwell (who, of course, did not have the benefit of working under paternal guidance). In it Ruskin recounts for them the virtues of Work and of paternal worker-master relations: he does not report on the degradation of work. His jeremiad against the cheap, dishonorable, and unjust character of capitalist organizations, or simply of bourgeois capitalists, is cut off from his direct appeals to the working class to Work. He tells the workers to develop the "character of right childhood," which is to be "Modest . . . Faithful . . . Generous . . . and Cheerful" (53-55). Ruskin, prescribing as much as he is describing working-class culture, demands fair wages, but his noble workers are to "[trust] somebody else to take care of to-morrow" (55). He resounds Carlyle's brand of organicism again and again in his insistence that workers "trust their Captains [and accept] a leader" (23). His concern for the working class often boils down to ratifying *existing* structures of authority, a consequence of preaching Work in the conditions of labour – itself a consequence of dividing Work and labour and separating the message he delivers to the working class from the one he reserves for the rest of society.

As with Orwell, Ruskin values the environment, handwork, and working-class culture. In such uncorrupted simplicity both writers find the last vestige of a resistance to the dominant ethos of capitalism. They both also invest Work with a very male libidinal component. Defining himself as a "Socialist of the most stern sort but also a Tory of the sternest sort" (quoted in Mendilow 181), in any case anti-capitalist and conservative, Ruskin is a natural forerunner to Orwell. Points of connection between the two, as between Carlyle and Orwell, are nonetheless

numbered.² Ruskin's aristocratic longing for an immobile chain of authority gives way to an exaggerated and problematic paternalism that would erase working-class autonomy and the freedom to challenge authority. Orwell thought the attempt to reintroduce feudalistic hierarchies was a back door to fascism. Though not a very powerful criticism to make of an unsuccessful movement circa National Socialism and W.W.II, he was right to be suspicious of the hypostatization of social roles – 'rough men must do rough work, gentlemen must do brainwork' – which Ruskin confirms in nearly all of his major works. Ruskin undoes much of his own speechifying about the value of Work by arguing that

it is of no use to try to conceal this sorrowful fact [the 'division' of labour between rough work / rough men and brainwork / gentlemen] by fine words, and to talk to the workman about the honourableness of manual labour, and the dignity of humanity . . . Rough work, honourable or not, takes the life out of us; and the man who has been heaving clay out of a ditch all day, or driving an express train against the north wind all night, or holding a collier's helm in a gale on a lee shore, or whirling white-hot iron at a furnace mouth, that man is not the same at the end of his day, or night, as one who has been sitting in a quiet room, with everything comfortable around him, reading books, or classing butterflies, or painting pictures. (*Crown* 41)

Ruskin, however, is not arguing his deep-seated belief in hierarchy at the expense of Work. He is, in fact, reminding workers of the inevitably 'tragic,' hard life in store for them. The myth of the hard life arrives part and parcel with the specialized language of Work – a language reserved for the working class and cut off from the language of labour. Orwell also comments on the working-class work that the intellectual class takes for granted, reaching a very different conclusion.



²Points of connection between Ruskin and Orwell are not difficult to find, especially if seen against rationalist politics. Whereas Ruskin and Orwell favour decentralized community organizations, Bentham's centralizing mind offers the panopticon for prisons, industry, workhouses, schools, and hospitals. Ruskin and Orwell would agree that wages ought to be fixed by something akin to custom rather than supply and demand. For Bentham, less centralizing when thinking in terms of economics, the government's role was to remove obstacles to market freedom.

William Morris, working towards a reconciliation between Ruskin (or Carlyle) and Marx, shares a Ruskinian appreciation of the Work of art, the art of Work, and the decline of Work into labour, but would effect change by empowering workers, not by re-empowering a paternal aristocracy. The most important point of divergence from Morris to Ruskin, Carlyle, and the Victorians in general, is that he, more often than not, brings together Work and labour in such a way as to underscore a dialectic. In this way, he is the voice of dissent in English cultural socialism. As Lawrence Lutchmansingh observes,

Carlyle's positive acknowledgement of the worker's contribution to human progress and Ruskin's celebration of work's redemptive moral power were valuable to Morris only up to a point. For their Tory utopianism, complete with worker obedience until the grave and submission to "the law of heaven," still harbored an element of condescension, which would, in the end, render a genuine and revolutionary politics impossible. (12)

The titles of his essays – "Labour and Pleasure versus Labour and Sorrow," "Work as It Is and as It Might Be," "Useful Work versus Useless Toil," "How we Live and How we might Live," or "A Factory as it Might Be" – speak of his vehemently dialectical approach. He cuts through his own eulogizing on Work and production to focus on the ownership of labour and production. He recognizes that "it has become an article of the creed of modern morality that all labour is good in itself – a convenient belief to those who live on the labour of others" ("Useful Work" 287).

Just as Morris desired the objects of Work to have equal parts aesthetic appeal and use-value, he brought together an intrinsically oriented approach to work with an understanding of its context and effects. Carlyle and Ruskin express the Gospel of Work to the working class as an imperative to work but deliver it to the middle and upper classes as a critique of their role in allowing work to become mechanical and dehumanizing. Under Morris, the relative value of work is a sign of its preconditions or the environment it takes place in regardless of which class he addresses.

Discussing the need to "beautify our labour" in "The Lesser Arts" (1877), a lecture originally written for workers, Morris only tells them of "the blessing of labour" as it is

“wrapped up . . . with changes political and social” (236). Later on in the same essay, again discussing Work, he repeats this theme, arguing what Bradley Macdonald calls “a political discourse concerning wide-scale social transformations, iterating the ideal that will become important in his later socialist activism” (109). Morris tells his audience:

I believe that as we have even now partly achieved LIBERTY, so we shall one day achieve EQUALITY, which, and which only, means FRATERNITY, and so have leisure from poverty, and all its griping, sordid cares . . . for surely then we shall be happy in [work], each in his place, no man grudging at another, no one bidden to be any man's *servant*, every one scorning to be any man's *master*: men will then assuredly be happy in their work, and that happiness will assuredly bring forth decorative, noble, *popular* art. (253-54)

This is decidedly not ‘scarcely more than an echo of Ruskin's words’ (235), as Morris humbly declares his essay to be at the beginning of the lecture. Unlike Ruskin, Morris understood that intrinsically valuable work must involve more than just the craftsmanship of a ‘free’ worker. The worker, simply put, in order to take pleasure in the work and thus make a work of art, also has to decide for himself or herself what it is that he or she is going to make.

Conflating Art and Work,³ he thought a socialist future would heal the class-oriented division between art and daily life. In his survey of work and literature, David Meakin distinguishes between two ethics of work: a ‘protestant ethic’ which assumes work is a good in itself or treats it as a moral duty regardless of its form or function – thus reinforcing or upholding the status quo, and another ethic which entails “a different kind of society” (174). Morris, he argues, belongs to the latter category whereas Carlyle and Ruskin belong to the first. Though I cannot agree that Carlyle and Ruskin were subsumed into a neat Protestant ideology or that they did not desire a ‘different kind of society,’ and while I think that Meakin's model bypasses the problem of their pragmatic approaches to labour, he is right to point out the difference between

³His idea of Art pre-echoes Arendt's definition of work. Artistry for Morris is activity which produces goods that remain beyond the immediately consumable products of labour, “leaving to future ages living witness to the existence of deft hands and eager minds” (“Art” 383-84)

the three. Morris, always explicitly reverent towards his 'forefathers,' seems to blatantly challenge them in "The Revival of Handicrafts": "the worst tyrants of the days of violence were but feeble tormentors compared with those Captains of Industry who have taken the pleasure of work away from workmen" (quoted in Grennan 142)).

One of the best expressions of Morris's fundamental grasp of the opposition between Work and labour might be in his long poem, "The Pilgrims of Hope" (1886). It is the only one of Morris's narratives to have a working-class, poverty-stricken hero (Boos 147). In the tale a skilled joiner, radical in his views on socialism, the value of Work, and the changes needed to arrive at a fair distribution of those values, commands the respect of his boss and co-workers but only because he has a private income. When his lawyer dies and his inheritance curiously vanishes – "So I who have worked for my pleasure now work for my utter need" (140) – his boss recognizes his views as subversive and he is fired. Reduced to a commodity looking for work, he is no longer able to idealize it. His financial situation (a matter of privilege, of inheritance, of class) allowed him to interpret and experience Work.

Orwell for one did not see Morris's appreciation of Work, which is as or more pronounced than Carlyle's or Ruskin's, as dependent upon a consideration of labour. He dismissed Morris because Morris's name was so closely associated with medievalism and rural utopianism. Orwell did not think that Morris had come to terms with the rationalized world. But Morris knew that the idea of moving backwards to outdated modes of production was "preposterously futile" ("Hopes" 325)⁴ and put himself 'inside the whale' of modern culture. He might have idealized medieval work, but he was mindful of the improvements to the overall standard of living in the modern world (Grennan 141). In fact, he created his utopian society, the

⁴Even in *News from Nowhere* a small number of machines exist. The function of machinery there is to perform duller tasks so people could dedicate themselves to a *variety* of creative crafts and "practical aesthetics" (58). Morris wrote his utopia as an alternative to Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1887). He was especially offended by Bellamy's idea of a "workers army" and the implication that work is not a pleasure in itself but necessarily burdensome and mechanistic. Interestingly, the American Socialist's idea of a worker's army reappeared with Trotsky in 1920. In his prospectus for a "militarization of labour," Trotsky has "every worker feel himself a soldier of labour, who cannot dispose of himself freely" (quoted in Gramsci *n* 35, 301). In Stalinist Russia, the militarization of labour was made redundant.

society of *News From Nowhere* (1890) – as is common to science fiction and fantasy literature, whether utopian or dystopian (Orwell should have known better) – as a critique of the contemporary world and as a model for the direction of immediate (in this case socialist) politics. Though he understands that Work must be premised by an unanxious life, he also understood that people would be comfortable with about a quarter of the goods that were available to them, the rest being merely quantity or waste. In this way he was more pragmatic than Marx, who very much worked according to an assumption of high productivity. Morris also knew that undesirable work would always exist, he only maintains that it ought not to be done by one class only. He sought “practical Socialism,” to conflate the principles of Work with an understanding of necessity. His concept of art, complete in its own way, was also, as said, a metaphor for Work, but not in the way that art or ‘culture’ was used as an alternative to ‘society.’ He understood that the mutually exclusive discourses of Work and labour betrayed deaf ears towards class issues, towards context, and insisted that the only manner in which to introduce the union of beauty and usefulness, to reintroduce Work, was through a total restructuring of class, the elimination of exclusive levels.

Despite Morris’s explicit call to combine Work with a steady acknowledgement of the needs, conditions, and immediate context of labour, it must be said that he was less pragmatic in practice. E. P. Thompson is right to argue against debating where Morris falls on the line between Romanticism and Marxism (*William* 892-99); but Marxism does not imply or lead to practical reform. In *News From Nowhere* there are no politics, as the elimination of private property makes the need for laws and so forth unnecessary. The whole of the people are the government. Morris was an anti-parliamentarian, arguing a ‘Policy of Abstention’ and calling not only parliament but unionism a “palliation.” When the Victorians – including Carlyle and Orwell (in spirit) – negotiated with labour, it was usually in the form of reluctantly requesting an increased role of government, albeit decentralized. Morris violently rejected Fabianism, state socialism, and the idea of tinkling with wages and working hours. He saw piecemeal reform as negligible to the *whole* system of labour, which he did contrast to the holistic implementation of

Work. His concept of labour was shaped by Marx and Marxism and he was thus antagonistic towards the state. Because of this, because he viewed labour, pragmatism, and reform as a matter that outreached specific issues, he again places himself outside of English cultural socialism and its brass tacks of action. Morris thought it was his role not to concede anything, to take the high road, and that there would be others to negotiate and plead with government – that part of his thought was immensely practical. But as Thompson confirms, such an attitude limited his influence among the working class, especially among working-class reformers (*William* 455-64). It is one thing to censure “the hypocritical praise of all labour” as “there is some labour which is so far from being a blessing that it is a curse,” and another thing to extend from that “that it would be better . . . [to] refuse to work, and either die or let us pack him [the recalcitrant worker] off to the workhouse or prison” (“Useful Work” 287). The postulate that “compromise is of no use” is not one familiar to either reformism or to those who would have to do the dying.

If Morris’s approach to labour was made impractically holistic by way of his adoption of Marxist tenets – that only revolution and a complete overturning of capitalism serves the *true* interests of ‘labour,’ anything and everything short of that being corporate, capitulating, colluding labourism – his approach to Work was nonetheless against the grain of the developing Marxist rhetoric. As Marx increasingly lost touch with the idea of Work, interpreting its Gospel as bourgeois or reactionary morality (or ideology), Marxists generally did the same. In 1907, for example, Paul Lafargue, Marx’s son-in-law, wrote a treatise on the ‘delusional’ working-class “love of work,” urging “the proletariat” to “return to its natural instincts [and] proclaim the Right of Laziness” (9, 29). Morris, on the other hand, showing his ties to Ruskin, wrote about the artisan and not the proletariat, or about the structural changes which needed to develop for the proletariat to once again become the artisan. Though this at points leads Morris to dehistoricize,⁵ his utopianism, as I’ve tried to demonstrate, is always situated in a contemporary critique: his

⁵Margaret Grennan points out that Morris “arrived at his conception of the medieval workman not primarily from the study of surviving records of conditions of labour and real wages but from the study of the surviving product – the art of the middle ages . . . his conclusion [being] that only under satisfying conditions of labour and in relative freedom could such results be effected” (70-71).

invocation to Work, in contrast to Carlyle or Ruskin, is designed to counter its real context and effects. The prevailing direction that the idealization of Work was taking after Carlyle was arguably in the hands of the bourgeois and reactionary morality (and ideology), decisively demarcating the idea of Work from its context and effects in such a way – unlike English cultural socialism – that ignores or even inverts social injustice. Rudyard Kipling, very Victorian in his ideas and style, makes a point of glorifying Work especially in the conditions of labour. In “The Glory of the Garden” (1911), he suggests that the sanctity of England, the Eden-like Garden of the poem, depends on working through laborious conditions:

Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders,
If it's only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders;
And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden.

In “A Truthful Song” (1910) he rather defensively sets his target on history itself. A Brickmaker and a sailor, as if threatened by an encroaching modernity, insist that Work is impervious to the specificity of labour:

*We tell these tales, which are strictest true,
Just by way of convincing you
How very little, since things were made,
Anything alters in any one's trade!*

Kipling, inheriting the authoritarianism of Carlyle and Ruskin but neither their radical nor their reformist inclinations, couldn't get an honest drop of inspiration from Morris even if he ever tried. Morris's refutation of labourism comes not only from an admiration of Work and its products, but also from the artisan's obstinate refusal to be regarded as a replaceable commodity on the labour market. Even then there is more than just a hint that Morris accepts gradualism. Not only does Hammond's account of “How the Change came” in *News From Nowhere* include “necessary” reformist ‘steps,’ the story ends with a direct appeal to “Go on living while you may,

striving, whatsoever pain and labour needs must be, to build up little by little the new day of fellowship, and rest, and happiness” that is presently nowhere (228).



When evaluating Victorian approaches to Work it is important to historicize the challenge faced by advocates of the non-economic imperatives of Work in an age of utility and economism. Orwell, who generally does not, had no discriminating patience for Ruskin or Morris or any Gospel of Work – that is, when he was entangled in labour. The critique of economism based on the assumption that Work provides intrinsic and social benefits was itself critiqued. The procrustean Ure argued on the behalf of industrialists that the “most perfect manufacture is that which dispenses entirely with manual labour” (quoted in Webb, *Custom* 29). Though the nature of job satisfaction is dynamic and conditional, the strategy from Carlyle to Orwell when facing economism is to locate a work ethic beyond self-interested, paid labour: to rework it as psychologically and socially meaningful – not the same reaction they have when facing economics. Even if the most important question of who owned the profits of work was not always properly raised until Morris (via Marx), the intransitive imperative to Work emerged from the anti-utilitarian tradition in order to prevent energy and self-interest from becoming synonymous. In the representation of Work as a therapy for introspective anxiety or neurasthenia (though the question of what is worth doing would cause its own anxiety) is a refusal to reduce work to its disfigured meaning in political economy. Understandably, the working classes who need to work hardest in order to make ends meet never embraced this abstraction (Burnett 19), even if – according to English cultural socialism – they are the last to bow down to the habits of economic reasoning. Orwell distrusts the non-economic imperatives of Work when adopting a concrete perspective and accepts it when imagining a resurgence of Victorian values, quite definitely selecting those values with care.

I am not suggesting that Carlyle, Dickens, Gaskell, Ruskin, or the anti-utilitarian tradition recklessly promote a unified, non-contingent idea of Work, but that the movement from abstract to specific, final to conditional, and uniform to variable knowledge is slow and uneven. Orwell

himself never reaches it, continuing to vacillate between Work and labour, though he pronounces the need to always challenge his own totalizing assumptions. Dickens endorses the need to work for work's sake but also shows a growing doubt about its universal application. (Though, and this is a crucial difference between Orwell and Dickens, never because the call to work is redundant for the working class or because it mobilizes that class to work for the interests of the capitalist class.) In *Bleak House* (1852-3), Esther's self-prescribed palliative of becoming "so dreadfully industrious that [she] would leave [herself] not a moment's leisure to be low-spirited," loses its universal application if Mr. Vholes is also to be found, as he says, always with a "shoulder to the wheel" (288, 611). Uriah Heep, Mr. Dombey, and Mr. Veneering are as industrious as David Copperfield, Walter Gay, and Lizzie Hexam. The anti-utilitarian tradition, at points, acknowledges that by changing the social, political, and economic relations in which work is embedded, the meanings surrounding it also change. At other points, in fact most of the time, it simply divides Work from any problematical context. In *Bleak House*, Dickens can only 'resolve' the conflict between self-serving and self-denying work ethics by removing Esther and Allan from competitive London and insisting on the importance of moral, individual change. The newlyweds move to pastoral Yorkshire where there is the prospect of nothing but a "great amount of work and a small amount of pay" (873), an integrated community, a 'family romance,' and contentment (certainly not social mobility). For Esther and Allan to fully engage themselves in a community and gain non-economic, psychologically stabilizing benefits from Work, they must disengage themselves from the greater part of society and go where there will be little need for psychological stabilizers. Luckily for them, they apparently do not need to worry about earning a living.

Forms of the Anti-Utilitarian Novel

Political economy for the first time was raised to the rank of a special science and has been treated as such ever since. As a special branch of science it absorbed the other relations – political, juridical, etc. – to such an extent that it reduced them to economic relations. . . . The complete subordination of all existing relations to the relation of utility, and its unconditional elevation to be the sole content of all other relations, we find for the first time in Bentham, where, after the French Revolution and the development of a large-scale

industry, the bourgeoisie no longer appears as a special class, but as the class whose conditions of existence are those of the whole society.

Marx *The German Ideology*

Besides the cleavage which developed as English cultural socialism responded to alternate pressures of morality and money was a debate with utilitarianism, a purely economic strategy, over the shaping of social and political reform. The reformist ideas of the former group were based on contingency, embedded in compassion, and answered to specific experience. Orwell, in his turn, adopts the same brand of non-theoretical, bread-and-butter reform. Utilitarians hoped the economically based sciences of society would provide legislators with the facts to write law under inelastic, scientifically testable guidelines. 'Fallacymongering,' identifying mistaken 'facts,' as in Bentham's *The Book of Fallacies* (1824), shows the full parameters of utilitarian methodology. Utilitarianism treated facts as the key to freeing individuals from the constraints of the traditional and arbitrary. Anti-utilitarian reformism, largely a decentralized and reluctant governmentalism, would never suggest that the principle of reform could be inferred from facts and scientific laws, that what ought to be can be grasped by 'what is,' even though by fragmenting Work from labour that is essentially what they do. Still, no matter how saturated in pragmatic discourse it could be, its literature recoils from the lead that the rationalist order took in reforming society.⁶ Even when rejecting utilitarianism to the extent that it treated reform as a moral dilemma, the topical / moral Victorian novel (excepting Martineau and that school) is crucial because in its very constitution it maintains that cultural values can and must play a mediating role in economic relations, in reform, rather than leaving economics to shape culture.

The reaction to economism, to a definition of the world as a place of commodification and competition, however, was either "generally reactionary and conservative," as Lukács shows, or acquiescing to economic individualism, as Watt shows. Lukács and Watt emphasize class interests. Lukács looks at the historical novel in order to identify the reaction against moneyed relations. The awakened consciousness of capitalism as a "historical era," as a

⁶Matthew Arnold's name might come up at this point. However, I will look at him as a modern.

framework for society, was answered by an "ideology of immobility" (*Historical* 24). Thus, for example, Carlyle's and Ruskin's fascination with the Middle Ages and rejection of democracy. Watt looks at the realist novel as a literary form developed for and by the bourgeois to consolidate their interests by favourably representing hard work, thrift, and "the idea of every individual's intrinsic independence" (60). Gone are the larger-than-life heroes with larger-than-life inheritances; in are the adventures of autonomous development (financial, social, familial, total). *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is the classic example, but the sheer literary output in the nineteenth century implies that success can be gained through individual effort and has something to do with bulk, with production.⁷ The Triple Decker novel suggests that production in itself was highly valued. Though the size of the most thoughtful novels may imply a rejection of utility, of 'getting to the point,' the reader was not to waste time reading them, but to learn the lessons of effort, perseverance, and Work. Williams, whose argument in *Culture and Society* has affinities to Lukács, and Houghton, whose *Victorian Frame of Mind* (1957) is closer to Watt, would agree that the responses to economism by both the upper and middle classes are entangled, though neither suggest that the faraway moralism implicit in the reactionary position or the concrete economic pragmatism surfacing in the bourgeois approach are dialectically opposed to each other. Both Williams and Houghton emphasize the "contradictory elements" (Williams, *Culture* 20) of the era. Houghton shows conflicting attitudes by drawing up conflicting categories of thought; e.g., 'optimism' and 'anxiety.' Carlyle, for one, bounces between an aristocratic desire to freeze social relations in rigid hierarchies and the typically middle-class position that self-made wealth signifies goodness. Dickens first ends *Dombey and Son* by making a fine statement against ambition. Then, in a sort of coda, the industrious Walter quickly rises into Mr. Dombey's world of finance. Conservative and liberal values constantly

⁷Terry Lovell attempts to redress Watt's thesis by suggesting that the Victorian novel sends more than a single message of industriousness, thrift, and the virtues of work and production to its readers – to be in compliance with capitalism, it also must push consumption. But Lovell actually confirms that the nineteenth-century novel marginalizes the consumer: she admits that 'commodity fiction,' literature of consuming and spending, is mostly alien to the period between 1840 and 1890 (74).

intersect in the Victorian period of English cultural socialism – an intersection that Orwell would epitomize.



In counteracting utilitarian thought the tendency of Victorian literature is to subordinate determinism to character, setting the dynamics and idiosyncrasies of the protagonist and his or her allies against the utilitarian image of a guiding self-interest. Character, the moral individual, remains largely impervious to circumstance, to external determinations. Introducing *Dombey and Son*, Williams speaks of Dickens's awakening to the agency a general condition, society, can have over character, even if vice is sometimes reducible to "faults of the soul" ("Introduction" 16). But in *Dombey and Son*, as in *Mary Barton* or *Sybil* (1845) where class position creates vice (mostly lower class for Gaskell, lower and middle for Disraeli, and upper for Dickens), vice is the susceptibility to socialization. Succumbing to the material base of society is a sign of weakness, a misplaced work ethic, or a manifestation of a 'natural' correspondence between inner character and outer environment. This is certainly not always the case. In *Bleak House*, the sympathetic Phil Squod has been physically deformed by capitalism, by a life of labour. But even in this example, if labour creates an identity, the apparatus to identify 'natural' character (physiognomy) is nonetheless upheld. Dickens, for one, does not think in terms of definitive external determinations.

Both Williams and Himmelfarb accuse Orwell of misreading Dickens because in "Charles Dickens" (1939) he finds that individual moral deficiency is *always* Dickens's root of conflict (Williams, *English Novel* 49; Himmelfarb 487). But Orwell is not far off the mark, especially as he acknowledges Dickens's developing consciousness of the "helplessness of well-meaning individuals in a corrupt society" (*CEJL* 1: 418). The peculiarity of Orwell's essay is that Orwell wrote it. Orwell, as I have tried to show, defensively represents idiosyncratic, moral individuals; that is, when absorbed in a discourse of Work. Woodcock famously critiques Orwell as Orwell critiques Dickens in his essay on him:

In one of his essays there is a portrait of Dickens which might not inappropriately be applied to Orwell himself. 'He is laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity. It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry* – in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence – a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our soul.' The open fighting, the generous anger, the freedom of intelligence, are all characteristics of Orwell's own writing. And that very failure to penetrate to the fundamental causes of social evils, to present a consistent moral and social criticism of the society in which they lived, which characterized the nineteenth-century liberals, has become Orwell's own main limitation. ("Liberal" 246)

Orwell himself, distanced from a Work discourse, makes these very same standard criticisms of liberalism, of Dickens the liberal.

The main fault in Orwell's essay lies in the claim that Dickens "has no idea of *work*" (CEJL 1: 445).⁸ In *Hard Times* Dickens says the English people are as "hard-worked" as any in the world (48). Saying that they are the 'hardest working' would be defining the English people from the bourgeois point of view, repeating its central line of defence. Though there may be few industrial proletarians in Dickens's novels, paid and unpaid work never stops. The Mayhewian peculiarity of the work, from doll-making to recovering dead bodies, shows a rare cognizance of urban diversity. Shaw said it better than Orwell in his introduction to *Hard Times*:

Dickens knew certain classes of working folk very well: domestic servants, village artisans, and employees of petty tradesmen, for example. But of the segregated factory populations of our purely industrial towns he knew no more than an observant professional man can pick up on a flying visit to Manchester. (338)

Orwell also says that Dickens's characters dream of and are rewarded with idleness. Idleness in Dickens, say for Richard Carstone, is an aberration, a sickness. Orwell, however, is clearing

⁸In the 1968 *Collected Essays*, the sentence reads, "he has no ideal of *work*." In *Decline of the English Murder and Other Essays*, it reads, "he has no idea of *work*." The typo is in the *Collected Essays*. The following sentence reads, "With the doubtful exception of David Copperfield (merely Dickens himself), one cannot point to a single one of his central characters who is primarily interested in his job." Either way, idea or ideal, Orwell is wrong.

ground to indict bourgeois culture of concealing proletarian labour. A culture excelling in a free market economy would use any means at its disposal to obscure the labour which provides for modern comforts and opportunities, but does not secure proportional benefits for the workers (such as with Orwell's miners). But Orwell cannot find *any* 'work' whatsoever in Dickens, not even in the busyness of the heroes. When keeping with pragmatic definitions, when observing rather than participating in working-class culture, work for Orwell involves making money and answering necessity. In any case, only physical or materially based work can be work, only the proletariat works. For Dickens, work reflects character and is justifiable only if it is attuned to a moral completeness. Those who do not work solely for financial and social ascendancy are awarded with ascendancy. That kind of disinterested work is easier put off-stage. In *David Copperfield* (1849-50), David and Uriah pursue similar ends but David's story is of personal growth whereas Uriah's is of the explicit and reckless pursuit of self-interested gain. Orwell is basically right, just as Dickens does not criticize society "as a system," the value of work (though Dickens has a prejudice against certain occupations – lawyers, bureaucrats) depends upon the individual's approach to it.

The Only Connect Theme

The Completeness of limited man

Mill quoting Carlyle

Despite his belief that isolated acts of goodness adequately compensate for the world capitalism creates, Dickens's art works through demonstrating symbiotic social interconnections. *Bleak House* especially shows the need to recognize common human bonds between disparate social groups; connections impose themselves between characters at any rate through disease and plot entanglements. Carlyle, well versed in organicism, uses disease in both *Chartism* and *Past and Present* (the Irish widow) to illustrate that society is bound together "for mutual good or else for mutual misery" (*Past* 282). Though the immediate context for the connecting power of disease is cholera, Carlyle and Dickens use it to redress the fragmentation of social life coincident with the impersonality of the city, the different worlds of class, and utilitarian ethics.

In her "Address to Working Men" (1866) George Eliot also associates disease with "the law by which human lives are linked together" (266). But under the idea of 'linking,' she sweeps in the idea of a "common interest" between the classes, a harmony of interests, and the need for working-class moderation and toleration. Carlyle and Dickens, conservatives and liberals, do the same. The "Address" is actually intended for middle-class liberals, Eliot's audience. It provides ways to justify to themselves and others their belief in freedom, equality, liberty, and justice for all but the lower classes. The Gospel of tolerance, obedience, and natural / inevitable subordination, an appendix to the Gospel of Work sermonized unto the working class, is not one Eliot would deliver to the middle class, especially not to middle-class women. In the "Address," she argues that the classes are responsible for specific "functions or duties" and that the "nature of things in this world has been determined for us beforehand" (272). Instead of integrating social groups, she entrenches the separation of mental from manual labour and legitimizes the middle-class' claim to a distinct organizational competency and efficiency. 'Connection' in the "Address" also involves the 'leveling up' of the working class to conform to the culture of the middle class (who can afford to be inspired anti-utilitarians advocating a moral conception of Work). It is because of these stipulations – treating efficiency as a moral matter, adopting a utilitarian belief in prescribed functions when convenient, leveling up – that Orwell rejects the notion that the classes can or ought to connect. His conservative / liberal urge did not extend into his economic, concrete, analytical perspective. Ironically and paradoxically, that perspective was shaped by the bread-and-butter pragmatism of the Victorian reform movement.

The Victorian anti-utilitarian tradition, however, wanted to inject some pre-industrial values into the organization of society as a site for driving, instrumentalizing individualism. The 'only connect' theme not only takes the form of uniting people (classes), but also of uniting values. In Gaskell's *North and South*, Margaret's values, essentially rural and feminine, temper and humanize Thornton's business values: the connection leads him to shed his maximizing psyche. A shot of old-world *caritas* disencumbers rationalized work from its counterpart, political economy. I will examine the non-dialectical form that this model of connection takes in

the chapter on Modern work, focusing on E. M. Forster's *Howards End*. In *Mary Barton*, the connection Gaskell sets out to affirm is between master and worker, between classes.⁹ It is not successful, ending less in a reconciliation or a viable social network than in a massive exodus. Often, in Gaskell's and Disraeli's fiction, for example, authors represent fundamental class divisions only to deny them in those very fictions. Moderate reform, good will, and identifying the few irresponsible agitators of collective action obviate structural questions about the ownership of industry. In *Mary Barton*, the "gap between the master and man," turns out to be "not really the case . . . [but only] what the workman feels and thinks" (24). Connection, in other words, is any display of brotherliness precluding working-class unrest.¹⁰ In *Sybil*, Disraeli attempts to show that the use of a phrase such as "the two nations" is indicative of the kind of inflated and dangerous rhetoric that adolescent malcontents such as Dandy Mick or Devilsdust – or dangerous radicals, Chartists, and Owenists such as Stephen Morley misuse. Even though Egremont recognizes the aristocracy's responsibility to the lower classes, Disraeli ultimately reveals a lack of commitment to the idea of class connection. In a Fieldingesque, providential discovery of birth, the marriage between the rich Egremont and poor Sybil, of course, turns out to be between two nobles.

The Good Employer The Self-Made Man

Without industry those majestic masses of men . . . would have no existence; and the magic impulse . . . would never have been communicated.

W. D. Greg

It might almost be said that early encounter with difficulty and adverse circumstances was the necessary and indispensable condition of success.

Samuel Smiles

Though some are dandies who have forgotten their obligations to the workers, Disraeli's patricians are historically alive to the responsibilities attending their privileges (which as Marx

⁹ David Lodge includes both of these types of connections and a few others when retracing the steps of classic Victorian fiction in *Nice Work* (1988).

¹⁰ One must also recognize that industrialists such as W. D. Greg, spokesman for mill owners in Manchester, criticized Gaskell for misrepresenting his class as inhuman; Gaskell's criticisms of industrialism were not run-of-the-mill.

said, the middle class are not). Trafford, a displaced aristocrat with "gentle blood in his veins," knows his social duties, keeping "other ties than the payment and receipt of wages" (*Sybil* 179). For the most part, however, in the Victorian period, it is the middle class that utilizes the Carlylean image of the good industrialist, making the case for its social ascent. The claim of a triumphant morality in the midst of institutionalized exploitation (and invocations to Work hard, obey the law, and respect private property in the name of common interests) led Marx, a very moral philosopher, to dismiss all 'morality' (Norman 146).

To be fair, the beneficent industrialist, the capitalist as philanthropist, is often juxtaposed with malevolent employers, suggesting the way employers might be and not the way they are. In Jewsbury's *Marian Withers* (1851), John Withers's and Mr. Wilcox's model factories contrast with Higgenbottom's unsafe workplace. Still, readers do not see the bad factory: only the benign ones are described. Emphasis is placed on the harmony between worker and machine, on individual morality, and on the treachery of unions and aristocracies. Jewsbury's novel is amazing for its sanitized representation of Manchester, 1825. The central conflict, outside of the romance, involves the morality of the parvenu – if adopting upper-class taste is the only way to have the middle class understand 'anti-utilitarianism,' than the possession of wealth is not an end in itself. John Withers does not have any aspirations toward gentility, but neither is he a counterfeit Captain of Industry interested in get-rich-quick speculation. He spends his capital on perfecting machinery, on pursuing economic development, not on displaying his personal wealth.

Withers is a self-made man whose Smilesian "spirit of self-help" is "at the bottom of all success" (2: 23). He refuses to beg even when homeless and starving. The test of personal value, a labour theory of value, is passed or failed in terms of action, not inheritance. Instead of birth, economic activity defines the social spectrum, defines society. But in the Victorian period of anti-utilitarianism, the case of the autonomously developed selfhood – overcoming circumstance to achieve success through hard work, self-control, ambition, and persistence – is accompanied by non-economic developments which balance (not dialectically confront) a

conscious rationalism with a sense of communal and familial duty, in effect isolating them from each other.

When profit, money, and mobility are blended with decency as the rationalizing grounds for action, when character is the centre of meaning, and when moral praise is earned in accordance with success, poverty itself becomes suspect. Such is clearly not the intention of Jewsbury, Dickens, Gaskell, or Kingsley when they depict self-made men (Withers, Rouncewell, Thornton, or Alton Locke). Neither is poor-bashing a deliberate part of the *bildungsroman* or novels in which orphans without inherited resources rise to successfully restart a family. But the implication of individual economic responsibility is unavoidable. Failure becomes the great taboo – a sign of idleness, carelessness, or profligacy. In *North and South*, Thornton succeeds by following “the habits of life which taught [him] to despise indulgences.” Those who do not succeed must answer to “the natural punishment of dishonestly-enjoyed pleasure” (126).

Malthusian political economy argued that labourers could only help themselves by reducing the supply of labour. In more ways than just expenditure, large families made the poor responsible for their own condition. Malthus maintained that the population would always increase up to the limit permitted by the means of subsistence, that the population is held in check by the food supply. Charity then is either futile or increases the number of the poor, thus lowering the demand for work (lowering wages). Ricardo turned the subsistence theory of wages into an Iron Law of Wages, a supposedly equilibrium price of labour also designed to impede market interference. The anti-utilitarian tradition desired to rekindle non-rationalist values in order to divorce itself from the violence directed towards the poor. But they attempted to do so without interfering with the idea that freedom, individual prosperity, social progress, and personal development were healthy quadruplets; that industry itself was blameless; and that initiative allows all self-relying Robinson Crusoes a fair chance – thus the altering Work (moral) and labour (pragmatic) discourses.

Outside of Victorian literature, the bourgeois who considered work a duty may also have considered retirement and idleness a blessing, as the latter two are the symbolic display of

accomplishment and success. Such a belief corresponds to a rationalist view of work as solely a means – even non-work, retirement, becomes only the means to achieve a goal: reputation. In contrast, most Victorian representations of Work and the self-made man underline a moral component, downplaying the economic value of work and ‘rationalist,’ self-interested motivations. If the Victorian novel treats class, economic, or political issues under its *moral* umbrella, it is rarely in such a way as to represent conflict between moral and economic imperatives.

Apart from the profligate, the working-class poor appear as either passive victims, suggesting the need for political reform, or dangerous free agents (Devilsdust, Barton) if they fight for those reforms themselves or simply adopt a discourse of labour. The self-made man, on the other hand, is active and sensible; he has his middle-class attributes, such as perseverance and honesty, before he ascends. Thornton, for example, is as if born into the wrong class, made before he made himself. The image of the good, self-made man with a higher purpose validates the utilitarian principle of happiness by showing that in pursuing self-interest, happiness and goodness accrues. In other words, the convention of the self-made man does little to separate the anti-utilitarian tradition from rationalist habits, despite an egregious Bounderby here and there.



In *Middlemarch* (1871-2), Eliot challenges the myth that the self-made man signifies equal parts of predestined salvation and worldly respectability, the yin and yang of Puritanism. From a convenient fabrication in support of personal ambition, she restores the idea of vocation into a model for anti-rationalist behaviour. Bulstrode reads Providence as ratifying a “universal order of things” (169) which exonerates his actions. The presumed legibility of Providence, the “illusion of a concentric arrangement” of “scratches,” is merely the projection of a defensive “egoism.” Yet Lydgate’s “moment of vocation” and discovery of a “right profession” he is “most fit for” (195, 130), for example, argue the legitimacy of a calling. Eliot’s treatment of the calling, her attempt to transfer the energy harnessed in religion into a duty to society, a Religion of Humanity, marks a different approach to absolute, totalizing epistemological systems (as

Casaubon's failure to find the 'key to all mythologies' marks a challenge to those types of systems). Altruism is written as if authorized by nature, a natural and intuited imperative. By replacing self-interest with an active and emotional humanism as the world's driving motivation, Eliot challenges the dominance of Economic Man, whether or not he is self-made, and breaks down the strict division between secularism and anti-rationalism imposed upon the world, in part, by the various configurations of scientism.

But rediscovering in Man what the age had lost in God, as with Carlyle's Gospel, reduces, in my context, work to Work, to its non-economic or moral function. As a religion, a matter of faith, humanism cannot be susceptible to conditions, to variability, to labour. Eliot's humanism might not have the same crass confidence in Enlightenment reason behind it as does Benthamism, but its adaptation of religious form to different content (substituting Man for God) would give way to a disregard for the great divergences – such as class, gender, ethnicity – in the content. She is better than that, but the side of her addressing those divergences is kept severed from the side which is implacably moral or religious. Nietzsche's critique of Carlyle, that he was "an English atheist who makes it a point of honour not to be one" (*Idols* 521), applies to Eliot as it does to much of English cultural socialism. Thus by adhering to final Truth, when they breakdown the division between secularism and moralism it does not follow that they confront the material world with the moral one, the world of Work.

Women's Work

If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution.
Commonly attributed to Emma Goldman

Work innocent of self-interest is said to have the benefit of bringing psychological and moral sustenance to the worker, thus one of the dilemmas for the women of *Middlemarch* denied work. Rosamond's idleness is in contrast to Dorothea's energy, but even Dorothea lacks something to do. *Pace* Austen, idleness is no longer a sign of class status, though Emma Woodhouse (and the same might be said for Emma Bovary) would undoubtedly be less mischievous if she had something to occupy her time. In Jewsbury's *The Half-Sisters* (1848),

Alice's mother tells Alice to be "useful" by loving her husband "in a sober, rational way" (46). Alice, overcome by the 'ennui' following a lack of work (or Work), would leave her husband for another man but for being saved by death. Jewsbury may not unravel the trope of the fallen woman (which includes tempted women), but she does begin to challenge the typically essentialized, 'naturally irrational' convention of character. In Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, the idle Mrs. Carson suffers a "Wind in the head" as the "natural consequence of the state of mental and bodily idleness in which she was placed." Though she has the opportunity to palliate her illness by taking up "the work of one of her own housemaids," her drawing-room persona, the role to which she is "circumstanced" (237), forces idleness (*passivity*) upon her: her social role causes the self-destructive cycle. Nineteenth-century women writers certainly did not monopolize representations of idleness. The middle class censures idleness because it is antipathetic to its creed and because only the aristocracy can afford it. In Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5), idleness leads the upper classes to have "no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manness" (160). But for women writers of the period, idleness is first a consequence of having nothing to do, not of doing nothing.

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea is not idle but nevertheless lacks the opportunity for meaningful work. She lacks the means to attain the psychological stability and a certainty of identity that, say, Caleb Garth achieves through his work, his "religion without the aid of theology" (185). In marrying Casaubon, Dorothea does not find substantive work: to "help some one who did great [*sic*] works" is not enough to construct herself in Work (351). Although Dorothea has a complex and problematic "pining hunger" to channel libidinal desire into work, her lack of options add to her "thwarted energy." In *Bleak House*, Esther successfully displaces her desires into work, nervously reaching for a 'basket of house-keys' (which Freud himself might have cut) whenever Allan arrives. But housework, even if available to Dorothea in her rank, is not the kind of work Eliot has in mind. *Middlemarch* begins with Saint Theresa, a woman who achieves "illimitable" vocational "satisfaction . . . [and] reconciles self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self" (3) and ends with Dorothea denied vocational

opportunity, still faced with despair and frustration, and with her altruistic potential limited. After Casaubon's death Dorothea becomes "absorbed into the life of another," into Will's life, since there is nothing "else . . . in her power" to do (611). Although the convention which depicts a conflict between masculine aspiration (Lydgate's) and feminine consumption (Rosamond's) can be found in *Middlemarch* as in *Madame Bovary*, Dorothea's frustrated vocational desire, so evidently in contrast to Rosamond's romantic delusions, shows that romantic expectation is a second-order problem in the construction of gender roles.

But as with Mill, Eliot subscribes to the myth of "the greater nervous susceptibility of women," though both writers are important nineteenth-century feminists and critics of essentialist paradigms. Hysteria, they agree, "would cease when the energy was directed to a definite end" (Mill, *Subjection* 60). The coexistence of an increasingly popular myth about female hysteria and an equally growing belief in the salutary benefits of Work points to a fundamental inconsistency in Victorian cultural codes. If Work alleviates neurosis and women are particularly prone to neurosis, why restrict women from significant work? Again and again in women's literature of the era, Work is said to lead to "Self-control, self-discipline" (Jewsbury, *Withers* 3: 130) or "hope" (Brontë, *Agnes Grey* 163). Yet the paucity of women represented at rewarding work implies that the need for women to create significant work is the work itself.



The kind of work sought by Eliot, Jewsbury, and Brontë is entirely moral, but nonetheless locked into a middle-class perspective. This is not to say that they never addressed women's need to make money, not to confirm identity but to eat, or even that earning money can build a sense of selfhood, but that the topic of the working-class woman's pragmatic needs were on a different page, usually in a different book. In any case, the pragmatic need to labour is not written as if in conflict with the moral need to Work. At the same time, in this case, behind every request for the moral rewards of Work is the economic, real-world, labour-oriented problem of not being treated as legitimate economic agents, short of female consumer power. Thomas Hardy also illustrates how a gendered division of labour can interrupt Work. In *Far*

From the Madding Crowd (1874), Hardy hints at the conflict between Work and labour when he argues that “good fellowship – *camaraderie* – usually occurring through the similarity of pursuits, is unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes because men and women associate, not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely” (303). That middle-class women writers would adopt the Gospel of Work for their own is understandable, as I’ve tried to show. It entails not only the means to stability, but having access to economic work, being a player in the negotiation of labour – though it would also entail a conflict between Work and labour if the working-class woman, who labours, was considered. Still, the Gospel was firmly masculine – the examples in Carlyle, Ruskin, or Orwell being too numerous to repeat. Even Morris’s *News From Nowhere*, which at points sounds vaguely feminist, is divided against itself, critiquing manipulations of the idea of a human nature and naturally prescribed social roles on the surface while representing women as happy and natural only doing housework or as lovers (94). That female writers also embraced Work shows just how far the ideology was in the literary culture from being dialectically opposed to the field of economic labour. It shows that middle-class women, partly because they were financially well off, treated themselves as middle-class men treated the working class – as if blessed with special insights into the world of Work.



The nineteenth-century polarization of private ‘women’s work,’ household work, from a public, male domain of paid employment is well documented and has links to urbanization, work rationalization, and ‘economization’ (Pahl, *Divisions* 86; Stearns 42; Thompson, *Work* 59-60). The hardened division of social roles coincided with the myth of superior female moral qualities; the male, public world was rationalized as competitive, unemotional, aggressive, and concerned only with ‘practical’ economic matters. The feminizing and privatizing of morality, of philanthropy, exculpates laissez-faire policy and the separation of economic from any other social theory. As Kate Millett remarks, delegating women to the role of aid giving was “ridiculous” because women themselves were dispossessed (147). The split between private, female morality and public, male business also reinforced the cliché association of maleness and

rational (and / or rationalist) knowledge. Economism maximizes gender constructions by insisting on a complete identification with either domesticity or employment. It was under Victorian political economy that the term 'work' was specialized into meaning 'employment' (Williams, *Keywords* 282), establishing a linguistic base for the naturalizing of functions and gearing society for rapid cycles of production and consumption.

Women who worked as domestic servants or in factories were mostly daughters of rural labourers and saw their employment as temporary. Such work was not considered moral, as a source of identity (Pahl, *Divisions* 67). As maleness became more and more associated with breadwinning, female employment – stigmatizing for the male – was rarely continued into marriage. Ossifying laws of gender existed independently of political economy (for example, with Ruskin, Orwell, and the conservative manipulation of chivalry), but the *maximizing* of social roles¹¹ was duly confirmed by the nineteenth-century overemphasis on economic *man*. In an industrial society buttressed by claims to rationality, to efficiency and functionality, work becomes as specific to sex as it is to class.

Ivan Illich argues that by fighting against discrimination women “cloud the key issue” (110): the rise of economism and the disappearance of independent coping. Favouring a ‘small world’ approach (à la E. F. Schumacher), he argues that non-employed women do most of the unsalaried “shadow work” – by and large, housework – that formal economics does not recognize, but which has been distorted from a valid and satisfying means of subsistence to a “kind of serfdom” (22). Illich raises a difficult question for modern feminism: does participation in the ‘workforce’ capitulate to rationalism, to a ‘male,’ strictly economic form of work (to disutility theory)? There is a more fundamental issue at stake. The problem emerging out of the nineteenth century concerns the rise of rationalist economics into widespread supremacy, into economism, and the subsequent creation of rigid, analogical categories which only divide both time and space into rationalist or non-rationalist sites when convenient, when it suits those with

¹¹The maximizing of social and gender roles under nineteenth-century economism included changes in clothes (Stearns 40) – emphasizing masculinity for males and femininity for females – a bifurcation in learning, and the construction of sex-specific leisure (for example, the rise of a very male sports industry and sports culture).

economic power. Housework was not allowed onto the site of the rational, even though it very much had been subject to a militantly strict rational organization. Anne McClintock argues that the

striking difference between the rationalizing of the market and the rationalizing of housework is that the latter is rationalized so as to render women's work invisible and to thereby disavow its economic value. The rationalizing of domestic labour in the nineteenth century involved massive expenditures of effort that went *unquantified* and *uncalculated*, since such work had to be excluded, as far as possible, from the rational market. (172)

Illich's concern is valid; it applies every time labour might interfere with Work. But before intrinsic work satisfaction and spontaneity can harmoniously coincide with production and a degree of formal rationality, interference is necessary. Offering a real choice for both women and men between what comes under 'rationality' and 'non-rationality' involves some freedom to cut through the two modes. The undermining of inflexible binaries in order to allow for new modes and definitions of work, behaviour, and motivation lies behind the dialectics of praxis.

A Brief, Final Word on Developmentalism

A history of the spirit of reform in middle-class literature between 1832-1867 must be largely a history of its disappearance, as it becomes absorbed either by assumptions of inevitable progress or by theories of progressive evolution.

Patrick Brantlinger

The powerful countercurrents to economism and scientism testify to the impact of mechanistic, rationalist thinking. Even though Darwin's theories show that species change is unpredictable and directionless, this is not what registered with most of his contemporaries (Gilmour 133). They emphasized the mechanism of progress, science's domination of nature, and the similarity between evolutionary and economic laws. Darwin himself accepted positivist dogma and adopted Malthus's theory of population instead of looking towards cooperation and mutuality to explain survival and society. But if the origins of natural selection were in economic theory, economic theory, most notably via Spencer, used it to further the cause of

rationalist political economy. As William Irvine points out, for all the parallels between Darwin and utilitarianism,¹² his ideas also parallel conservatism (an anti-bourgeois emphasis on time and the past, on the slowness and minuteness of change, and on the “persistence of vestigial structures” [98]). In other words, after William Townsend and Malthus, political economy was primed to use nature in the service of its own interests and to shape it into a rationalist framework.

The rationalization of work had ordered time into a process of quantifiable (Dickens would say ‘hard’) change. Donald Lowe points out that ‘development’ “was a new word in bourgeois society.” Time was no longer experienced as cyclical and restorative like the seasons, but as a rationalized, linear movement towards the new, towards product (Lowe 21). Even anti-utilitarian thought, from Hegel and Marx to Carlyle, embraced the concept of progress. But the host of universal life impulses heralded by Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris, Bergson, Shaw, and later Freud and Jung, were striking departures from Smith’s invisible hand. When utilitarian thought embraced developmentalism, it turned, as G. M. Young says, “an aspiration [into] a schedule” (9) and history into an impersonal but purposeful, smooth and straightforward tide. Economic rationalism later began to use the concept of progress with an awakened attention to the consumer in order to enclose and finalize what it meant to be a social being. But for English cultural socialism, developmentalism could be embraced if it was compartmentalized as a moral concept. As such, it was easily reWorked to counter utilitarian notions of progress. Still, as Patrick Brantlinger points out, such assumptions are antithetical to reform, to the matters of labour. Again, two divided discourses, one engaged with economism and one engaged with economics

¹²Darwin defines the “general good” as “the means by which the greatest possible number of individuals can be reared in full vigour and health” (*Descent* 98).

Joseph Conrad

Introduction

In the previous chapters I have attempted to identify and contextualize a tradition specific to English cultural socialism insofar as it oscillates between a moral idea of work and pragmatism: a tradition reared against the background of work rationalization and an insomniac economization. On the one hand it reacts against constricting man – yes, man – into the role of a maximizing agent, *homo economicus*, his working-class brother into *homo laborans*, and public society into an organized, functionalized, yet unregulated gesellschaft association by appealing to the Gospel of Work. The censure of over-extended formal rationalisms in general unites with the censure of the rational organization of work and that formality; they become more than just metaphors for each other. In this ‘mode,’ Work has value in itself. On the other hand, members of the tradition sink into rationalism, move cautiously and conditionally in step with work or social rationalization in order, largely, to propose pragmatic reforms and implement piecemeal change. At the economic level, the intrinsic value of Work is either neglected or denied. Orwell epitomizes the tradition not because he intermittently pays homage to the Gospel of Work and then denounces it, but because he swings harder, faster, and farther than those before him between claiming the unqualified abstract and negotiating the problematic concrete, between representing work as subjectively good and objectively perverted.

With Orwell, Carlyle, the Victorians I have discussed, and now Joseph Conrad, a unified ideology of Work and the historicized impossibility of that sanctification coexist only because they never directly and dialectically connect, meet, or clash. I am interested in the tendency to vacillate between assuming an unconditional, essentialist idea of work and the need for its pragmatic reform, between the needs of ‘culture’ and ‘society’ in Williams’s sense, between ‘work’ and ‘labour’ in Arendt’s, between the ideal and the real, final and contingent, visual and empirical, between assuming either the realm of freedom or necessity to the point where they get entirely cut off from each other. The slippages lay bare the imprint of synchronic habits of mind, where two contradictory forms of social commitment that depend upon isolation for their

survival sit side by side with equally unmitigated, unremitting finality. Various called and indeed a hybrid of Conservatism, Organicism, Reactionaryism, Liberalism, Romanticism, and Socialism, the lack of an intersection that might mitigate the structural tension is intensified by the image and rhetoric of rugged, masculine obstinacy. The chasm also increases in relation to the degree in which the writer gets inside, though not necessarily submits to, the whale of work rationalization.

Contradiction and inconsistency in this tradition do not bear the intellectual opprobrium with which literary critics, formalist or anti-formalist, often measure success. Antinomies offend only theory and models, abstractions that the strong empirical side of the tradition rejects wholesale. For Orwell, consistency is the mark of orthodoxies and betrays the refusal to admit to or grapple with real tyranny. Inconsistency especially refutes utilitarian and liberal theory in which the individual is elevated into a predictably rational, self-interested agent: maximizing being his sum capacity. Inconsistency challenges the construction of this monological subjectivity and, it follows, the idea that maximizing self-interest maximizes society's interests. Inconsistency is also the keystone to work before or beyond rationalization. Ruskin's individuated, inconstant Gothic architecture confers "signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought" ("Gothic" 149). Consistent production is measured only by quantity. When quantifiable production is the measure of success and the formal rationality of economic action prevails in the production of all values, including consumption values, then substantive ends tend to evaporate.

But a watermark inconsistency between moral and pragmatic work cannot be rescued from the deadlock of a subjective-objective split by appeals to a second order of deliberate contradiction. These competing ideas of work, moral and pragmatic, undermine and deny each other; the pragmatic parts never add up to the moral whole and the whole cannot be broken down into parts. Lukács regarded this gulf as the "dualism of economic fatalism and ethical utopianism" (*History* 196) because he held that any action short of (insisting on) the total restructuring of society to be fatalism (and fatal). But Carlyle and Orwell, for example, with all

their ideas for specific pragmatic reforms, can only be accused of succumbing to fatalism if their pragmatics are analyzed from the point of view of 'utopianism,' of their uncompromising moral idea of Work. That is one reason why their moral and pragmatic ideas of work never meet. The real and immediate is not to determine or even have an impact on the possibilities of the ideal. But no level of isolation could prevent the two sides of the disjunction from working against each other.

The hiatuses, structural dislocations, displacements, fissures, impasses, or glitches between moral and pragmatic work signify the point where ideology surfaces (Eagleton, *Criticism* 117). In the specific case of English cultural socialism, the split signifies the point where ideology meets conviction, outruns it, and outlasts it. The hard split between moral and pragmatic work, more importantly, demonstrates a belief in the capacity of the individual to overcome the social formation, to resist determination. When a character can glean value from work which the author represents as objectively negative, can separate herself or himself from economic reality, she or he has the self-made resources that show where the author's individualism has become a challenge to her or his social criticism. 'Individuals' in these cases, are those who work as if independently of an economic function. With their special insights into the world of Work, and their ignorance of and need for assistance in negotiating the world of labour, they often, though not always, belong to the working class. As a rule, the working class at least exemplifies Work. Still, regardless of what overdetermines the rift causing the Gospel of Work to sit undisturbed besides consistently rejected labour, a belief in the armor of subjectivity dominates, as long as there is Work to do. The dualism of finding categorical value in Work and powerfully condemning its corruption, and the system which corrupted it, is also typical of an age grasping for a totalizing moral compass in the felt departure of one. It is not only the indoctrinated automaton but also the struggling believer who will be wholly uncompromising in the outward projection of his or her belief. The uncompromising believer in the Gospel of Work might expose skepticism about its power in modernity, just as the religious fundamentalist might expose doubt about the strength of his or her faith by adamantly proselytizing it in inappropriate

venues and then ignoring it in others. But the coin shining a manly worker swinging a hammer or a banner of unqualified hope on the one side and is flat dull on the other, the side listing interminable qualifications, was minted under an unwavering assumption that the individual can always choose heads.



Joseph Conrad's decidedly ambiguous attitude towards work places him firmly in cultural socialism. In *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), Terry Eagleton rightly finds that Conrad's "need for value, and the recognition of its utter vacuity" is "the deepest contradiction of Conrad's enterprise" (140). Eagleton reads Conrad as shuffling between Organicist idealism and Romantic individualism, hope and disillusionment, activism and language whose spectral cloudiness would prohibit the *vita activa*. His attempt to undress ideology is not, however, entirely successful. First, Eagleton cannot show, as he attempts to show, that Conrad's contradictions are ideologically "resolved" or "overcome." Second, his assumption that Conrad's belief in a disciplined community and his allegiance to Romantic individualism is contradictory neglects the fact that Conrad's Romanticism has nothing to do with liberation from social, religious, and ethical norms in the pursuit of experience that *would* be in contradiction with a hierarchized community. Third, the 'impasse' Eagleton observes between praxis and inscrutable prose is not obvious: if it were, Marxist critics, such as Eagleton himself, would have a lot more to answer for than Conrad. Finally, in terms of Eagleton's central argument in the chapter "Ideology and Literary Form," the cavalier censure of the "Culture and Society tradition," that it couples an "idealist critique of bourgeois social relations" with a consecration of the rights of capital (102), is too general and dismissive. He ignores the fact that, when tackling 'society,' the tradition speaks mostly of reform and change (a gradualism to which Eagleton refers in passing as the "banally empirical" [123]).

Conrad came to the tradition from the outside, as an émigré, but also as a sailor immersed in non-rationalist Work. If participating in the English merchant service "fashioned the

fundamental part of [his] character in [his] young days" (*NLL* 196),¹ it continued to shape at least the outward projection of his character long after that. But between arriving in England in 1878 and writing *Heart of Darkness* twenty years later, he shared a loss of earnest and energetic optimism with the late Victorians. The faith in Progress that flowed through the purer notions of imperialism and evolutionism would not survive the end of the century for most of the informed British (Watt, *Conrad* 161). But as with many Edwardians or early moderns, Conrad also refused to concede the principle behind the thing, the idea of Imperialism or Progress (or Work) – even if that meant completely detaching the idea from the practice. Marlow's involvement with the Company he despises in *Heart of Darkness* is not resolved by a recourse to a saving illusion, the principle, the salvageable idea; his participation in the colonial enterprise is *as if* removed from the idea, from work of value, by that illusion.

Despite the withdrawal that the saving illusion implies, Conrad never conclusively denies social reality (that people live among one another) or that life is lived in the realm of necessity and governed by an ascendant rationalist economic order. That is, after all, also implied by the need for a saving illusion. However, when reminding readers not to lose sight of the non-economic considerations surrounding Work – loyalties to group or ideas about nobility, honour, and emotional involvement – he isolates those values and shields them from reality. Though some of those values contain the residue of a very real reactionary economic and political agenda, by compartmentalizing them he forgoes social change for personal commitment and gets cut off from pragmatic economic reform. (Orwell's phrase, that "A humanitarian is always a hypocrite," is again useful and appropriate.) The values associated with the sea-locked *Narcissus* render any non-Gospellized matter high and dry. They are raised to be untouchable values, more importantly, only because there is little reference made to the fact that the ship is also transporting goods, that there *are* economic factors surrounding work. Two very different

¹In this chapter and unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Conrad's work will be abbreviated as follows: *NLL* – *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921); *HD* – *Heart of Darkness* (1904); *NN* – *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897); and *LJ* – *Lord Jim* (1900). Though I am not discussing *Nostramo* (1904), I should point out from the outset that it is a very different text than *Heart of Darkness* or *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, and that it, with its unremitting attention to economic undercurrents, would not cohere with my argument about those two texts.

systems of work take place in both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* moral Work and a subtextual order which would contradict every article in that morality if it was simultaneously addressed. Before looking at these two incompatible and segregated branches of work, I want to examine the explicit juxtaposition in *Heart of Darkness* between types of work: the search for intrinsically satisfying Work in the midst of perverted structures.

Conradian Work

A man perfects himself by working. Foul Jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby.

Carlyle *Past and Present*

Conrad's philosophy of work, his pre-historicized idea of Work, differs little from Carlyle's. Both treat work with a trans-economic emphasis, confirming its ability to foster self-realization and solidify community. Both argue that social duty is *felt*, participation only impelling further consent. Conrad wrote

From the hard work of men are born the sympathetic consciousness of a common destiny, the fidelity to right practice which makes great craftsmen, the sense of right conduct which we may call honour, the devotion to our calling and the idealism which is not a misty, winged angel without eyes, but a divine figure of terrestrial aspect with a clear glance and with its feet resting firmly on the earth on which it was born. (NLL 194)

Adventuring, the *raison d'être* of young Marlow in *Youth* (1902) or Jim in *Lord Jim*, is not Work because it neglects or even negates the community, discipline, and clear sense of purpose which characterize Work. Unlike American transcendentalists, for English cultural socialism the idea of 'Idealism' is always rooted in the 'terrestrial,' in something as tangible, physical, and practical as work. The subsequent split of Work from labour is fundamentally different than a split between metaphysics and history, especially when it involves a clear rejection of anything remotely mystical, because Work is – and is even thought to be – a real world activity. The history of English cultural socialism is one where spiritualism as the alternative to economic

rationalism was centred in not only secular but corporeal activities, making the division between Work and economic activity all the more remarkable.

In *Heart of Darkness*, the abstract idea of work enables the subject “the chance to find yourself” (59). Working, Marlow finds the opportunity to self-authorize or be his own author in an existential affirmation, and to self-authorize or be his own authority in the absence of political, economic, or social rules. In *Heart of Darkness*, of course, no “solid pavement,” public opinion, or law exists to regulate conduct. Only work allows Marlow to “keep [his] hold on the redeeming facts of life” (52) by necessitating self-discipline. Commitment is demanded in order that identity might be appropriated from the sheer effort. But contrary to this equation where work entrains self-knowledge and self-control is the opposite one, where work brings about self-subterfuge and that engenders self-control. Work provides the last defence against too much reality: the opportunity to immunize oneself against introspection and deny lurking frenetic impulses. Speaking on the effort involved in steering a ship, a metaphor for self-control, Marlow says

When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality – the reality, I tell you – fades. The inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily. (67)²

The same dualism between fostering and denying self-knowledge is found in Carlyle’s writings. In a previous chapter I described the close resemblance between Carlyle’s belief that work confirms identity by supplying the chance for the individual to see himself objectified in the product of his work (it is ‘his’) and Marx’s early essentialist writings. But Carlyle also wrote, “Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at” (*Past* 196). In both Carlyle and Conrad, and in the general model(s) of work that I am suggesting define the tradition of English cultural socialism, Work functions alternatively to clarify identity and to conceal it, to establish it and to negate it.

² In *Chance* (1913), in a passage nearly as famous, Marlow says, “to be busy with material affairs is the best preservative against reflection, fears, doubts – all these things which stand in the way of achievement. I suppose a fellow proposing to cut his throat would experience a sort of relief while occupied in stropping his razor carefully” (282).

The split between work as the means to either 'find oneself' or 'hide from oneself' is closely associated to the split between moral and pragmatic work. In each case, the individual is understood to be able to surmount undesired, repudiated conditions (and that it is his or her moral duty to do so). The gap between the ethical and historical, between moral and pragmatic work, assumes that the individual has the power to wrest intrinsic (moral) value from Work despite its structural (historical / objective) organization for extrinsic purposes only; accordingly, the individual is represented as if outside of history. The disjunction between work which promotes self-definition in one breath and self-subterfuge in another also shows a belief that the individual can find or develop an identity which counters intermediaries lying outside of his or her will, in this case an irrational, primitive, or 'savage' identity deep within. But the inner identity is never conclusively defeated. The individual who finds himself through work lives cut off from the one who must hide from himself in work. As that unchosen identity is confirmed and galvanized by modern relations of production, being able to muzzle it shows a self-engineered resistance to influence, whether it is external or internal.



The social confirmation and galvanization of the worker into a rapacious individualist under a laissez-faire structure is one of the basic themes of *Heart of Darkness* and ought not to be dismissively filed under 'reactionaryism' as Eagleton and others have been so quick to do. Conrad brings to the surface the difficulty of accruing intrinsic benefits from work under alienating conditions in a way Carlyle never does. But contrary to what sympathetic critics such as Paul Gaston and Paul Bruss have been concluding for years, he does not qualify the Gospel of Work or argue its indefensibility and impossibility in modernity. A generalized and universal creed of Work endures, given the imagined possibility of its seclusion. Undoubtedly and with vigour he explicates the vast discrepancy between the ideology informing colonialism, enlightenment, and Progress on the one hand and the barbaric practices which follow on the other. The representation of the pilgrims, for example, surfing the Empire's free market for profit and muttering 'Ivory' underlines the true nature of the colonial quest (the Company, of

course, is "run for profit" [39]). But Conrad shows no reservation when it comes to the solid canons of the Gospel, only frustration with what *would* impede or violate it.

Despite the power of the individual to work as if independently from his or her surroundings, grasping value from the presumption of isolation, the need to overcome circumstance embodies social – moral and structural – criticism. Maintaining a classic work ethic against the corrupted organization and economic base of work is the responsibility of the individual in conflict with an individualist society. Conrad vilifies nearly all specific acts of work being carried out in the Congo; Work is validated but not colonial work. The chief accountant devotes himself to his work as steadily as Marlow devotes himself to Work. Whereas Marlow repels impulses contrary to humanity by working, when the accountant works he ignores humanity. Marlow tends to resemble Orwell insofar as he idealizes Work as a participant and blasts labour as an observer of working conditions. Calculating, impersonal, and starched by routine, the accountant complains about the distracting noises of the suffering and dying when he has "correct entries" to register (47). The formal rationality of the accountant increases the irrationality of the outcome, of substantive ends. There is nothing in *Heart of Darkness* to suggest that bureaucrats in inhumane institutions can be exculpated because they are merely 'cogs in the machine'; the individual is expected to bypass the machine, even if he continues to work for the Company. (Marlow, I am arguing, is not a cog in the machine. Instead, with the Gospel of Work, it is as if he manages to slip out of it.) Despite the routinization and rationalization of work, all the colonists are competitive and ambitious.³ The papier mâché Mephistopheles is "upset" because Kurtz's success interferes with his plans "to be assistant-manager" (56). Even the Roman conquerors were "cheered" by a "chance of promotion" (31).

When colonizers turn towards their work they add to their aggressive instincts and work's power to sublimate id and egoism gets turned on its head. Laissez-faire economics is not merely a device to generate a story about finding an interior Darkness after all systems of restraint are

³ Arendt misunderstood bureaucracies when she said that the "nature of every bureaucracy, is to make functionaries and mere cogs . . . out of men" (*Jerusalem* 289). Bureaucrats compete: Eichmann, always rational (maximizing, calculating), competed to reach his rank.

removed. The story is about the sanctioning of egoism, the rationalization and justification of the egoistic impulse, the shaping of it, and the liberation of it into everyday life. The manager prides himself on being a social-Darwinian beast, reaching ascendancy because he can stay healthy while others around him fall ill. With his uncle, he desires to be "free from unfair competition," meaning that "anything can be done in this country" (64). The more work done, the greater the proliferation of savagery.

Kurtz also "lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts" because "there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased" (97, 95). At one time, Kurtz was an ideal worker; as a missionary and an ivory hunter he excelled, surpassing and causing envy in his fellow and rival colonizers. Before the "jungle had found him out," before his inner nature is elevated, Kurtz is a "first-class agent" who "Sends in as much ivory as all the others put together," and "an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company" supposed to go "very far" "in the Administration" (46, 51, 47). But devoting himself to his work only leads him to embody its principles. His work incites ambition, it involves negotiating and bypassing restraints, struggling with competition, acquiring excess, seeking promotion, and seeking ascendancy. Kurtz is a "product of the new forces at work" (43), Empire and Capital, as much as he embodies freed primal lusts. He distinguishes himself from the profiteers by his plans to 'enlighten' and by being, as Ian Watt has observed, a Romantic individualist: bohemian, painter, poet, and political radical (*Conrad* 164). But that zeal has an individualist counterpart which seeks any form of gain. Even as a cultic, megalomaniacal leader he maintains the Company's work ethic and hoards ivory. When dying he longingly recalls his "immense plans" (107). Kurtz never ceases to show that "all Europe contributed to [his] making" (86); that under the surface of civilized Europe is a savage will to ascendancy, aggravated by its economic institutions. Kurtz dedicates himself to work, but his work only arouses what Marlow's Work is meant to suppress.

Marlow attempts to bypass "creepy thoughts" (70) by immersing himself in work. He counters the ugliness of Progress and his immediate surroundings by sticking to a traditional

view of work, apparently sufficient to divorce a moral imperative from the economic act. He finds solace in the meticulously crafted *An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship*. It articulates his belief in "a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work" (71). For Marlow to work, however, he needs rivets (in order to fix his boat). Riveting suggests a permeation of a phallic substance into hollowness. If Conrad insinuates or has unconsciously illustrated a libidinal transference through the act of riveting it is no doubt of less symbolic importance than Marlow's desire to fill meaning into nothingness and thus resist the morally sunken state of the Hollow men. But Marlow needs rivets; the lack of rivets brings him close to unrestrained, hysterical anger. Differentiating between Work and economic activity, Marlow realizes that "rivets were what really Mr Kurtz wanted, if he had only known it" (59). Enraged, Marlow says that there were "cases of them down at the coast – cases – piled up – burst – split!" (58). The coast caravan brings in "trade goods" but not rivets; it brings "ghastly glazed calico . . . glass beads . . . [and] confounded spotted cotton handkerchiefs" (58). Ruskin also associated mass-produced "glass beads" to the proliferation of the "utterly unnecessary" ("Gothic" 166). Conrad and Ruskin, and indeed the 'culture' side of the 'Culture and Society tradition,' resist the emergence of the consumer age and are repelled by the shift from working as the origin of value, to production as value's flag, and finally to the fetishization of consumption, the satisfaction or frustration of desire.

In modernity Marlow is an anachronism. In the age of consumerism, steamships and mechanization, speculation (in *Lord Jim* the man with "globular eyes" preaches the "minimum of risk with the maximum of profit" [128]), and greed, where 'honour' is a charmingly antiquated curiosity, Marlow, Jim, and the crew of the *Narcissus* (excepting Donkin and Wait) do not fit in. Fredric Jameson complains that Conrad's "feudal ideology of honour" has no place "in the midst of capitalism" (*Political* 217). That honour and shame are out of step with capitalism is precisely the point. Marlow, when speaking about how Jim leaves one work place after another, says that

They were all equally tinged by a high-minded absurdity of intention which made their futility profound and touching. To fling away your daily bread so as to get your hands free for a grapple with a ghost may be an act of prosaic heroism. (147)

Jim is an exception, obsolete: that is what the text says and that is what Jameson repeats. *Lord Jim* is both 'ethical' and 'historical' in the way that subjective ethics and objective reality clash. Jameson would be correct to point out the dualism between 'personal' values and social history because they regularly do *not* clash, a disjunction maintained by isolating 'personal' values from an otherwise pervasive history.

Against such history Conrad employs the saving-illusion. The illusion is not in question because it is an illusion; as with all myths, it must be evaluated by its effect. In this case, it enables the practitioner to dig out value from what does not exist. But the willed illusion is also the device magically setting the individual apart from history, ever the more magical because the individual initiates the illusion when directly and actively participating in the very reality to be concealed. With volition, the individual converts the illusion into a separate, subjective reality.

A subjective reality, a functioning illusion, is nonetheless coincidental with objective history. The illusion does not mitigate objective reality nor does it reconcile 'personal' and economic values; it compartmentalizes them and protects them from each other. Marlow or the crew of the *Narcissus* work for the very companies or institutions which have perverted work. The idealization of work survives the corruption of modernity by insulating itself, becoming an entirely private value, but the actual work is unchanged by the innocence of the intention behind it. Kurtz, as an earnest 'emissary of light' and the best ivory-snatcher in the Congo, confirms what Conrad evades, that private intentions don't compensate for or in any way overturn corporate malevolence. Moreover, private intentions which enable salutary Work to thrive obviate political action. They challenge the post-Darwinian malaise about the lack of purpose in the universe by positing a local design. At least they assuage the hurt of being told about your existential emptiness. They disturb the slumber of efficiency accompanying corrupt intentions

and bureaucratic control.⁴ And they provide an alternative to extreme and especially anarchistic social philosophies which lack positive mechanisms to effect change. But good private intentions that cooperate with the very rationalized work they would overthrow leave the political will to bring about change in the non-private structure of work looking pharisaically empty. That Marlow can maintain a belief in the intrinsic value of work even as he contributes to its rampant perversion, insofar as he works for the Company, points to a divisive and damaging fissure in the treatment of ideals and reality. The conviction to Work which lies behind the saving illusion is reduced to being the means by which moral Work gets separated from its economic and potentially political frame.

The same dualism makes for an ambiguity in Conrad's attitude towards imperialism. Just as work has been perverted in the Congo, imperialism, it would seem, has been perverted – it is not inherently or fundamentally wrong, but a fundamental good carried out in a perverted manner. In a letter to *Blackwood's Magazine*, Conrad wrote that *Heart of Darkness* would explore the "criminality of inefficiency when tackling the civilizing work in Africa" (quoted in Watts 81). Marlow serves colonialism under the moral safety net of private, personal values. Conrad's bottom line opens the way for a private colonialism. The disjunction between moral and economic work sees Conrad promote the social-economic status quo by representing personal psychic stability and maintain the social order by strengthening the personal one.



In the structural conflict between work as an absolute moral principle and its specific applications inheres Marlow's strength as an individual. Because he can rise above circumstance, the most effective weapon against modern work is his own industry, despite the fact that that industry contributes to the very organizations his traditional work ethic would abolish. Conrad distinguishes between effort and product, between process and item; he rejects

⁴In *Heart of Darkness*, holes are dug for the sake of digging holes, cliffs are blasted indiscriminately for the sake of blasting cliffs, the brickmaker does not make bricks, the roadkeeper keeps no road, and the man with mustaches puts out a fire with a pail that has a "hole in the bottom" (52). The bitterness of Marlow's sadly ironic remark that "What saves us is efficiency – the devotion to efficiency" (31) is only augmented by the real efficiency of the accountant.

the transition from a productivist to a consumerist ethic and the mentality fetishizing accumulation. But he cannot help but confirm the ends along with the means, what is being worked for along with what is being worked on. In *Heart of Darkness*, the private value of work and the institutions worked for are treated as if entirely unconnected to each other, just as Orwell keeps the moral and pragmatic ideas of work tightly compartmentalized or Carlyle separates final from contingent knowledge. As with Orwell and Carlyle, Conrad also vacillates between positioning himself either inside or outside the whale, treating the rationalization of work as either an inevitable reality that must be coped with on its own terms or refuting it wholesale by returning to an independently reached moral idea of Work. Both Conrad and Orwell had given up relative economic comforts to pursue and explore vastly different manners of living where Work, not economic negotiating, was thought or could be represented to still dominate the job. With Carlyle they also treat writing, intellectual work, as the physical Work they extol. Intellectual work is one of the few types of work in which 'work' and 'life' are not easily and strictly separated, as in the rationalist design. The major difference between Orwell and Conrad (or Carlyle) is that while inside the whale, tackling pragmatic work from an analytical, post-Work perspective, Orwell is inclined to insist on a politics of working-class issues whereas Conrad (or Carlyle) is more likely to manifest his conservatism and a lack of sympathy for the working class. But in their pragmatic 'mode' all three tend towards rejecting extreme politics: rejecting the organized attempt to destroy exactly what a realization of a non-private, non-segregated moral idea of Work just might need to destroy.

Despite his contemptuous attitude towards the political working class, reducing their struggles to laziness (as with Donkin in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*), within the gradualist or pragmatic conventions of English cultural socialism, Conrad marks a movement towards a reformer's sensibility. In *Lord Jim*, Marlow comments on the strangeness of Jim's honour, saying that, "we who have lived know full well that it is not the haunted soul but the hungry body that makes an outcast" (147). Carlyle, on the other hand, repeatedly states that the "only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself with asking much about was, happiness enough to

get his work done. Not 'I can't eat!' but 'I can't work'" (*Past* 157, see also 38, 155). Orwell is blunt in his own way: he says, "when one's belly is empty, one's only problem is an empty belly" (*CEJL* 3: 103). Conrad, emphasizing Work in an illusory realm of freedom, but recognizing that it is illusory, is somewhere between the two. He was political, writing topical essays with a directness Orwell could admire. But the consequence of representing the predominance of Work over working conditions, of flourishing Work, is a political emptiness. Since the individual rises above the circumstance, the imperative to reform is transplanted from a political to an individual challenge.

Conrad's Organicism

The workers were prepared to give their lives for him [the Feudal Baron], it was beautiful, it was human.

Carlyle *Past and Present*

The entire Conradian concept of the individual, however, is much different than in utilitarian or liberal theory. In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, the organic whole, the collective that works as one, is the individual, insofar as it acts as if independent of an economic function. The organic-conservative model insists on each person's responsibility for carrying out a certain prescribed function. Under the argument of time immemorial, and with presumably little mention of salaries and pay, workers consent to subordinate themselves to the community, effectively integrating themselves into a single body. As in Carlyle's political workshops, members of Conrad's organic group must fix their identity with a role, and play it. Captains, who provide the mental, decision-making power, are to rule. The Captain in "The Secret Sharer" (1912) incurs danger for all aboard by allowing his crew rest from their duties. After Captain Allistoun quells the mutiny on the *Narcissus*, he tells his crew that "If you knew your work as well as I do mine, there would be no trouble" (113). Solidarity in Conrad's organic model means that each man plays a part and develops a sense of identity under that part, though the parts are based on a hierarchical structure and not the movements of a rationalized, Tayloresque division of labour. But the only way in which Conrad can wholly differentiate between the tenets of his organicism and utilitarian functionalism is to completely divorce the operations of organicism

from its economic enterprise, trade. He then separates a discourse promoting Work and obedience from the one that vilifies the conditions of labour. The latter is reserved for the observing middle class, the reader – it is not the proper discourse for the ship's workers to utter. The individual members of the crew are located socially through their skill and rank, but not through an economic function, as what develops under classical political economy. As an individual, an organic whole, the crew acts outside of any economic, objective reality. But organicism does not act to erase, mitigate, or justify the material or commercial exploits ultimately driving the sails of the *Narcissus* (and which the values of organicism contradict), just as Marlow's devotion to Work does not undo his presence in the Congo. Organicism and materialism, or Work and imperialism, are rather treated synchronically, as discontinuous or different, so that moral and economic work *can* coexist.

For the whole to function in equilibrium Conrad divides it into hierarchized parts. A vertical division of labour guarantees that the collective operates in continuity and mutual dependence. Disruption occurs when individuals confuse or evade the functions set out for them or question the structure of the whole. When the crew of the *Narcissus* defend Wait or entertain Donkin they challenge the moral idea of Work. Donkin and Wait are effective only when the crew has time to think about working conditions and economic matters, rather than about Purpose, which is a moral matter. When the crew focuses on the collective, on Work, Donkin and Wait are either absent or a declared nuisance. Pity, self-pity, personal resentment (Donkin's *ressentiment*), anti-authoritarianism, or worker solidarity that attempts to act independently of officer control jeopardizes the assurance that necessary roles will be performed. As with Orwell, Conrad shows little patience with would-be liberal sympathizers of workers' rights in the abstract. He insists that natural and inevitable crises demand an internalization of a disciplined organization of work: that without authoritative forces of constraint to keep people in check, primitive or chaotic impulses would govern. Yet one of the more important recurring motifs in Conrad's canon revolves around an existential test, and the preparation for that test. One cannot know how one will respond to an object or a situation unless one faces it without the security of

external scrutiny (without police, the opinions of others, God, etc). Though existentialism abandons the apparatus to critically examine any deterministic force save the individual at the centre, Conrad's existential situation suggests a special circumstance, a special test of identity. But the crew of the *Narcissus* are never isolated in this way; they are only isolated from economic issues (except in special circumstances). The crew, never thinking of anything but their roles when functioning at their best, do not will their own moral attitudes towards work as Marlow does: it is willed for them for their own 'good.'

Conrad would agree with Orwell that "liberty and efficiency must pull in opposite directions" (*CEJL* 4: 49). But whereas Orwell divides the two sides and prioritizes a defence of the former, Conrad, closer in this regard to Carlyle, for the most part would, when discussing rank and file work, choose efficiency. Conrad treats efficiency as a moral, not an economic issue. He is much more comfortable with the idea of deference and devotion to leaders, of honour, and of an authoritarian society than Orwell, even in Orwell's most conservative moments. Ian Watt has pointed out that Conrad's hierarchies are "not in general based on inherited, educational, or economic advantages" (*Conrad* 116). But the fixity of relations on the *Narcissus*, for example, suggests an antipathy for egalitarianism which I do not think Conrad would deny. His typical view of society simply bypasses the place of inheritance and holds economic matters in abeyance (education is another matter): it does not directly challenge them. Carlyle also juxtaposes liberty and efficiency, favours the latter, and would reactivate an aristocratic right-to-rule, though not necessarily the aristocracy. His feudal system of "noble loyalty in return for noble guidance" would deter "infidelity" with "fire and faggot." (He adds that that kind of punishment is "difficult to manage in our times" [*Past* 272, 240].) The link between Carlyle and Conrad runs deep: Captain Allistoun runs his ship as Abbot Samson runs his monastery. In *Past and Present*, Carlyle pre-echoes Conrad by saying, "they do not tolerate 'freedom of debate' on board a Seventy-four!" (278). Orwell flirts with this brand of reactionaryism, with representing efficiency as a moral concern, but also completely recoils from it, waning in his belief in the efficacy of old verities in direct proportion to the amount of time he

spends removed from the (projected) anti-economism of working-class life and negotiating the specific conditions of modern work.



All three, however, find that tough and taxing physical work, albeit in a subordinated role, is inherently satisfying. They all validate a sense of independent, swaggering manhood which equates 'being able to take it' with honour. They share what is typically argued to be a labourer's approach to work and life. Conrad especially assumes that life is necessarily difficult, toilsome, and unpredictable – tragic or at least ironic. But if the working class expects life to be a struggle, that sensibility is born from economic, not metaphysical conditions; there are, in any case, economic conditions leading to that sensibility. Conrad's tragic sensibility belongs to his discourse of Work and confirms manliness in the ensuing struggle. (Economic consciousness, such as Donkin's, often goes hand in hand with physical weakness.) The difference between machismo promoted in order to put a shine on commitment, loyalty, comradeship, and trust, and the dissemblance of contemporary management firms who use a metaphor of sports or the team player to legitimize rules and encourage devotion to the company's profits is enormous. But Conrad's, Carlyle's, or Orwell's hyper-masculine worker also labours for the owner of a ship, monastery, or mining firm; his labour serves others while his Work serves himself. The 'tragedy' of life simultaneously naturalizes and conceals service to the ruling economic class. The ideology which equates exacting labour with masculine affirmation only becomes tenable when the intrinsic value of Work is kept isolated from its economic counterpart.

The toughness of the worker's gendered role is often matched by a lack of intelligence. However, it is not obviously true that Conrad, Orwell, and Carlyle celebrate the stupidity of manual workers: a lack of intelligence is often meant to signify Wisdom. Yes, Carlyle says that "difficulty and work" make for an "almost stupid" person, a person dependent upon those who "can articulate" (*Past* 23). Orwell, despite believing in working-class politics, agrees that workers need the guidance of the middle class. In Conrad's *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, reflection leads to self-interest, irrational chaos, and the disintegration of the social fabric,

whereas the body's activity leads to social integration. Singleton, the best of the crew at its best, is mute, "unthinking," "easy to inspire" (31), and instinctually driven to duty. The positive, regulating properties of physical work are also sanctioned by a metaphysical mandate. Through "the perfect wisdom" of the sea, the crew is "not permitted to meditate at ease upon the complicated and acrid savour of existence." Rather, the sea "commands toil to be hard and unceasing" (80). Conrad and Carlyle especially imply the childishness of workers, represent sailors or factory workers as "big children" (17), shelter the working class from valuable economic criticisms, and accordingly prescribe a severe paternalistic stance for the 'superiors.'

But stupidity is not the same thing as 'simplicity' or 'uneducated.' Engineering and navigational skills for Marlow are sufficient "to save a wiser man" (*HD* 70) from being paralyzed by self-consciousness or mobilized by self-interest. Simplicity is not shameful if the results of studied and advanced intelligence are primitive urges systematically pursued. The consequence of fixing simplicity to Wisdom or Work, however, is that entrained in the coupling is a blind devotion to mind-numbing *labour*. It might be Work for Conrad, but it is bought labour-power for Singleton's employers. Conrad can only validate the simplicity of workers by keeping them totally isolated from the economic structure. The place where Work occurs, the sea, is unreconciled with and entirely different, historically and symbolically, from the operation engaging that work, located on the land. Invocations to manhood and simplicity, to Work, occur as if they had no economic meaning, that capitalism had never reached the sea. Manly endurance and uncritical obedience may have been virtues in themselves, but only in themselves; otherwise, they were virtues contributing to the demise of the 'moral economy.'

Work and Rationalism

It is not the slumber of reason that engenders monsters, but vigilant and insomniac rationality.

Deleuze and Guattari

But such is the advantage of representing a self-contained *gemeinschaft* community of non-rationalist Work, despite the outer presence of rationalist institutions and systems surrounding and setting up that community, but never penetrating it. The sites of Work in

Conrad's fiction have a protective coating of isolation and antiquation covering them – a hermetic seal which disallows any economic discourse. The work performed there is entirely non-rational, even anti-rational. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow and the foreman jig and “behaved like lunatics” (60). Their actions match much of Johan Huizinga's definition of play. The dance is “devoid of purpose, not bound by logic.” It is “outside the sphere of necessity and material utility” (Huizinga 119, 132). Marlow's personal project is *not* to bring everything under rational control: Kurtz's irrationality is very different from a non-rational jig. Conrad maintains a distinction between irrationalism and non-rationalism that is lost under the aegis of industrial and economic functionalism. The jig scene is also in direct opposition to the formally rational, the systematic: the charts of the Accountant. It shows that formal rationality confronts Marlow as something external to him, further away than his heart of darkness.

In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, Captain Allistoun's peccadillo, his “secret ambition” to be “mentioned in nautical papers” (36), is not a rationalist fault. Though it leads him to drive the ship with an overgrown sense of ambition (and maximize profits for his employers), he acts to satisfy his ego. Singleton alone might be faultless in his continuation of the old art and practices of seamanship that defy rationalist organization, modern technology, contracts, and so on. He is superstitious and unadapted to life on the land. Besides invoking feudal values, Conrad represents the sailors as children and the officers as paternal in order to contrast a metaphor of the family and the psychology of heredity to rationalist business. The fact that the ship operates best under chaotic, threatening situations overturns the liberal-rationalist idea that the organization of society is a scientific problem with an administrative answer. Liberal-rationalism insists that rational calculation, a planned society, eliminates disturbance: part of an assumption about the perfectibility of humankind. Conrad rejects the feasibility of the rationalist society because of an anti-Rousseauian, tragic sense of life which understands nature and human nature as uncooperatively unpredictable. His organicism, as Avrom Fleishman notes, challenges and rejects the idea of classic liberal theory that the individual is a “rational being who could be depended upon to know his self-interest and to act on it in predictable ways” (52). Liberal

theory, which also assumes that self-interest accrues benefits for the public good, is in every way antipathetic to Conrad's anti-rationalist organicism.

But his *Narcissus* operates in situations far removed from the threat of economic rationalism. Non-rationalist work provides an alternative to the rationalist, moneyed society associated with the land, but the community he depicts on the water works as if entirely oppositional or resistant to it. Conrad represents Work as a contest with nature, not an economic struggle, not a competition between persons, not a fight against the predominance of rationalist systems. The critique of rationalist economics (in super-economic terms) is never in doubt: it appears when the payclerk, a representation of the rationalist social order, calls Singleton a "disgusting old brute" and Donkin an "intelligent man" (140, 141); it appears as technology leaves tradition "devoured and forgotten" (31); it appears when the "invisible hand" that recalls the crew back to their "duty" (106) demands self-sacrifice and not self-interestedness. The criticism takes place on the land and implicitly whenever moral Work takes place, but it is not directed at economic institutions. Conrad's complaint is directed at the threat of economics penetrating the moral idea of Work. Finally, his critique of economization does not confront rationalist economics so as to recognize the economic function of the *Narcissus* itself.

Behind Conrad's criticism dwells a pragmatism that never questions the organizations and institutions it serves. Economic issues never surface when moral Work is underway, as if moral Work precludes the idea of wages, profit, capital: as if the economic society runs only in the recesses of the moral one. But the economic society runs nonetheless. Conrad avoids the contradictions that become manifest when economics, the profits of shipowners for example, undermine the moral idea of Work. He may censure the quantitative values of a commercial, material, rational society, but his merchant marine vessels nonetheless carry cargo. The pragmatic Conrad knew that the "British Empire rests on transportation" (NLL 202). Along with Orwell, he would raise more than an eyebrow at any flighty protest for a friendly economy. But that pragmatic ethic or voice, preserved for the non-working class, is pushed far into the

background when the stage belongs to moral Work, the work demanded from the working class (sailors in this case), as it mostly does.

Fleishman rightly observes that

Conrad's nautical pieties: subordination to authority, devotion to the given task, fidelity to comrades, identification with the mariner's tradition of service, acceptance of the difficulty of life within destructive nature, and the manifestation of effort and courage . . . have the effect of rationalizing the status quo by extending the relationship of a work situation to political life generally. (73)

Such an extension is made, though the extension between the work situation and economic life generally is not.



Though Conrad's nautical pieties act directly as political standards, they can only be claimed by removing the metaphor, Work, from the artificiality of contracts. If society / work is based on a contract, as the crew's or Marlow's work ultimately is, then there is little room left for organic spontaneity. Conrad may pursue the idea that the polis is the supreme end of Work, as does Hannah Arendt, but he arrives at the point by partitioning off and concealing the economic base and operations underlying it. Both Conrad and Arendt maintain that craftsmanship imparts continuity to humanity over time, a kind of historical organicism. Both of them lament the transformation of 'work' into 'labour' under modern production. They question and reject the 'rationality' of a utilitarian ideology which conceives of production as temporary, merely the means for further production (reducing it to 'labour'). And both of them regard work as finding full meaning in the polis; that the purpose of work, of the *vita activa*, is to develop and organize society. Though Conrad would not deny that that society would involve a good deal of pragmatic economics accompanying these more high-minded principles, his representation of a moral society, of Work, does.

Terry Eagleton bases his criticism of Conrad on a perceived split between organicism and a "sometimes solipsistic individualism – a metaphysical skepticism as to the objective nature of

social values . . . a view of human societies as essentially 'criminal' organizations of selfish self-interests" (*Criticism* 134).⁵ But Eagleton assumes that the individual and the social whole, the polis, are at odds as a matter of course and refuses to admit that Conrad's rejection of the social whole is simply the rejection of a warped, rationalized social whole. Eagleton also refuses to admit Conrad's distinction between aloneness and individualism.

The dominant disjunction in Conrad's work is not between the polis and the individual, but between ideal values and the ugly realities they support, or between moral Work and pragmatic economics. The gap is not furnished in the slightest by an appeal to the organic fellowship of the merchant marine service: organicism has nothing to do with the reason why the *Narcissus* is on the water in the first place and is not the only thing which keeps it afloat. The only way to ratify either moral Work or the material undercurrent is to treat them in mutual exclusion. Conrad was certainly attracted to the British 'practical bent of mind.' Pragmatism was so important to the tradition of English cultural socialism that the alternative to pragmatism is work, albeit 'moral' and not utilitarian. Like Orwell, Conrad rejects economic thinking; but he rejects the idea of rational agency *and* the idea that the individual is incapable of independent decisions, a mere cog of the commercial machine. He antagonizes both the right and the left because his individual, the one who works to be 'one of us,' is decent, not self-interested, despite the indecency which surrounds him.

⁵If Conrad's letter to Cunninghame Graham were not so obviously sardonic, a criticism of what is as opposed to what might be, Eagleton would have very strong evidence for his assertion. Conrad writes, "Man is a malicious animal. His malice has to be organized. Crime is an essential condition of organized life. Society is basically criminal – otherwise it would not exist. Egoism saves everything – absolutely everything . . . And everything holds together. That is precisely why I respect extreme anarchists. 'I wish for general extermination' – Excellent" (quoted in Najder 251). In a sense, Conrad's 'land' in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, and the Congo in *Heart of Darkness*, is based on organized malice and organized egoism.

Conrad and the Art of Work

Conrad assigns to the art of writing the value of Work and explicitly contrasts it to the language of science and facts. In *Lord Jim* Marlow reflects on Jim's situation by saying, "They wanted facts! Facts! They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything!" (27). He picks up from Carlyle and Dickens what Orwell would adopt in his turn: a distrust and disregard for the clean mechanics of scientism. In "The Ascending Effort" (1921) he writes that any attempt "to league together . . . science and the arts" is not only unforeseeable but also undesirable (*NLL* 73), confirming the antagonism between rationalism and non-rationalism which pervades his fiction. Conrad treats art and science as adversaries; science, including the human sciences, is an inadequate barometer for the unpredictability of humankind. In *The Secret Agent* (1907) he satirizes the public's overvaluation of science by imagining the outrage caused by blowing up time, the premier discourse of rationality. Throughout his career he took the stuffing out of a "world which prides itself on being scientific and practical, and in possession of incontrovertible theories" (*NLL* 241) with style, the very inscrutability of his imagery and *brooding* of his prose.

Richard Ambrosini argues that Work in Conrad is a trope used to "synthesize the aesthetic and moral implications of his artistic intention" (17). The union between artist and worker, in fact, brings us back to Arendt's definition of 'work.' For Arendt and Conrad both art and Work demand an active life, service, and duty: to "forget one's self" and to sacrifice one's self to the community (*Mirror of the Sea* 30). Both artist and worker enrich themselves with tradition, and by embracing traditional forms are exacting, drawing out the best in the committed. Both art and Work last, creating a feeling of fellowship with all of creation over space and time. Labour-goods are instantly consumed. Both art and Work also foster self-realization. And both create transcending beauty.

The "Preface" to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* includes an affirmation of the symbolist / impressionist manifesto 'art for art's sake,' but the context in which it appears entirely reverses

the gesture towards amorality common to *fin de siècle* aesthetics. The emphasis in the essay, rather, is placed on process as opposed to product, effort as opposed to item. Conrad writes that the "motive . . . may be held to justify the matter of the work" (12). The parable of the "labourer in a distant field" confirms an anti-rationalist position in its traditional imagery. The worker "has tried" but failed at his given task. He is still worthy of praise because his aim was not "the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion," in maximizing the outcome (14). Such "an avowal of endeavor" (12) along with the connection between writer and worker, transforms the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' from a self-indulgent, anti-utilitarian relativism to mean 'Work for Work's sake.' Art, as in the aesthetic creed, is not to be regarded "for immediate profit, demands specifically to be edified, consoled, amused" (12-13). But unlike the aesthetic creed, art has value in the same way that Work has intrinsic value: it has moral value, that is, because it is not performed to maximize ends.

Even insofar as Conrad borrows from the avant-garde, from impressionism, his language is not, contrary to Fredric Jameson's argument in *The Political Unconscious* (1981), a strategic device employed to transform realities into pure style, to derealize, to aestheticize and thus evade social reality. The Marxist dismissal of modernist style as categorically expressing decadence and displacing history is dogmatic enough to reveal the shortcomings of a legacy of asceticism and rationalism. To justify his assertion about impressionism's dissemblance, that the impressionistic text conceals real economic determinants, class stratification and conflict, Jameson discusses the boiler room scene of *Lord Jim*. The scene runs as follows:

short metallic clangs bursting out suddenly in the depths of the ship, the harsh scrape of the shovel, the violent slam of a furnace door, exploded brutally, as if the men handling the mysterious things below had their breasts full of fierce anger: while the slim high hull of the steamer went on evenly ahead. (20)

Instead of recognizing that this is a representation of labour, Jameson believes its presence is "muffled . . . easy to ignore (or to rewrite [for the reader] in terms of the aesthetic, of sense perception as here of the sounds and sonorous inscription of a reality you prefer not to

conceptualize)" (215). The language may draw attention to its own aural qualities, but what is so airy about 'metallic,' 'clangs,' 'violent,' 'harsh,' 'scrape,' 'brutally,' or 'fierce'? Labour's sounds are also juxtaposed to the 'even' and calm language which describes life above the workplace. Still, even if the sounds draw attention to themselves as artistic and aesthetic, does it necessarily follow that the reader will be distracted from the content? Is it not as likely or even more likely that the content – the demands made on labour to ensure the ship's business – will be underscored through the attempt at descriptive atmosphere? Jameson discounts the amplification of meaning which aesthetic form confers to content in order to show the inward configuration or artificial boundaries of the 'ostensible' text. Only then can he reveal that *Lord Jim* has an unwritten subtext of class contradiction to which Conrad remained impervious.

The sentence which follows the description of the boiler room – the steamer "cleaving continuously the great calm of waters under the inaccessible serenity of the sky" (20) – contains another juxtaposition, this time between hard 'c' and soft 's' sounds: between steamships (the *Patna*) and nature. The conflict is not really between man and nature, but between modern mechanization and traditional sailing. Steamships can 'cleave' the ocean under a 'serene' sky; a sailing ship cannot cleave water without cooperation from the sky (without wind). The sounds refer back to the unnaturalness of the technology and the rationalist system from which it developed. Impressionism can accommodate political form. When cleared of its hyper-subjectivity, and the example above is much too rudimentary to be thought of as self-involved, impressionism challenges rationalism, for if a process is to be rationalized it has to be systematically represented. Conrad, whether temporally Romantic, Naturalist, Realist, or Impressionist, or an amalgamation thereof, uses style to counter the systematic.

In "The Novel as Art Form" (1993) Jim Reilly finds Conrad's 'yarns' "disingenuously dubbed." Citing Benjamin's *Illuminations* (1955), he argues that the proverbial wisdom implied by the oral narrative structures is "transformed by all the relativizing, problematizing devices which are [Conrad's] decisive contribution to emergent modernism; hesitant and fractured telling, writing which writes within the agonized intuition of its own lack of reference, evocation

of the moral opacity of a world congealed into secret and deceptive forms, a radical indeterminacy of meaning" (59). Conrad may frustrate traditional orality, but the stylistic innovations primarily counter the clinical discourses of rationalism and scientific logic. Moreover, oral narratives ought to be more convoluted than written ones – most people talk in run-on sentences punctuated – at best – by dashes. Benjamin himself argues that, the "storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work – rural, the maritime, and the urban – is itself an artisan form of communication, as it were. It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report" (91). An oral structure enables Conrad to speak for tradition and against mechanical rationality.

Conrad's rejection of the language of rationalist science, of scientism and scientific management, of any attempt to define and thus limit the unwieldy, plural shape of humankind, was complete. He did, however, speak of science as Orwell spoke of technology; i.e., with resignation. In 1897, he wrote:

You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is a tragic accident – and it has happened. You can't interfere with it. (Quoted in Karl, *Modern* 200)

Conrad's style does interfere with it, but when Conrad wrote he played the role of a moral worker, miles away from the shores of rationalism.

Modern Work

Introduction

What was almost conventionally accepted by the 1930s to be a contradiction between repressive managerial discipline and a defence of Work was quite easily 'resolved' for the generation tutored on Carlyle and Conrad. Both Carlyle and Conrad maintain that a worker who respects discipline and practices self-denial accrues psychological freedom and intrinsic satisfaction precisely from that discipline and self-denial. Only the more pervasive contradiction between the consideration of modern economic relations and equally vehement sermons on the Gospel of Work remains entirely irrecoverable: non-dialectical because neither side is qualified by or confronts its opposite. Carlyle and Conrad treat Work as if separate from its context and its effects, modern economics. The dislocation of Work and the traditional order it represents is also at the heart of the Orwellian inconsistency. Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell do not deny that labour (and what it represents) exists, but behind the disjunction between Work and labour or moralism and pragmatism in the texts I have examined is an assumption of the individual's imperative to subordinate or overcome history, to treat it as that which can be surmounted by moral determination: to get Work from labour.

The apotheosis of Work as an end in itself, however, countered the apotheosis of work as contoured by the ascendant bourgeois class. The latter stood to gain extrinsically from proselytizing work as the labourer's keystone to intrinsic rewards. It seems everyone but the economists represented work as noble and sacred: Carlyle and English cultural socialism to promote non-rationalized Work and a society modeled upon it (a 'moral economy,' artisanal, traditional, and socially rigid) and the bourgeois either to foster an ideology that mobilizes society towards production and has workers diligently labour or to promote their own image. The money to be made by the emerging middle class by capitalizing (on) Work meant that they had to go against the grain of economic theory, which argued that work was a disutility, that it was all just labour. This same group would go with the grain of economic reasoning when

justifying working conditions that kept profits high and erased the possibility of an intrinsic reward.

But around the turn of the century a group of economists, the neo-Classicalists, threw a spanner into these already cranky works. Before them 'economics' primarily signified the production of goods: value (of the product but with further reaching cultural implications) was thought to be the result of the labour that was embodied in production. Instead of emphasizing production and assuming the consumer to be the mere means to further it, the neo-Classicalists focused on theories of consumption. In *Consuming Desire* (1988), Lawrence Birken argues that 'value,' in economic theory and the dominant social outlook, became "simply attached to objects by the subjective desire of consumers," no longer the "result of social labour nor the social need for products" (32). Though Carlyle and Conrad document a growth in consumerism by denigrating cheap merchandise and the rise of advertising, their assumptions are founded on a productivist theology – for classical economists, a productivist technology. If Smith, Ricardo, Mill, and Marx basically ignored demand, Carlyle and Conrad vilified it. The diversion away from production politics was twice as crippling for the advocates of Work as for the theorists of labour. The fascination with the consumer affected the social understanding of economic relations in such a way as to confirm the economic dismissal of Work even in such rarified quarters as literary Modernism.

The neo-classical view maintains that value proceeds from the satisfaction of individual desire or the subjective perception of need. It corresponds to the theory of marginal utility, which states that the least urgent, the last and least wanted, or the marginal need determines value. Value decreases with increasing availability so that the value of water at the margin, in its usual abundance, is low. In the desert the value of water is greater than the value of a diamond. In consumerist theories, neither labour or Work, mechanical or creative activity, nor the primary function of the object necessarily imparts value whereas scarcity, psychology, theatrical display, fashion trends, culture, and individual taste do. *Homo consumeralis* replaces *homo faber* and *homo laborans* as the primary agent deciding value, not only price. This shift corresponds to the

transition of an economy based on land and then trade to one based on finance. Economic savvy was no longer rooted in supplying basic needs ('useful' items), but in tracking the psychological and ideological flux of desire, or in manufacturing desire. David Trotter argues that the transition can be evidenced between 1880 and 1930 in the rise of popular phrases such as 'the Age of Demand,' 'the Economy of Abundance,' 'Consumer Capitalism,' or 'the Retail Revolution' (11). It is critically documented in H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay*. Though the politics of production did not disappear because attention had shifted to the consumer, and though the majority of people in England in this period never felt the 'Democratization of Luxury,' the movement had cultural implications which were as far reaching as utilitarianism.

Before examining the cultural and specifically literary consequences of the shift it must be said that the consumer revolution was not very revolutionary. Birken and Trotter are right to draw parallels between the innovations in economic theory and a twentieth-century preoccupation with subjectivity and psychology, but the former unlike the latter still presumes the predictable rationality of human behaviour and its fundamentally economic base. Consumers, as with producers in utilitarian theory, are thought to be rationally self-interested, always maximizing their interests. The 'Assumption of Non-Satiation' and the 'Diminishing Marginal Rate of Substitution' posit that if the consumer stops buying one good, he or she will or must buy more of another good in order to maintain the same total level of satisfaction. Marginal theory assumes that the consumer will buy until the cost of the last good bought equals the satisfaction or utility that will be rewarded by the purchase. The mechanical logic confirms the principle of maximization and the association of that maximization to 'rationality,' despite the new emphasis on the consumer's idiosyncratic desire. Barry Jones points out that neo-classical economists answer the question "what determines this rationality of human nature" the same way classical economics answered the question: by "dismissing it as pointless" (27).

Even Thorstein Veblen's famous *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1934) assumes that the individual always acts so as to maximize or at least safeguard his or her interests, social standing, or reputation. Veblen, however, marks an important development in economic thought by

showing that *homo economicus* is submerged in his social relations, in the need to display consumer power, and in the urge to employ leisure as a signature of success even to the point where his behaviour is non-rational in purely economic terms.¹ Veblen, like Marx before him and Karl Polanyi after him, situates economics within the totality of society and assumes the basic non-economic nature of humankind. For my purposes, one of the more important implications of Veblen's thesis, given that he understands people to act rationally (to maximize) for 'irrational ends' (attracting a mate through Conspicuous Consumption) is to confirm Weber's thesis that formal rationality (the means) can lead to substantive irrationality (the end) – even though Veblen implies that formal rationality is irrational and substantive rationality (attracting a mate) is rational. If the free market operates rationally, then it does not follow that the ends are 'rational.'

But by assuming a general maximization hypothesis and a psychology of economic rationality, Veblen argues that anything desired and pursued that is not immediately necessary for basic life ought to be read as formal rationality, as maximizing self-interest. Not only is this conclusion precariously tautological, but it also imposes a strict homogeneity on behaviour. The question is not whether people conduct themselves as strategizing agents, but if they always do and when they do, if that behaviour is constructed, natural, chosen, or something not so neat. Veblen assumes that people subordinate all other impulses or choices to pursue the maximization of their interests as a matter of nature, but also argues that culture or collective concepts give shape to those interests and that the operation of human reason (which in pure rational choice theories is not different from animal reason) must be situated in a broader discussion of ideology. But even then, under the assumption of rationality, culture is reduced to the obstacles that rationality negotiates in order to maximize; culture, while structuring all instinct, never fully prevails as a fateful determinant of human contingency because it parallels nature. Civilization, one can only imagine, is content.

¹Veblen's theory problematizes the function of objects from the consumer's point of view: a candle is not for light but for suggesting mood. Carlyle, on the other hand, problematizes the function of objects from the producer's or worker's point of view: making a candle allows for self-objectification and thus self-realization.

Given that neo-classicalism assumes rationality, Trotter's claim that Modernism is "the literary equivalent of the theory of marginal utility" (67) has to be severely qualified. He uses Birken's theory to argue that the shift in emphasis in economic theory from a nineteenth-century focus on society to a twentieth-century focus on the psychology of the individual can be found in the organizing principles of literary Modernism. Nineteenth-century British fiction, though frequently capitulating to or even promoting utilitarian theory, more often than not argues the detrimental effects of assuming that rationality as a process is applicable everywhere. Although Modernism shares with neo-classicalism a fascination with psychology and private motivations and abandons for the most part the drama of the producer, it also rejects the assumption of rationality, either as a process or an end. It has been part of my study to demonstrate that the relationship between a prevailing economic theory and the literature of a given period is an uneasy one. In trying to coordinate historical movements into an episteme, critical theory too often ignores the maverick role art plays. Though the economic subject of consumerist theory is capricious, quickly shifting interest from one product to another, he or she always proceeds within the logic of the system, i.e., strategically. The subject in Modernism is marked by fragmentariness, a seeming arbitrariness, an erratic logic, and disjunctions having little in common with economic 'whimsicality.' The literary subject does not proceed with purposefulness, with a calculated objective towards maximizing self-interest – if he or she does, it is emphatically not for a rational end. Kafka's resignation, Beckett's paralysis, Camus's indifference, Pound's multi-directionality of consciousness, and Joyce's wandering hero on the one hand or Eliot's and Yeats's myths and Woolf's flickering of intuitive and total vision on the other do not suggest subjectivity ceaselessly pursuing self-advancement. The portrayals of formal rationality, of Eliot's Wasteland automatons, of Woolf's Mr. Ramsay and his misguided ambition, of James's conniving villains, serve to illustrate the irrational (substantive) character of the established (formal) rationality. Modernism's layers of myth and symbolic codes challenge the science-like character (the language of mathematics, econometrics, matrix algebra, and what-have-you) economics was developing for itself as it turned away from defining itself within other

disciplines.² Even in realistic texts – in nearly all of Lawrence, in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), or Kipling's "Mrs. Bathurst" (1904), the unknown, symbolism, Romance, epic forces, and the rituals then being investigated by anthropology, structuralism, and psychoanalysis penetrate and disperse rationalist causality and logic. Consumerist theories attempt to bring the idiosyncrasies of consciousness under rational control by finding economic logic, an economic man, in capriciousness. Literary Modernism represents what cannot be assimilated into rationalist models.

Rejecting formal logic, an exaggerated faith in reason, the dominant individualism, and schemas for creating a predictable world, the counter-enlightenment movement in which literary Modernism entrenched itself, however, retreated from the new economics and curled up in an anti-democratic, anti-industrial vision of society. Here culture, myth, and private reflection dominated society and a cultural elite dominated culture. The withdrawal from society may have been more extreme and complete than in earlier configurations, but withdrawal itself was nothing new. What was new was that in Modernism society was no longer separated and removed from Work. For the most part, Modernism bypassed the split between moral and pragmatic work where nineteenth-century writers (and Orwell) divided culture from society. Representations of work, moral or pragmatic, are conspicuously absent from the Modernist canon, though Modernists continued to segregate moralism and rationalism. The post-Victorians, Wells for example, represent different kinds of work, but fail to confront Work with economic reality just as Carlyle did before them. In this chapter I continue investigating the anti-rationalist tradition, the relation between economic theory and literary movements, and (primarily) the non-dialectical split between moralism and pragmatism. In this chapter, however, I am also interested in those who reflect upon the gap between moral and economic work, who posit the antinomic nature between Work and labour and prepare for a dialectic contest. In this section I look at Bernard Shaw, Thomas Hardy, Henry Green, and James Joyce. Though set this time in the post-

²Donald McClowsky argues that to this day economics cuts itself off from other fields of research. See his *Knowledge and Persuasion in Economics* (1994).

Victorian ('early modern') and modern ('high modernism') periods, a linear presentation of the argument, as will become obvious, is not greatly important to me. After the Victorian elevation of Work (the unqualified representation of Work and the negative though sometimes uncertain attitude towards labour) and the fin de siècle rejection of it, the Moderns were mostly silent when it came to work and labour, rewriting the term under which rationality was to be resisted as an exclusionary Culture. That culture opposed crass, trashy philistinism and materialism, but also threw pragmatism, specificity or reform, or what Eliot would call "Secularism," and Work out with the bathwater.

High Modernism and the Disappearance of Work

What 'purpose' they have is very much up in the air. There is no attention to the urgent problems of the moment, above all no politics in the narrower sense . . . In 'cultured' circles art for art's saking extended practically to a worship of the meaningless. Literature was to consist solely in the manipulation of words.

Orwell "Inside the Whale"

All art is propaganda. Neither Dickens nor the majority of Victorian novelists would have thought of denying this.

Orwell "Charles Dickens"

Orwell's direct and indirect critiques of Modernism and its claims to transcendence say as much about the politically active generation of the 1930s as they do about the writers of the 1920s. In the tradition of Carlyle and Conrad, Orwell uses Work almost symbolically to criticize industrial and social rationalization. But instead of a dialectical contest or contrast, he treats it as something to withdraw into, cut off from that rationalization. The anti-realist Modernists turned to myth, aesthetics, and culture to censure rationalism in society, treating withdrawal itself as an alternative to rationalism. They struck out against the discourse of Evolution and Progress by representing atavism and degeneration. Their vantage point to criticize the fragmented, self-interested society was a transcendent, contemplative moral authority. Perhaps mixed up with their rejection of everything pre-Modernist, Work was no longer part of the general opposition to society, labour, and economics. But the omission of Work entrained a rejection of the protest against the socially dominant form of labour and an acceptance of the economic assumption that work is necessarily a tedious routine, a disutility, a non-creative economic function, and

unessential within the realm of the private self. Undifferentiated from labour, Work disappears into the dirty, crass, tawdry cheapness of modernity. Only contemplation, the *vita contemplativa*, withstands rationalism, bourgeois utilitarianism and greedy materialism, or the degradation of violence, love, and mysticism that Eliot's juxtaposition of antiquity and contemporaneity attempts to invoke. The disappearance of Work, especially considering that Modernism was largely open to the promise of order, hierarchy, and authoritarianism common to the Gospel of Work, suggests either that the middle class had abused 'the work ethic' beyond repair, provoking Culture's dismissal, or that Modernism felt the need to divide culture from society in a way that protected Culture from the influence of traditional working-class culture. After introducing the proto-modern attitude towards work, which considered the Victorian Gospel a mere subterfuge for economic expediency and a reactionary fiat dictating moral duty, I will argue that Modernism's cultural avant-garde evaporated Work into labour, consumerist vulgarity, and rationalism in order to preclude the rise of that other (largely theoretical) modern phenomenon, the democratization of luxury.



The Modernist rejection of work was heralded by Samuel Butler's defence of luck in *The Way of All Flesh* (1903). Butler's very post-Victorian manner of undercutting the intransitiveness of a Victorian morality which demanded Duty to work and not duty to job 'x,' however, addressed the realm of necessity – something Modernism, I argue, lumps in with materialism and rationality. Around the turn of the century the floodgates opened. Wilde ("The Soul of Man Under Socialism" [1891]) and Wells (*Men like Gods* [1923]), for example, question work in an age that promised machines to take care of unwanted labour so that everyone could devote their lives to leisure, art, or contemplation. Bertrand Russell shares their point of view but also directly attacks the Victorian code of Work in his "In Praise of Idleness" (1932). Russell's essay combines equal parts of Freud (that the "road to happiness" is signposted by the Pleasure Principle and therefore "lies in an organized diminution of work" [Russell, 12])) and Nietzsche (that "the morality of work is the morality of slaves" [Russell, 14]). Happily

hedonistic, Russell assumes "modern technique" will allow everyone the kind of leisure that only rulers had previously enjoyed. He understands all moralists as abusive elites, using the creed of Work as a means to induce others to labour for them. Yet despite his rejection of Work, necessity and history are not, as in high Modernism, neglected. In fact, Russell very nearly bridges the concept of Work and the reality of labour, but for his denial that Work can be anything other than labour.

Out and out attacks on Work were first vogue for the Aesthetes of the 1890s. When Pater declared that art was no longer to grapple with moral or pragmatic issues, that it strives to create a counterworld politically unconnected with the objective one, Work was first to the whipping post. Though claiming amorality through 'pure poetry' and an aspiration to music, Aestheticism and the entire concept of artistic self-sufficiency was still moral insofar as it critiqued the prevailing morality. Work was vilified because it was akin to the busyboddiness of Victorian morality. Its overtones of order, strict behavioural codes and regulations, Action, and a gravity of purpose would not only pass judgment on sexual and lifestyle 'deviations' but would attempt to 'correct' them. The adoption of work by the bourgeois and Utilitarians, the way in which use-value was prostheticized onto it, also made it anathema to the Aesthetic cause, non-functionalism. In any case, Wilde quipping, "Work is the curse of the drinking classes," for example, has political content. Idleness, idealized in nearly all of his plays, shows the worthlessness of rationalist planning and attempts to expose the prudishness latent in proselytizing activity for activity's sake. Not only was flippancy an alternative to Work in the struggle against a hegemonic rationality, but *homo ludens* rose to challenge *homo economicus* and *homo faber* as if they were one. The post-Victorian rejection of Work was a rejection of the predictability and conformity created by rationalist societies, a society also rejected by Work enthusiasts, even though they meant to return to a traditional order and the Aesthetes meant to move far beyond it. Perhaps the advocates of art for art's sake could never tolerate the doctrine of work for work's sake because their creed also had a side – profit instead of labour – which

they had to demarcate from their artistic claims in order to keep Aestheticism pure, just as Work cannot exist in a context of labour.

Lytton Strachey's suspicion of work and energy in *Eminent Victorians* (1918) is in some ways the Aesthetes' Gospel of Counter Work, though it also embodies the post-Work attitude of the Butler / Russell School. His dismissal of the Work Gospel echoes Nietzsche's contention that work "keeps everyone in bounds" and reduces "everything individual" (*Reader* 233).³ Strachey understands the conflation of work and morality as consolidating restrictions on all deviation from repressive norms and restraints. Thus he attacks Carlyle's "unending energy" as facilitating a "reckless moral sense" (*Carlyle* 100, 102). And thus, in *Eminent Victorians*, all of his moral zealots are work zealots. Florence Nightingale, besides channeling libidinal energy into work, cannot separate her "moral and active self" (178). Cardinal Manning's intolerance and rigidity parallel his "zeal" and "enthusiasm" (11). Dr. Arnold's policy to initiate a return to religion and morality in the classroom, to restore 'family values,' is part and parcel with his insatiable work ethic. Mrs. Arnold, mother of ten, "no doubt" agrees that he has "unhasting, unresting diligence" (230).

Strachey, however, targets the idea of providential callings in *Eminent Victorians* largely in order to indict a culture that permitted opportunism to validate itself as divinely sanctioned Progress. All of his subjects claim a matter-of-fact determinism and believe that they are "allotted distinct work . . . a destined goal" (Gordon, quoted in Strachey 264). Manning "decided that he had received a call from God"; Gordon needs only "to discover what were the Bible's instructions, and act to accordingly"; Nightingale must decipher "that secret voice" and "do her duty"; and Dr. Newman cannot refuse the call to "take part in a whole succession of

³Strachey, Russell, and most of the post-Victorian thinkers owe a great deal to Nietzsche. Strachey's suspicion of religion is Nietzsche's suspicion and his reproach of the Victorian age, where "Even the atheists . . . were religious" (Strachey, quoted in Sanders 171), is Nietzsche's reproach. Nietzsche abhors the façade of Christian sentiment that Strachey ridicules in *Eminent Victorians*. Nietzsche, however, was not beyond all Victorianisms, including a disjunctive attitude towards Work and labour. He argued that, "For all kinds of sadness and misery of soul we should first of all try a change of diet and severe manual labour" (*Dawn* 250-51). But he also argued that labour is "the best police" (*Dawn* 176) against self-realization. For the most part, he too had lost the meaning of Work, seeing it as the Master's ruse and heralding the neo-classical opposition of contemplation versus rationalized greed.

schemes" (9, 258, 136, 82). Still, Manning 'decides,' Gordon 'discovers' the legibility of God's signs, Nightingale formulates and answers her own questions about duty before dressing for dinner, and Newman himself concocts the labyrinthine plot of an otherwise calculating divinity. In other words, the calling is not accompanied by a "flash and a roar from heaven" (106), but is a rationalistic, self-motivated, self-interested call to enterprise and fame.

Though Strachey acknowledges that his figures believe or try to believe that they have a vocation, he reduces the work ethic and non-rationalist Work (the calling) to egocentric priggishness, superstitious self-delusion, spurious humility, self-righteous intolerance, and above all, greed. Again and again he refers to the Machiavellian manner in which they prey on whoever stands in the way of success. Manning and Nightingale are 'eagles' and she "ravenous," a "tigress" (183, 173). General Gordon seeks "fame and influence" in the military world. In "reality," his "desperate . . . labour" is motivated by an attempt to position himself as if besides God – to be an earthly demigod ensuring "Events . . . go as God likes" (260-61). Gordon, then, rationalizes "violent excitements and extraordinary vicissitudes" in the name of complying with an inscrutable force (259).

The refutation of Work, eminence, and an endorsed vocation connotes a refutation of correct nature and conclusively normative sexualities not only because of Strachey's homosexuality, but also because of the way in which he represents absurd retreats into sexual sublimation. Gordon redirects "earthly desires and temporal temptations" (272) into a frenzied and fanatical work ethic. Nightingale's "possessed" "craving" for work more than suggests a displacement of "passionate fires" (165). Her sublimation engenders a ruthless and demonic work ethic and a desire to manipulate to the detriment and even to the death of others (of Sidney Herbert). If Nightingale's calling to save lives eventually leads her to destroy other lives in part due to sexual repression, the criticism of a transcendental duty acts as a criticism or acts simultaneously with a criticism of the fear of sex and the subjection of sexuality.



But Strachey's derision of work is pre-modern insofar as it is radically critical of order and custom and firmly based in history (i.e., an anti-metaphysical reality). The Modernist project is often a search for an epistemological truth that would negate the passage of time, such as Yeats's apocalyptic fantasies or his and Eliot's juxtaposition of antiquity and contemporaneity. But myth was not invoked solely to foil social freedom; it was also made to confront the materialism and rationalism of modernity. Yeats's nationalistic or demarcated Jungianism, for example, depends on a contrast between a feudalistic and a capitalistic age. Yet it is not Work that initiates a withdrawal from modern life. His representations of a rural, traditional Irish peasantry might contrast work and money (the modern, rationalist devil), but the work itself is toil and only serves to contribute to the temptations of modernity. Spirituality, magic, literature, imagination, intuition, home, landscapes are the effective alternatives to rationalism. In Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922) modern rationalized work has led to an "Unreal city," with men dead in their spirituality mechanically flowing under brown fog. In a wasteland environment, work is reduced to industrial engineering, scheming, profiteering, and value free instrumentalizing. This attitude towards rationalism speaks to a direct engagement with history, but again the alternative to spiritual dryness and corruption is spiritual contemplation, not Work. Anthropology, mysticism, and the Church replace Work as the contrary of rationalism, effectively negating any recourse to pragmatism and reform. Whereas Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell withdraw to Work against the tide of rationalist labour and economics, Modernism retreats to culture and contemplation. There is no better evidence to show the emphasis on contemplation than the Modernist subordination of events – action – to cerebral reactions. The exclusion of Work betrays an isolationism rife with a sense of entitlement far removed from the withdrawal and moral individualism underlying the division of Work and economics. Ironically, in "The Waste Land," withdrawal (contemplation) is made possible through a sharp incongruous cut, a device Eliot uses in the rest of the poem to convey social fragmentation.

In *Literary Modernism and the Transformation of Work* (1988), James Knapp skillfully argues that modernism was a "powerful kind of social analysis, rather than a quasi-religious

escape from the hopeless condition of modern history" (3). He suggests that scientific management and modernist fragmentation "might be brought together in ways which call into question the view that modernist writing tended to suppress historical reference and engagements" (14). Though he admits that Eliot evades history and that Pound abuses history, his argument is tenable insofar as, one, Modernists were as vocal in their critique of a rationalist society as the Victorians before them; and two, sensuous, complex language does not necessarily signify the whitewashing of history. But he does not mention James, Beckett, Woolf, Forster, Hulme or discuss Yeats. More importantly, he does not come to terms with the absence of Work in modernism, even though he focuses on its technical rationalization. Modernism may have been sensitive to the fragmentation of modern labour practices, but the fragmentariness of the style, considering the glaring absence of Work, is much more likely to represent a general fragmentariness in society (caused by secularism, for example) than work rationalization.

It is possible that Beckett had rationalized labour on his mind when in nearly all of his plays his characters strive to find or insert a bit of variation into the repetitiveness of their lives, or be defeated by that repetition. In "Quad" (1984), for example, slight changes in the performers' routines act as to resist the mechanized, machine-like repetition that seems to resemble factory work. But the protest against rationalism is not specifically directed at work rationalization: political fascism or simply the philosophical struggle against habit is more likely to be placed in contrast with a need for variation than the daily grind of the working class. Whereas Carlyle finds in habit the "source of all Working, and all Apprenticeship, of all Practice and all Learning" (*Past* 129), Beckett finds only "the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit" (*Proust* 8).⁴ Beckett is not the best example of a Modernist who spurns the proliferation of consumers, where this discussion on the disappearance of Work is leading, but his attitude towards work is typical of their bent for contemplation. Belacqua finds that the "antidote" of

⁴Henry Green's *Living*, which I discuss later, is a distinct anomaly in the Modernist canon because it locates dignity and nobility in the repetitions of working-class life.

work, "depending on its efficaciousness on mere physical exhaustion," deserves "the greatest contempt" ("Ding-Dong" 40).

Notwithstanding a brilliant chapter on *Ulysses*, Knapp is so involved in a Foucauldian search for a "subtle, calculated technology of subjection" (Foucault, quoted in Knapp 11) that he ignores the obvious absence of Work in Modernism and the attitude, which Woolf epitomizes, of having outgrown social criticism. Though it is true that, as Lukács had said, the modern critique of machine production must confront "the subtler dangers of a more pervasive, inward redefinition of the very subjectivity of . . . workers" (Knapp 11), one must begin by representing workers to see their subjectivity redefined. And it was *not* the nineteenth century that exclusively limited debate to the moral and aesthetic consequences of work rationalization. Rationalism in *Hard Times*, for example, is all-pervasive and whether it was born in the factory and seeped outside or vice versa, it dilates into nearly every aspect of Coketown, including consciousness. Modernism's complaint against ugliness, on the other hand, is primarily directed at the size and impact of mass culture; a complaint against the effects of class elision as much as against the effects of rationalized industry. From Carlyle to Orwell we have seen nostalgia for morality structures that would circumvent the proliferation of cheap goods. But only Modernism treats the effacement of class division and the spread of rationalism as one and the same. Carlyle shares Yeats's and Eliot's complaint (in "Meditations in Time of Civil War" [1928] or "Sweeney Erect" [1920] for example) that violence was losing its greatness, its class, its stability and with Eliot felt that it had declined into an ugly state of mechanical and indifferent brutality (*Past* 191). But in his recensions of the past, say in *Past and Present*, which are as reactionary as in Modernism, Carlyle represents Work as the alternative to rationalism, implying that anti-rationalism is fundamental to the working class and making it accessible to them. Orwell, as I have tried to show, goes further than most in championing working-class culture precisely because it is anti-rational. English cultural socialism depicts the working class as having special insights into Work. In Modernism the alternative to rationalism is Art, and specifically art which was alien to the mainstream population. If Modernism raises the question of modern work, it is

only to censure the proliferation of its aesthetic shortcomings, which Modernists yoke to a mobocracy dictating the market. The proliferation of consumers and not the work rationalization takes the brunt of the criticism.

The threat of the consuming mass, a group ratified in neo-classical theory by the 'fact' of their purchasing power, was mostly a perceived threat: the mass was still mostly poor (Trotter 11). But unlike the Aesthetes who welcomed this perceived change in consumerism (a change largely ushered in by economic theory) because it promised an always-right consumer who ignored use-value and bought for the sake of buying (the necessary flipside and precondition to art for art's sake), the Modernists downgraded the new consumer into a parvenu. Modernism's objective was to sell its items on its own terms, to challenge the expansion of the marketplace but still make a buck. Perceiving that the new, 'vulgar' consumer – a post-working class amalgamation of the traditional working class (or 'proletariat') and the lower-middle class (retailers, bureaucrats etc.) – could determine the cultural marketplace, Modernism was to rarify itself beyond quick consumption.⁵ Its value was to be defined by its rarity, in creating a higher demand by making the supply of meaning low. Instead of serving the 'tawdry' mass market, it would meet its needs by creating specialty markets. The democratization of luxury implies that the working class, or at least those who were once the working class and became the 'mass,' was the new consumer. Validating Work, a fixture of working-class culture, would be the equivalent of validating the consumer. No distinctions were made between Work and labour because even though they are the opposite sides of the same coin, that was not the coin, the purchasing power, Modernism wanted to attract and service.

In other words, the highly specialized, opaque, and deliberately difficult style and subject matter of high modernism was not merely the aesthetes' distaste for the language and manifestation of capitalism or a disguise and denial of its own commodity status. Modernism's formal experiments with language and material target the quantitative increase in commodities

⁵ Orwell understood more than most that the working and middle classes were merging, especially in their consumption habits (*CEJL* 3: 22-23). Modernism's antipathy for 'the new consumer' was a double-barreled attack on the working class and the lower-middle class.

available to the 'masses' and indicate a bitter refusal to allow everyone into the market where they shopped. Ironically, Modernism's position was part of the same epistemological movement as marginal theory, an auxiliary to consumerist theory. As said, marginal theory argues that value decreases with increasing availability. Modernism, not readily available or retail friendly, positioned itself as the glass of water in the middle of the arid desert so that it could sell at an inflated price.

Modernism failed to acknowledge Work when it presented culture as an alternative to the individualism, rationalism, materialism, commercialism, and all that is vulgar, degenerating, transitory, fragmentary, and dirty in modern life. They guard against the rationalization of human relations, but where is there Work in James or Woolf? For that matter, where is there labour? James repeatedly implies in his essays that 'centres of consciousness,' insofar as they are to be 'lucid reflectors,' must have the kind of refined sensibility not available to the lower classes, even if the centres are to be slightly bewildered. He argues, for example, that the "immediate" drama of "getting through a job" is not the "affair of the painter" ("Preface" 65). Orwell, always deeply pragmatic when handling specific subjects, argues that,

even the best writers of the time can be convicted of a too Olympian attitude, a too great readiness to wash their hands of the immediate practical problem. They see life very comprehensively, much more so than those who come immediately before or after them, but they see it through the wrong end of the telescope. (*CEJL* 1: 510)

Though the economic does not become entirely invisible in the Modernist focus on the private and mythological (even if it could be wiped clean from the art, it can never be wiped clean from all interpretations of the art), economics – class, wages, relations of production, etc. – was folded into culture's antithesis. The same, I have argued, is true for Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell: they also strictly demarcate economics and anti-rationalism. But Work was included in the sealed off compartments of culture, which, if it jeopardizes reform, does not seal off the working class, the majority, from culture.



The two poles of the Modernist evasion of history, the retreat to eternity, myth, and a sanitized antiquity on the one side and the withdrawal to an inner self on the other both assume that economics, which is not distinguished from Work, erodes and vulgarizes culture in the same way that Carlyle's, Conrad's, and Orwell's withdrawal into Work assumes that labour and economics erode Work. But Carlyle's group, and I now involve select Edwardians, not only included Work in culture, they struggled with labour in its own, specific terms. If the trend in Edwardian fiction was to be informed by some kind of exploration of the various strata of class and their potential to determine consciousness, Woolf's complaint against Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy might have less to do with a supposed reduction of character to the "fabric of things" than with the rooting of fiction to an economic dimension. Her representation of the unknowability of subjectivity and the eternal is not reducible to, but certainly related to an attempt to transcend class, specifically, the lower class. Her complaint against materialism is a complaint against the representation of white-collar, lower middle-class shopkeepers and clerks. The near refusal to depict character in an economic and social situation in order to find "the essential thing," to absolutely divide essentialism from environment, to downplay background, material circumstances, and whether or not Mrs. Brown works in "Doulton's factory" ("Brown" 327) – Woolf's Mrs. Brown would not – suggests that her agenda to shape the common reader included the denial of the common consumer. Woolf's initial reaction to *Ulysses* – "An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me; the book of a self taught working man, and we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating" (*Writer's* 46) – does not document her snobbery as much as it reflects Modernism's anxiety about the perceived tawdriness of working-class culture. She rejected a realism dominated by male perspectives and chose a literary form that emphasizes subjectivity and allows a female voice to be as experienced as any male voice that had come into direct contact with public work. Work, then, would be downplayed. But if form, literature, can have political content, then why criticize Wells for attempting to do the work of the government (someone's got to do it)? Her elevation of the private life draws lines between literature and the rest of the world that would dramatically

reduce the importance of her own writings. Woolf was politically committed to left-wing progress. That she was well-nigh preoccupied by the private, psychological dimension of experience in her novels suggests that Modernism made elitism and the disappearance of the consumer, labourer, and Worker its mandate.

The ebbing of Work under the anti-humanist, anti-Enlightenment school of Hulme and Eliot also involved vitiating Work and the activities of the working class and compartmentalizing them with crass materialism. By refuting the exaltation of the individual and insisting that 'man' is essentially bad, Eliot and Hulme divorced themselves from the rationalism or rational progress which the dominant social forces connected to work, but also from the idea that Work leads to intrinsic gain. Hulme thought that poetry should contain itself, soberly express a 'holding back' and avoid the 'infinite,' metaphors of flight and so on. Eliot added the doctrine of impersonality, conscious design, and confirmed the ban on spontaneous emotion. His insistence that the work of art ought not to contain the personality of the artist counters Carlyle's and Romanticism's, or Marx's and Lukács's, idea that in the object of work lies the expression, objectification, realization, and development of the worker.⁶ Opposing Work in this way is to judge all work as rationalized labour, as the attempt to maximize one's interests in the temporal world and through temporal world standards. For Eliot and Hulme, only the spiritual world is anti-rational. But, ironically, opposing Work as the means to self-realization is also reconcilable with Enlightenment skepticism, insofar as Enlightenment phenomenology claims the importance of seeing the object as it really is. Eliot and Hulme reject the principles of rationalism, not its sobriety, not its antipathy to the values of working-class culture. They show a willingness to accept rationalism as a process but not as a conclusion.



To be fair, Modernism's rejection of work and economics was not due solely to a stubborn elitism. If the Victorian and Edwardian, realist or naturalist writer tried to convey

⁶ Lukács contends that the working class sees an object as a process, the coming together of parts, whereas the bourgeois see the object as static, a purchased item.

human experience by representing Work and labour, the most ordinary of experiences, the modernist writer tried to convey the difficulty of representation itself, that the thing written is not the real thing. Since reality was no longer considered to be a self-evident construct, the emphasis on Work as that which structures reality had to be quashed. Even if, as in Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), a "single self, a real self" (*Orlando* 196) is still available, it is not susceptible to objectification through Work as with Carlyle or Marx. The development of character into a coherent self by a well-made narrative of Work – such as in the smooth, linear development of a *bildungsroman* (Naturalism depends on a narrative of labour) – is turned inside out by the new emphasis on the fragility of consciousness. If Work had once fixed identity, it had to be silenced, disappeared, in order to convey that identity is made up from random "scores upon the consciousness." Carlylean Work obviates or precludes the Modernist's interrogation of subjectivity, making the abdication of Work a precondition for the rendering of consciousness as volatile, fragmentary, purposeless, and multi-directional. Arnold Bennett's work ethic, his compulsive / obsessive tracking of the number of words he wrote daily and annually, along with his total annual earnings, for example, suggests a sense of will power, self-control, and purpose which goes against Modernism's skepticism about the stability of selfhood, the security of a reliable epistemology, and the possibility of rendering experience in its fullness. But if the subject who receives, shapes, and assesses "myriad impressions" is also shaped or framed by those impressions, why does Modernism, excepting Joyce and Green, exclude work as a fundamental part of those impressions? Orwell hazards an answer: "Was it not, after all, because these people were writing in an exceptionally comfortable epoch? It is just in such times that 'cosmic despair' can flourish. People with empty bellies never despair of the universe, nor even think about the universe, for that matter" (*CEJL* 1: 509). But it was not simply the realm of necessity that Modernism ignored or denied, it was also working-class culture. Modernism ignored Work because from its position that was a realm of freedom reserved for the working class.

The Post-Victorian Split

The Socialist is always in favour of mechanization, rationalization, modernization – or at least thinks that he ought to be in favour of them.

Orwell *Road*.

At this point I am taking a step back from high Modernism and returning to a more familiar expression of the rationalist / non-rationalist split. The non-dialectical rupture between Work and labour, which becomes a split defined to be solely between Culture and society in Modernism, continues for the post-Victorians in the same earlier vein that Carlyle, the Victorians, and Conrad share (and in the vein Orwell would later typify), with a slight change of emphasis from working-class labour to lower middle-class struggle. Though economics became synonymous with enterprise and the marginalist focus on the consumer in this period, it continued to represent the formally calculated, rational maximization of a substantially irrational end. Finance was now the opposite of work for work's sake and though subject to the same kind of scrutiny labour had undergone, it slides into the category of pragmatism just as 'labour' did before it. As pragmatic work, finance is kept entirely isolated from moral work. I use H. G. Wells as an example though it would be possible to apply the model to Bennett, Kipling, or Galsworthy. In the 'low' Modernist period – Forster is my example – the schism between Work and finance begins to drift into more rarified grounds where Culture supplants Work.

Wells's dual admiration for rusticity and technology leads Orwell, who was never himself consistent in these matters, to suggest that "vast contradictions" infuse Wells's work (*Road* 177). Orwell saw the split attitude in Wells as a struggle between science and romance.

On the one side science, order, progress, internationalism, aeroplanes, steel, concrete, hygiene: on the other side war, nationalism, religion, monarchy, peasants, Greek professors, poets, horses. History as he sees it is a series of victories won by the scientific man over the romantic man. (*CEJL* 2: 139)

Orwell, typically not self-reflexive, was correct, except that the scientific man is not always crowned. In fact, Wells at times saw the dangers of science in Orwell's terms, representing a "paradise of little fat men" (Orwell, *Road* 169) in *The Time Machine* (1895), or the Eloi who had

left all the physical work to the Morlocks. In *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910), technology is implicitly admonished by Polly's position as a hands-on jack-of-all-trades at the Potwell Inn. The world's first slacker when in the city, the work that Mr. Polly embarks upon in the country is 'News From Nowhere' work, potato digging and so forth.⁷ His Work is validated precisely because it is the opposite of technological labour, rationalist learning, utilitarian goals, and a scientific epistemology. Polly's duties span two pages of text as if to emphasize that a jack-of-all-trades is a position that is the complete opposite of the division of labour. He is also intuitively skilled at the work he embraces. He grows strong in the country and is able to fight Jim with a manliness not available to him in the city. In other words, Work, along with chivalry, questing, and combat, is part of the Romance genre missing from the prose of his everyday life. However, in *Tono-Bungay* (1909) and in his non-fiction, Wells is a self-appointed spokesperson for machines, for the "adventures of mechanism" (*Bungay* 254). Wells moves quickly and absolutely between endorsing rational science and romanticizing the imagination, between technological optimism and social pessimism (over decadence). The two sides of Wells, rationalist and anti-rationalist, pragmatist and sentimentalist, scientist and moralist, are in constant opposition in his writings. That dualism remains undialectical because Wells finds an escape hatch in what I have labeled moral individualism.

I will focus on *Tono-Bungay* and *Mr. Polly* because they more than any other of Wells's novels slip out of the contradiction between validating distinctly opposing values by withdrawing to the non-rationalist (non-maximizing), moral (self-changing) mindscape of the doer. *Mr. Polly* confirms this brand of individualism in contradistinction to the individualism of the businessman. The conflict in the book is simple: "modern business conditions," the ideology of "getting on," and the "hard old economic world" versus the imagination, Work, and a "healthy, human life": bookkeeping against books. Even Polly's departure from shopkeeping to the non-economic world is not a calculated, rationally chosen act, but a carefree leap into the unknown

⁷One of Polly's stranger jobs is that of "recovering the bodies of drowned persons" (183), the most urban of jobs in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. For Wells to associate it with romantic Work suggests that what was in Dickens's day cruelly urban had become pastoral nostalgia forty-five years later.

with little concern over whether or not something will turn up. Unlike Jim's failure to deal with reality in *Lord Jim*, an over-inflated romantic sensibility and idealistic expectations are not in any way to blame for Polly's disenchantment with the real. Wells's own sense of the determining power of the environment, and in fact the whole materialist movement in Post-Victorian fiction, is undercut by Polly's declaration that "If the world does not please you, *you can change it*" (172). The statement perfectly expresses the attitude of moral individualism. The individual is presented as capable of cutting himself off from an economic reality and material circumstances which were previously represented as ubiquitous, unremitting, and unforgiving. The history of Mr. Polly, before his escape, is an economic history. Polly's leap from a world where "things happened to me" into a happy, comfortable trampdom and peaceful, rustic living is generated by a moral commitment to break free from circumstance and necessity. The non-rationalist split from pragmatism and economics, the split which assumes that the individual can get beyond the rationalized world, voids itself of political content. Polly's escape from the economic world can only confirm the power of volition by creating a chasm between the two worlds of romance and economics. Polly becomes a "Visitant from Another World" when he returns to see Miriam (223). The discrepancy between his private utopia, where he lives life on his own terms, and the powerful economic and social determinism of his life as a lower middle-class shopkeeper reflects the same split between Work and labour, Work and economics, Work and pragmatism, or Work and necessity found in Orwell, Carlyle, and Conrad. The split remains non-dialectical in all four writers as they avoid having the opposites cancel each other out by withdrawing into a disinterested individualism.

The dualism between Work and economics or Romance and rationality continues in *Tono-Bungay*, even though, because of Wells's faith in rationalist science, the terms get mixed up. Work, George's flight of fancy, is written as a rational, technological, engineering enterprise: "the fine realities of steel" (9). In *Tono-Bungay*, skeptical science, aeronautics, and the dream of Progress replace 'Culture,' 'Art,' and 'Work.' With Woolfian overtones George admits that he regards science as the "enduring thing," as others see art (353). Edward,

furthermore, is a romantic, a dreamer; in fact, George rationalizes Edward's business by insisting on increasing efficiency and reducing production costs (119-20). The tension in *Tono-Bungay* is nonetheless familiar. On the one hand it explores economic activity and financial corruption and on the other hand it withdraws to romantic, imaginative, passionate, questing, moral Work. The disjunction between moral and economic work does not collapse in Edward and George Ponderevo; rather the dreamer and the economist in both George and Edward are not forced to confront each other. Though the reader is never allowed to forget that George's romanticized science is bankrolled by Edward's commercial success, his work is an escape, not affected by that money or by the need to market inventions, by pragmatic economics. In a similar way, Edward's economic scheming does not arrest the basically moral side of his character. At one time he is the petty egotist / capitalist selling waste and at another, the harmless comic hero. Edward is an attractive character, committing what are ultimately represented as the peccadilloes of a "child" (330). Whereas he is supposed to incite reader sympathy, the society that allowed him to become a fraud is held responsible for the wrongdoings. Just as the city is at one time "cancerous" and "sinister" and then "boundless" and full of "extraordinary life" (90, 94), or the flux and aimlessness of trade is countered by the exhilarating prospect of change, Wells has an ambiguous attitude towards George. A part of him manages to remain isolated from the economic realm that otherwise determines his entire character. Wells ultimately gets swept up by George's energy and the "Romance of Commerce" (62), not unlike Defoe's enthusiasm for his naughty Moll Flanders.

The incoherence and inconsistencies of *Tono-Bungay* stem from the same dualistic tendency found in Orwell, Carlyle, and Conrad. The main difference has to do with the shift, sparked by economic analysis or reflected in it, from an emphasis on the producer to an emphasis on the consumer. When Carlyle complains against advertising, the rise of Public Relations or planned obsolescence, it is from the point of view of someone who understands commercialism as an adjunct to the product. Wells understands value, at least when it comes to determining price, as determined by the subjective or ideological desire for the product, not by the labour

invested in the product. Instead of Work being contrasted to labour, then, Work is contrasted to marketing, business, capitalism, profiteering, finance, and consumption. Faced with the loss of the institutions that were thought to stabilize history – Work but also the church and marriage – Wells places faith in science and not in the return to the fixity of a rural aristocracy. But the division between Work (science and industry) and economics (finance and commercialism) resembles the more ‘traditional’ split between Work and pragmatics in that the worker, George, avoids pragmatism and the pragmatist, Edward, rises above it.



Wells’s belief in the redemptive value of a rationalist technocracy and a scientific elite, socialistic but politically authoritarian, places him awkwardly among a line of disjunctive Pragmatists / Romantics. That he was a radical balancing an anti-democratic platform with a program for economic socialism is not altogether a departure from the company in which I have placed him. Expressing faith in rationalism, however, is very alien to the group. The pragmatic / socialistic Fabian movement, of which Wells was as antagonistic towards as he was a contributor, marks the rebirth of a utilitarian and positivist schema that was the catalyst for much of the anti-rationalist writing I have discussed from Carlyle to Conrad. Fabianism is a child of Benthamism insofar as it is super-rational in its approach to gradual social reform, but a wayward child insofar as it contested laissez-faire policy. Contemporary socialism, in many ways, has been reduced to a Fabian idea of governmental involvement and the meaning of ‘liberalism’ has been transformed, in part through Fabian ideas, from signifying governmental silence to meaning social nets and the welfare state. Still, the prominent feature of Fabian socialism is its adulation of the fact and its application of the scientific method to social, economic, and political arrangements. It emphasizes practical, unvisionary efficiency rather than a moral imperative, experts and elites rather than popular opinions, and numbers above all.⁸

⁸Samuel Hynes points out that Beatrice Webb, despite having spent three weeks of ‘social investigation’ among the down and out, thought on class lines on all subjects not directly related to her socialism. She signed an anti-suffrage manifesto in 1889 and the National Council on Public Morals manifesto against “the degradation of racial instinct” in 1911. Hynes also notes that her prudishness and dislike of the lower classes was not against the grain of the

Beatrice Webb in particular has received criticism for her exaggerated appreciation of the scientific method, partly because she called herself a "Gradgrind" and asked that remarkably philistine question about literature, "what have the whole lot of them, from the work of a genius to a penny-a-liner, accomplished for the advancement of society on the one and only basis that can bring with it virtue and happiness – the scientific method?" (385), but also because her rationalism did not fit the feminine stereotype. But as Williams points out, Shaw's association with Fabianism "marks the confluence of two traditions which had been formerly separate and even opposed." Utilitarianism, in other words, was redefined by "the direct successor of the spirit of Carlyle and of Ruskin," Shaw, who was "telling Carlyle and Ruskin to go to school with Bentham, telling Arnold to get together with Mill" (*Culture* 181-82). The question, however, is if anyone in the Fabian school listened. I will discuss Shaw later, but the Fabians, despite him, had an amazing capacity to think solely in terms of economic man, recreating society as an economic enterprise. Art and culture or Work could only be incidental, not a factor to influence the serious planning and organization of society. The Fabians were not moral morons or philistines, but the movement speaks amazingly well to the enormous methodological split between moralism and pragmatism in the English attitude towards reform.



In 'low Modernism,' basically the Modernism which did not aspire to obscurantism and the avant-garde, the structural conflict between moral vision and pragmatic economics began to take on, in a widespread manner, the specifically Arnoldian terms of culture (knowing) and anarchy (doing), not Work and society. Perhaps Arnold's frame of reference gains precedence during this period in proportion to Fabian utilitarianism, but be it high or low, Modernism turned to Arnold and not Carlyle, Culture and not Work. Arnold's rejection of utilitarianism included work as part of all that is *vulgar*. Because Work no longer represented anti-rationalism, the working class and its culture or activity was identified as part of the anarchy otherwise reserved

Fabian cause (97). Orwell was correct to point out how far the Webbs were from the socialism they advocated (*Road* 153).

for the philistine, rationalist bourgeois. Consequently, Modernism not only sequesters (or ignores) all reform, economic, or political issues within 'Hebraism,' but it refuses to extend its ideas about itself to the political and economic systems from which it is based. Arnold was an inspector of schools, politically active in his day-to-day life, but he suffers from the tendency to strictly demarcate the cultural and social and to treat them as polar opposites – all the more so as he deletes Work from culture.

The return to Arnold in this period, however, is complicated by a fascination with individual consciousness and unconsciousness. Consumerist / marginal theory and psychoanalytic theory arrive at roughly the same time and to ascertain which came first or which was more influential on the other and in determining the course of Modernism is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the two theories are remarkably similar. Freud may have based his conception of consciousness on the irrational whereas consumerist theory sees only rationality, but even Freud attempts to explain in scientific terms the predictability of mechanisms that determine behaviour. Both theories placed emphasis on desire and the subdivisions of consciousness. Both consumerist theory and psychoanalysis are also interested in the social valuation of work, in the psychological dimension of economic activity (in prestige and the display of wealth or social contribution). Most importantly, both theories are organized around a pleasure principle. In fact, not only consumerist, but economic theory in general assumes work is undesirable and that people must be provided with external rewards in order to work. In contrast to Marx, work for Freud could not itself be a source of satisfaction. He speaks of a "natural human aversion to work," "that men are not spontaneously fond of work" (*Civilization* 30n; *Illusion* 9), and that work is a device used for necessary social coercion. 'Civilization' for Freud means a submission to the reality principle, to the undesired, to labour. Freud does not differentiate between Work and labour, revealing the same ahistorical gap in the thinking that vitiates both classical and neo-classical economics.

In its traditional or Carlylean form, Work obviates psychoanalysis. Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell all make the point that one of the advantages of Work is that it replaces introspection,

cutting short neurasthenia or any neurosis. For all of Freud's writing and his admission that work is the primary technique in sublimation or attaching "the individual so firmly to reality" (*Civilization* 30n), he rarely, with the exception of a footnote in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) and a paragraph in *The Future of the Illusion* (1927), speaks about work in detail. For Freud, the process of Analysis is in itself worthwhile, just as for English cultural socialism the process of Work is in itself worthwhile.

D. H. Lawrence's obsession with instinct on the one hand and his censure of industrialism on the other suggests that he has links to Freud *and* Arnold (his criticism of the sterile bourgeois lies somewhere in between), the former link being much stronger than the latter. The balance of the relationship is inverted in Forster. Lawrence was originally from the working class and had sympathies for their supposed earthiness and affiliation with hard, physical work. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Parkin, the gameskeeper, is juxtaposed to the soulless, effete, rationalist, Fabian intellectual Clifford Chatterley. Still, Lawrence's connection to Freud, not his understanding of labour, disrupts his attitude towards Work and the working class. It disrupts his Carlylean anti-industrialism;⁹ it disrupts his Marxian focus on class; it disrupts his Hardyean argument that an immediate contact with the earth imparts a sense of community, identity, and a special moral knowledge to the 'aristocrats of the spirit,' manual workers; and it disrupts his Orwellian argument about the importance of moral criticism, that we read to be morally affected, not to observe the finer points of style. As has been frequently said about *Sons and Lovers* (1913) (see Christopher Harvie's *Political Fiction in Britain* [1991] or Graham Holderness's *D. H. Lawrence: History, Ideology, and Fiction* [1982]), the class conflict between Mr. and Mrs. Morel is depoliticized and displaced onto the ahistorical, ephemeral terms of psychological turmoil. Similarly, Clara's political frustration is reduced to a frustrated sexuality. The spirit of Work which informs the text's early pages, the children getting "united with [Mr. Morel] in the work, in the actual doing of something" (63), is replaced by a narrative of sexual desire, Lawrence's locus for the non-rational. Hardy, sometimes reduced by critics to a kind of

⁹Williams points out the similarities between Lawrence and Carlyle in *Culture and Society* (200).

Lawrentian warm-up, maintains a link between Work and sexuality. The conflict between Mrs. Morel's bourgeois dream for her son to 'get on' and Mr. Morel's working-class roots is quickly overshadowed by a more decisive Oedipal conflict. In the initial conflict, Work and economics are contrasted, not split; in the substitution of Work and pragmatism for sexual psychology or instinct, the conflict between Work and economics is neglected – Work and economics are neglected.



If Lawrence absorbed a Freudian or psychological model which dislocates Work, Forster absorbed an Arnoldian or liberal model which ended in a similar result. Forster was burdened by a world dominated by business and sought to achieve an Arnoldian balance between Hellenism and Hebraism. To only connect – culture and economics, moralism and pragmatism, or simply with others – is the liberal plea, along with democracy, reason, and tolerance. Like Lawrence, Forster responds to the rank philistinism of bourgeois society, but questions the alternative to that philistinism if held in isolation, in his case culture (in Lawrence's sex), as Lawrence never did. First, he recognizes that culture exists because of money made without 'cultured' values and he faces the awkward questions regarding social justice that follow. In *Howards End* (1910), the Miss Schlegels acknowledge that the eight hundred pounds a year they receive makes their culture possible. Second, he admits that on its own culture becomes effete, as with Tibby, or impotent, as with Helen. But in *Howards End*, culture and economics are never reconciled: before Margaret, Henry was married to the original Mrs. Culture (Mrs. Wilcox) and was nonetheless able to operate as if divorced from her influence. There is nothing in *Howards End* to suggest that the connection between Margaret and Henry will curb or influence his economic behaviour. The only way that the reader knows that the Wilcoxes are sympathetic is through Margaret's assertions. Forster cannot seem to represent the pragmatists as anything but calculating philistines. The symbolic, personal relationship between Margaret and Henry acts in the place of a confrontation that would mitigate Henry's economic fanaticism, just as Lawrence withdraws to sex and instinct when faced with the opposition of Work and economics.

Forster's message in *Howards End* is the same as Gaskell's in *North and South*,¹⁰ that is, to connect male and female principles, materialism and spiritualism, age and youth, prose and passion, the world of contracts and love, economics and culture.¹¹ Just as in the earlier novel, the connection is sought above the social level where a connection might empower those who would benefit from a little morality in the economic sphere. Gaskell and Forster are aware of the contradiction in a world dominated by economic man who claims to carry Christian sentiment everywhere except into business, where it might be most effective. But Leonard Bast, the new version of the working-class man, has no place in Forster's blueprint to re-shape England: Bast is an infringement on and an inconvenience to both culture and money. He is not to connect with anybody, but rather to be superseded. He adds little more to the necessity of connection than being the unwitting occasion for liberal humanism and an indifferent capitalism to connect, exactly the role of industrial workers in Gaskell's novel. M. Eagleton and D. Pierce argue that, "the alliance of the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels suggests a rearguard action, a last attempt to sustain the class against internal decay and the advance of the Basts of the world" (*Attitudes* 102). It is a convincing argument, implying that Helen and Leonard's child is merely a purification of the world's Basts. Forster was a humanitarian, but he evidently knew little about the lower classes except that they do not fit into his idea of culture or economics. He does not think that the lower-middle class would be first interested in getting money. Though Bast does come to realize the value of the pragmatic, his instinct is to gain cultural experience. Bast reads Ruskin to improve his cultural sensitivity (which Forster represents as comically absurd), but could read him for Work or economics. It is only absurd that Bast is blind to those sides of Ruskin. A meaningful connection between thinking steadily and thinking whole could only take place at the level of the world's Basts, where those who labour (Henry only puts others to labour) could affect their own material conditions, whether it is what they do or what they do it for.

¹⁰That both heroines who initiate the connection between moralism and pragmatism are named Margaret suggests that Forster was resituating the 'only connect' story from an industrial context to a financial one.

¹¹ By adopting these types of conflict and setting them in the contemporary era, David Lodge in *Nice Work* playfully adds to this series of opposites. In many ways his novel casts a humorous shadow on most of the texts discussed in this thesis, not to mention the thesis itself.

The dismissal of the "very poor," the "unthinkable," those "only to be approached by the statistician or the poet," is more likely the narrator's (the narrator has a definite personality) flip concentration of subject matter than Forster's snobbery (45). It is, however, indicative of the elitist level at which the connection between moralism and pragmatism is to take place. This elitism, the nervous reaction to the 'crassness' of working-class turned consumer-class culture, the expression of disgust at advertisements for "antibilious pills," bridges low to high Modernism. In its defence of rural permanence, the diatribe against cars and the encroaching city, elements of radical anti-industrialism and social criticism connect with a reactionary nostalgia for conservative principles in the same way that reactionary values infuse the anti-rationalist high-ground of high Modernism. Even Forster's reaction to cars is problematic: he is obviously saddened that they, the harbingers of nature's declining status in modernity, are "here to stay" (in the same way that Orwell expresses sadness that machines are here to stay). In this sadness is the idea that, as with the city, cars mark the emergence of a classless society, insofar as all drivers have to follow the same rules. Again, Forster was a humanitarian, but he betrays an anti-democratic desire to shelter Culture from becoming a marketable item and thus open to the driving influence of the new consumer.

Howards End appears to make the argument that Carlyle and Orwell, for example, ought to connect their two disparate directions of thought, moralism and pragmatism. But when Carlyle and Orwell are pragmatic, they, for the most part, struggle inside the whale and challenge specific economic systems. Forster wants the world of moralism to accept Wilcoxian economics. He endorses a brand of rationalist, utilitarian, imperialist (the source of Henry's wealth), free market economics. Margaret's defence of Wilcox pragmatism means that she and the sympathetic reader must abandon criticizing the specific type of economics Henry follows, which is nonetheless obscure to begin with. Those are the economics which "have formed our civilization" (103). In other words, a socially responsible economics, and specifically socialism, is not to be considered as *pragmatic* whereas rationalist capitalism and an unregulated market are. Helen, who prepares to make a (presumably left wing) speech on political economy when

Margaret speaks to Tibby about the value of work (not Ruskinian Work, but bourgeois, utilitarian, Wilcoxian work), is entirely unconnected to the pragmatism of Wilcoxian economics – only Henry's economics are pragmatic. By having culture accept the Wilcoxes, Forster proposes that their economics are the only viable economics. The discourse of economics is once again isolated from culture (which had earlier been represented by the working class and its supposed affiliation to Work). The impact on economics culture is to have (by Forster's own definition – culture sees things wholly), does not include specific changes. *Howards End* does not propose to connect moralism and pragmatism, but to accept each in its time and place. By no means are moralism and pragmatism asked to *confront* each other, not even symbolically. Towards the end of the novel, Margaret asserts "It certainly is a funny world, but so long as men like my husband and his sons govern it, I think it'll never be a bad one – never really bad" (274). Just as Wilcox pragmatism remains on its own, Schlegel culture gains nothing from its opposite. At the end of the novel, Mr. Wilcox is absent. He has nothing to do with culture, is still allergic to it, and is not needed. In other words, moralism flourishes without pragmatism and pragmatism operates best independently of moralism. The locus for change in *Howards End* takes place only at the level of personal relations: it is never a dialectical change and it never insists on a need for social change.

Work and Labour

*Shew me a People energetically busy; heaving, struggling, all shoulders at the wheel . . .
I shew you a People of whom great good is already predictable.*

Carlyle *Past and Present*

Monday morning start afresh. Shoulder to the wheel.

Joyce *Ulysses*

Until this point, in the chapter and in the whole thesis, I have examined a group of texts which fail to bring together moral and pragmatic attitudes, specifically attitudes toward moral and pragmatic work under the shadow of work rationalization. Despite this shadow, the common way out of the very real opposition has been to assume that the individual can rise above circumstance and Work for its own sake. I have called this tendency moral individualism in

order to differentiate it from the rationalist individualism it counters and to emphasize that the individual is changing before his or her determinants change. At this point, I want to suggest several texts that identify and address this non-dialectical gap between the moral and the pragmatic. In dialectics, no viewpoint is absolute, but consistently subordinated to the "grand design of the dialectic as a whole" (Burke 25). In the post-Victorian and modern periods, Bernard Shaw and especially his *John Bull's Other Island* (1907), Thomas Hardy and especially his *Jude the Obscure* (1896), Henry Green's *Living* (1929) (especially), and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) (in a special way), all address or redress the opposition between moral and pragmatic work. Again, this is not a comprehensive survey. The texts have been selected because they are good examples of a dialectical approach to intrinsic Work and economic reality, not the only examples.



Orwell's criticism of Shaw, that he had an "admiration for dictators" (*CEJL* 3: 222), speaks more about Orwell's failure to historicize than about Shaw himself. Despite modeling himself after Shaw in his youth and taking a cue from him (and Jack London among others) to 'investigate' London's East End, Orwell was critical of Shaw, seeing in him a rationalist, totalitarian bent and a "hypertrophied sense of order" (*Road* 157). Orwell saw in Shaw an antipathy towards the poor, not only towards poverty. Shaw did not think socialism or democracy ought to be based on the "trash" proletarians capitalism created and argued for a dictatorship of the elite. He appealed to an intellectual aristocracy to lead England, as in *Heartbreak House* (1919), in a fashion similar to Carlyle's and Ruskin's appeal to paternal, manufacturing leaders. But Shaw's critique of Dickens's anti-democratic conservatism ("Hard" 338; also see page 120 above), suggests, despite Orwell's criticism, that he was not a reactionary moralist. His famous praise for Dickens in the same essay, that Dickens taught us to see that it is not our disorder but our order which is at fault (334), suggests, despite his membership in the Fabian movement, that he was not a militant pragmatist either. His belief in an extra-rational force driving human evolution has no relation to pragmatic logic and yet it did not prevent him

from addressing the nitty-gritty social and economic policies of his day. Shaw did not follow Wells in arguing for the rule of a scientific aristocracy, but argued for a 'well-rounded' one. His process at arriving at conclusions elevates dialectics itself, synthesizing (or demonstrating what prevents synthesis between) the pragmatic and action on the one side and thought, ideals, and the imagination on the other. He practices a sort of negative capability where all the various viewpoints expressed on his stage are credible. All viewpoints are created equal and though some viewpoints are more equal than others, the form of the play (the medium, here, really is the message) ensures a confrontation between ideas.

In *John Bull's Other Island*, feeling, instinct, intuition, passion, dream, revelation, sentiment, imagination, and all the values packed into Yeats's myth plays are juxtaposed to the material, practical world. Only a synthesis between Keegan and Broadbent, between vision and pragmatism, could lift Ireland out of its impoverishment. Broadbentism alone would bring temporary relief, but it would also destroy the uniqueness of the Irish character. Broadbent is an Edward Ponderevo figure: "a robust, full-blooded, energetic man . . . sometimes eager and credulous . . . mostly likable, and enormously absurd in his most earnest moments" (69-70). Both Ponderevo and Broadbent are romantic in a fashion, Broadbent in his sentimentalist inclination to be charmed by stereotypes. But as a pragmatist, Broadbent is legitimate: his business vitality is in its own way a value. At the same time, the Irish imagination is also validated as it rejects the planning, organizing, rationalizing tendency of the utilitarian onslaught. One meaningful stage direction has it that "a basket lies unmolested because it might as well be there as anywhere else" (107). Both epistemologies are also subject to criticism. Doyle accurately describes Broadbent's ideas as being "in watertight compartments, and all the compartments warranted impervious to anything it doesn't . . . understand" (83). The imaginative Irish, meanwhile, lack any economic savvy, save for minor scams, and thus any chance for autonomous reform.

I have discussed the coming together of these values in Forster and Gaskell, but unlike *Howards End* or *North and South*, merging economic pragmatism and the moral imagination in

John Bull's is a political, not a personal affair. Synthesis for Shaw is "a country to live where the facts were not brutal and the dreams not unreal" (*Bull* 88). If the Irish imagination were to correct British pragmatism and vice versa, the result would be Irish home-rule and the possibility of British economic satiation. And again unlike *Howards End*, the opposition between non-rationalism and rationalism reaches the level of Work and economics. The Irish Work (the Schlegels do not), they are industrious for moral reasons. What they lack is an economic sensibility. Whereas the Englishman "never does more than he can help . . . an Irishman will work as if he'd die the moment he stopped" (*Bull* 111). But Matthew and Andy Haffigan, for example, who work with "their own naked hands" and create a sufficiently prosperous farm out of it (a story which gets the approval of Broadbent, ideologically but not as physically committed to the work ethic as he is to the economic ethic) are turned out because they cannot pay rent, because they bought a spade before they considered their economic situation (111). The dilemma in the play, considering that both Broadbent and Keegan can appreciate English pragmatism and Irish fancifulness, the reason that no connection is ever made between pragmatism and moralism, is that Broadbent sees efficiency entirely as an economic concept (as rationalizing, maximizing, planning, and colonizing) and Keegan sees it as a moral and imaginative one. The result of reading efficiency as a moral concept involves authoritarianism, as it does for English cultural socialism (especially for Carlyle and Conrad); for Shaw, moral efficiency suggests revering worthy elites and "admiring the thoughts of great men" (160). But in *John Bull's Other Island* an efficient imagination also entails actively determining the influence that culture is to have on the economic determination of culture. Shaw, unlike Forster, thought in terms of sides in order to judge their social or ideological make-up and imagine a politically oriented dialectical collision between those 'sides.'



Shaw had the advantage of reading Marx. Hardy wrote dialectically, placing tradition and discovery, Work and education, loyalty and ambition, roots and mobility, and in a different category, freedom and necessity against each other, but in such a way that hints of a

stonemason's son attracted and repelled by the increasing pace of change in society. Hardy understands work in its traditional, moral sense. Agricultural work anchors his characters physically, spiritually, and culturally. It generates a reciprocal relationship between worker and land and a further interface of worker and tool. Elaine Scarry, despite arguing the difficulty of representing work, shows that Hardy writes "the materials of earth . . . as extensions of the human body" (68). Marx, in his early vocabulary at least, also regards the earth and the tool as the worker's extended body, emphasizing the alienation that occurs when property and ownership sever the worker and those extensions. Hardy's emphasis is not all that different. He shows the effect of oppressive economic environments on workers and the preclusion of the moral element of work that follows. Unlike so many of the workers we have seen in Conrad, Carlyle, or Orwell, Hardy's workers are not self-made loners, validated by their ability to isolate and separate themselves from economic reality. Hardy also represents labour as an opposing term to culture in the Modernist manner, but continues to distinguish Work from labour. He also comes to terms with necessity, allowing Arabella, in *Jude the Obscure*, to undercut Jude's idealism with her irreproachable "Poor folks must live" (86). Finally, he understands labour in Orwell's sense, that labour generates the lights, or in this case builds the structures, which allow for the intellectual's ideas – and which in turn exclude that labour.

Jude The Obscure, like the Leonard Bast episodes in *Howards End*, shows the difficulty a workingman endures trying to become 'cultured.' The differences, however, are immense. Bast is not a worker in the sense of having rough hands. Jude could truly appreciate Ruskin. Bast is ridiculed for attempting to strive beyond the world he has been born into. Jude is admired for his attempts. Bast fails to achieve any true knowledge of 'culture' but is welcomed into the cultured world. Jude succeeds in gaining 'culture' but is refused acceptance into that world. And though both Jude and Bast change when 'culture' is "spoilt . . . by the grind of stern reality" (412), the grind teaching them the nature of reality versus ideals, whereas Bast would have been better off remaining in his own sphere because he is from that sphere, the same cannot be said of Jude.

In Hardy's novel, Work creates identity. The workplace is a site of "energy, gaiety,

horse-play, bickering, weariness"; a place where people fall in love "between reaping and carrying." But for Jude, dreaming of higher learning, "it was a lonely place" (34). (Not until he gets to the stone yard at Christminster and sees the sterility of the university does he sense that the workplace is a "centre of regeneration" [104].) Jude's mistake is that he opposes Work and culture and sees the skills developed at the university as superior to those a stonemason acquires. The mistake is Jude's and not Hardy's. David Trotter argues that a "division between allegiance and identity," an allegiance to Work and an identity based on books and culture, informs *Jude* (34). He suggests that the novel "challenges the idea that identity should derive from an allegiance to work and community" (36). But Trotter suffers from the same misconception that plagues Jude, namely, that knowledge (or culture) and Work are opposing terms. Jude's "true illumination" about work includes seeing the stone yard as a "centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of the colleges" (104). Jude's crisis of identity stems from his failure to see, and society's failure to allow, masonry *and* the university to be conjunctive terms. The *real* opposition is between Work and labour. In the same scene that Jude has his "illumination," he sees that the work is at best only "copying, patching and imitating." Instead of being validated by effort, "the modern vice of unrest," rationalist economics, would have him jump from one job to the other (104). Jude is a worker, an "all-round man, as artisans in the country-towns are apt to be. In London," however, "the man who carves the boss or knob of leafage declines to cut the fragment of moulding which merges in that leafage, as if it were a degradation to do the second half of one whole" (117). This demarcation of jobs is specifically Ruskin and Conrad's complaint about labour. By idealizing the university, Jude fails to see a distinction between Work and labour.

It is not true, however, that Jude could be satisfied with Work (as opposed to labour) and only Work. The world of the university presents the opportunity for Jude to escape old ideas, superstitions, conventions: the kind of emancipation Sue had seemingly achieved only to withdraw from when harsh reality appeared. But as Terry Eagleton points out, and it applies equally to Work and labour as it does to Sue's struggle with social conventions, if ideals

undercut reality, reality does the same to ideals; the opposition between what could be and what is is always "a dialectical one" ("Introduction" 11).



For Jude, Work is accessible in stonemasonry or in the field. In Henry Green's *Living* the question arises if that kind of Work is still possible in the factory. Before discussing Green's novel, however, I want to briefly examine some of the implications of the factory as a place of Work and labour. The standard view of the factory, and not without reason, cites work rationalization, managerial control, scientific management; it suggests a place of order, discipline, regularity, supervision, hierarchy, drudgery, and dehumanizing abuse. In its inception, the factory is said to have acted as a substitution for the disappearing authority of religions. The labourer is thought to be reduced to an exchangeable product, alienated by a minute subdivision of labour and estranged by commodification: an abstraction incapable of Work and a support of social relations. Marx speaks about alienation; Lukács speaks about reification (or instrumentalism); Braverman speaks about the separation of thought from the execution of work, of de-skilling, degraded work, and a homogenized labour force. Marx suggests that the factory is always going to be rationalized under capitalism because of the Law of the Tendency. When the rate of surplus labour rises, profits rise, but as the capital spent on material and machinery rises, profits fall. He argues that the long run tendency of capitalism is to raise the capital spent on production to such an extent that profits would fall even as the rate of surplus labour rises. The attempt to overcome the tendency and make profit leads directly to work rationalization. Economics speaks of this in terms of the Law of Diminishing Returns. A firm incurs costs in proportion to the amount it attempts to extract from its plants and labour force. Rationalizing work reduces costs.

But the abstract, economic language at which the debate surrounding factory work takes place cannot be complete or satisfactory. Factory work for the most part is labour, but even when the workers are systematically alienated and the managerial controls work overtime to keep production as laborious as possible, the history of factory work is one in which the workers,

with various degrees of effort and success, attempt to turn labour back into Work. This “arena of contestation” (Calagione 7) sees workers resist regularity in the pace of their activities, prefer ‘St. Monday’ or ‘Blue Monday’¹² to extra wages, turn repetition into a ritual, practice mutual aid on both economic and non-economic levels, develop their own codes of behaviour and laws about what is right, resist retirement, and refuse automation. J. B. Schneewind argues that in the Victorian period intrinsic satisfaction was to a large extent only subordinated to extrinsic need in times of desperation (which were, however, frequent) and that it took “decades of factory discipline to make workers to any very great extent responsive to the cash incentive” (121).¹³ Michael Burawoy, even though he reads the history of “the human side of [factory] work” as an “adaptation to degradation,” argues that “objectification of work . . . is very much a subjective process – it cannot be reduced to some inexorable law of capitalism” (*Politics* 36, 10). He experienced factory work as a game between workers and management where the former bent the rules and the latter allowed them to in order to enforce bigger rules and to obscure property relations, surplus value, and the natural antagonism between workers and owners. The game, he argues, does not “reflect harmony,” it generates harmony (*Manufacturing* 82). But that kind of playing, which he describes in both *Manufacturing Consent* (1979) and *The Politics of Production* (1985), notwithstanding that it suggests worker participation in their own exploitation, also suggests that a contest between rationalization and non-rationalization is taking place, that factory workers try to turn labour into Work. Burawoy himself realizes that any work context involves not only an economic, political, and ideological dimension, but also a cultural, social, and psychological one. It is taking the rest of Marxist sociology a long time to recover from the ban against anything that sounds even remotely metaphysical.

In his overwhelming detailed *The Fabrication of Labor* (1995), Richard Biernacki

¹²These unofficial holidays are not the same as what is today called ‘the blue flu’ or ‘fucking the dog,’ which are means whereby union members position themselves in order to negotiate economic contracts. Here all workers call in sick the same day as a form of organized protest or try to ‘steal back time’ (and the profits employers make off their labour power) by avoiding work but looking busy.

¹³In the U.S., Fritz Roethlisberger among others, hired to confirm Frederick Taylor’s authoritarian management principles and the standardization of tasks, showed on the contrary that work rationalization was “inefficient” and that informal relations, de-rationalizing work, increased output (Breton 151).

attempts to “demonstrate and specify culture’s independent effect upon the construction of factory practices,” and to show that “culture was *necessary* for building the regimes of the factory but also that it was *independent* of the immediate economic environment” (16, 91). What he in fact shows is that the intersection between economic and non-economic determinants is always jammed. E. P. Thompson had shown years earlier that economics operates within culture, even if economics simultaneously and dramatically affects cultural standards. In this study, I am not interested in the debate over the first determinant, economics or culture. I am interested in the survival of subjective experiences – value, intrinsic satisfaction, mystery, the indeterminacy of human agency, Work – in the most objectively alienating factory environments.

The workers in Henry Green’s *Living* respond to both economic and non-economic incentives. The world of alienation, anxiety over employment, extrinsic gain, economic strategy, boom and slump is dialectically opposed to the world of Work, never severed from it. Personality both affects and is affected by the workplace: the relationship between character and environment is never unidirectional. Unlike Carlyle, Conrad, or Orwell, Green shows the difficulty for an individual to transcend by volition the alienating effects of modern work and real economic struggles. But he also, like Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell, understands that the economic dimension of work is not always going to dominate and destroy the moral experience. Green does not represent workers as entirely autonomous subjects, but as in Thompson’s definition of the “human experience” of work, they are “persons experiencing their determinate productive situations and relationships . . . and then ‘handling’ this experience” (*Poverty* 356), or struggling to handle it.

Born wealthy, Green felt “a sense of guilt whenever [he] spoke to someone who did manual work,” and, like Orwell, it “drove” him “to see for [himself] how by far the greatest number live in England” (*Pack* 195, 217). Between 1927 and 1929 he went to work in his father’s factory. The desire to move to a “world which was the oldest,” the world of work or “essentials” (*Pack* 236), suggests that he was searching for the moral element of work. But in *Living*, the problem of ‘making a living’ is not set aside so that the intrinsic values of work can

be articulated. The sense of happiness from Work is never conclusive and, vice versa, the "very sad" (217) life that affects the entire community never defeats the almost instrumental optimism of its heroic members. Unlike Orwell, the closer Green got to the working class, to the plight of the 'common man,' the less distance he placed between Work and labour. Even though Orwell attributed both the struggle with labour and the appreciation of Work with working-class culture, the more he ventured into working-class life, the more he became swept up in, or projected, only working-class Work.

In one sense, *Living* documents the transition from paternalistic work relations to modern, impersonal organizations. Richard Dupret seeks an almost Oedipal revenge against his domineering father by rationalizing the factory and letting go of the older workers who cannot meet quantifiable production demands. Craigan, the factory's best worker in terms of quality and the ostensible hero of the book, is anonymously dismissed. He is a victim of the thinking that insists, "What we want in the place is some go and push" (230). The novel also documents the "daze" which can paralyze workers forced into mindless repetition (304). It shows management, Bridges, equating discipline with profit (223-24). And it is unremitting in acknowledging the effects of class, proceeding by juxtaposition with Zolaesque abruptness (not only between class, but also between age groups and genders).¹⁴ The workers' busy, toilsome lives are contrasted with the idle, bored, silly lives of the rich. Craigan is nearly killed by a wire rope that breaks; Mr. Dupret, also a bed-ridden patriarch, dies after slipping on dog shit.

But *Living* also illustrates Burawoy's politics of production, the games played in the factory. Workers call their superiors by their first names in order to even out the playing field (271) and push factory rules by smoking in the washroom. The management overreacts by imposing the ultimate in rationalization, a seven-minute daily maximum on washroom time. In the ensuing struggle, both the workers and management "lied for some time all of them" (250).

¹⁴Lily, in the house of the old-fashioned Craigan, is not allowed to find employment. Craigan represses her in the same kind of way that the management at the Dupret factory represses its workers. He says "None o' the womenfolk go to work from the house I inhabit." She, obviously working, "carried dirty plates to the sink then" (215).

The novel also depicts the struggle to turn rationalized labour into non-rationalist Work. In one scene, the workers feed and race sparrows, an unequivocally treated symbol of freedom. The management is angered because the workers do not respond to the cash incentive and resist rationalizing their activities: "We pay them while they bet on these sparrows" (208). Work rationalization leaves no time for ritual, but the workers always search for ways to include it. After Alf dies, the management "tried to make the men cast with molten metal Alf had suicided in, but of course the men didn't have that, they dug his coffin for him here, like had been done for those other two and poured into it the metal he was in" (371). Job satisfaction is seen to be gained from the community that working in close quarters generates, even between workers and management. In one scene, antagonism seethes but in another "John's and Mr. Bridges' faces grew red with companionship . . . they shouted together and held each other by the arm."¹⁵

Escape from drudgery, symbolized by birds, thematized by Herbert Thomson's desire to go to Australia, Bert Jones's desire to go to Canada, his and Lily's trip, smoking breaks in the washroom, Craigan's radio concerts, drink, movies, and so on, is written in a way to suggest that living in the real world demands dreaming beyond it. When Lily sees children and desires some of her own, "she was being very practical," insofar as optimism is practical for the working class. Such optimism puts a new twist on the way that the tragic sensibility of the working class gets represented. Richard sees the same children and imagines that "they'll work, they'll marry, they'll work harder, have children and go on working, they'll die" (329). Lily might agree, but she also has experienced the dignity and value in that life. Her emotional life, though not sentimentalized, is represented to be as viable as economic awareness, but also subject to economic reality. Lily is caught between choosing a romantic escape with Bert Jones and settling for Jim Dale, settling down with "the money that comes in regular at the end of the week" (320). Her romance is spoilt by economic factors, but it was still the "most practical to go away" because practicality is not entirely an economic matter. The novel's epigraph, like

¹⁵In *Pack My bag* (1952), Green remembers, "the gaiety there is in every well-run factory, the laughs, and there are plenty of them, when tears run freely and one has to sit down . . . The gayest of all were the oldest labourers" (244).

Forster's 'only connect,' is taken from the text itself: "As these birds would go so where would this child go?" But its meaning is not entirely defeatist, for the birds are homing pigeons and for better or for worse have a very non-rational loyalty to what is known and loved.

In other words, at the same time that economics is seen to infiltrate every aspect of factory-town life, moral work retains its value and the working class their innate dignity. Yet the non-economic rewards of work – pride, a sense of accomplishment, the esteem of co-workers, self-discovery, and self-development – do not mean that the workers forget about their salaries. Bert Jones gains a "sense of power . . . which he felt for the first time" by embracing "the difficulties that were before him." Woolfian stillness meets Carlylean Work as he focuses on "the job, revolving so many turns each second, now it had a stillness more beautiful than when actually it had been still . . ." (334-45). But the idea that work can bring satisfaction does not nullify his struggle with labour or undo Green's images of factory life: "Black sand mud the floor. Men knelt in it." Work is never removed from its context, its surroundings, or its effects. The reader can never forget that the workers, even as they Work, are generating profit for the Duprets. Craigan is Singleton on land, "like the deep sea" (242); he is laconic and disciplined, making others who complain about their duties seem foolish. He "loves his work" (255) and has the respect of his fellow workers. Working at the same job since he was eight, "monotony [had] grown so great that [he] had forgotten it." Repetitive work is part of his "rhythm" (339). He is not an automaton, nor is he an *artiste*. The relationship between Craigan and his machines is similar to what Hardy describes as the connection between agricultural workers and their tools. Craigan gains continuity in life and a moral purpose in his work. He would not educate a son to rise above his position (306). But Craigan's last thought reminds readers that the celebration of Work cannot come at the expense of economic and class issues or mitigate the fact that he was systematically used up by his employers. After being laid off, he "thought in mind how he had gone to work when he was eight. He had worked on till no one would give him work. He thought what had he got out of fifty-seven years' work? Nothing" (380). Not only a very powerful end to a book about Work, Craigan's thought ensures that the Work / labour dichotomy

will not be given a greater berth by an anti-rationalist invocation or through non-rationalist individualism.

In *Living*, the interlocking of Work and labour has a counterpart in the interlocking of private and public life. Sometimes private life affects the factory, as when Arthur Jones brings it to a stop by singing and expressing joy at his son's birth. Certainly Richard's private life affects his decisions. At the novel's introduction, he sees beauty in the creative process: "wild incidental beauty . . . where engineers had thought only of the use put to them." His attitude is Morrisian, aiming to make "useful things which were beautiful" (211). In fact, he is so caught up with moral Work that his attitude is mostly alien to the workers – he only notices that they are "beautiful," not the black mud they work in (259). After finding his romantic desires unrequited, however, he understands the factory only as a place of maximizing profit and attempts to further rationalize it. At the same time, public or factory life dilates to every aspect of private life, only the Eameses seem capable of talking about anything other than the factory.

Green's *Living* stands out in the literature of the modernist era not only because it is about industry but because it is also about Work. It stands out among the texts I have discussed in this dissertation in the way in which it attempts to balance the dignity of Work with issues that surround labour – safety, wages, unemployment, poverty, class. Work is celebrated without economics being held in abeyance and without status quo economics being ratified. Work and labour confront each other in *Living*. Moral individualism has no standing in the novel, but neither does the determinism, structuralism, or pragmatic realism which assumes that subjectivity under labour is always defeated. The difference in Green's approach to work and economics and Orwell's, Carlyle's, and Conrad's, is that Green comes to terms with the fact that Work and rationalist economics, labour, are contrary forces which would cancel each other out unless approached dialectically.



Before concluding this chapter, I want to briefly comment on Joyce's *Ulysses* – briefly because to attempt a full analysis of work in that novel could be the length of this whole

dissertation and a cursory glance is my only alternative. Bernard Benstock in "Middle-Class Values in *Ulysses* – and the Values of the Middle Class" (1994) enumerates all the lower-middle-class work, 'marginal work,' and unsatisfying work as well as the sufferings of the unemployed in *Ulysses*, dispelling the notion that Joyce evades social history. But *Ulysses* also draws attention to a split between Work and rationalist economics and identifies the contradiction between the two in one Leopold Bloom. Bloom is part Keegan and part Broadbent.¹⁶ He oscillates between sermonizing a moral idea of Work, work as an end in itself, and positing its rationalization, its solely extrinsic, instrumental value. Against Bloom the non-rationalist, romantic, Mr. Pollyish dreamer is Bloom the rationalist, bourgeois, Robinson Crusoeish dreamer-cum-planner. Competing definitions of work undermine each other, underscoring the ideological disjuncture embedded in non-dialectical approaches toward Work and economics.

In *Ulysses*, the split between non-rationalist and rationalist work takes place entirely at the ideological level, as Bloom does very little work, period, during his day. Still, in one 'mode' Bloom wants to organize society under a utilitarian / rationalist order. He concocts ways the cemetery caretaker could improve efficiency (110). He practices deferred gratification and passes judgment on those who do not (58). He makes detailed budgets. He calculates doing favours in order to get some in return – "Leave him under an obligation: costs nothing" (112). He guesses at the going price of nearly everything. He is constantly scheming (see especially his "schemes of wider scope" in "Ithaca" [718]), regarding the future as open to the most innovative, alert, and opportunistic individual. He believes fully in quantitative Progress. He thinks in terms of organizing society under a utilitarian / rationalist code, imagining, for example, the advantages of "artificial irrigation" (60) or that "if they ran a tramline along the North Circular from the cattle market to the quays value would go up like a shot" (58). And he dreams of new

¹⁶Taking place in the same year as Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, Joyce's *Ulysses* draws the same kind of contrast between Bloom and Stephen as Shaw does with Broadbent and Keegan, in addition to locating the split in Bloom himself. The difference between the two writers is that whereas Joyce documents a bourgeois utilitarianism in Irish history, Shaw does not.

technology, "something automatic" which might facilitate manufacture (91). In the second 'mode,' however, he imagines "Bloom cottage" to help him sleep and relieve the anxiety built up during the day. He dreams of becoming a "gentleman farmer" with "civic functions" (715) who gardens and follows light intellectual pursuits. His dream cottage is a pastoral, feudal home, recalling the cottage Allan and Esther Woodcourt escape to at the end of *Bleak House*. It is a "flowerville" removed from the stress and anxiety of modern work, removed from plans of 'artificial irrigation,' and promising to bring about intrinsic satisfaction only. Yet Bloom's last sleep-inducing fantasy is for "some one sole unique advertisement to cause passers to stop in wonder" (720). In other words, his preoccupation with commercial success and efficiency in pursuing an end constitutes a competing desire that not only highlights the anxiety Bloom's work engenders, but demonstrates (in Weberian terminology) that formal rationality undermines and precludes substantive rationality, the pursuit of intrinsically satisfying ends for the sake of those ends.

Despite encroaching poverty, the tension in his place of work, the inactivity of his day, the failure to make a sale, the lack of work to pursue, and the fever of his obsessions, Bloom tells Stephen that "all must work, have to, together" (644). The "together" conveys the ambiguity in Bloom's attitude towards work. The bourgeois ethic would not emphasize togetherness, but an individualistic striving for success. Bloom does not work together with anyone in his paid work. Such an appeal to social harmony in its distinct absence suggests the hollowness of his words, that they are not in fact his words, even if he would hold them deeply.

Bloom's literary ancestor in terms of this struggle with modern work is Wells's Mr. Polly. Hustling elitism, Pound recognized that Bloom "is the man in the street, the next man, the public, not our public, but Mr. Wells's public" (403). Joyce's public is still a working public. Both Polly and Bloom find work to be a monotonous, humiliating experience but continue to deny the mediocrity of their jobs while they in fact desire means of escape or evasion from them. Both of them protest interest in their business but have to make concessions to their employers and secretly disparage the world of 'competitive acquisitiveness.' Both exist in urban worlds

populated by the humdrum activities of clerks and shop assistants, but harbour a desire to be creative and impulsive. Both figures are antagonized by the cultural pressure to get on. And both dream of a romantic, escapist cottage. The difference of course is that Polly gets his pastoral playland and Bloom remains in Dublin. Whereas Wells's hero can change the world, Joyce had no such belief in the possibility of a moral escape from rationalism. That very British, feudal-nostalgic, pastoral-spiritualistic homecoming is one of the great non-events of *Ulysses*.

Challenging the myth of an Irish imagination distinctly opposed to an endemic and crass British utilitarianism, Bloom would balance both, but, in another great non-event, fails. The glorification of a richly imaginative peasantry is dispensed with simply in the act of writing an urban novel of the Irish bourgeois. Bloom is not devoted to things of the spirit. Yet he does maintain a richly imaginative life. Furthermore, the English in *Ulysses* are associated with money and a utilitarian attitude towards work. Professor MacHugh refers to the British as "a race the acme of whose mentality is the maxim: time is money. Material domination" (133). And Mr. Deasy with his little money machine evokes Gradgrindery. Bloom is imaginative and utilitarian. His job requires both creativity and instrumentality from him. But he is not the dialectical achievement thought of by Shaw in his *John Bull's Other Island*. Rather, Bloom is an unhappy example of a failed synthesis: rationalist at one time, anti-rationalist at another, and unsuccessful at both. The consequence of this split is that he does not notice the lack of meaningful opportunities he has – Work or economic opportunities.

By identifying the split between economics and Work, different in its makeup from Carlyle, Conrad, or Orwell only insofar as Bloom's economics are fully rationalist and bourgeois whereas the others would protest rationalist economics, Joyce identifies a contradiction not only in bourgeois culture but also in a major line of British literature. *Ulysses* does not offer a window for reconciliation, but Joyce suggests, as Shaw, Hardy, and Green glimpse, that the split between Work and pragmatism exists as a fissure in ideology – and that ideology is exposed in that split – when it ought to be treated as a dialectic.

George Orwell Revisited

Introduction

The difference between Orwell's withdrawal from and Modernism's aversion to society is not merely a matter of degree, but a difference in kind. Whereas Orwell finds refuge from rationalism in Work and the folksy 'decency' of the 'common man,' Modernist transcendence looks toward enforcing a revival of the classical spiritual / corporeal divide. I have argued that as Work – the most common point of departure from society for Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell, as well as many Victorians and Edwardians – is treated as if separate from its context and effects, real concessions to the very economic structures and agents its advocates deplore are inevitable but suppressed. Withdrawing into Work is different from any other utopian gesture, spiritual high, Cultural retreat, or totalizing refusal of modernity insofar as work is an active ingredient in the rationalized world. In order not to become economistic myself, however, I avoid the argument that every time a worker smiles he or she is contributing to his or her own exploitation or that every time a writer represents Work he or she is engaged in some sinister mystification of rationalist capitalism. The writers of Work I have identified also grapple with economics, pragmatically debate specific issues, and get their hands dirty over specific ills. But between Work and economics there is no middle ground and no dialectical confrontation. When speaking about wages, for example, Orwell adopts an almost unionist rhetoric about the exploitative mythology behind the 'work ethic.' Yet when speaking in the abstract and general, Orwell gospelizes Work. The dichotomy points towards, or leads Orwell towards, an affirmation of moral or self-sufficient intransitiveness: the individual manages to find Work despite economism, despite an overwhelming and ubiquitous rationalism, the acknowledged but compartmentalized rule of labour which refuses to dignify individuality.

Orwell inherited from English cultural socialism not only the tendency to divide Work from labour but also the related tendency to associate the working class with special insights into the world of Work and non-rationalism. Reacting against economism the tradition is suspicious of all economic negotiating and praises the working class because of its supposed ignorance of

labour issues. The other, pragmatic discourse is often made on behalf of the working class, but the working class itself remains impervious to economic thinking. Orwell goes further than his predecessors in linking Work to the working class (or the lower-middle class) and, as a result, declaring them in particular to be moral individuals able to wrest Work from situations he identifies as rationalized work sites. The predecessors often linked Work to the working class in order to make way for a conservative agenda of rekindling feudalistic relations between 'masters' and 'men.' The working class know only Work; it needs 'natural superiors' to manage economic matters. Orwell's attitude towards Work and the working class follows from this tradition but contradictions overwhelm his writing because his pragmatism is as extreme as his moralism. That pragmatism nevertheless has the gritty, concrete, inductive, stopgap, 'bread-and-butter' attributes that intermittently characterize English cultural socialism. The prevailing contradiction in his fiction is the one between moral individualism and pragmatic realism.

Orwell's novels are renowned for their themes of complete defeat, submission, failure, capitulation, or concession. Raymond Williams finds that the fiction and prose are reducible to one, to intrapersonal documentary where crafted, self-exiled and non-conformist versions of Orwell submit to more powerful social forces (*Orwell* 41). But only the final novels condemn the self-exiled, non-conformist heroes to utter defeat. Only the final novels end the oscillation between the success and defeat of the subject, the survival of the moral self and the submission to rationalism, which propel the earlier works and the prose. By that time Orwell was no longer participating in working-class culture, his inspiration for moral Work and indeed moral individualism. The later prose also shows less influence of working-class culture, however projected it may be, than *The Road to Wigan Pier* or *Down and Out*. The early prose and fiction vacillate between showing passive, resigned identities inexorably absorbed into a rationalist society which refuses expressions of individuality and representing moral idiosyncrasy. Though the early novels conclude by leaning towards pragmatic realism – an absorption into rationalist society – and not moral individualism, both the early fiction and prose shift between a world of Work and independence on the one side and a world of economics and necessity on the other; in

the fiction often an inside world and an outside one. Only the late fiction decides once and for all that life in the outside, rationalized world makes any other kind of existence impossible. The early fiction is also essentially defeatist, conceding to the world of labour, but the concession also involves a moral victory of sorts. Incrementally, *Coming up for Air* (1939), *Animal Farm* (1945), and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) depict a process of rebellion and independence, or recall an era of Work, as if only to setup a final statement of inescapable defeat, of a world where Work has lost all of its meaning. Though little pockets of anti-rational individualism survive in these texts, they can be distinguished from the early prose and novels by the fact of their unequivocal devastation.

The early novels, on the other hand, presuppose that society offers nothing in the way of support, stimulation, or non-economic affirmation to the individual, just the opposite most of the time, and yet insist that some form of his or her selfless decency survives. They resemble the later novels in that their endings insist that life is lived, has to be lived, within the rationalized order, but they treat submission as an awakening. The final scenes of capitulation and defeat in *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) – where existence is reduced to negotiating the conditions of labour or submitting to the whale of rationalism – also represent hope, humanity, common decency, and suggest that a kind of steadfast nobility can flourish within a corrupt society. If Dorothy Hare and Gordon Comstock compromise themselves, embrace the world they had previously tried to escape, they achieve a moral, non-rationalist independence which contradicts the callous, rationalist, or individualist society they join. Accepting the 'pragmatic realism' of the texts, reading that Dorothy and Gordon abandon their struggle against the world which demands conformity (a very compelling reading in light of Orwell's later fiction), does not contradict the concept of moral individualism: Dorothy and Gordon learn that they cannot change the world, yes, but they nevertheless manage to change some part of their inner states, their way of perceiving and negotiating the world. They can live decent lives and be decent people despite the rationalistic, capitalistic, economic, and *deterministic* world that had previously received their and their creator's wrath – or at least

triggered their evasion, as in Dorothy's case. Common decency, in defiance of an all-engulfing rationalism, is affirmed even though nothing shores it up but individual effort. That what I have called pragmatic realism and moral individualism can exist side by side shows that the world of labour and the world of Work, pragmatism and moralism, are never made to confront one another.

To write the survival of decency in indecent conditions is to attempt to imagine a working-class version of the Victorian self-made man myth. Notwithstanding Orwell's clear revulsion of the middle-class narrative (as in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, 101-102), both Orwell's storyline and the self-made man myth represent society as an obstacle overcome by joining it. Dorothy and Gordon cannot claim that they have gained the kind of ascendancy, success, respect, and happiness through self-help, an ethical steadiness, perseverance, and work that constitutes the self-made man story, but through self-motivated endurance and work they maintain moral integrity. The happy-ending readings of *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, finding decency and reasons for optimism in ordinary economic life, are expressions of moral individualism at its best, even though they are clear examples of pragmatic realism. In moral individualism, the individuated subject finds within himself or herself strength to withdraw into a private code of honour and glean the rewards or satisfactions of Work from a pre-established economism. Just as moral individualism makes Work possible when labour predominates, it reduces or surpasses pragmatic realism, the effects of conceding to the extremely corrupt economic world. In the case of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, even an entirely pessimistic, defeatist reading that maintains that no moral individualism remains at the novel's end suggests that Gordon was spiritually, morally, and intrinsically healthier when he was poor, when he was materially worse off, itself a confirmation of moral individualism. (Throughout his fiction and prose, Orwell jumps from representing people who are economically disenfranchised, and who work harder physically, as internally better off to representing the debilitating effects *in toto* of poverty and labour. Orwell's poor and working class are often moral and decent almost in direct proportion to the level of hardship they face. This holds for all English cultural

socialism.) The hard split between economics and Work, external and internal rewards, allows for the values of Work to survive in the starkly represented conditions of labour. The individuated subject withdraws into a world of inviolate Work or holds specific economic conditions in abeyance through an exertion of will. Even the unequivocally devastating novels such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* cannot be read solely in terms of their defeatist endings. The isolated pockets of surviving decency, of places cut off from a demonstrated cult of ubiquitous rationalism (ultimately the inner self), point to moral individualism. Labour, rationalism, has to be quarantined in order for Work to remain inviolate. Before examining the role of Work and economics in *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, I want briefly to discuss, first, *Coming up For Air* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the context of the anti-rationalist tradition and, second, how Orwell's idea of getting inside a whale of rationalism speaks to the split between moralism and British pragmatism.

Orwell's fiction and nonfiction are essentially similar, though differences become manifest between his early and late work. The reason for dividing my chapters on Orwell as I have is in part to bring out the tension between moral individualism and pragmatic realism or the views they represent. But in fact, I am not treating the early prose and fiction differently. In this chapter I focus on *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* because they most clearly resemble the prose of the same period, the prose I focused on in Chapter One (*Down and Out* [1933] and *The Road to Wigan Pier* [1937]). Hopefully Orwell's place in English cultural socialism will show itself through this 'book-end' approach, Orwell at the beginning and end. I am not discussing *Burmese Days* (1934) because it would involve an analysis of colonialism, a topic too large in itself to introduce at this point. I am also not discussing *Animal Farm* because its themes and mood can be seen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Inside the Rationalist Whale

*It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.
Nineteen Eighty-Four*

After examining Carlyle's *Past and Present*, the juxtaposition of a pre-rationalist past, where life is a "natural process," with a "mechanical" present (and dismal looking future) in *Coming Up for Air* can seem almost hackneyed or rudimentary. But it is also a cliché to critique how every generation harkens back to a time when the grass was greener: Orwell for the days of Conrad, Conrad for the days of Carlyle, Carlyle for the days of yore. When the pragmatic, concrete Orwell admits that "Progress does happen" (*CEJL* 3: 57) or sympathizes with George Bowling for proceeding one repetitive day at a time, he goes against the grain of a convention the moral, generalist Orwell fully endorses in *Coming Up for Air*. But in that text it becomes very difficult for the reader to distinguish between an animadversion on modernity and an entirely subjective nostalgia for the lost days of Youth. George Bowling's yearning for the "civilization which I grew up in" (*Air* 74) is indiscernible from his fond memories of being a boy, effectively reducing the story to a lower middle-class man's middle-age crises. The psychological drama in which George conflates 'getting on' in the business world with getting on in years may be absolutely necessary for the integrity of the novel, but it sets up an unbridgeable chasm between what was and what is. The chasm between youth and age slides into a chasm between the past and present, or between that which they represent. Intrinsically satisfying Work on the one hand and economic need or pragmatism on the other are then irrevocably polarized according to the model of youth and age, with the only recourse to Work (or youth) under the inexorable and complete reality of labour (or age) being through an imaginative repossession of identity. In George's modern reality, Work or non-rationalism are as unattainable as youth, establishing a disjunction between moralism and pragmatism that makes for a nearly ahistorical past and a nearly amoral present.

George remembers ponds with fish in them (as opposed to the rubbish dumps of industrial expansion), innocent and naive women (as opposed to economic wives),¹ strong beer, and Work. When recalling the past, the representation of economics is certainly not absent

¹As in Wells's *The History of Mr. Polly*, George's wife represents middle-class rationalism, a cardboard-like, nagging barrier precluding the romantic, non-rational, imaginative man from recovering his true nature.

(George's father, for example, has financial difficulties), but economics do not affect the spirit of the age. George remembers his uneducated Uncle Ezekiel quoting Carlyle. He bristles when describing how "man's work" and "women's work" were well defined (49-50). And he emphasizes for nearly an entire section (two) that everyone worked all the time as a way of life, not between certain paid hours for an indexed paycheck, but as an activity fundamental to a sense of identity, purpose, belonging, self-respect, honour, etc. His present, on the other hand, is not merely a Wellsian world of shopkeepers and petty bourgeois traffickers but a Joycean world of demoralizing urban work (21). Drab economic survival suffuses every aspect of life and getting a job means that the 'job gets you' (85). George's present is a *gesellschaft*, a rationalized world where "recreations are provided" and the potent sense of a life-affirming vitalism (especially feelings of manhood and self-sufficiency) is subordinated to the "struggle to sell things" (86, 128). George has a working-class past, a working-class inner identity, and a bourgeois present and appearance.

As said, economic reality is far from absent in the representation of George's past, but the point is that though economic pressures existed, though class boundaries were severe, and in fact though "People on the whole worked harder, lived less comfortably, and died more painfully," a "feeling of security" and a "feeling of continuity" (106, 107) effectively displaces the hardship. When Orwell speaks in general terms, he describes the working or lower classes as suffering an inevitably tragic life, but remaining mentally, morally, and spiritually healthy. When prioritizing economics and speaking about specifics from the point of view of an observer and not a participant, his working class suffer physically and undergo complete psychological (and especially sexual) malfunctions. In *Coming Up for Air*, the separation of moralism and economism is written as an irrevocable either / or, essentialist / historicist, past / present rift because Work makes labour (or economics) impossible and labour makes Work impossible. Non-rationalism is made available to the 'modern' George only through an imaginative revival of an inner self, a self which struggles against or contradicts the Naturalist conventions Orwell follows and the hyper-extended economism that the older George projects onto the world. When

the older George displays the characteristics of an earlier time, is an imaginative participant in working-class life, when he claims that he has “more the prole’s attitude towards money” as “Life’s here to be lived” (137), it counters the otherwise uncheckable forces of bourgeois determination that the novel insists upon by strictly dividing the spirit of the past from the pragmatism of the present.

Critics such as Patrick Reilly who seem obsessed with emphasizing the consistent humanism or vitalism in Orwell’s canon and who argue that George refuses “to submit to the bleak banality of the world” (218) may impose an optimistic ideology on Orwell’s world view in order to protect something they themselves value and believe in, but they are nonetheless feeding off a solid foundation in moral individualism – ideas about the power to withdraw into an uncorrupted, non-rational world of Work. Even under the weight of tired despondency, despair, and the threat of war (as the novel’s refrain goes, “it’s all going to happen”), Orwell affirms that even the stereotypical bourgeois has an inviolate moral centre. Nothing hinders the individuated subject’s capacity to locate and retreat into value in a valueless world. Unlike Leopold Bloom, George Bowling is not written ironically or as a contradictory, ideologically-ridden (or narratologically-ridden) character who is rationalist bourgeois at one time and romantic escapist at another. Rather, George’s rationalist, modern self is always represented as external to his inner identity and, furthermore, under the control of the moral, inner individual. The super-economic self can step out of his life to critically assess and respond to it. George admits he is “vulgar,” “insensitive” – “I fit in with my environment” (23) – but in doing so he has already distinguished himself from his environment. His external life, however, is written as socially constructed according to the conventions of the Naturalist tradition. Again, I am not insisting that George should be contained by his situation, his bourgeois environment, but insofar as he is able to jump from a rationalist to a non-rationalist world, a world incommensurable with his contemporary one and the Naturalist structure of the text, he is the moral individual, able to keep himself – the place where he withdraws into – defiantly inviolable.



Still, as Williams points out, the defining moment of 'George Orwell' begins with a cold day in April, the clocks striking thirteen (*Culture* 285). The bleakness of Orwell's final vision has nothing to do with moral individualism, the world of intransitive Work, self-sufficiency, or any hint of a possible transgression against or withdrawal from the rationalized order. Winston Smith is never the last man in Europe or anywhere else, never independent. His 'rebellion' is always under the scrutiny of O'Brien. From the beginning it is merely the result of a seed planted in his head by O'Brien "to meet in the place where there is no darkness" (27, 256). Representing the totalitarian state must do one thing: represent total control and total submission to that control. Julia, who expresses her anti-rationalism through sex, is the only rebel in the novel, but Orwell simply could not imagine a last woman in Europe. But even her autonomy is questionable: if it was her story it seems likely that she, as with Winston, would also have turned out to be a confirmed experiment. In any case, neither she nor Winston is able to stay even partially autonomous. The novel goes way beyond pragmatic realism: Winston and Julia concede to the rationality of the world, but there is little left to pragmatically negotiate except saving their own hides. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* differs from Orwell's other fiction or prose insofar as it *resolves* and it is depressingly consistent. The rationality of the futuristic world where military music is music, statistics are empiricism, and a glass ornament is forbidden "because of its apparent uselessness" (99) is absolute. The Party is rationalist politics gone berserk. If modern governments try to impose homogenous desires on the public because a sameness of predictable preferences, in theory, might maximize support for them (if two people want two different things, the government will anger one person by favouring the second person's desires), the Party standardizes preferences and the whole population as a matter of course. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not simply an anti-government textbook. Orwell also held that a rationalist, 'free' market and private ownership in general leads to "tyranny" (*CEJL* 3: 118). He wanted to show that power, not only economic power, but the attempt to maximize power for its own sake – formal political rationality – leads to or is abuse. The defeat of the moral individual who cannot change himself let alone the system is a commentary on the system, not

on the individual. Whether the final defeat of moral individualism and the final success of rationality have to do with Orwell's growing depression over his health or the rise of centralized governments, it is contrary to Carlyle's, Conrad's, and his own earlier writing. The world of non-rationalism, the golden country, and the world of rationalism are still split, but the latter is now completely victorious.

Hyper-rationalized, each and every article in Winston's world could act as a kind of microcosm of it, but his workplace suggests one of the more prophetically frightening aspects of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The severe bureaucratic rule of invisible bosses, the electronic and panoptical-type surveillance, the standardization of routines, the paper-pushing, and the anonymity in Winston's workplace are all nearer to the contemporary world than any other 'big brother' scenario of the novel. Today, interfaced computer technology allows for a greater amount of surveillance or impersonal activity tracking than ever before (Sennett 59). Contract-driven work eliminates the chance of fostering a work community (not to mention worker solidarity), and the absence of visible authority, a boss, allows corporations to reorganize, hire and fire, without having to consider or hear about the employees' individual situations. But Winston's work, albeit a "tedious routine," is his "greatest pleasure in life" because the "jobs [are] so difficult and intricate you could lose yourself in them" (*Nineteen*, 46). (The more physical Julia enjoys her work because it is mindless and she can 'use her hands' [*Nineteen*, 136].) It is as if some residual anti-rationalism survives despite Orwell's determination to create a world where it cannot. I will not argue that anti-rationalism or moral individualism ever prevails in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in a meaningful way. In *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* a certain part of Dorothy's and Gordon's subjectivity remains in contrast with the world they submit to or join. Up until *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, defeat, submitting to the rational world, does not mean the end of decency or the still individuated person's capacity to remain good while inside the whale which otherwise overwhelms. Not only is any type of escape impossible in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, no inviolate humanity is possible. The idea of a Two Minute Hate, the emotional exercise of *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, does not mark the end of humanist

sentiment because people are expressing hatred, but because their emotional life has been rationalized into a time-based, systematic order.

But Winston's work, despite being incredibly dismal and intensely rationalized, is still satisfying. The proles work harder and in worse and more primitive conditions than even Winston does, but as with the working class of the earlier fiction, they are of superior morality, almost gleaning their morality from those conditions or from their ignorance of the economic structure. But the proles do not live in a fully rationalized world and the vitality they get from their Work almost goes without saying. Satisfying Work continues to survive in Winston's world only because Work is an aberration in the text. It is not treated as part and parcel with rationalism, even though it epitomizes rationalism. Writing fiction, even what is arguably science fiction, does not affect the way that Orwell writes about work. Winston's work might be the only glimpse of an indulgence in non-rationalized feeling in the completely rationalized world.



Even if Winston's betrayal of Julia marks the end of his humanity, his final submission to the Party is very human insofar as Orwell defines humanness. For Orwell, being "defeated and broken up by life" is the "essence of being human" when one fastens "one's love upon other human individuals" (*CEJL* 4: 467). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as with so much of Orwell's writing, reenacts the argument of "Inside the Whale" (1940) though it goes a great deal further than any other expression of pragmatic realism. Whether or not he endorses compliance or inertia he allows himself to be understood as at least sympathizing with those who submit to or passively accept the way of the world, if only because the path of least resistance is the most common path. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is unique if only because of the way the futuristic world aggressively hunts down anyone who steps off the path. Orwell evinces a Carlylean or Conradian tragic sensibility by assuming that life is hard and, in turn, by ennobling those who persevere – except for Orwell, more politically oriented to the struggle of the working class, perseverance through the tragic life can take on the form of an endless submission to rationalism. For Carlyle and Conrad, the tragic

sensibility is entrenched in the world of Work, as it often is for Orwell as well. Submitting to the whale of modernity and withdrawing into Work, however, turn out to be quite similar alternatives to rationalism. Pragmatic realism, even though it engenders participation in the 'real' world, resembles withdrawal because it means avoiding confrontation and, more significantly, does not seem to affect the individual in his or her moral constitution – just as Work is treated as if beyond the economic realm and labour does not seem to affect Work or the individual subject's ability to glean the benefits of Work from the conditions of labour. Withdrawing *from* the whale, transcending economics with intransitive Work, would concede nothing to modern rationalism. But in order for Work to be harmless, it must be isolated from economics, which, to reiterate, is particularly difficult to do: work is without doubt central to economics and vice versa.

What I want to emphasize here is that with Orwell total submission to the rationalized world, pragmatic realism, does not entrain the corruption or social rationalization of the individual, though it theoretically would if it was to be dialectically opposed to the individual. Submission, doing whatever it takes to get by, according to Orwell's own definition, is a central fact of working-class decency. In "Inside the Whale," Orwell apologizes for quietism and accepting the 'thing-as-it-is,' albeit "decay," on the grounds that it is the reasonable choice of "a voice from the crowd, from the underling, from the third-class carriage, from the ordinary, non-political, non-moral, passive man" (*CEJL* 1: 501). It is worth noting that Orwell's common man has little to do with today's average Westerner, whose sense of self-entitlement demands a great deal more than what the tragic sensibility will offer. Still, what I have called moral individualism is evidenced when Orwell's characters submit to an all-encompassing whale but find the means to remain impervious to its effects. Moral individualism exists in the fact that by 'accepting' the comfort of the whale's insides, being "irresponsible" by giving up the struggle against rationality or tyranny, being "completely negative, unconstructive, [and] amoral," even a "Whitman among the corpses" (*CEJL* 1: 527), the subject only gains decency. Orwell is not necessarily wrong: submitting to and negotiating actuality might lead to decency. Because one

has a job in the modern world one will not necessarily carry the imprint of a cruel capitalism. But the moral individualism implied here undercuts and dissolves the radical critical sensibility underlying both intransitive Work and economic pragmatism (the reformist sensibility): it is, as he says, 'non-political, non-moral.' The moral individual is kept entirely but magically removed from his or her situation because the idea of a moral individual and the idea of an immoral determining structure erase each other out. The typical Orwellian novel includes unmitigated criticisms of the rationalized world, including dismissive criticisms of those who are cogs in it or do not challenge it, sympathy for those who are swallowed up by it, and space for those who can withdraw from it.

In *Coming Up for Air*, for example, Orwell borrows Eliot's Waste Land imagery of an English Walking Dead, but he also sees the decency which outlasts the transfixing rationalism and which takes place despite the unambiguous dismissal of them as bourgeois zombies in other parts of the novel. Succumbing to the world as it is, George Bowling, one of the Dead, abandons the social critique implicit in his nostalgia for the past. He concedes that, "if a factory isn't in one place it'll be in another" (209). He accepts living in a spiritual vacuum, relinquishing his idealized past and his prophetic fear of the future for the comfort of blending in under the cloak of mediocrity: "What's the future got to do with chaps like you and me? Holding down our jobs – that's our future" (225). This is the "voice of the belly protesting against the soul," the "little fat man who sees very clearly the advantages of staying alive with a whole skin" (*CEJL* 2: 192). It is the voice of pragmatism or pragmatic realism abandoning or segregating the dream of Work and moralism (or moral individualism). But in spite of his effete and passive acceptance of the terror the future promises to bring, a vestige of the little thin man survives inside the whale of the fat one, entirely swallowed up but inviolate, a 'real me' saturated in an unforgiving universe of fatty, Naturalist determination.

The oddity of a very active Orwell, an Orwell who fought in Spain and was a political advocate for the working class, repeating the Victorian creed of endurance and tolerance, virtues of the ruled, and expanding on the myth of a working-class tragic sensibility demonstrates the

reach and force of English cultural socialism. Still, one might argue that it is odder that his most important critics, Williams and Eagleton, would label him as having a 'self-exiled' ideology while maintaining that all Orwell's novels end in the defeat of a rebel, of an outsider reconciling or being forced to reconcile himself or herself (or itself in the case of *Animal Farm*) with the aggregate (with the exception of *Burmese Days*, which ends in Flory's suicide). Dorothy and Gordon, for example, move from being exiles to embracing society. Orwell himself said that

Exile is probably more damaging to a novelist than to a painter or even a poet, because its effect is to take him out of contact with working life and narrow down his range to the street, the café, the church, the brothel and the studio . . . not [writing] about people working, marrying and bringing up children. (*CEJL* 1: 496)

Orwell here means 'labouring' when he says 'working,' working for and in the economic whole. He exiles himself and rejects society outright by finding vistas to the traditional world, to the culture of Work, not when he condemns social ills or when he sympathizes with those who succumb to them. He built himself up as ideologically neutral and an "individual, an outsider, at the most an unwelcome guerilla on the flank of a regular army" (*CEJL* 4: 413), but in such a 'mode' he was a conscious reformer, politically active and struggling inside the whole. True, he was a loner and had sympathy for loners, but as *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* suggests, he would also mock Byronic poses. And if he exiles himself through a withdrawal into Work, leaping over the hypertrophied scientism and economism of Naturalism and the inaccessible transcendence of Modernism and landing back in the Gospel according to Carlyle, even in exile he embraces the *gemeinschaft* or moral, working-class community associated with Work. In order for Work to remain a sanctuary for the exile, it has to be treated as entirely intransitive, entirely outside the economic realm of which it is nonetheless part. The point of the transcendence is work, only written as Work, but itself never a hiatus from economics and not transcendent. To be transcendent it needs layers of insulation, the invention of a new, friendlier whole.

Work acts as a point of transcendence accessible to the 'common man,' but the activity of the 'common man' has little to do with Work. Orwell was caught between standing behind those

who need to answer to necessity and advocating the problematic means for their 'withdrawal,' problematic in that even if a labourer Works he or she nonetheless labours in order to answer necessity. He gets caught between documenting that social proscriptions construct reality or lead to crises of identity and implying a culture of freedom by confirming idiosyncratic individuality. The dilemma is not endemic to but typical of the British adoption and adaptation of the Naturalist novel (from continental Europe). Terry Eagleton is right to argue that

For the naturalist novelist, men are capable of a limited transcendence of their determining environments – they can, if they are sufficiently sensitive, identify and fight its sterility – but it is part of the philosophical assumptions of naturalism, which the English novel . . . inherits, that men are passively bound to their situations by only partially controllable forces. (*Exiles* 73-74)

In Orwell's version, the truth of small things and a faith in large ones are at odds, history and essentialism are at odds: economics and Work would attempt to expose each other as a gesture of escape or a trivial commonplace. The two sides of the antinomy are compartmentalized and the final victory of material circumstances becomes shrouded in qualifications and ambiguity, even though it is clear that he attempts to show, as Lukács said of Realism, economics "as immediate forms of existence of human life" (*Historical* 354-55). *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* are both undecided, unresolved novels: Dorothy and Gordon defeated and heroic characters. The ambiguity of the novels, where morality or decency are seemingly gained by capitulating to amorality or indecency, where the characters are irrevocably determined by but also fundamentally independent of or different from society, reflects a hard, undialectical split between pragmatism (or labour) and moralism (or Work).

A Clergyman's Daughter

*It wasn't a bad life, but with standing all day, sleeping rough
and getting my hands cut to bits, I felt a wreck at the end of it.*

"Hop-Picking"

Not only does *A Clergyman's Daughter* end by confirming a swing-with-the-punches theme hard to square with critical tenor of the novel, but it also contains the most ambivalent or

contradictory attitude towards work in Orwell's fiction. No matter if she is cooking, cleaning, scavenging for her father or slaving as a volunteer, hop-picking, or teaching, Dorothy suffers economic deprivation, physical abuse, and in a word, the effects of labour. Yet in each of these roles or episodes, the work, ultimately, is or can be internally rewarding, gratifying, character building or at least an opportunity to locate or ground identity. I will begin by discussing the hop-picking episode, the most autobiographical and documental episode in the text. Joining a band of migrant pickers, Dorothy has a glimpse of the redeeming value of work which she again endorses at the end of the novel. The difference is that as a hop-picker she experiences Work as a social glue and at the end of the novel she feels the experience of Work as a social glue without being part of an integrated community. The hop-pickers sing as they work, they are "happy," "sitting round the fires with their cans of tea and their hunks of bread and bacon, in the smell of hops and wood smoke!" (97-98). Orwell's picaresque working-class home gone mobile segregates, filters out, or erases the representation of an otherwise (and understandably) economically preoccupied crowd. Moreover, it is as if the Proudhonian universe of a just and stable social order organized around Work and mutualism, the *gemeinschaft* community, is faster to arise under economic injustice than in the world of regulated contracts, once that injustice has been rearticulated and dislocated into the terms of hard, demanding, physically-exhausting Work. With proper Naturalistic / economic detail, Orwell outlines how pickers deal with the harshness of their work and living arrangements, the physical wear and tear, the lowness of the pay, and the lack of a defence against thieving farmers. Yet despite overwork, poverty, fatigue, undernourishment, and lice,

you were happy, with an unreasonable happiness. The work took hold of you and absorbed you. It was stupid work, mechanical, exhausting, and every day more painful to the hands, and yet you never wearied of it; when the weather was fine and the hops were good you had the feeling that you could go on picking for ever and for ever. It gave you a physical joy, a warm satisfied feeling inside you, to stand there hour after hour, tearing off the heavy clusters and watching the pale green pile grow higher and higher in your bin, every bushel twopence in your pocket. (*Daughter* 105)

Having twopence in the pocket is no longer an economic fact, but part of a romantic underdog image of the swaggering worker doing an honest day's Work. Even the gypsy thieves are heroes and morally solid. Being cheated by a farmer is written into a game where the pickers exact justice by stealing apples from other farmers. Saturated in the culture of the workers, Orwell only represents Work. Just as Work becomes the means by which Dorothy seals off her deprived, draughty, and drudging life at the novel's end, in the hop-picking scene Work displaces economics, minimizes the struggle over reaching the wherewithal to live, and compartmentalizes the complex politics of survival that it is one of Orwell's impulses to represent as the bottom line.

In the excruciatingly detailed essay "Hop-Picking" (1931) Orwell shows his middle-class readers the economic hardships of the marginal workers. Wearing the garb of a sociologist reformer, he attempts to make socialist theoreticians blush by ignoring abstractions and listing the cost of beds, the difficulty of laundry and hygiene, the hours standing, the low wages, and the way the farmers "can sack a picker without notice and on any pretext whatever, and pay him off at 8 bushels a shilling, instead of six" (*CEJL* 1: 63). The opening pages of the essay are concerned with immediate labour issues. He recounts rats so big and numerous that the workers need to carry guns. He describes "dirt and vermin" which "passed belief." He outlines how children work "like slaves" because labour laws could be ignored (*CEJL* 1: 61). Finally, he emphasizes the roughness of the workers, their drinking and swearing, and the cold outer shell that a life of labour plasters on them. Yet as if harshness leads to decency, Orwell also says that he has "never seen anything that had exceeded their kindness and delicacy," that the children "liked the work, and I don't suppose it did them more harm than school" (*CEJL* 1: 61), and that the workers share their food despite their hunger. Again, I am not suggesting that the workers were not kind and delicate or that it would be impossible for them to be so, but only that attitudes toward Work and labour do not clash in Orwell's texts, that they are not positioned dialectically or forced to confront each other. Orwell treats Work and the intrinsic benefits it accrues for hop-pickers as if separable from the exploitative and harsh labour they do which benefits the farmers

in a way that confirms the individual's ability to suspend, surpass, or otherwise remain untouched by economic conditions. He shows the decency that can be gained by or is inherent in simplicity and old-fashioned Work but he also depicts the difficulty that specific groups of the poor endure, "that according to their standards hop-picking is hardly work at all" (*CEJL* 1: 67). By keeping the conflict between Work and labour at bay, by stepping out of the economic context and having his working class so easily do the same, he undermines his own sociology, trivializes the inequities that the workers face, and negates the tenets of his reformism – just as his economically specific reformism negates the radicalism implicit in Work.

In *A Clergyman's Daughter*, Orwell retells his hop-picking adventures via Dorothy to the same end. The morality of the migrant workers is internally managed, even though Orwell takes great pains to describe the ugliness of the external conditions and seems set on emphasizing the subjective effects of those objective conditions. Alox Rai suggests that this internal, sacrosanct morality can be related to Orwell's proximity to the "romantic tradition." He suggests that Orwell's

books suggest a kind of civilized pastoral in which man fulfills himself through work and sex without regard for money, competition, and self-seeking. Like William Morris' utopia, Orwell's socialist state is tinged with this nostalgia for a past that the latter is surely too astute to believe ever existed outside of man's imagination. (164)

Orwell in fact derided Morris's vision (as in *Coming Up for Air*) and the fundamental goodness of 'man' it implies. But he swings hard and fast between a Naturalism which deflates the pastoral vision and a romantic view of working-class culture which resurrects it. The vacuum produced by this split undermines the principled criticisms which are his greatest strength as a writer, whether they are moral or pragmatic principles.

I have little to say about the underworld descent scene in *A Clergyman's Daughter* because it has little to do with Work or labour. It does show, however, Dorothy's ability to remain unscathed in a 'Naturalist environment' of slums and prostitution. The chapter is a complete failure, of interest to the reader only for imagining why Orwell would attempt it or for

observing the speed at which he moves from it, a Joycean experiment, to a Dickensian critique of rationalist education.

The episode at Ringwood House, the private school, also stands out in Orwell's writings insofar as *it involves a dialectical contest between Work and economics*. As a teacher, Dorothy is tremendously successful, creating enthusiasm in her students and actually teaching them something. But due to corruption and rationalist ideologies, analogous to the economic real world she faces when hop-picking or the oppressive work she does for her father, she is forced into "Practical work," "figuring and handwriting" not poetry and creativity: teaching by the numbers and conceding to the "eleventh Commandment," "Thou shall not lose thy job" (211). Confronted by economic reality, Dorothy's non-rationalist approach to teaching, the Work she does, comes undone. The difference between this and the hop-picking scene is that while hop-picking Dorothy experiences labour but engenders Work for herself and while teaching she experiences Work but is confronted by economics.

The teaching scene, the contest between Work and rationalist economics and the final depiction of the impossibility of Work in the modern world, is a lot less ambiguous than the infamously vague and equivocal scene which concludes the novel. That scene also sees Dorothy coming to terms with pragmatism but in a way that does not jeopardize the meanings of Work. In one way, Dorothy is defeated at the end of *A Clergyman's Daughter*. Eagleton argues that, "the movement to freedom and renewal, here as in all Orwell's novels, ends in failure. Life is hopeless and sterile, but the worst false consciousness is to think you can change it" (*Exiles* 89). Dorothy is hauled back into service for her father and the unthankful recipients of her philanthropy, reduced to the same "discouraging," "futile" work that unconsciously drove her to leave the Rectory (48), left bereft and divorced from the *gemeinschaft* community which made the labour of hop-picking such a petty problem, and saddened or hardened by her experiences and her loss of faith. *A Clergyman's Daughter*, like all of Orwell's novels, is tinged with an anti-Victorian sense of futility and resignation that goes against the grain of, for example, the family romance, the marriage of 'sides,' or the recapturing of an all-important social identity typical of

nineteenth-century literature. The image of a still passive Dorothy finding comfort in labour and duty, in “what is customary, useful and acceptable” (261), is not very different from the image of Winston Smith drinking Victory Gin and smiling happily at Big Brother, an unequivocal image of utter defeat.

But the same image of Dorothy ‘working on’ is in another way a victory, a moral affirmation of the self in the face of a failure to change the world. This reading, not a difficult one to make, has Orwell reintroduce the Carlylean resolve to bypass introspection and the impossibility of faith by turning towards Work. She embraces the Gospel of Work written for the working-class: not the ‘bourgeois work ethic’ that values ascendancy, but the other Victorian Gospel that values endurance. Such a reading also confirms the Conradian ‘saving illusion’ by implying that Orwell assumes the value of devoting oneself to immediate tasks despite a consciousness of their moral emptiness or a half-conscious knowledge of their part in the perpetuation of corrupt systems. In other words, Dorothy, like the Marlow of *Heart of Darkness*, knows the world is valueless, but finds inner strength to act as if it were not and thereby consolidate and augment inner strength – a non-vicious cycle. Phillip Rieff reads the conclusion of *A Clergyman’s Daughter* as an “ethic for liberals in a meaningless world,” an affirmation of the verb ‘to do’ which might ward off metaphysical and social despair. Dorothy, then, uses “the exhaustion of activity [to] counter the exhaustion of morality” (57). Alan Sandison critiques Rieff’s analysis because he is determined to argue that Orwell never fully relinquishes the culture of Protestant individualism (which in itself is probably true) and therefore never assumes a Godless universe (not at all a corollary). Such a critique is off the mark. In *A Clergyman’s Daughter* Orwell explicitly treats Work, ‘glue,’ as a substitute for religion. Dorothy has a “need for faith” that cannot be found in the church (or in going too far towards a hedonistic belief in ‘paganism’ or too far towards a rationalist belief in ‘Progress’), but that is satisfied by the “smell of glue,” of getting to Work. With Carlylean confidence, Dorothy makes Work “the answer to her prayer” (261). As both a social and psychological glue, Work becomes a Religion of Humanity, a Feuerbachian rediscovery in Man of the moral imperatives which were previously

thought to follow from the concept of God. In Dorothy's case, her Eliotic (George) humanism finds her masochistically abasing herself to Man instead of masochistically abasing herself to God. *A Clergyman's Daughter* preaches duty and Work: Orwell is never more Victorian than when he affirms the theme of endurance. Dorothy gives into the whale, "saying in effect, 'What the hell is all this about? God knows. All we can do is to endure'" (CEJL 1: 501). In the novel, Orwell attempts to echo the theme he understood Joyce was getting at in *Ulysses*. Orwell thought that "What Joyce is saying is 'Here is life without God. Just look at it!'" (CEJL 1: 508) and in *A Clergyman's Daughter*, Orwell – sketching out the theme of resignation he was to pursue for years to come – tries to do the same. But whereas Joyce in a Nietzsche-cum-Chaplin pose mocks the solace that the substitution of one form of faith for another is supposed to accrue in modernity, Orwell returns to a Victorian or Carlylean affirmation of Work, the Master Narrative. Orwell suggests that the devil finds activity for idle hands, even if the devil is dead.

Sandison is correct to point out, however, that there is "an ambiguity in Dorothy's attitude which suggests that she may not in fact be morally exhausted" (50). Her return to the Rectory can be read, as I have suggested, as both a counter-Victorian defeat and a very Victorian confirmation of autonomous or self-made morality. That she does not despair or deceive herself about her situation, or the prospects for the future, is itself an affirmation of self-sufficiency, that she will get by on inner strength. Though she rejects the provincial and religious guilt which demands that she work, she determinably returns to work under the same conditions of economic inequality, abuse, ennui, and vacuousness – labour – that define her initial pre-amnesiac situation. As Eagleton explains, though it does not square with his interpretation of a defeatist theme, the Dorothy Orwell satirizes for sacrificing herself to self-flagellating habits is nonetheless endorsed by the plot's resolution (*Exiles* 89). Dorothy's devotion to duty validates her older habits, even if they are divorced from her latent desire for a nun's habit, and assumes that she can find affirmation in herself. That affirmation comes at the expense of the novel's greater criticisms of the exploitation and corruption that Dorothy's laborious, unrewarded life represents. Dorothy finds internal strength in "some inner part of the soul that does not change"

(258). She perseveres for its own sake and by doing so accepts that "the mere outward things like poverty and drudgery, and even loneliness, don't matter in themselves" (257-58).

This brand of moral individualism is made possible by an undialectical approach to Work and economic oppression: Dorothy's inner self (which Works) and her outer identity (which labours) are not forced to confront each other and neither is made to bend to the weight of the other. Rather, the two sides exist as if unrelated. But by affirming intransitive Work – "that if one gets on with the job that lies to hand, the ultimate purpose of the job fades into insignificance" (261) – Dorothy withdraws from the knowledge that she labours for others, an oppression which Orwell had acknowledged and condemned. In other words, *A Clergyman's Daughter* repeats the pattern of splitting Work from labour that pervades the prose. By keeping work intransitive, Orwell keeps it and the idea of the inner self inviolable. In doing so, he denies that Work in the conditions of labour exculpates and exacerbates those conditions. The work that Dorothy withdraws into is not Work, it is labour: invented Work or inverted labour. Just as hop-picking was turned into pure Work through delimiting the economic component of it, Dorothy wrests from the labour she does for others, the same demeaning work which unconsciously drove her to escape the Rectory, the rewards of anti-rationalist Work.

The novel repeats this dualistic pattern several times. Dorothy spends a good deal of the novel avoiding, evading, or escaping her slavish duties, driven by an unconscious (justified and authorially endorsed) desire to be free of those duties. Whether she is drifting from her father's rule or recoiling from metaphysical questions of deeper meaning through Work, both the economic and the spiritual problems raised by the novel are sidestepped. Yet the novel is about the moral value of refusing escape. Not only does she return to her drudging routine, but she also refuses, with a decisive authorial endorsement, to indulge in the hedonism Warburton makes available to her. Warburton is ambiguously drawn, both a hedonistic rake and a liberated alternative to Dorothy's sexual repression. Whereas he and Dorothy both accept the meaninglessness of the universe, only Dorothy's refusal to abandon responsibility is condoned. Dorothy's frigidity is at first parodied, but as she recovers redeeming value through a dutiful

commitment to the task at hand, it is affirmed. The sexual repression and the ambiguously treated alleviation of that repression through work parallel Dorothea's conflict in Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2). Warburton is a sexual threat to her just as Henry James's Warburton is a threat to Isabel Archer, an earlier rewriting of Dorothea in *A Portrait of a Lady* (1881). The dualisms in *A Clergyman's Daughter* correspond to the distance between the Orwell who has a fiery hatred of hedonism and the Orwell who has an equally passionate allegiance to common simplicity and uncalculated day-tripping, the kind of moralism that "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad" (1946) expresses. Orwell writes between pragmatism and moralism, creating a tension that is only 'resolved' by keeping them strictly divided.

Keep The Aspidistra Flying

To suggest that a creative writer, in a time of conflict, must split life into two compartments, may seem defeatist or frivolous: yet in practice I do not see what else he can do. To lock yourself up in an ivory tower is impossible and undesirable. To yield subjectively, not merely to a party machine, but even to a group ideology, is to destroy yourself as a writer. We feel this dilemma to be a painful one, because we see the need of engaging in politics while also seeing what a dirty, degrading business it is.

"Writers and Leviathan"

Orwell has an ivory tower, Work, and he engages himself in politics. In general, his characters yield themselves subjectively to the whale: Orwell, for the most part, either denies it or struggles against it. Submission, as I have suggested, resembles withdrawal, since the characters' innermost selves remain undefiled or actually refreshed despite the gook they surround themselves in, just as values of Work are wrested from conditions of labour. Both submission and withdrawal imply a willed retreat into a private, inner, purifying sanctum. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying's* Gordon Comstock eventually yields himself completely to modern rationality. At first, however, he is disgusted by the money god, renounces the world of bourgeois business, attempts to 'escape the money code,' and seeks a 'bad job' (57, 60). His judgment and rejection of day-to-day conventional society, the ideology of 'getting on' or even of getting up (Gordon's politically-oriented laziness and self-exile pre-echoes the slacker's

creed), takes him to the brink of complete self-alienation, to a no-man's land of dogmatic negativity that refutes idyllic withdrawal (denial) and political engagement (struggle).

In one sense, his capitulation to conventional normality, losing his "soul" to an advertising company, an industry that greases the consumerism he initially vilifies, signifies defeat or pragmatic realism. He forgoes his youthful and rebellious pride, and his obstinate desire for autonomy, to the lower middle-class humdrum life of wives, babies, and aspidistras. His abandonment to expediency and pragmatism, to the comfort of going with the grain, is tinged with a sense of self-betrayal and failure which subverts the many stubbornly vitalistic readings of the text. Even Bernard Crick, who is not ideologically bent on asserting Orwellian vitalism, suggests that Orwell despised the materialist or money monomania that defines the modern age, but "like Gordon Comstock" "realized that independence for a writer depended on earning some [money]" (*Life* 67). Though Orwell, in his specific, concrete, pragmatic 'mode,' makes the point often enough that the artist, and in fact everyone, needs a full belly in order to best find expression, Gordon does not gain independence after his acquiescence to 'the system'; he even ceases to be a writer.

In another sense, however, Raymond Williams is in uncertain territory when he suggests that Orwell's characters, and especially Gordon Comstock, are exiles who do not integrate themselves with society "in any positive way," and in that manner mirror Orwell himself (*Culture* 291). In the same breath the Williams / Eagleton school steadfastly maintains that a defeatist, surrender theme / ending permeates all of Orwell's novels, that characters submit to the society at large. Winston Smith's acceptance of society may be entirely void of positivity, but the value of Dorothy Hare's and Gordon Comstock's surrender is much more ambiguous. Gordon abandons his principles and bows down to the money god at the end of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, but he is an exile when he clings to those principles, when he rejects that god. Stephen Ingle nails it perfectly when he suggests that Gordon becomes "anti-Polly" (*Socialist* 53): the self-chosen economic outcast who then finds and engenders value by embracing the

economic society. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, unlike *The History of Mr. Polly*, uses pragmatism as a corrective to anti-social moralism.

The dilemma between moralism and pragmatism is one that suffuses both Orwell's fiction and prose. In the novels, Orwell continues to swing hard between moralism and pragmatism, but the way in which he adopts the conventions of closure pronounces final victory for pragmatic realism. The essay form lends itself to equivocation in a manner that the exigencies of narrative closure do not. Orwell's fictional characters end up submitting to economic reality because for him such was the experience of the common man who cannot live life on moral principles. If one reads his novels in sequence, one finds moralism starting afresh from one novel to the next, though in a diminished state from novel to novel. The same hard swing between moralism and pragmatism characterizing the prose then rises to the surface. Just because Gordon chooses conformity over the puerile romance of anti-social non-activity or has that choice forced upon him, Orwell never ceases to rotate between the two visions of moral and pragmatic imperatives. As with *A Clergyman's Daughter*, the ending of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* is not necessarily defeatist. In many ways it is precisely the opposite. The ambiguity of its ending, and of the value of Gordon Comstock-as-rebel, is never finally resolved. The question of whether Gordon Comstock the outcast or Gordon Comstock the up-and-comer at the New Albion Publicity Company is our hero is never finally answered.

The discrepancy between Nicholas Guild's reading of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, where Gordon's capitulation to convention is definitely "something of which his creator approves" (144) and Richard Rees's version of it, where "in the end [Gordon] is a disastrously defeated rebel" (32), for example, testifies to the ambiguity of the novel's final swing towards pragmatism. Perhaps it is impossible to see Gordon's transition to the money world as anything but the right, proper decision because the rebel Gordon is, technically speaking, an insufferable jerk. Gordon may begin by rejecting the "money-stink," but he is nonetheless obsessed with it. When Orwell insists that a lack of money leads to "Social failure, artistic failure, sexual failure" (*Aspidistra* 84), he incisively touches upon an expansive reading of economic determinism. But

when the same critique comes out as whining complaint or self-pity, it translates into an entirely different and unsympathetic gesture. Gordon uses poverty to excuse his brutal treatment of Rosemary and his failure to write poetry. He amplifies his isolation, imagines he is snubbed when he is not. Even when he foolishly blows the slight fortune he stumbles upon, in itself not a condemnable act, he blames it on his lack of economic training, declaring that the "rich don't behave like that" (199). He is too preoccupied with economics – even his poetry is about the effects of poverty – to notice the decency of Ravelston, Julia, or Rosemary. Orwell himself had no patience for self-pity and the slacker's self-exile. He busied himself excessively, almost betraying a self-loathing neurosis in concert with Dorothy Hare.² But when Gordon sheds his self-pity it is almost impossible not to read his new job, new outlook and so forth, as a victory, an authorially approved submission to the whale.

But just as Dorothy's "action of going to the scullery" ends her "self-pity" (260), utilizing the classic antidote of Work when in fact she returns to rationalist labour, Gordon's return to the advertising agency, which he excels at because he proceeds mechanically, is written as a return to Work. Gordon's awakened devotion to activity, like Dorothy's before him, is a testament to the individual's ability to find value in the valueless. Gordon, in this way, is a hero for shedding his Byronic, Swiftian pose, for becoming a social being: he even gets the girl. It would be hard to maintain that Gordon is less decent at the novel's end, after he has joined the money world and validated the corruption of pure morality which it represents, than as an entirely negative, self-pitying but unflinching moralist.

Becoming decent in the corrupt economic world, inside the whale, underlines the foremost characteristic of moralism where subjective value is created through individual effort despite the overwhelmingly corruptible objective world. Gordon's criticisms of a society based on money, the cash nexus, and self-interest, criticisms that Orwell himself endorses, unravel as

²In his notebook (1949) Orwell wrote, "there has literally been not one day in which I did not feel that I was idling, that I was behind with the current job, and that my total output was miserably small. Even at the periods when I was working ten hours a day on a book, or turning out four or five articles a week, I have never been able to get away from this neurotic feeling, that I was wasting time" (*CEJL* 4: 510-11).

he discovers in himself the decency that survives the rationalist, petty bourgeois world of moneyed relations. The traditional values Orwell raises to nostalgic heights, such as fatherhood and family, are conflated with the acceptance of mediocrity and aspidistras, with a sensual appreciation for the feel of money (259), and with mild bourgeois rationality. The rebel Gordon turns out to have been merely a self-centred, whining, callow, *mistaken* brat: "Failure" turns out to be "as great a swindle as success" (63). In between criticisms of the day-to-day rationalist world and locating value in that world lies moral individualism. The baby to be born at the end of the novel is inside a womb and Gordon is inside the whale, which Orwell also calls a 'womb' (*CEJL*, 1: 521). The new Gordon, then, is "alive and stirring" (264), as innocent and vital as a newborn. But the miracle of Gordon is that he can be 'alive and stirring' while fully embracing and participating in a world which readers were led to believe stifles life. Instead of trying to change the world, ultimately written as a preordained failure reducible to youth and angst, Gordon successfully changes himself and his relationship with the world, gleaning decency and nobility where decency and nobility had been absent. Between total moral commitment and the pragmatic strategies necessary to make a buck is an undialectical non-event, the surpassing of the moral limitations of pragmatism through a retreat to an inner, unassailable morality. Terry Eagleton's assessment of Gordon's transformation, that "the novel finally perceives the humanity which remains at the heart of capitalism" (*Exiles* 99), is slightly inaccurate. The humanity exists in the heart of the individual who, while participating in it, can and does elevate himself above capitalism.

Because capitalism turns out to be an insurmountable given in all ways but in its moral or subjective effects, the radical criticisms of the text – not of marriage and paternity but of the rationalist concessions needed to support them – are withdrawn. Orwell did not believe the working class (the proles of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for example) or the lower-middle class (men like George Bowling or the new Gordon Comstock) could or would change the world. He also had little patience for the fantasy of a moral and resurgent aristocracy. He does not blame Gordon for abandoning his principles because survival itself is a value and despair or withdrawal

is valueless. Gordon, by focusing on the immediate, turns work into a palliative even though that very type of rationalist work had received nothing but his, and Orwell's, condemnation from a moral point of view. Work becomes an intransitive item, its rationalism reversed by its identity-fixing function, albeit the identity of the pragmatist. Orwell himself had asked the question in "Inside the Whale" that critics continue to apply to *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. If "the moral" of getting inside the whale is "Sit on your bum," then "in a time like ours, is this a defensible attitude?" (CEJL 1: 522). For Orwell, sitting on your bum (not raging against 'the system') can obviously mean pragmatic work, an attitude implying that Work and pragmatic work are polar opposites. Working outside the whale, involvement in pure Work, would demand an entirely new economic structure, a moral economy. Gordon cannot successfully revolt because the rationalism of the world, after all is said and done, is a reality with an almost metaphysical stature. Again, submission to the whale was not Orwell's personal alternative; he shifts between fighting directly against it and withdrawing from it into Work. But the undialectical approach to Work and reformism shifts seamlessly into an undialectical approach to evasion and submission, again with the possibility for a moral elevation to the inviolate from within the confines created by the submission.

The mixed values of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, *A Clergyman's Daughter*, and in fact most of Orwell's fiction are the result of a polarized or non-confrontational attitude towards moralism and pragmatism, between Work and labour. Orwell writes in the Naturalist genre but fails to maintain an attack on society because he believed himself to be a self-starter, trusted in 'decency' that the individual could be responsible for his or her own codes, and because he was antagonistic towards any form of self-pity. Since the amorality of pragmatism could be sequestered off or held in abeyance by a self-sufficient moralist, and since Orwell saw a profound morality in the ordinary Joe's social adaptation, he did not imagine a contest between Work and economics. In fact, Naturalism never achieved the same kind of success or popularity in Britain as it did in continental Europe because of a deep-seated belief in moralism – the power to do good despite the bad – an equally rooted belief in pragmatism, and a tendency to split the

two so that they don't cancel each other out. Orwell encompasses the tendencies of Carlyle and Conrad in his antipodal positioning of Work and labour, of freedom and economics. Value, finally, is located in intransitive activity and the individual himself or herself over a disparaged and disparaging reality.

Post-Industrial and Postmodern Work

Despite derision from postmodernism on the one hand and the anti-work manifestos of slackers on the other, the idea of Work continues to survive into the present day. And despite the rhetoric of post-industrial utopians and cyber-enthusiasts downplaying poverty and economic domination, issues surrounding labour continue to overwhelm us as well. If we are witnessing a substantial and widespread increase in the standard of living, and the 'if' is a big one, it still does not follow that the interests which our labour serves today have undergone any kind of substantial revision. And if we are witnessing the end of industry – a revolution of 'flexible' work, task-based work, de-differentiated work, and the possibility of shop-floor innovations – it does not follow that contemporary versions of work are intrinsically (or extrinsically) satisfying for the many. If work has become humanized, and I do not think that it has for most workers, the few it serves certainly have not been.

What has changed is that for the first time ever the dominant mode of self-conscious and deliberate cultural activity, postmodernism, corresponds to and ratifies the concurrent mode of work. The relationships between Victorian literature and utilitarianism or Modernism and neo-classical consumerist theory, for example, were antagonistic, notwithstanding significant points of collusion. The theoretical principles of postmodernism are nearly identical to those lying behind the definition of post-industrialism and the bond between the two worldviews is for the most part solid and friendly. Postmodernist enthusiasts embrace the idea, and the structure, of post-industrialism and vice versa. This is despite the fact that most postmodernists reject the concept of Work and most post-industrialists confidently boast that Work is a present day reality. In this brief epilogue I ask questions about what postmodern and post-industrial theory embrace. I am not suggesting that everyone who accepts that postmodernism and post-industrialism are palpable realities accepts that each or both are suffused with enormous value, but I do want to examine the popularity of the theories in light of their respective devaluation or dismissal of Work *and* labour. I am interested in the assumptions behind post-industrialism and

postmodernism concerning work, especially when the paths cross, and I am interested in the politics of post- or anti-work rhetoric. But this is an epilogue: I am merely touching upon immense topics, observing from the historical and dialectical perspective I have used throughout this paper, and in a necessarily cursory manner, critiquing generally and liberally. This is not a conclusion: it is not a summary of my argument and in some ways I am abandoning the themes discussed and even the parameters used in the thesis. I am, for example, no longer focused on English cultural socialism or indeed on England. I am also permitting myself to use a different methodology. Witnessing the unfolding of history demands or inevitably will provoke a different rhetoric and tone than the one produced by attempting to put history back together in a conceptual form.



Daniel Bell first ushered in the idea that the West was becoming post-industrial in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973). He asks us to abandon the image of the factory when we talk about work and envision in its place professionals, advisors, experts, technocrats, educators, and a technical "elite" in the service sector. His society is wealthy, fair, full of convenient amenities, and "communal." Having matured beyond a "mode of life modeled on economics . . . [on] maximization and optimization" in industrial society, post-industrialism represents a real "change in the *social structure*" (127, 114). Bell does not speak of a problem-free society, but the tenor of his theory emphasizes social amelioration, justice and equal opportunity, wealth and health, and happiness for all. At the centre of the post-industrial society are the rewards accrued by advances in the dissemination of information. Post-industrial theory highlights that information, fast technology, and fast information technology. Bell argues:

That information and theoretical knowledge are the strategic resources of the postindustrial society just as the combination of energy, resources, and machine technology were the transforming agencies of industrial society. ("Social" 545)

It would be difficult to deny that the West has seen a shift from manual to mental work. Though statistics about the current state of work are difficult to interpret, as they often seem to be

corresponding to and shamelessly promoting sundry political and theoretical objectives, it is clear that more and more people work in service and information sectors and fewer and fewer in 'industrial' fields of work.¹ There are, however, at least six major problems with post-industrial theory.

The first problem with post-industrial theory is its basis in Enlightenment reasoning: its belief in progress, human reason, and 'man,' and its optimism or flat-out utopianism. As Jean-François Lyotard says in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), the idea of the information society "fails to challenge the general paradigm of progress in science and technology, to which economic growth and the expansion of sociopolitical power seem to be the natural complements" (7). The development of knowledge and reason in itself is said to correspond to freedom and a better world. The implied faith in progress is coupled with an explicit faith in beneficent technology. Technology, as Fredric Jameson argues, is understood to be the "ultimate determining instance" of social life (*Postmodernism* 37). Tom Stonier and Yoneji Masuda, self-declared post-industrial utopians, argue that the mechanisms of the information society enhance democracy (by diffusing information), and that the Internet and TV liberate (Kumar 14). They contend that the information society will wipe out the need for war because wars are fought over resources: brains, apparently, are not a resource that would lead to aggression.

This brings us to the second, third, fourth, and fifth problems with post-industrial theory. The second, probably the most significant, is that it deliberately ignores, downplays, or conceals the fact that with the shift from manual to mental forms of work there have been no coincidental shifts in the distribution of workplace (or structural) power and authority. The dynamic of the workplace – or the division of labour between conception and execution – has not changed. The deadening, paper-pushing routines of information channeling, tracking, and circulating are not that different from Taylorism on the factory floor. Taylorism and Fordism were not primarily about efficiency and productivity. As Stephen Marglin has shown (also see page 219 of my

¹ As Boris Frankel shows, post-industrialist theorists from both the political left and right accept that factory work or assembly-line industry has greatly decreased in Western society over the last fifty years (1-16).

thesis), one of the basic uses of the division of labour was to prevent workers from acting for and by themselves; data processing for the sake of data processing is only a slight variation on domination for domination's sake (15-17). James Beniger convincingly argues that the structure of the information society demands "increases in the speed of material processing and of flows through the material economy" in the same way as assembly line rationalism did a century ago (435). The fact that the material basis of the production has changed does not mean that the organization of the production has changed. New technologies, the electronic panopticon, only augment the potential for increased surveillance, domination, and control, and the insistence on an orderly, rational, set manner of production.

That post-industrial theory downplays the fact that no shift in workplace domination has occurred can be further divided into two categories, the third and fourth shortcomings of the theory: the new global division of labour and the old matter of class. Unendurable labour, low wages, child labour, and the kind of working conditions which England saw during the worst years of the 'industrial revolution' exist today all over the world. This is not news. Nor is the fact that Western multinational corporations, Disney is an excellent example, exploit resources (human and natural) in other nations and only thus enable parts of Western society to be post-industrial. The unmitigated greed that globalization and free trade encourage reflects a demarcated post-industrialism. Certain segments of the world's population have always been post-industrial, which takes us to the fourth point.

Not only does post-industrial theory ignore non-Western industry, it ignores and denies industry, poverty, and class within the West. It builds its social and economic models on the idea that all are enjoying and have equal access to an era of plenty, leisure, learning, and happiness. By emphasizing technology, efficiency, automation, abundance, and consumer freedom, post-industrialism obscures issues surrounding economic domination and class. One should not boast about or suggest that a four percent U.S. unemployment rate is indicative of a shift in political power when that number would be tripled if the prisons were emptied. Stanley Aronowitz et al document the growth of sweatshops, child labour, underpaid and 'contingent' work, underground

labour, and economic disparity in Europe and the U.S. (31-36). They also show that people are working longer now, in post-industrial societies, than ever before (37). Though it is true that it has become extremely difficult to rely on traditional demographic variables such as consumption habits to identify the classes, as individuals from all classes more and more seem to piece themselves together from various mass media images, it is not true that the division between the rich and the poor has decreased in terms of economic, political, or social power (Gorz, *Critique* 66).

I would not deny that the proliferation of consumer goods has led to a real improvement in the overall standard of living for the once identifiable working class. For some workers, not only has the ability to possess easily been taken for granted, they themselves have become 'wealthy' through unions or stock options. Marcuse critiques this 'good way of life' on the grounds that it "militates against qualitative change," that the "new technological work-world thus enforces a weakening of the negative position of the working class: the latter no longer appears to be the living contradiction to the established society" (*One* 12, 31). Though his case is vitiated by an anti-democratic, ascetic snobbery, and an assumption of the disappearance of poverty, he is right to point out that an increase in the availability of goods does not "compensate for the fact that the decisions over life and death, over personal and national security are made at places over which the individuals have no control" (*One* 32). Post-industrial theory denies that the relations of production have not changed, that poverty is rampant and critical in the West (though effectively ghettoized), that, as Schumacher says, "wants will always rise faster than the ability to meet them" (25), that information technology is in part responsible for bigger and bigger corporations and more and more centralization (and thus less and less direct control by the worker over the object of work), and that if some material needs have been met for workers it does not follow that 'higher order' needs at the workplace, or beyond it, have been met. A great deal of industrial work – and the flexibility of the term 'post-industrialism' is the fifth problem with the theory – still takes place: the kind of work which enables post-industrial activity to

make millionaires (just as with the global division of labour or as Orwell's miners enable intellectuals to have their insights).

The fifth pitfall of the theory, then, again related to its assumptions, has to do with its super-categories. Labour and union rhetoric – workers of the world unite – has always suffered from a generalized grouping and a lack of discrimination that places social workers making minimum wage besides garbage-men who make forty dollars per hour. But these workers have at least the fact that they are unionized employees in common. Post-industrial theory groups nearly everyone who isn't working in a factory as a 'professional.' It is one thing to show that our world is more oriented towards mental than physical labour by showing increases in the number of jobs in education or administration, but it is another to imply the disappearance of physical work by calling janitors 'sanitation experts' and thus grouping them as professionals. Moreover, to class service sector jobs – retail, restaurant work, parking attendants – in the same category as expert professionals, as does Vladislav Inozemtsev (96) and John Naisbitt (26) for example, is to ignore that those jobs, and there are zillions of them, have more akin with industrial factory work (being paid by the hour, having a physical nature) than with information technology. The implication of a world where routine has been done away with, where everyone enjoys the same dignity of work, is ideological nonsense. Working in a factory can be easier than waiting tables: less people to boss you about, less people to judge how you do your job, less people to deny you are an 'expert.'

The absurd and self-interested assumption of a classless, professional society is based on or fortified by the idea of a knowledge theory of value, the sixth shortcoming of post-industrial theory. To begin with, post-industrial theorists treat knowledge and information as a brand new thing, as if before the computer value was determined only by labour, land, or capital. The *combination* of knowledge, labour, land (or inherited power), and capital has always been that which leads to value, generated growth, made riches. That we privilege knowledge today is in effect to conceal that labour takes place (whether making the product or selling it), that capital is needed to make money, and that power is remaining in the hands of those who have always had

it. Perhaps knowledge is more accessible today and innovation now open to a wider spectrum of people. But that a handful of computer whiz-kids have made it big by designing websites for insurance companies does not mean that we should ignore the thousands of Asian women with tiny fingers putting the hardware together. It does not mean that domination has disappeared or made the myths of equal opportunity and rags to riches in any way actual. The emphasis on knowledge as that which determines value is analogous to the liberal dictum that value or social wealth accrues from the abstract movement of the market and not the labour – and I mean the effort or the capital – which enables the market. The assumption of a knowledge theory of value – along with the misleading super-categories of post-industrial experts and professionals, the downplaying of class, the denial of the global division of labour, the misconstrued idea about freedom and the distribution of power in the workplace, and the throwback to a general Enlightenment utopianism – is an attempt to bypass or conceal what I have been calling *labour*.



A major counterpart to post-industrial theory, its more popular counterpart, is postmodernism. As a description of contemporary life, postmodernism is often accepted by intellectuals and social observers, though it remains loosely and dubiously defined. I am only interested in postmodernism as it relates to theories of work. In some ways, postmodernism surveys the shift from an economy based on production to one based on consumption, the same shift that modernists were faced with and which Orwell feels 'torn both ways' about. Instead of being put off by consumerist culture, however, postmodernists tend to support it as a relation to or a sign of the healthy transgression of boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture. Still, the foremost meaning of postmodernism comes from Lyotard. Postmodernism, following him, campaigns against 'grand narratives.' Lyotard especially argued that after Auschwitz and Stalin, the ideas of Progress, rationality, and science must be discredited: postmodernism today disparages any and all meta-narratives, including Work. Claiming to be more interested in the local (though not the specific) than the universal; maintaining that knowledge and truth are temporary and shifting; positing that there is no centre from which to steadily view, interpret, or

know the world; arguing the multi-directionality of information, a kind of hyper-textual world-text and the lack of a steady origin and destination of knowledge; and confirming another lack – of deep structures or final causes – the postmodern attitude does not tolerate concepts of Work: at best it might express amusement. The idea of Work involves all of the centring, universalizing, essentializing schemas that are anathema to postmodernism's image of itself. The 'work' of art, an expression of personal style or freedom (in Ruskin's sense), has been replaced by the 'text,' with its 'dead author' (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 77). The idea of Work encompasses a strict valorization of the past, vitality, earnestness, activity, humanist notions of subjectivity, and the fixity of nature. Postmodernism, to put it bluntly, does not. Postmodern (and post-industrial) theory would undo the idea that the worker objectifies himself or herself in the object of the work, thereby grounding, discovering, or solidifying a sense of identity. If the keyword for postmodernism is irony, then that irony turns cynical when applied to Work.

There are several points of theoretical contention between post-industrialism and postmodernism in the context of work. Postmodernism refuses to accept that the 'new' world has a privileged carrier of change whereas post-industrialism trumpets high-tech. Lyotard in fact argues that the computer age equals the mercantilization of knowledge. But the greatest disagreement between the two theories must be that whereas post-industrial theory adopts a neo-Enlightenment faith in reason, science, and progress, postmodernism calls itself a 'post-science,' wishing to leave the totalizing unity of science in its wake and spearheading an anti-Enlightenment, post-humanist trend. Yet the two theories also relate and agree with each other in such a way as to create a very self-contained frame of reference. Both theories claim to favour and proceed through hybridized, decentralized, yet self-reflexive mechanisms. And both theories celebrate the multivalence and multiplicity of theoretical knowledge in itself. Because postmodernism stands adamantly against meta-narratives, its advocates often accept the fragmentation or 'flexibility' of post-industrial society. Both post-industrial and postmodern theory see the censure of social fragmentation as a modernist refusal of difference (or *différance*). Stewart Clegg, though not a fan of either theory, argues that:

Where modernist [work] was rigid, postmodern organization is flexible . . . Where modernist organization and jobs were highly differentiated, demarcated, and de-skilled, postmodernist organization and jobs are highly de-differentiated, de-demarcated, and multi-skilled. (181)

The new emphasis on contract and sub-contract work, networking, or loyalty to the job and not to transient co-workers is represented as an alternative to job stagnation, repetition, and de-skilling. That job definitions have been atomized and wage scales have been problematized according to postmodern multiplicity or that work is now task-based, as opposed to being time-based, does not necessarily indicate intrinsic job satisfaction or extrinsic justice. Such work organization can also be the means by which employers try to squeeze the most out of employees while avoiding pension payments and allowing themselves the flexibility to downsize at whim. Again I refer to Aronowitz's documentation of the recent increase in white-collar working hours (37). 'Flexibility' is most significantly the rhetoric of hyper and very successful – not late – capitalism.

Marxist scholars, including Jameson, have been quick to point out that postmodernism is the ideology of the post-industrial (or post-Fordist) society. They argue that Postmodernism is the crutch globalism or multinational capitalism leans on just as Modernism was the cultural trend during the hey-day of industrial capitalism. Marxism, in turn, is accused of employing a totalizing narrative revolving around industrial workers, class, and capitalism. But Marxism's critique, and especially Jameson's critique, should not go undervalued: nearly alone they attempt to identify causes and initiate political discussions. In *Postmodernism* (1991), Jameson not only wonders what has become of history in postmodernism, but also why postmodern images of ubiquitous commodification are meant to titillate or exhilarate, not cause anxiety or anger. Both post-industrialism and postmodern theories go out of their way to show themselves as if transcending politics, especially in the assumption of a world transcending class and poverty. Postmodernism's emphasis on endless contingency and deferral, its knee-jerk rejection of binaries, and its focus on reflexivity strips itself of political content. Post-industrial theorists

often reject notions of left and right politics because they themselves, largely the right wing, have been by and large victorious in achieving their goals of global free enterprise and minuscule government.² One has to wonder about declarations of a post-industrial world where, as Daniel Bell famously argues, 'the game against nature is now a game between people,' just as environmentalism becomes a popular political movement. One also must wonder about postmodern declarations that irony reigns supreme just as NGO-based anti-capitalist, drop-the-debt, anti-multinational protests are shaking up the West.

The effect of the alliance between post-industrial and postmodern theory is to undermine both the issues surrounding labour and the idea of Work, which, as I'll suggest in a moment, is in effect to further entrench rationalism. First, however, I will continue to discuss modern organizations of work in order to argue that the West is not a post-industrial or a postmodern society in a meaningful way except in the most isolated and rarified quarters. Sar Levitan and Clifford Johnson contend that, "Despite an enormous decrease during this century in the amount of human labour required to produce given quantities of goods, no corresponding decrease in the number or relative proportion of workers has taken place" (1). André Gorz shows that only a privileged few have gained from post-industrial work and that the clear majority of Westerners continue to live on the brink of unemployment, working de-skilled jobs (*Critique* 66). But it is not my intention to reproduce his or flash any testimony of numbers across the page: as said, the tenableness of statistics is extremely questionable. It is especially difficult to gauge whether or not the idea of Work has decreased because higher absenteeism, the desire for early retirement, and shorter workweeks might mean an increase in the desire for Work outside of employment. The current do-it-yourself home improvement craze seems to suggest a desire for Work, though watching Martha Stewart patter about is also a good reminder that to enjoy Work one needs

² In the 1980s, generally speaking, the left wing failed to adequately censure the idea of a post-industrial society because they imagined and based their critiques on the understanding that high-tech and automation would eliminate jobs. André Gorz, in *Farewell to the Working Class* (1987), sees that a "society based on mass unemployment is coming into being before our eyes" (3).

money.³ The taking of second jobs and working longer employment hours, on the other hand, might only suggest an increase in a 'labour ethic' and not a 'work ethic.' I tend to agree with Michael Rose, that despite the representation of a postmodern society and the discourse of a post-industrial one, "what is striking is how stable some work values seem to have remained" (92). Rose argues, without dislodging history, that the idea of Work is "not being abandoned because of a move towards post-industrialism" (93).

This is not to suggest that 'flexible capitalism' or the post-industrial workplace fosters intrinsic job satisfaction. Inozemtsev, however, sees nothing but roses in current organizations of work: "Today's corporation unites people, not as simple sources of physical energy or the appendages of machines and mechanisms, but primarily as creative individuals" (186). He argues and refers to hundreds of others who argue that modern corporations are now driven by non-economic goals, not only profit, and that a "whole new work ethic is emerging under which the product carries the imprint of the personality of its creator" (182).⁴ Barry Jones comes close to confirming this Work point of view by suggesting that the West is moving from 'time-saving' principles (trying to minimize the labour time of workers in order to decrease costs and increase profits) to 'time-absorbing' principles (careers in research, administration, information services, etc. where people do not punch the clock). He is correct to point out that time-absorbing work has historically been done by "those for whom work and existence were inextricably linked, unaffected by the division of labour" (82). Time-absorbing work, however, does not necessarily entail the kind of cottage economics advocated by the Schumacher / Rifkin school (which attempts to bring a spirit of Work to economics and labour) even if resituated in electronic and information-based technologies. More often it would simply mean having employees exhaust themselves for the company brass.

³ A lot might be said about today's D.I.Y. industries in the context of Work, about the class or classes they are directed at, or about the gendered division of labour that they for the most part uphold. I, unfortunately, do not have room for such a discussion here.

⁴ Inozemtsev may be trying to hard-sell capitalism in Russia for a somewhat 'progressive' end, but his glorification of the West (sanctioned in a foreword by Mikhail Gorbachev) nonetheless encapsulates a great deal of the egregiously cheery bragging common among post-industrialists.

For every backer of post-industrial theory there is a critic who takes into consideration the deepening economic inequalities associated with the rise of high-tech. Richard Sennett suggests that "the new language of flexibility implies that routine is dying in the dynamic sectors of the economy," but that "at least two-thirds . . . of modern jobs . . . are repetitive in a way which Adam Smith would recognize as akin to those in his pin factory" (44). 'Flexibility' can be read as an ideological ruse instilling values that tolerate the fragmentation and accept the risks, unsteadiness, lack of community and loyalty, and validation of opportunism easily linked to short-term work. Sennett underlines the uncertainties bred into today's short-term contract job market, arguing that "What's peculiar about uncertainty today is that it exists without any looming historical disaster; instead it is woven into the everyday practices of a vigorous capitalism. Instability is meant to be normal" (31). He also shows that job insecurity is nothing new, but that now it is not only manual workers who suffer its effects, but post-industrial 'professionals' as well. As said, the language of 'time-absorbing' or 'task-based' activity can be read as a ploy to squeeze the most out of the worker for the least amount of pay or for very controlled pay. Just as the only mechanism to gauge whether Carlyle's aggrandizement of work was complete in itself, or if it was on loan to businessmen in order to mobilize their economic machines, is to confront his rhetoric of Work with matters surrounding labour (what he himself does not do), the current moral elevation of the organization of work, the supposed fusing of 'work' and 'life' under postmodernism, must be seen in reference to the group who profits most. Flexible capitalism allows corporations to treat the workforce as a reserve army, calling up workers when it suits their needs and unilaterally controlling the labour supply – keeping it high by endlessly fluctuating the demand.

The idea that rationalism in work has been reduced in the move from the factory to the office or the computer terminal or from modernist to postmodernist society is absurd and terrible. The idea that in moving from a dominant ideology of deferred gratification to one of 'spend now' we have radically changed our politely hedonistic 'make a living ethic' is equally as

absurd.⁵ Post-industrialism and the computer, as Krishan Kumar argues, have ushered in more standardization and a greater division of labour in the contemporary workplace than scientific management ever did (19). The dot.com organization of the information society means the maximization of information for its own sake, quantity and now speed over quality, and the elevation of methods above the end (where it garners support from postmodernism). In other words, the formal rationality of the means is substantially irrational in the same way that Weber, Marx, Marcuse, Schumacher, and many others have defined the formal rationality of economic maximization – maximization or profit-seeking for its own sake – as substantially irrational or empty. If contemporary workers find Work in such environments it only shows that rationalization comes as something external to them.



In certain fields the workplace may have been re-structured to include employee innovation (which, everything else being just, would probably mean employee satisfaction), but such restructuring takes place only when it promises to be efficient and increase profit for employers. This is also the reasoning of slackers as they interpret the post-industrial rhetoric of work. (To clarify, post-industrialists claim a new organization of work which fosters intrinsic satisfactions, though they nonetheless continue to maintain that work is a disutility and that people seek and desire leisure. Postmodernists denounce Work wholesale.) Slackers are proud to be social dropouts. In order to reject society – its laws, its conventions, its underlying kill-or-be-killed mentality – they wholly reject work. Having been around for about fifteen years now, they have taken to computers,⁶ but generally insist that since they do not put effort into anything, their links and so forth might not work. Their creed includes the virtues of procrastination,

⁵ In *The Critique of Economic Reason* (1989), Gorz argues that even leisure has become organized by rationalist economics, that economic logic has 'colonized' all aspects of life. "Technical culture," he holds, "is lack of culture in all things non-technical. Learning to work means unlearning how to find, or even look for, a meaning to non-instrumental relations with the surrounding environment and with other people" (86).

⁶ The Internet has allowed slackers to unite without becoming too organized. For obvious reasons they have a difficult time justifying and defending their dedication and collaboration, or having a mission and loyalties to the cause.

stealing paper clips from the companies they work unambitiously for (as clerks or mailroom attendants – some of them *have* to work), interminably watching TV, and being unproductive in as many ways as they can imagine without giving it much effort. They are urban, subversive for its own sake, and young. They target Work, but in fact reject yielding to the world of labour: Work is refuted because it is understood to be the ideology of capitalism. Bob Black, one of their heroes, argues against Work because it is a tool used to promote the self-interested society, though he also rejects unions and what's left of the pro-Work rhetoric of the Marxist school. However, though he preaches in *The Abolition of Work* (1985) the need to turn work into play, declares himself to be half nihilist and half ludist, he ends up by affirming something akin to William Morris's values. Work, he suggests, should be creative, fun, community-based, irreverent (as with artisanal stubbornness), and as multidirectional as his own prose. Slackers, Black, and Morris all deny that in capitalism there can be truly meaningful work. From that slackers and Black argue that work is not a good source of social or personal identity. They avoid being accused of a hypocritical or full-bellied attitude by happily relying on the welfare system and trying to reverse the stigma associated to it. Their nihilism is understandable in a world where Work is constantly appropriated for the greed of the few. In many ways, Orwell foresees slackerism when trying to understand Henry Miller in "Inside the Whale" (1940):

The passive attitude will come back, and it will be more consciously passive than before. Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism – robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it. Get inside the whale – or rather, admit that you are inside the whale (for you *are*, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it. That seems to be the formula. (*CEJL* 1: 526)

Slackers are a clear minority, but the anti-work or 'Post-Work' attitude has become increasingly widespread. Slackerism is in one way an extreme variation of postmodernism, accepting that one thing is as good as another, that any lifestyle (or interpretation) is valid, that irony is the only defence, and that the categories of 'good and bad' have to be transgressed.

Slackerism is only more comfortable with the nihilism and violence that would follow than are postmodern academics. Other 'post-work' movements, as expressed by André Gorz or by Stanley Aronowitz in "The Post-Work Manifesto" (1998), call for shorter working hours (as adopted in Scandinavian countries) and less emphasis on the needs of the market. Again, the attack is consistently aimed at the conditions of labour, not Work – though it is expressed as a case against Work. The case for shorter working hours, for example, is not made on the basis that work is inherently undesirable, but that shorter hours would affect higher levels of employment.



Carlyle preached Work while he scorned labour. Today, notwithstanding slackers, Work is scorned while labour – economic activity – is preached. In Carlyle's day Work was preached just as industrial technology made it worthy of scorn. Today work is a source of stress, fear, and competition just as post-industrial high-tech guarantees its satisfying flexibility. We often imagine that at one time workers did not consider their efforts a commodity and did not seek to maximize their incomes. Instead of social or financial mobility, and other extrinsic gains, work provided the opportunity for creative satisfaction, a sense of identity, and community spirit (along with the festive pleasures associated with groups). Such a narrative, however, must be incomplete as it begins to ignore need. Post-industrial theory continues to deny the realm of necessity by assuming an era of abundance, of met needs. Postmodernism then offers a narrative displacing Work. The idea of a world without origin, of actions which only refer to other actions, would satisfy only the nouveau riche and geek chic few who have others working and building things for them.

But the most harm that post-industrial theory can have is to diminish or obfuscate matters surrounding labour, specifically domination – precisely the damage that the rhetoric of Work causes. Post-industrial society, where and when it exists, has done nothing to lessen the way people with (and sometimes without) power treat those working for or besides them. In today's world of computer-oriented work the mode of domination has become less personal, more like

bureaucratic bullying. Instead of a single, suspiciously surveying power centre, a boss, productivity is impersonally measured by central computers. As surveillance increases so does the assumption that workers are lazy, that they will do anything to avoid work, and that the role of management is thus to ensure people are busy for the sake of busyness. This assumption justifies the surveillance. Marcuse, who does not forgo the idea of Work but understands that "the mode of work" "matters," suggests that in the history of work there has been one constant, domination. He argues that work has been "*imposed* upon individuals – first by mere violence, subsequently by a more rational utilization of power . . . [and] no matter how useful this rationality was for the progress of the whole, it remained a rationality of *domination*" (*Eros* 33). Rationality, he argues, can have positive value when

derived from knowledge and confined to the administration of functions and arrangements necessary for the advancement of the whole. In contrast, domination is exercised by a particular group or individuals in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position. Such domination does not exclude technical, material, and intellectual progress, but only as an unavoidable by-product while preserving irrational scarcity, want, and constraint. (*Eros* 33-34)

By dismissing domination as a master narrative – only pure Work is free of domination and there is no such thing as pure Work – the post-industrial / postmodern alliance is attempting to undermine ways to rethink labour and by dismissing Work as a master narrative it is attempting to undermine ways to enable Work. The result is not the same as we have seen with the undialectical approach to work, which eases the tension between Work and labour: in this case, attention is drawn away from those who would Work and those who need to labour. There has to be tension between Work and labour. A dialectical approach to work might blur the dialectic and initiate the kind of cross-hybridization that so titillates postmodernists. For example, as feminist theorists argue, earning a living (negotiating labour) can itself contribute to a sense of identity, accomplishment, and all the intrinsic benefits which we associate with Work. Though there will always be some conflict between Work and labour – that is, as long as one

works for the gain of others – Work and labour need not be treated as frozen, polar opposites. The reform of labour should include measures to guarantee the conditions of Work and the discourse of Work should include the recognition that it is inextricably connected – and that means dialectically connected – to labour.

Speaking about the division between labour, or the need for specific reforms, and Work, or “the great Romantic criticism of utilitarianism,” E. P. Thompson makes the point that “After William Blake, no mind was at home in both cultures, nor had the genius to interpret the two traditions to each other.” He goes on to say that, “In the failure of the two traditions to come to a point of juncture, something was lost. How much we cannot be sure, for we are among the losers” (*Making* 915). Blake was a great dialectician, perhaps the great dialectician, but reading Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell does not make one a loser. Thompson, however, is right: the spirit of reform, whether or not born from radical artisans, and the spirit of Work, whether or not articulated by Romantics or those negotiating that inheritance, has to be brought together if the fight against Economic man, businessmen, is going to succeed.

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