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OBJECT LESSONS: WORKING-CLASS NATURALISM
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OBJECT LESSONS: WORKING-CLASS NATURALISM
AND THE SUBJECT OF LABOR

By

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ABSTRACT

OBJECT LESSONS: WORKING-CLASS NATURALISM AND
THE SUBJECT OF LABOR

By

Nicholas Daniel Gavrilu

This study examines the politics of working-class naturalism during the crisis of Labor in England (1880-1914). From the broad perspective of a historical, sociological and semiotic approach, I assess the relationship between the politics of the Labor movement and the discourse of naturalism. Working-class naturalism is most oppositional in Robert Tressell's The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, most contradictory in representations of gender in social tracts and novels by writers in the Labor movement, and most disruptive in D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers.

The ideological implications of naturalism reveal that the term has both dominant and oppositional meanings. In a dominant or restrictive sense, naturalism implies a method of scientifically documenting the world as fact, as well as upholding narrow versions of social evolution, in order to justify extant social relations. Oppositional naturalism deploys a set of discursive practices that resists hegemonic variants of dominant naturalism and attempts to transcend oppressive social and historical conditions. The term working-class naturalism or oppositional naturalism

incorporates a diverse intersection of indeterminate discursive practices, including a wide range of documentary procedures, the discourse of social evolution, and the metaphoricity of social organicism.

I begin with a critical analysis of Robert Tressell's political novel, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (1914). In chapter one I address the problem of ideology and social discourse in Tressell's production of oppositional naturalism. In chapter two I discuss this problem in Tressell's resistance to dominant myth in the press.

In chapters three through six, I analyze the politics of naturalism in gender representations by writers connected to the Labor movement. I examine myths of gender present in social tracts and novels. I assess writing on gender issues by E.B. Bax's, the radical journalist Robert Blatchford, the South African theorist and novelist Olive Schreiner, and women connected to the labor movement such as Eleanor Marx and Isabella Ford.

In chapter seven I address the impact of oppositional naturalism in D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. My reading of Lawrence's autobiographical novel reveals how an intertextual, ideological struggle between dominant and oppositional naturalism conflicts the narrative form of Lawrence's representation of working-class culture.

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Introduction

You see these Liberals and Tories understand the sort of people they have to deal with; they know that although their bodies are the bodies of grown men, their minds are the minds of little children.

The only way in which it is possible to teach these people is by means of object lessons, and those are being placed before them everyday.

From The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists

The years preceding World War I in England witnessed some of the most intense activity in the history of Labor. From 1880 until 1914 the Labor movement underwent a process of self-definition, but this movement had produced a crisis in culture, which, for many reasons, could be called the Crisis of Labor. In the wake of the Chartist movement, and the Reform Act of 1867, which gave the vote to property owning, working-class men, Labor leaders felt that the interests of the working classes had been betrayed by politicians instrumental in reformism. If Tories were generally despised by Labor, Liberals were to be highly distrusted. Liberals were viewed by Labor as the handmaidens of Tories.¹ With the potential of the workingman's vote, and possibly the

potential of political revolution Labor, attempted to seize the day. The time seemed ripe for radical change; between 1880 and 1914, England witnessed an unprecedented activity in trade unionism and radical movements. But the working class itself was not overwhelmingly radical. The term populism

best characterizes the general status of working-class ideology. As J.F.C. Harrison has demonstrated, populism could be characterized as an us-versus-them mentality, a general distrust of the wealthy and parliament alike, but also a feeling that it was better to wait and see how events shaped themselves before plunging into the uncertain waters of extreme radicalism.²

There has never been a time when diverse forms of Labor affected culture in such a marked way. The late Victorian era and the Edwardian period have often been characterized (especially in relation to customs, style and taste) as a relatively strife-free time. Yet it was marked by some of the most violent strikes and protests, the formation of socialist leagues, women's guilds and other oppositional formations. Few examples of literature have survived as the direct expressions of the lived relations of working-class communities and the rhetoric of everyday life. Those examples of fiction that did, usually addressed the barbarism of life in the East End of London as a sensational naturalist phenomenon. But the voices of working-class writers, and writers in the Labor movement have not received much

attention. As Raymond Williams has demonstrated, few novels were actually produced by working-class writers, and the form of writing most accessible to working-class subjects was autobiography.³ Therefore, few "internal" examples of fiction exist outside of working-class autobiography. This problem of representing working-class culture is compounded by the fact that most Labor leaders and writers in the Labor movement were not from the working class themselves, but were from the middle-class. Nevertheless, the contributions made by these writers in the transformation of culture are significant.

Writers in the Labor movement were not writing literature in the way we conventionally think of it. Even though the idea of literature is continually undergoing revision, it might still be difficult to claim that some of the examples I chose in this study are literature or are part of a "minor" literature. A minor literature might be described as literature produced in "sub-dominant" social contexts in which writers inscribe themselves against dominant culture or the language of dominant culture.⁴ However, examples of literature which have been seen as tendency fiction, or highly politicized fiction are usually summarily dismissed as something other than literature in conventional terms. But it can be argued that writing for the political moment, no matter how tendentious the work may be, or whether it is framed in the terms of a "minor literature," carries with it

the production of subtexts and discursive intersections that supersede the work's stated goals. For example, writers in the Labor movement may have specific objectives in mind, but those objectives might be contradicted by assumptions unconsciously borrowed from literature, religious discourse, or other discursive forms that the producer of the text hopes to circumvent. In my examination of how writers either connected to the Labor movement or from working-class backgrounds viewed culture in relation to their goals, I began to see them more as naturalists of a kind that I could not at first isolate as literary naturalism, nor could I call them philosophical naturalists, social evolutionists, social organicists, or even socialists--although some of these writers stated that they were committed socialists. Almost all of these writers were concerned with these discursive issues. But outside of the sketchy appellation Labor Writer or Radical Writer, it became difficult to find a way of characterizing their discourse.

These writers were producing pamphlets, books and novels that almost always incorporated historical narratives or exemplary tales that dramatized the plight of the subject of labor. Their narrative and rhetorical strategies included elements of political and religious allegory, but they often relied on mimetic procedures to dramatize the need for municipal transportation, public utilities, national health care, child care, better working conditions for women and

educational concerns.

Radical writers inevitably borrowed terms from the vocabulary of naturalism, social evolution, and social organicism. In addition to dramatizing social concerns, radical writers were also concerned with the demystification of ideological myths produced about the working-classes that circulated in the organs (magazines, newspapers and advertisements) of dominant middle-class culture. Many of these dominant myths rested on stereotypical assumptions about the world that incorporated a conservative usage of the discourse of naturalism in order to reinforce a middle-class hegemony in culture. Therefore, I use the term working-class naturalism or oppositional naturalism to characterize modes of writing about working-class culture in England that attempt to produce a counter-hegemony to dominant assumptions about everyday life.

But it must be said that writers in the Labor movement were not necessarily naturalists; that is, they did not refer to themselves as naturalist authors. Therefore, I use the term working-class naturalism or oppositional naturalism to show that the discourse of labor is heavily invested in the discursive currents of naturalism in a wider, ideological sense. It might have sufficed to call the subject of working-class discourse, working-class realism or working-class representations. But the phrase working-class social

organicism or working-class social Darwinism would not work as an adequate way of assessing the problem of oppositional writing. In many respects, then, I use the term working-class naturalism in a provisional sense, because there are so many facets of the discourse of Labor and working-class writing that have not been charted and are open to further ideological and cultural investigations. What these writers were producing were negotiated forms of naturalism aimed at the working classes (as well as the rest of culture). In short, they were producing what I would call a working-class naturalism. A working-class naturalism may be distinguished from a minor literature, but depending on the specific work, it may very well be the expression of a minor literature.

The term working-class naturalism is bound to cause problems because of its generic literary implications for the term naturalism, in addition to the philosophical implications of naturalism. First, the question will be asked, isn't naturalism itself an oppositional term that by its own nature focuses on working-class subjects? Didn't most naturalists align themselves with radical movements and focus on the degradation of working-class life in the late nineteenth century? Isn't the term redundant? It is difficult to answer these questions unequivocally. It was the case that most naturalist writers focused on subjects and conditions within working-class culture. But not all aligned themselves with radical causes. Even in the case of Zola,

there is considerable debate about when he pulled back from such concerns and merely described conditions.⁵ But as I point out in chapter one, naturalism as a social or literary movement never gained the momentum that it did in France and Germany. In England examples of naturalist fiction usually revolve around the work of George Gissing, George Moore, and, to some extent, Arthur Morrison. All of these writers reflect conditions of working-class life, and they seemed to have been influenced by sociological and scientific theories of the subject in culture.⁶ However, the formal aspects of mimesis in naturalism were developed earlier in the nineteenth century. The influence of scientific studies in sociology have contributed to the production of naturalism.

In England, as David Baguley writes, literary naturalism "tended to refer to the nasty French version of realism that was invading the native tradition."⁷ Naturalism, like many terms circulating in contemporary literary studies, is not a fixed or a stable term. Most studies of naturalism center on French naturalism, the work of Zola, and the incorporation of experimentalism, causal relationships, and detailed observation of events as literary technique. The philosophical versions of naturalism overlap with literary definitions of the term. One definition of philosophical naturalism rests on the assumption that the world "consists of phenomena that are subject to and thereby explainable in terms of, regularly recurrent natural causes,

open to scientific explanation and forming a self-contained system of natural explanations."⁸. It should be added that naturalism also entails the discourse of natural selection, and assumptions about the social order in complicity with social organicism.

Naturalism is a term that constantly shifts in its meaning, and undergoes a continual transformation in literary studies. To use the term to characterize the discourse of Labor and representations of working-class communities might suggest that the term has an inherently progressive value, but that is not the case. Naturalist writing may have been associated with radical movements, but it was not always radical in its intentions. There is a sense, then, in which naturalism is appropriated by a dominant tradition, valorizing the world as it is, and appropriating scientific discourse for mechanistic, and deterministic aims, but not necessarily for radical social change or reformist efforts. On the other hand, there is a kind of naturalism more closely aligned with social movements that attempts to deploy discursive aspects of naturalism for progressive objectives. It would be difficult to say that the writing in the following pamphlet published by the Social Democratic Federation was not naturalist in an oppositional sense:

The fascination of Socialism for men who have undergone scientific training is not, I think, difficult to explain. The guiding principle of science is the search for the order of the universe. To those who have grasped this idea

of order, there is something antipathetic in the chaos of our existing competitive society. . . . Again, to the true scientific worker, the idea of immediate profit is unimportant. He is accustomed to work for larger and remoter ends.

. . . Man is a part of Nature, but he alone in Nature is able to understand nature. He alone is capable of modifying Nature in the pursuit of his own ends. Science has conceived the idea of a reconstructed humanity. From this point of view Socialism is, in fact, a part of Science --it is the scientific scheme of the next stage in the evolution of human society.⁹

This does not imply a reduction of radical discourse to the status of sub-set of literature. But how do we account for the discursivity involved in such a passage, in an example from one faction of the Labor movement?

I have organized this study into three parts. The first part addresses Robert Tressell's revolutionary novel The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, a work that is remarkable for the time it was written. Tressell's novel reveals aspects of working-class ideology, and also addresses the conflicts in the Labor movement itself. Tressell's contextualization of naturalism reveals different types of naturalism--literary and philosophical--in different modes. Moreover, Tressell articulates a resistance to dominant myths about the subject of Labor. Tressell's novel is not a monological novel; it is truly polyphonic in the way it encodes various voices and subject-positions. As an example of oppositional naturalism, Tressell reveals the aspirations,

contradictions and limitations of radicalism during the crisis of Labor.

In the second part of this study, I look at the issue of gender constructions in relation to the Labor movement. In this section, literary naturalism seems less operational, while aspects of a watery philosophical naturalism were instrumental in producing versions of the feminine in culture.

However, gender is one of the most contradictory issues in the Labor movement. Male writers in the Labor movement often transferred dominant, traditional notions of gender under the sign of liberation. In chapter three and chapter four, I examine two distinct patriarchal (paternalist) versions of women. On one hand, male writers were concerned with a version of woman as a kind of hyper-natural agency--women as hyper-natural, cosmic mothers. In extreme opposition to this version of women, misogynist writers threatened by progressive women's voices resorted to vulgar, positivistic forms of naturalism to demonstrate a crude essentialism about the feminine. I then address the radical journalist Robert Blatchford's novel Julie, which encodes assumptions about social and biological determination in order to represent women. However, in chapter six, I address the way women writers such as Isabella Ford, Olive Schreiner, and Eleanor Marx set out to debunk reductive essentialisms and patriarchal fantasies about feminine subjects. Women in

the Labor movement tended to theorize a definition of gender against patriarchal assumptions that valorized biology and the private sphere.

Although D.H. Lawrence was not a socialist or a radical in the way we think of writers in the radical tradition, his early narrative mirrors aspects of the ideological conflicts of this period. It is from this perspective that an ideological reading of Lawrence can supplement and compliment the diverse psychological and sociological dynamics of his early narrative. I conclude this study with a reading of D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. In light of the social conflicts that Lawrence appears to have turned his back on, the idea of an oppositional and a dominant naturalism sheds new light on the production of Lawrence's Sons and Lovers, a novel in which the politics of narrative truly experience a radical transformation in culture.

Section One: The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists

Chapter 1

Working-Class Naturalism and the Subject of Labor

Educate. We shall need all our intelligence.
Agitate. We shall need all our enthusiasm.
Organize. We shall need all our force.

EDUCATE! AGITATE! ORGANIZE!

Slogan of the Social Democratic Federation,
1883.

The belief, not only of the socialists but also of those so-called Liberals who are diligently preparing the way for them, is that by due skill an ill-working humanity may be framed into well-working institutions. It is a delusion. The defective natures of citizens will show themselves in the bad acting of whatever social structure they are arranged into. There is no political alchemy out of which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts.

Herbert Spencer, "The Coming Slavery," 1884.

During this time Owen did his best to convert the other men to his views. He had accumulated a little library of Socialist books and pamphlets which he lent to those he hoped to influence. . . . As a rule, when they returned them it was with vague expressions of approval, but they usually evinced a disinclination to discuss the contents in detail, because, in nine instances out of ten, they had not attempted to read them. . . . Some, when Owen offered to lend them some books or pamphlets refused to accept them, and others who did him the great favor of accepting them, afterwards boasted that they had used them as toilet paper.

Robert Tressell, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, 1914.

In this section I provide a context for an examination

of Robert Tressell's working-class novel The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (hereafter RTP). Tressell's novel embodies most forcefully what I refer to as working-class or oppositional naturalism. A discussion of the historical and ideological background from which Tressell was writing is necessary for a discussion of RTP. I will also point to the relevance of Tressell's work in a broader cultural context.

The Subject of Labor

On the subject of political developments in the British labor movement during the early part of this century, E.L. Hunt argues, as have other social historians, that "Working-class consciousness was clearly less advanced by 1914 than the dramatic events of 1889-91 had seemed to promise."¹ This promise of the left could be felt in the various attempts to chart a viable course through the uncertain and often choppy waters of the labor movement. During the 1880's and the 1890's, socialists of most stripes made a difficult passage from the impossible currents of utopianism and anarchism to the more practical causeways of reformist procedures, organized labor struggles, and democratic participation. The publishing efforts of socialist groups such as the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the Fabians, the Clarion Group, the Independent Labor Party (ILP), and various offshoots of these organizations intensified dramatically. Armed with rhetoric, but plagued by a chronic lack of funds, these groups

launched a diverse campaign that they thought would win the working man over to the socialist cause. For the most part, the leftist press had failed to achieve an immediate and effective intervention against the well-heeled, commercial interests of the dominant factions. After a period of infighting and domestic adjustments, it would not be until sometime after 1914 that the left could consolidate its interests into a single labor party, if these interests could ever be said to have been consolidated at all. There would still be squabbles and debates as to what direction labor should steer itself, but the winds of social change had prevailed, and English cultural history would be radically transformed. Institutional changes and transformation in the public sphere produced a dynamic environment for social change. Working-class men could now vote; participation in trade-unionism activity was at an all time high; mass strikes occurred; the Boer War had planted the seeds of grave doubt about the fate of Empire; and the suffrage movement was gaining ground with unprecedented force. In light of this, ideas about the private and the public spheres were constantly under revision, as were traditional assumptions about the subject and class. In short, the Labor movement possessed a more powerful voice, but it was a voice that did not speak for all of its subjects; moreover, the ideological objectives of this voice were continually disputed, as a dialogic of labor intensified. If culture seemed ripe for

rapid social change, one thing was clear: it would take more than the fierce rhetoric of labor to produce such change. In general, the left was not short on rhetoric, but it was divided on the issue of theory and praxis, and its ability to develop adequate plans for social change demanded serious revisions.

During this transitional period, radical writers found themselves coming to terms with their often frustrated attempts to mobilize the working-class for what they hoped would be swift action against forms of oppressive social conditions. But the left found itself in a position that forced it constantly to negotiate dominant ideological impasses and examine its own largely untheorized relationship to the future. But for the most part, radical writers had to spend a good deal of their time countering the arguments against their programs, as they were continuously pushed into defensive postures. Powerful mis-representations of labor--distortions, myths, and stereotypes directed against their programs and proposals--freely circulated through the commercialized sphere of mass-culture. In other words, representations of labor often tied to representations of working-class culture in the press, and in other forms of popular discourse, seemed highly effective in debilitating the thrust of the labor movement, as much if not more than the internally divisive aspects of labor weakened its own cause. It can be seen that from a working-class perspective what

subverted radical ambitions more than anything else during this period--and this was one of the most crucial cultural problems of the crisis of labor--was a defiant resistance to social change among workers, something that appeared to confirm the sobering fact that these dominant myths, through the mechanisms of hegemony, were firmly entrenched within the staunchly conformist positions of the very audience the left had hoped to convert.² Of course, many of these mythological or ideological conceptions held by workers about the social order were genetically derived from a wide range of beliefs and attitudes, including utilitarianism and the persistence of popular religious ideas. But if there was a dominant figure whose social ideas had directly or indirectly affected working-class attitudes, it was none other than Herbert Spencer. The left in Britain, primarily the SDF, attacked Spencer for his views on natural selection and social organicism, and its implications for the individual in the social system (what I will refer to here as dominant naturalism), in which ruthless, persistent struggle between individuals in a capitalist system functions as the normalized expression of everyday life.³

Radical writers thus found themselves in a difficult battle. Pitted against the ahistorical but easily naturalized tenets of self-help individualism, functionalized social organicism, and restrictive versions of social Darwinism made popular by Spencer, leftist writers (many of

whom earlier had been undeniably influenced by the implicit progressiveness of Spencer's earlier writings on social organicism) were now rejecting the metaphysics of his social principles and challenging the rhetorical strategies of these so-called universal laws of human nature and morality.

Through a broad range of political tactics, leftists, feminists, and reformists of differing degrees produced a disparate body of oppositional texts that might tentatively fall under the general heading of working-class naturalism or emergent naturalism. (I will return to this issue shortly).⁴

And while I do not want to grant Spencer the status of a cultural monolith, I will examine how a specific example of working-class fiction strategically resists the ideological distortion of social myths largely derived from Spencer and aimed at the subject of working-class culture and the goals of the labor movement. At the same time, these oppositional texts also document the power of dominant ideology and the function of hegemony to mobilize populations.

Robert Tressell's (real name, Robert Noonan) The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists with its panoramic representation of social processes, is perhaps the most powerfully dialogical example of an oppositional text which represents the aspirations, struggles, and contradictions within working-class culture and the labor movement, well before the establishment of England's first labor government.

Tressell's novel is indeed a unique and inimitable

document of working-class culture, one whose production and reception themselves make an interesting narrative within the history of British labor in the early part of this century. Its narrative skillfully expresses the dialogical tensions within labor, and remarkably incorporates an intersection of fictional and non-fictional discursive strategies in its sobering depictions of a working-class community between the shadows of Victorian imperialism and the dawn of a stern Edwardian paternalism. Unlike any other work written at the time, RTP weaves together a variety of styles and forms, including religious allegory, documentary realism and naturalism, working-class autobiography, as well as pamphlet-strategies of the British Left.⁵ As a non-canonical work, RTP straddles many of the boundary lines between fictional writing and other discursive practices. In a contemporary sense, Tressell's novel lands in the largely uncharted territory of cultural studies because of its unique history and its significance for understanding the complex dynamics of working-class ideology.

Published in two earlier, abridged versions in 1914 and 1918 by Grant Richards Ltd., after Tressell's death, RTP was later restored to its complete text by Fred Ball, Tressell's biographer, and published by Lawrence and Wishart in 1955.⁶ Labor historians refer to Tressell's novel as a "minor classic," and, as Raymond Williams has noted, RTP is considered to be "the first internal English working-class

novel."⁷ Incidents and dialogues in Tressell's novel focus on a year in the life of Frank Owen (allegorically named for the early socialist Robert Owen), a house-painter down on his luck who attempts to educate fellow workers in the economically depressed community of "Mugsborough," which is an allegorical name for Hastings, where Tressell lived and worked as a house-painter and sign-painter. Tressell avoids traditional novelistic themes and describes his novel as "Being the story of twelve months in Hell, told by one of the damned." Tressell says that his aim in writing the novel was "to present, in the form of an interesting story, a faithful picture of working-class life--more especially of those engaged in the Building trades in a small town in the south of England" (12). In stating his intention in writing the novel, Tressell writes in his preface:

I wished to describe the relations existing between the workers and their employers, the attitude and feelings of these two classes toward each other; the condition of the workers during the different seasons of the year, their circumstances when at work and when out of employment: their pleasures, their intellectual outlook, their religious and political opinions and ideals. . . .My main object was to write a readable story full of human interest and based on the happenings of everyday life, the subject of Socialism being treated incidentally. (12-13)

Despite the fact that Tressell's novel is heavily autobiographical, information about Tressell's early life is limited (admittedly, this raises the problem of authority and

authorship in RTP), but it is known that he was born in Ireland, and lived in South Africa during the Boer War, before moving to England, where he worked in the building trade and was directly involved in the British labor movement.⁸

Undoubtedly, Tressell's reception has had a direct impact on the Labor movement, beyond its initial publication. Championed by the Labor party in England for many years--Alan Sillitoe has written that it was the novel that helped win the '45 election for Labor--RTP has received little attention on this side of the Atlantic.⁹ In England, however, Tressell's novel has been transformed into a stage play, and has been presented on the BBC, in both radio and video productions.¹⁰ Recently, in the Masterpiece Theater production of the film series, "A Very British Coup," in which a Labor Leader in England really does turn the world upside down, the novel is mentioned again but, as usual, is misquoted. Whatever its status as a novel, political narrative, or cultural discourse, Tressell's work is a text that transforms readings of other works in the dominant tradition and illuminates ordinary perceptions of culture and history. And while it prefigures aspects of social realism with its allegorical posture, didactic rhetoric, and documentary transcriptions, it is a novel more closely related to works situated within the naturalist tradition, but with a pronounced cultural difference.

Dominant Naturalism and Working-Class Naturalism

Naturalism, as a literary and political movement of the late nineteenth century, refers to a specific kind of technique, generally thought of as a style of writing in which the author positions himself or herself as a detached viewer, one that details how environmental forces condition community life and forms of subjectivity. This heavily continental style of naturalism never really took hold in England as it did in France and Germany. Discussing the reception of literary naturalism, P. J. Keating points out in The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction that "In the nineties English critics were often equally distrustful of scientific naturalism, and were quick to point out the long 'realistic' tradition in the English novel, invoking primarily the work of Defoe, Jane Austen, Dickens, and George Eliot as examples of accurate and detailed observation of human behavior."¹¹ Moreover, in England, the most prominent figure of naturalism, in a conventional sense, is George Gissing, whose early novels address the problems of representing socialism and the working-class subject, but later distance themselves from radical issues and uphold traditional and conservative attitudes toward class and culture.

In Europe at the time, the most notable naturalists such as Emile Zola and Max Kretzer, as Diane Smith argues,

ultimately possessed a profound skepticism toward socialism, although they had been involved in radical movements.¹² In a formal and technical sense, the naturalist emphasis on mimetic techniques might have shocked audiences through stark depictions of the appalling conditions of working-class life and emphasized a need for radical change, but it nevertheless withdrew ideologically from a truly revolutionary position. Despite the fact that many of the naturalists experienced life in impoverished working-class communities, and for a time held personal convictions that "led them to sympathize with the aims of the socialists, they abandoned these principles because of a loyalty to their own class heritage. . .and, above all, by their fear of working-class violence in which they saw no less than a possible end of civilization."¹³ However, most British writers connected to the labor movement were less worried about the animalistic tendencies of the mob, than they were with the tactical power of labor to effect changes in the work-place and mobilize a spiritually and politically dis-enfranchised community.

Before I discuss in detail the example of Tressell's resistance to the production of dominant myths as working-class naturalism, I want to briefly focus on the problem of defining naturalism. Raymond Williams has shown that naturalism is not a transparent term, but an intersection of aesthetic and political discourses. In Keywords Williams reminds the reader that the definition of naturalism as an

accurate description of the external world is a severely limited definition, one that ignores its historical, cultural, and philosophical underpinnings. Williams' definition of naturalism involves at least "two specialized applications": the first one focusing on the effect of social environment on the subject, and the second one more related to the philosophical aspects of natural selection or what is commonly referred to as Social Darwinism. Leaving traditional definitions aside, Williams writes that "Given the complexity of this history, naturalism is a very much more difficult word than most of its current uses suggest."¹⁴

By revising and historicizing cultural concepts, Williams and other theorists have paved the way for an understanding of naturalism as social discourse--and therefore as a form of cultural study. Attempting to move a theoretical step further than Williams, Terry Eagleton politicizes his definition of naturalism more forcefully, arguing that "[the] naturalist form produces, and is the product of the bourgeois illusion of 'normality' of the solid indestructibility of the quotidian world."¹⁵ Like other post-structuralist Marxist critics, Eagleton examines how naturalism is ideologically overcoded in literary texts, such as those by Conrad, rather than examining naturalism's mimetic functions. Eagleton therefore historicizes naturalism as a complex form of cultural representation. Although Eagleton also effects a political deconstruction of

dominant naturalism, we will see that a post-structuralist analysis of ideology is indeed relevant for an examination of working-class narrative such as Tressell's. Williams, however, in his cultural investigations, historically directs us to the rhetorical power of Spencer's philosophy and the cultural impact that Spencer exerted on the quotidian perceptions of daily life. Of course Williams is quick to point out how other writers contributed to a cultural matrix of naturalist (evolutionary and hierarchical) assumptions--most notably Bagehot in Physics and Politics. But if there was a dominant, influential figure it was Spencer, whose later writings were also influential on matters of social morality, trade, and socialism.¹⁶

Ideologues who adopted the Spencerian scheme of things ("the survival of the fittest"), in which rivalry between species in the animal world is erroneously interpreted as a rule or law of nature regarding relations between people within capitalist systems, were able to propagate these assumptions as a cultural dominant. Simply put, this position easily rationalizes exploitation as a "natural" result of competition. As such a world-view becomes naturalized in the pages of the public imagination--in the press and popular fiction--it also becomes naturalized as the unquestioned status of "objective fact" or what is referred to as "bourgeois normality." But as Williams argues, this is part and parcel of a "Social Darwinism in the narrow sense"

in which "the weaker or less able members of society should not be artificially preserved, because the process of social selection that was creating the most vigorous and self-reliant types was something that ought not to be interfered with. . . ."17

Williams also points to the flip side of naturalist versions of competition advocated by Kropotkin in Mutual Aid. This version rejects inter-species rivalry and upholds intra-species symbiosis. On a social level this would undoubtedly entail state intervention.¹⁸ For Tressell this kind of cooperation would provide an alternative to the "Christian Battle of Life" (a code-word for the social currents of Spencer's naturalistic philosophy) and help to restore to the working classes the often mentioned "Benefits of Civilization" (the social amenities of industrial culture). For Spencer, however, such programs meant the ruin of society, a collapse of the social order, and the halt of evolutionary progress.

Oppositional naturalist forms of cooperation were compatible with the general drift of socialist philosophy at the time (and sometimes erroneously labeled by less than scientific socialists as a form of Altruism¹⁹). This mutualist version of social philosophy tied in neatly with most currents that characterized the numerous strains of populist, reformist, and collectivist forms of ideology. One of the most influential of these groups was the Social

Democratic Federation (SDF). The early leadership of the SDF was formed by H.M. Hyndman and William Morris.²⁰ The SDF's program was arguably the only quasi-Marxist platform of its kind at the time in England, and its emphasis on the formation of co-operative communities and progressive reform so enraged Spencer, that he lost his philosophical cool and publicly went on the warpath against the SDF and any form of collectivism, reformism, or intervention. And it was Spencer's response to the SDF that would provide Tressell with some of the crucial raw material for his working-class naturalist novel. I would like to turn to a specific exchange between Spencer and H.M. Hyndman that is crucial for an understanding of the ideology of Tressell's novel. Although Tressell composed RTP some time after this exchange, the discourse of labor that Tressell embodies in RTP is closely allied with Hyndman's earlier positions.

Spencer Among The Philanthropists

When H.M. Hyndman spelled out the goals of the Social Democratic Federation in 1884 in the pamphlet Socialism Made Plain,²¹ he quickly drew fire from Spencer. Enraged by Hyndman's vision of a socialist future for England, which included the nationalization of land ownership, the empowerment of a militant, and possibly militarized, working class, Spencer, employing a deterministic logic, predicted the ominous threat of centralized state control and

correspondingly the demise of the individual and individual rights. In the April 1884 issue of The Contemporary Review, Spencer went public with his warning and bluntly titled it "The Coming Slavery."²² Here, Spencer vehemently argued that organized efforts to improve the conditions of victims in the selectively "natural" order would only pull down the stronger members; as a result of this, liberal and/or socialist interventions would eventually squeeze the life out of the bourgeois individual, subsequently rendering the autonomous subject hostage to a form of state servitude. If social problems such as poverty and unemployment did arise, they were not to be redressed by the state or any governmental agency, these problems belonged to the moral agency, and were the responsibility of the individual. Accordingly, Spencer saw the incorrigibly poor and unemployed (and all variants thereof) to be the defective units of the social body. These defects sprang from a deeply rooted immorality; therefore the unfortunate were quite deserving of their miserable position in the scheme of things.

Not surprisingly, Hyndman could not have received a more welcomed response from Spencer. What Hyndman wanted was a public confirmation from Spencer stating, more or less, that he was one of the contemporary spiritual architects of greed and self-serving individualism. More or less, a public confirmation of this fact was what Hyndman received. In his outburst against the SDF, Spencer had bared his ideological

teeth, and had unquestionably solidified his role as the public enemy of labor, the unemployed, and the poor. The SDF received Spencer's sentiment largely in the spirit of a "gift" and ironically employed the term "philanthropist" to describe his rhetorical stance. For example, a Mr. Frank Fairman, another writer aligned with the SDF, published a pamphlet on "The Coming Slavery" writing that Spencer "being a philanthropist, whose sympathies are not limited by country colour or creed, insults the unfortunate, and apparently depreciates all attempts to help them."²³ Hyndman could now strategically align Spencer with big-money capitalism, and confidently claim that "Mr. Herbert Spencer has cleared his mind of the cant of theology; but the cant of the profit-monger still holds his intelligence firmly in its grip."²⁴

But it was not necessarily the premise of Spencer's attack that stirred such controversy; rather, it was the uncannily brutal language that separated this Herbert Spencer from the earlier Herbert Spencer, a previously more humane social philosopher, who had influentially addressed the moral issues of wealth and poverty in his works such as Social Statics.²⁵ But suddenly, the benevolent and paternal "Dr. Jekyll" of individualism and social organicism had turned violently schizophrenic; and after uneasily digesting a socialist pamphlet, had transformed himself into the subject-position of an authoritarian and racist-sexist "Mr. Hyde." Consider the disgust he expresses in "The Coming Slavery"

toward the very sight of the unfortunate, who make a spectacle of themselves in public:

On hailing a cab in a London street, it is surprising how frequently the door is officiously opened by one who expects to get something for his trouble. The surprise lessens after counting the many loungers about tavern-doors, or after observing the quickness with which a street performance, or procession, draws from neighboring slums and stable-yards a group of idlers. Seeing how numerous they are in every small area, it becomes manifest as such that tens of thousands swarm through London. (36)

Spencer's firsthand "naturalistic" observation here warns that social life in London, and most likely the rest of England, is quickly going to the dogs. Making this claim, he relies on the imposition of mythical categories to suggest that these defective creatures--idlers and loungers--now roam the streets in ever increasing numbers. These idlers, according to Spencer, are more than victims of economic circumstances, they are the living proof of moral defectiveness and they seem to multiply mysteriously fast. Such a view is not all that detached from the serious side of Spencer and his organicist conceptions of society: the unfortunate souls on the lower rung of the ladder, metaphorically equivalent to lower forms of animal life, "swarm" in their alcohol-induced poverty, spreading (dis)ease to other regions of the social body.

In "The Coming Slavery" Spencer essentializes the

anonymous poor as if they are a race to be exterminated. In the paradoxically cold logic of social organicism it is better for the social body to remove the offending part before artificial attempts to assist it leads to further debilitation. Ironically, Spencer appears amenable to at least one form of intervention, state sponsored punishment; but that too is a result of previous but failed ameliorative attempts: "Saving men from the natural penalties of dissolute living, eventually necessitates the infliction of artificial penalties in solitary cells, on tread wheels, and by the lash."²⁶ Hence, poverty and unemployment--as problems of a defective individual nature--should not be preempted by the state, because an ounce of social prevention certainly does not add up to a "pound" of cure. According to Spencer, if the individual falls into a state of moral disrepair, it can be seen that he or she shares affinities with other members of Spencer's version of a "lumpen" species of the proletariat, which in this case seems to characterize most workers caught during specific moments of economic distress. In other words, Spencer's degenerate ranks of the poor form a class unto itself, a collective criminality, complete with gender distinctions:

They are simply good-for-nothings, who, in one way or other live on the good for somethings--vagrants and sots, criminals and those on the way to crime, youths who are burdens on hard-worked parents, men who appropriate the wages of their wives, fellows who share the gains of prostitutes; and then, less visible and less numerous, there is a corresponding class of

women. (31)

The rhetorical force of Spencer's criminal charges toward the working-classes appears to have affected the composition of Tressell's novel. At one point in the narrative (in the chapter "It is Not My Crime") Owen seems infected with this criminal affliction, and nearly capitulates to it, when, after reading a sensational story in the daily paper, "The Terrible Domestic Tragedy" in which an insane father kills his children and family, he imaginatively contemplates the same act.

In other narrative spaces in RTP, Tressell seems to have calculated the cultural importance of this uncereemonious exchange between Hyndman and Spencer. Both Owen's and Barrington's radical positions echo the political directives of the SDF. Workers opposed to these positions refract the hostile sentiment of the later Spencer of "The Coming Slavery." Of course this is not a voice limited to Spencer, as Tressell encodes a diverse range of public "voices" opposed to socialism and labor politics. But any discussion of the political and historical context of Tressell's novel cannot ignore the Spencer-Hyndman exchange, and, as we will see, Tressell directly appropriates the language of this debate and, given the language of the actual exchange, smuggles it into Barrington's lecture in the "Great Oration."

The visceral core of this conflict between Spencer and

Hyndman can be felt in most of the ordinary dialogues in the community of Tressell's "Mugsborough." Owen encounters workers who have thoroughly ingested Spencerian attitudes, only to spit them back at his suggestions for progressive reform. This is most evident in the pathetic diatribes against Owen by the repulsive figure of Crass, a foreman who spends most of his time finding ways to confront Owen's use of dialectics, and often succeeds in a brutal, quasi-Spencerian hammering of reason. Often unable to conduct arguments on rational grounds, Owen finds himself exasperated and bitter, and growing more disenchanted toward those he attempts to educate.

Many of the arguments between Owen and his co-workers revolve around the politics of Christianity, especially along the currents of watered-down versions of Spencerian evolutionary theory, which Tressell sardonically titles "The Christian Battle of Life." In these dialogues, different philanthropists express positions that sound like parodies of workers in early D.H. Lawrence novels. As one of the characters, allegorically named Slyme, opines on the epistemological dilemmas of political-theology, he informs Owen, "I don't pretend to 'ave no 'ead knowledge,' . . ."but 'ead knowledge won't save a man's soul: it's 'eart knowledge as does that. I knows in my 'eart as my sins is all hunder the Blood. . . ." (152) Inevitably, these positions cover the spectrum of the working-class belief systems. But eventually

these workers return their conversations to the core issues of religion, epistemology, and the nature of the social order.

Spencer maintains the belief that divine intervention, something akin to religious grace, mysteriously regulates the social order. Most of the workers in Tressell's novel agree with these positions, that the state should not intervene, but that a higher power does. In "The Coming Slavery" Spencer plays the role of social evangelist, sternly admonishing his public flock and invoking snippets of Christian doctrine to reinforce the underlying moral principle inherent in the natural order and natural "necessity" of things:

Well, the command "if any would not work neither should he eat," is simply a Christian enunciation of that universal Law of Nature under which life has reached its present height--the law that a creature not energetic enough to maintain itself must die: the sole difference being that the law which in the one case is to be artificially enforced, is, in the other case, a natural necessity. And yet this particular tenet of their religion which science so manifestly justifies, is the one which Christians seem least inclined to accept. (37)

But for Tressell social structures less than mysteriously regulate divine systems, as they are practiced by ordinary believers. It is interesting to examine how Tressell injects this sentiment into dialogues in RTP. Owen consistently charges that popular forms of Christianity

circulating in the community have little to do with actual theology and more to do with the reproduction of hegemony. This is dramatized in the many discussions on this issue, especially as Owen's ornery opponents usually come equipped for battle with clippings supplied by the daily press to reinforce positions that accord with what Tressell sardonically labels "The Christian Battle of Life" or Spencerian naturalism. In a key instance that dramatizes this conflict, Crass, the usual instigator in these situations, presents Owen with an item that characterizes socialism as a "share and share alike" scheme. Owen answers this charge, arguing that these ideas in the press are the result of popular misconceptions of socialism that draw their sustenance from other religious versions--other texts--of naturalism. This "Battle of Life" is depicted as an aspect of dominant ideology in the service of Christianity:

[T]he difference between so-called 'Christians' and Socialists is this: Christ taught the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Men. Those who today pretend to be Christ's followers hypocritically profess to carry out those teachings now. But they don't. They have arranged 'The Battle of Life' system instead! (283)

The "difference" that Owen mentions points to re-combinations of Christianity and socialism among the left at the time. These re-defined versions of Christianity and socialism were seen as part of a new religion, which would preserve the communitarian values of popular Christianity, and uphold an

emphasis on compassion and sharing. For Owen, the naturalist "Battle of Life" system has irrevocably corrupted the values to which the majority of the working community supposedly subscribes.

Owen finds his own values and actions overdetermined and constrained by this "battle." He continually demonstrates that in order to survive this battle, the revolutionary worker has to employ his individual resources more cunningly than the ordinary "philanthropist" who, from Owen's perspective, willingly denies him or herself a share in the "benefits of civilization."

But Owen himself profits from the specialized skills he possesses. Recognized for his painting skills, he makes money during lean times and provides for his family in ways that others in the community, due to a lack of personalized skill, cannot. But this appears to signal a contradiction regarding Owen's opposition to the "Christian Battle of Life." Although he is a reluctant participant in this struggle, Owen nevertheless "wins"--in a very marginal sense--while other, less talented construction workers practically starve. Of course this doesn't soften Owen's condemnation of that very system. But why? Doesn't Owen's success paradoxically keep him in line with Spencerian notions of evolution and struggle? And what does that say about Owen's "emergent" position? Tressell appears to reinforce Williams' assertion that it is "exceptionally

difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture . . . and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it: emergent in the strict sense rather than merely novel."²⁷ But Owen's resistance asserts itself in a naively militant rule, one that falls toward, then pulls away from a possible complicity with dominant ideology:

The Socialist--very much against his will-- finds himself in the midst of this horrible battle, and he appeals to the other combatants to cease from fighting and establish a system of Brotherly Love and Mutual Helpfulness, but he does not hypocritically pretend to practice brotherly love towards those who will not agree to his appeal, and who compel him to fight with them for his very life. He knows that in this battle he must either fight or go under. Therefore in self-defense, he fights; but all the time he continues his appeal for the cessation of the slaughter. He pleads for the changing of the system. He advocates Co-operation instead of Competition: but how can he co-operate with people who insist on competing with him? No individual can practice co-operation by himself! Socialism can only be practised by the Community--that is the meaning of the word. At present other members of the community--the 'Christians'-- deride and oppose the Socialist's appeal. (283-84).

This full-blooded sentiment makes itself felt in almost every breath of dialogue Owen speaks in Tressell's novel. But Owen's socialist counterpart, Barrington, appears to be the exception to this rule. As the wealthy socialist from unknown parts, the figure of Barrington is sketched in by Tressell at specific moments in RTP. His presence seems

mysterious. It is felt early in the novel, then he fades out. He is not part of the dialogues and action that comprise most of Tressell's novel. Toward the end of the narrative Barrington reappears, mostly for the "The Great Oration." On first reading, this character-problem seems to suggest that Tressell simply did not know what he was doing with this other socialist character; that Barrington's voice was redundant (considering Owen's pedagogical voice in "The Oblong" chapter and other parts of the novel) and that his general lack of appearance fails to justify his presence in the novel at all.

This sketchiness on Tressell's part certainly accounts for the editorial omission of Barrington in the two earlier abridged versions of RTP. But Barrington does play a necessary role in the novel. In one of his commentaries on RTP (a commentary on the restored, "complete" edition), Williams argues that "Tressell needed. . .the figure of Barrington, the wealthy young man who takes up laboring work in a kind of benevolence, to find out the conditions of working people, to experience them directly, yet in the end can withdraw from them, use his own money for the comfort of Christmas presents, or, as in that episode near the end, go away and come back to finance the socialist van."²⁸ In this sense, Barrington serves a social-cultural function in the novel that displaces the earlier editorial considerations regarding the novel's production.

There is another reason why Tressell needed Barrington that Williams and other have failed to notice, and that has to do with the function of rhetoric in RTP, and its social relationship to the class-position of the figure who utters radical discourse. Also, this has to do with Tressell's resistance to Spencerian philosophy, but in a historically roundabout way. In employing both of these socialist characters, Tressell's representational strategy divides the emergent voice of labor between the figure of Owen and the figure of Barrington. This dialogical con-figuration in the novel more adequately reflects the heterogeneous discourse of the labor movement; on another level it serves to distance and to parody the figure of the wealthy Barrington, who, similar to the historically wealthy figure of Hyndman (the stockbroker turned socialist), was an outsider. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Barrington's "Great Oration" mimics Hyndman's political discourse. This is not to suggest that Barrington is strictly an allegorical figure for the historical figure of Hyndman, but that Tressell's posturing of Barrington allows for the expression of a more public version of socialism; in that sense, Tressell more directly records--or assembles--the discourse of the left with more documentary force than has been previously realized.

The cultural implications in this inclusion are apparent as Barrington's voice, with its standard middle-class inflections, is distinctly different from Owen's

fluctuating intonations. While Barrington's "Oration" is not a carbon copy of Hyndman's rejoinder to Spencer, it does approximate Hyndman's views on class struggle and social change. As Hyndman argues in his response to Spencer, the goals of the SDF result from a clash between diametrically opposed positions on contesting theories of social evolution: "Thus the class struggle which we see going on under our eyes, the revolution in the methods of production--steam, machinery, electricity, &c.--which is affecting all classes, appears in the thoughts of men as a conflict between the principles of collectivism and individualism, between the system of public and private property."²⁹

To the assembled "Philanthropists" at the "Great Oration," Barrington simulates Hyndman's position in his critique of the class system and the role of the worker. Barrington's comments on the problem of loafers and idlers, and the necessity of work in a socialist future, echoes the tone and sentiment of Hyndman's reply to Spencer.

Under the present system everybody who can possibly manage to do so avoids doing any work, the only difference being that some people do their loafing better than others. . . . In the Co-operative Commonwealth there will be no place for loafers; whether they call themselves aristocrats or tramps, those who are too lazy to work shall have no share in the things that are produced by the labor of others. Those who do nothing shall have nothing. If any man shall not work, neither will he eat. (534-35).

Regarding the content of this speech, the emphasis on words such as "idlers" and "loafers" is, as I will point out later, crucial for Tressell's novel, for these "subjects" are part of the image-system that Tressell decodes and demystifies. But it is the external source of Barrington's Oration that we are concerned with here, for Barrington's speech exhibits a direct resemblance to Hyndman's language in his response against Spencer.

Tressell does not simply insert Hyndman's language into his novel; rather, he re-inscribes Hyndman's political discourse of the SDF in different words. The "official," public voice of the SDF thus enters Tressell's narrative from the outside and simulates Barrington's entry and exit in the narrative of RTP. It should be added that Tressell's imaginative insertion of this historical exchange is not an act of plagiarism or corrupt borrowing on Tressell's part. The language in RTP is still Tressell's and the only thing he does borrow from another text is the biblical allusion "If any would not work neither shall he eat." Those specific words belong to neither Spencer, Hyndman, or Tressell and are part of the public domain of dominant theological discourse. What does matter is the transposition of this statement in its political usage. Like Hyndman and other members of the SDF, Tressell's appropriation of SDF political discourse turns biblical language against Spencer in order to suggest the insinulatory value of common discourse of the time. For

example, the usage of words such as "idler"--i.e., in terms of class, the "idlers on top" as opposed to idlers on the bottom. If we look at Hyndman's reply to Spencer, there can be little doubt that Tressell, an SDF man himself, pondered the discursive aspects of this exchange.

Again, Mr. Herbert Spencer remarks that the Christian saying "If any would not work neither should he eat" is simply an enunciation of an universal law of nature under which life itself has reached its present height--the law that a creature not energetic enough to maintain itself must die. Why what is this? There are thousands of creatures in our present society who have never been energetic enough to maintain themselves in any sense whatsoever, and yet who have eaten excellently well every day, and will go on so eating from their cradle to their grave. . . .Such idlers as these are surely more harmful to the community at large and, if ethics are to come in, more open to condemnation, than weary wayfarers who perhaps have never had a full meal their life through, however hard they might work. The truth is our social arrangements breed idlers--wealthy idlers at the top: starving idlers at the bottom. (RTP, 7)

Tressell's linkage of Spencer, Hyndman, and Barrington ultimately inscribes itself into an overarching allegory of philanthropy. And while Spencer's "The Coming Slavery" might not have actually benefited the socialist movement as much as the left had hoped, Spencer's philanthropy materializes in Tressell's narrative. But Tressell's alleged borrowing from Hyndman fictionally transforms Hyndman (or a figure like him) into an unwitting philanthropist as well. This action is then mirrored in RTP in the form of

Barrington's donation to Owen and the local socialist cause. In this sense, Spencer and Hyndman both donate generously to the rhetorical trust (the text) of socialism, and become the extra-textual philanthropists to unwitting beneficiaries who reside in the allegorical world of the working-class novel.

Myths, Proles, and the Battles of Working-Class Life

When Barrington finishes his oration, which promises a utopian future for England, the reader expects that he has won the crowd over to socialism; after all, he has projected a better world for workers in which public ownership replaces private ownership, all forms of work are accepted as "equally necessary" (the pay the same for all), and collectively established work programs will maintain individual incentive. What more could Tressell's impoverished philanthropists hope for? How could they all not toss their painter's caps and zealously salute what many socialists of the time considered to be the new religion of man. Tressell tells us that some believe in this new world. But only a few:

As Barrington descended from the Pulpit and walked back to his accustomed seat, a loud shout of applause burst from a few men in the crowd, who stood and waved their caps and cheered and cheered again. (523)

It is easy for the words "a few men" not to register with the significance that it should here. Like other instructive moments in RTP, there is a heavily pregnant pause, followed by a single question, then a flurry of incredulous responses

and hostile questions. Workers in the novel rarely seem to know how to discuss these issues productively. They either end up dismissing them out of hand, or they rudely parrot slogans lifted from the pages of the daily press.

In this sense, Tressell's representation of working-class life prefigures an Orwellian landscape of social control. For Tressell's hapless proles, the possibilities of political and cultural change have been successfully prevented or effectively forestalled by an insurmountable wall of myths, on which are painted the daily messages that keep these philanthropists in their respective places. Tressell is certainly proleptic in this respect. Although the utopian vision of RTP differ from the dystopian nightmare of 1984, Tressell's philanthropists (the prototypical proles for Orwell?) gobble up slogans from the press as easily as the proles in 1984 swallow lies from Orwell's ministry of truth.³⁰ Tressell's representation of the social semiotics of everyday life show how the cultural consumption within an emergent mass-culture system works to constrain the formation of class-consciousness in working-class culture. The seductive narratives of penny fiction, the sensational terror of tabloids, or the distractions provided by race results either provide marginal entertainment or sufficiently frighten the average worker into a state of dumbfounded silence. And if that fails to suppress militant resistance in Tressell's Mugsborough,

popular religion, cheap alcohol, and the various debilitating effects of the local economy and environment function more effectively as agents of oppression.

It is as if Tressell more than concedes that the fractured nature of the socialist movement along with the contradictions within working-class culture account for the failure of revolutionary rhetoric to gain converts to its cause. But that much is realized in the author's preface. How these things happen is another matter, which is why Tressell's narrator, although he is unable to internally distance himself from the strident rhetoric preached by Owen, often bitterly steps back and describes this communicative failure, taking it not in stride, but on the chin. The example of Owen's socialist library provides a handy case-in-point. Owen keeps a small cache of revolutionary pamphlets handy, but he is painfully aware of the fact that it takes more than the small-arms firepower of pamphlets to pack a real revolutionary punch. Owen knows that these articles have considerable influence, that they stimulate the thoughts of the more articulate members of the working class, but he also realizes that the practical effect of such discourse, given the odds facing the working-community, is negligible against the overpowering environmental and cultural elements of social hegemony. The sober Owen may invest in the printed word, but he will only to encounter the usual round of hostile and incredulous responses:

Owen, being a teetotaler, did not spend any money on drink; but he spent a lot on what he called 'The Cause'. Every week he bought some penny or two penny pamphlets or some leaflets about Socialism, which he lent or gave to his mates; and by this way and by means of much talk he succeeded in converting a few to his party. . . . Others were simply indifferent, or treated the subject as a kind of joke, ridiculing the suggestion that it was possible to abolish poverty. They repeated that there had "always been rich and poor in the world and there always would be, so there was an end of it." . . . Some of those who had shown some symptoms of Socialism during the past winter when they were starving had now quite recovered and were stout defenders of the Present System (460-61).

With the exception of an overly optimistic ending--a rhetorical flourish for the bright future of socialism in England--Tressell's narrator rarely attempts to hide his disdain for those who don't wish to see the promise of revolutionary light. But for a novel as seemingly tendentious as RTP, this signals a problem. The question arises as to how politically tendentious RTP really is, given its representation of the micro-politics of working-class life?

Again, Tressell willfully documents the desperate struggles of the socialist movement--its failure to win popular support, its fractured politics, its inability to draft a coherent, realizable program--within the mimetic (technical and formal) conventions that define dominant conventions of naturalism. Tressell's use of naturalism,

however, is double-edged: on the one hand naturalism affords Tressell the means to incorporate organicism, but on the other, it allows him to resist the competitive strains of "narrow" versions of Social Darwinism. In the narrative of RTP Tressell simultaneously encodes a rigorous causality that explains socialism's inability to mobilize the community successfully, but nevertheless shows how these failures can be historicized within the social conventions of a naturalist world view. Scene after scene, dialogue after dialogue, Tressell manifests this through the figures of workers too addled, too angry, and too debilitated by the hellish rhythms of the working-day to ingest the social medicine offered by local agitators. Paradoxically, Tressell, like Spencer, articulates an allegory of natural selection. As subjects poorly nurtured on the crumbs of determinism and individualism, these philanthropists will, as Spencer predicts, form a scrap-heap of defective individuals, who will rot in social misery. However, in Tressell's depiction of the world this is not because of any essential aspect of their moral nature; it is because they cannot wrench themselves free from the material and semiotic conditions that overdetermine their social, and therefore, their inter-subjective existence.

For Tressell, however, one working-class generation may pass but another will reappear, more wised up and resistant to dominant ideology than the last. For a later generation

of English writers who were able to depart from the rigid confines of naturalism, this is the case. It is none other than Orwell's unlikely candidate, Gordon Comstock, the rebellious poet of Keep the Aspidistra Flying, who consoles himself in Tressell's novel and justifies his own political stand through the figure of "the starving carpenter who pawns everything but sticks to his aspidistra. The aspidistra became a sort of symbol for Gordon after that."³¹

As an object lesson to Orwell and others, Tressell's incorporation of causality, his representation of the hegemonic reproduction of myths and signs within cultural discourse is one of most powerful aspects of RTP. Unpacking the social mythology/ideology of the "Christian Battle of Life," subsequently establishes the novel's naturalist counter text. Tressell demonstrates how deeply rooted in ordinary language are the mythical elements of Social Darwinism and how they successfully mystify and distort the pragmatics of oppositional strategies.

"I've 'eard a 'ell of a lot of this 'ere Socialism," remarked the man behind the moat, "but up to now I've never met nobody wot could tell you plainly exactly wot it is."

"Yes; that's what I should like to know too," said Easton.

"Socialism means, 'What's yours is mine, and what's mine's me own,'" observed Bundy, and during the laughter that greeted this definition Slyme was heard to say that Socialism meant Materialism, Atheism and Free Love, and if it were ever to come about it would degrade men and women to the level of brute beasts. Harlow said Socialism was a beautiful ideal, which he for one would be

very glad to see realised, but he was afraid it was altogether too good to be practical, because human nature is too mean and too selfish. Sawkins said that Socialism was a lot of bloody rot, and Crass expressed the opinion--which he had culled from the delectable columns of the Obscurer--that it meant robbing the industrious for the benefit of the thriftless. (505)

Like many scenes in RTP, this is an indictment of working-class culture which straddles the line between documentary and caricature. In this instance, Tressell's round-table style of reporting attitudes toward socialism here satirically characterizes ways in which dominant ideology overcodes everyday life. The sampling of voices here cynically express contrasting versions of "human nature" and sundry matters considered to be patently unnatural. What is considered to be forms of materialism, atheism, and free love in the end devolve into perceived forms of bestial degradation and the triumph of Idleness. To these workers, a socialist world would be metaphorically equivalent to a social madhouse, ruled by morally defective criminals and thugs, who are precisely the very same sort of unemployed, unfortunate "idlers and loungers" encountered by Spencer in "The Coming Slavery." But the fact that Spencer points the same finger at them when they are out of work is part of the joke.

Punch Lines and Time-Sheets

Spencer's invisible pen inscribes its social vision well beyond his published attacks against socialism. A glimpse at

graphic social caricature of the time shows us that Tressell's satire toward the working class provides critical reflection of the working-classes in popular political representations. Because of this, we cannot afford to ignore the imagistic and rhetorical power of graphic illustration and its effectiveness in transmitting a naturalist version of the world, especially before the days of photo-journalism and the cinema. Examples of social caricature from periodicals of the time provide us with a better picture, so to speak, of the myths Tressell resists.

The middle-class, somewhat liberal, view of the world in Punch provides some pertinent examples. We find Spencer's social sentiment in "The Coming Slavery" surfacing in political cartoons. In a 1906 cartoon (Figure 1) the exchange between Heckling Thomas and the "Socialist" portrays an image of the socialist figure as a loungeur or idler seated with a newspaper, looking too lazy and too old to work.³² On the right side of the frame the youthful and (morally) upright Heckling Thomas quizzes him on the issue of sharing livestock as a satirical analogy for exchange under socialism, which echoes much of the sentiment expressed by Crass against Owen. In fact, there is a very similar scene in RTP between Owen and Crass. Trying to show Owen that socialism means "share and share alike," the badgering Crass pulls a newspaper clipping from his pocket titled "Prove Your Principles or Look at Both Sides." This humorous editorial

stresses the identical analogy in which a "discontented hack and a weary looking cob" talk about Socialism next to their "unhired cabs." Their discussion of socialism parallels the message of the Punch cartoon; however it does so in terms of beans and horse oats rather than livestock.

"Robbing the industrious for the benefit of the thriftless" is precisely what the visual message of "The New Altruism" (Figure 2) presents.³³ The illustration depicts a scene of street theft in broad daylight. A man with a mustache wearing a bowler hat aggressively reaches into the pocket of a prosperous looking merchant on a West End street. On the left, an old hunched up and bedraggled figure looks on as if he is expecting a handout. Directly underneath the dialogue the bracketed caption reads "According to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the programme of certain Labor Members includes an Old Age Pension scheme based on a graduated super-tax on incomes above L5,000." Given the cartoon's ridicule of such a program, could a visual encoding of Spencerian ideas be any more graphic? The three figures in the cartoon metaphorically suggest the circulation of money (a metaphor for blood or other bodily fluids) through a violent intermingling of bodies--from right to left--between a robust, healthy body (the City Merchant), a criminal body, (the Labor M.P.--actually a type of urban Robin Hood) and the possibly diseased body of the morally defective idler, (the Lifelong Loafer). The status of the hats, or lack of

them, of these three men is also significant, as it connotes societal standing.

"The New Altruism" puns not only on popular misconceptions of socialism, but on the spirit of self-sacrifice the working-class subject was supposed to have held for God and Country during the time of Empire.³⁴ The upshot of the cartoon implies that Labor desires to invert and weaken the national spirit, and, in accordance with Spencer's earlier warning, Labor also threatens to endanger the healthy regions of the social body. That this takes place on a street resembling a West End district reinforces this danger, because it forcefully suggests that undesirable elements have transgressed social boundaries and threaten the stable, affluent zones of British culture.

Obviously, this public expression toward workers and radical figures stigmatizes them from the metaphysical perspective of being the sinful, wasteful figures of the archaic social residue of Christian conceptions of Idleness. But as common as this residual attitude appears in popular discourse, it conceals the underlying cultural rationalization that has more to do with changes in the workplace than it does with Christian attitudes toward virtue and sin. Temporality becomes the displaced (im)material element central to definitions of the mechanized rhythms of the working-day. In a modern sense, idlers and loafers are really bodies out of sync with the mechanistic processes of

instrumentalized reason, as much as they might be cast as the organically defective rejects of the social order.

Correspondingly, Tressell represents the subjection to the mechanistic temporality of the working-day as a politics of incarceration--a restriction of the worker's movement within the grid structure of the modern house--the implication being that working on the house (which suggests the pun on "workhouse") implies a confinement to work, while workers in the community are themselves denied adequate living quarters. What makes this even more dramatic is that Tressell's subjects are not toiling in mills or factories, the traditional sites of narrative misery, but are performing semi-skilled labor. Hence, the reification of time seems to be more culturally pervasive. Always under the threat of getting sacked for "being too long on the job," (itself a pun on the spatial element of controlled temporality), Tressell consigns the artisan to the coordinates of the spatial grid.

As E.P. Thompson has pointed out, the history of clock time and its relationship to material production can be said to measure the evolution of bourgeois culture.³⁵ In Tressell's novel the mechanistic linkage between work and time paces the lived relations between the subjects of its narrative and the time they consume both on and off of the job. Nowhere in the novel is this more conspicuously objectified than in the graphic inclusion of what Tressell

calls "a new development in the area." Though we might expect a piece of machinery or some other kind of labor-saving device, it is nothing more than a piece of paper: the time-sheet. Prefiguring the Foucauldian voice of panoptic technology, Tressell describes this textual object as "an additional precaution" which guards against "the possibility of any of the men idling or wasting their time" (Figure 4). The inclusion of this document at first strikes readers as being somewhat odd. After all, the time-sheet appears to be a natural part of everyday life as we know it; to think of this as being innovative or radical by an author strikes us as being commonplace and trivial today.³⁶ But where else do we find a time-sheet in literature before or after Tressell? In this sense it is a truly novel event, and the inclusion of the time-sheet in RTP marks its emergence in the world, and in literature. RTP represents the time-sheet as a historical icon, reflecting the technological production of changes in the regulation and surveillance of the working environment.

The cartoon from Punch depicting a construction scene (Figure 4) reflects these changes in controlling work-time by punning on the mythical status of ordinary/dominant perceptions of temporality in a humorous context.³⁷ Of course, the cultural "punch line" of the pictorial joke, rests on the less than oblique analogy between the status of the Empire and the culturally constructed status of the work-site, the building site. In this instance, popular

conceptions of work and temporality are thus articulated in popular discourse as the products of recent historical change, and the changing face of Empire. These historical "products" reflect changes in the modes of production.

Culturally speaking, time is of the essence. The authority of clock-time and its rule over the work-place is made clear through this figure. The foreman impatiently holds his hand on or near his watch-chain. His time, in a graphic sense, is money (reified time). (We think of the phrase we encounter in Tressell in which a foreman will frequently snap at a worker with, "Not on my time, you don't.") The Foreman's other hand, in the form of a fist, reinforces that dominance. Other pictorial elements in this illustration articulate a visual language of power similar to the hierarchical structures in the work-place in RTP. The foreman, wearing a black waistcoat and jacket, appears imposing. The worker, jerked into a kind of military attention, looks at the dominant figure, startled, possibly confused. The worker wears a kind of pith helmet, which is strange, but also "builds" up and overdetermines the associations with Labor and Empire more forcefully. The foreman appears confident and in control, while the laborer wears a bewildered expression, his eyes being more "marked"--in a semiotic sense--than those of the foreman. A plank that extends from the lower part of the frame to the feet of the foreman suggests that he has a floor to walk on, while the laborer stands on the ground; the only thing standing between

them is a shovel, which stuck in the ground stands idle-- again, the idea of idleness is reinforced by other visual elements besides that of working figures. A hunched over figure in the background indicates that some type of work is taking place. Of course this representation and Tressell's representation of work-time fit into the larger context of cultural politics, in light of the strained relationship between Imperialist policies and Labor programs.

'Mysterious, Unmotivated, and Opaque'

Concerning the politics of culture and the role of labor, the question arises as to whether or not Tressell transforms our readings of other texts that represent labor or working-class environments. Given the overwhelming influence of Spencer on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narrative, can we examine dominant versions of culture and their representations of working-class figures without an awareness of Tressell's oppositional stance? Besides its importance for understanding writers of the turbulent thirties, Tressell's novel certainly casts the writing of such canonical figures as Hardy, Conrad, Lawrence, and others, in a different light.

Specific examples from modernist and realist fiction of this period encode Spencerian elements of dominant naturalism in works that reflect or formalize aspects of labor. Glimpses of how these works mark the effects of Spencerian

ideology might be a good place to start, if we are to chart the circulation of these myths in the texts of canonical authors. In Joseph Conrad's The Nigger of the Narcissus, for example, the mutinous figure of Donkin, the manic-mouthed agitator who rails against the hardships of life on a merchant ship, is contemptuously described by Conrad's narrator as a "consummate artist"--in short, a loafer who complains about work while trying to escape from it. Donkin's voice represents a dialogical example of Conrad's ambiguous attitude toward labor politics, as he is cast in the allegorical role of the vulgar rabble-rouser whose "picturesque loquacity flowed like a troubled stream from a poisoned source."³⁸ Conrad's impressionistic mystification of the radical worker suggests that Donkin's (dis)embodied voice, like poisonous fluid, pollutes the arteries of the social body, which for Conrad's social symbolism exists in the form of the patriarchal organization of the merchant ship.³⁹

A different example surfaces in John Galsworthy's A Man of Property, which reveals the ideological contradictions of Edwardian London, and, as the title suggests, depicts attitudes toward property relations by members of an upper-middle-class family in London. Consider Galsworthy's language in a description of an urban landscape in which the lawn of a London park is strewn with "strange waifs lying prone on their faces, like corpses on a field over which the

wave of battle has rolled . . . as the sun shone with a clear flame on so much idleness--on so many human evidences of the remorseless battle of property raging beyond its ring."⁴⁰ Such a description effectively defamiliarizes an everyday scene from the social picture, which is congruent with Tressell's "Christian Battle of Life." From Galsworthy's perspective, these subjects are metonymically fused into the landscape of everyday life, part of the "remorseless" struggle that cannot be made comprehensible to Tressell's philanthropists. In a formalist sense, this scene, so familiar in Tressell's world, is indeed "made strange." And similar to Spencer's language that frames unfortunate workers as part of a criminal class, losers in this battle (strange waifs, the human evidence) are metonymically linked to metaphysical categories that re-situate the social Darwinist metaphor of "survival of the fittest." In other words, Galsworthy symbolically equates economic struggle with biological struggle.

Conrad and Galsworthy, like many writers of the time, reinforce Eagleton's assertion that naturalism, "in fetishizing the material world, dislocates subjectivity from it, banishing it into its own autonomous zone where it inevitably presents itself as mysterious, unmotivated and opaque."⁴¹ In a larger context, Eagleton's description of naturalism might very well apply to Tressell's narrative as a paradigmatic model of the social relations between dominant

and working-class culture. The material world in Tressell's novel is fetishized; the alienated subjects of labor, most of Tressell's philanthropists, are dislocated from the possibility of subjective action. Often Tressell's frustrated and at times cynical representation of working-class subjects suggests, that, in a perverse and pejorative sense, they are truly autonomous--that they are free to collapse and die on their own. With few exceptions, they are unmotivated and unable to better their lot in a hostile environment. And as subjects within class-structures they exist within an irrevocably opaque landscape, and they are unable to see beyond it. While this aspect of naturalism is undeniably part of the ideological fabric of RTP, Tressell ruptures its texture and reveals its seams, by dislodging material conditions from metaphysical categories, and exposing the logic of the social machine that systematically re-produces this naturalist text of life.

The battered casualties of naturalist struggle are thus the very subjects Tressell attempts to transplant back into the material world by grafting narratives onto specific image-structures. Tressell's tactic is to take the mythical figure out of the public domain of anonymous discourse and caricature--for example a subject who fits the description of, say, the Lifelong Loafer--and provide him or her with a set of social features that particularizes the subject without replicating the negative features of Spencerian

thought. Tressell's dry attention to detail records with linear precision the ravages of the social environment on the worker's body. In addition to the many stories of worker's lives in his novel, he also focuses on anonymous figures. A description of an unnamed worker (as opposed to the many allegorically named workers) bears this out:

This man had two patches on the seat of his trousers which were, also very much frayed and ragged at the bottoms of the legs: the lining of the coat was all in rags as were also the bottoms of the sleeves; his boots were old and had been many times mended and patched; the sole of one of them had begun to separate from the upper and he had sewn these parts together with a few stitches of copper wire. (523)

As a broad-lined charcoal sketch of alienation and despair, this figure appears as if the social subject's protective armor has simply worn too thin for survival. The frayed suit with its ruptures and seams marks the organic decay of the subject. Here, the emphasis on separation, tearing, and ruptures suggest the violence done to the body in which the worker is not merely a detached image, but a living subject. On an allegorical level, this is not the description of a singular individual as much it is the metonymic description of a subject who stands in for the effects of a social system--that is, in the sense that Spencerian thought can be turned back on itself--undermining its own social health.

Tressell then supplements this description with a brief

narrative, and locates this anonymous figure in the community:

He had been out of employment for several weeks and it was evident from the pinched expression of his still haggard face that during that time he had nothing to eat. This man was not a drunkard, neither was he one of those semi-mythical person too lazy to work. He was married and had several children. One of them, a boy fourteen years old, earned five shillings a week as a light porter at a Grocer's. Being a householder the man had a vote, but he had never hitherto taken much interest in what he called 'politics'. In his opinion, those matters were not for the likes of him. He believed in leaving such difficult subjects to be dealt with by his betters (523-24).

The outrage that Tressell expresses regarding the inability of action--particularly the inability of this subject to speak politically--typifies the interventionist attitude of Tressell's narrator, who speaks for these subjects, and fills in values and beliefs that cannot be voiced by the silenced outcasts of Darwinist struggle.

Tressell does voice the positions of others that he felt could not be articulated by his average philanthropist who desired change but did not have the confidence to say so. While the paternalism of such a position is more than evident, Tressell also reflects an empowered voice of Labor. Tressell does so at a time, as Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, when "wisps of violence hung in the English air, symptoms of a crisis in economy and society which the self confident

architecture of Ritz hotels, pro-consular palaces, West End theatres, department stores and office blocks could not quite conceal."⁴² Tressell's image of the building trades, therefore, is all the more telling as the subject of labor enters the social picture more prominently.

But at the present time, when the boundaries between canonical and non-canonical literature, and fictive and non-fictive discourse have been re-formulated, and the issue of cultural studies still remains to be debated, Tressell's novel stands as a document that crosses, but most likely transgresses, this regional dispute regarding the institutional aspects of emergent discourse. In this sense, Tressell is important for understanding how previous cultural formations and traditions have directly and indirectly shaped the politics and criticism from which later generations of labor writers proceeded. Tressell's novel, along with other texts in the labor movement, is important for reconstructing the alternative traditions that eventually spawned the cultural work of Williams and the theoretical considerations of later theorists in the Anglo-Marxist tradition. Finally, Tressell's ideological decoding of dominant myths proves informative for understanding and countering the residual currents of naturalism and Spencerian positions still with us in the texts of popular culture and especially its contemporary transcoding in the media. Because of this, working-class naturalism, like other aspects of working-class

writing, should be incorporated into contemporary re-
definitions of culture.



Donald R. Kelly

THE NEW ALTRUISM.

LUCKY ME - MY POOR FRIEND BOB'S GIVE SHIRTLESS FOR YOU"
 LUCKY TOM LOVER - "GAND BLESS THE CHANCE."
 LUCKY MURPHY - "HERE, HAND UP THAT S. M. MONEY."
 LUCKY ME - "YES, I KNOW, BUT IT'S MY DUTY."
 (Standing up Mr. Robert Macintosh, the proprietor of the "New Altruism" board
 published in the "New York Times" and "The New York Herald.")



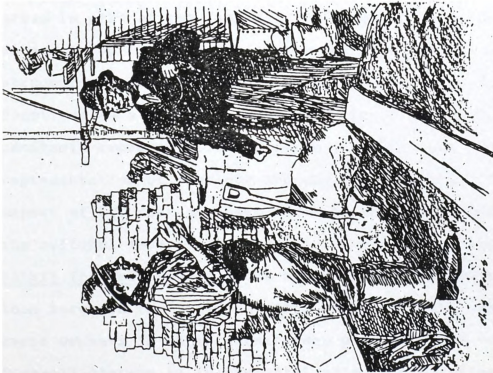
Hacking Thomas. "D'YER MEAN TER SAY IF TER 'AD TWO 'USSES YER'D GIVE ME ONE?"
 S. "COURSE I WOULD!"
 H. T. "AND IF YER 'AD TWO COWS TER'D GIVE ME ONE?"
 S. "COURSE I WOULD!"
 H. T. "AND IF YER 'AD TWO PIGS?"
 S. "WOT TER TALKIN' ABOUT? I'VE GOT TWO PIGS!"

448 THE RAGGED TROUBLED PHILANTHROPISTS

TIME SHEET
 OF WORK DONE BY IN THE EMPLOY OF
RUSHTON & CO.
 BUILDERS & DECORATORS : MUGSBOROUGH.
 NO MACHINE OR INSTRUMENT ALLOWED DURING WORKING HOUR.
 BACK PRICE OF WORK MUST BE FULLY SECURED, WHAT IT MAY.
 AND NO WORKMAN TO TAKE UP JOB.

	When Working		When Not Working		When Not Working		When Not Working		What Doing
	When Working	When Not Working	When Not Working	When Not Working	When Not Working	When Not Working	When Not Working	When Not Working	
Mon									
Tue									
Wed									
Thurs									
Fri									
Sat									
Total Hours									

Figure 4



Foreman Builder. "Now then, you, what's your name?"
 Labourer. "Owl, Boss! Name isn't built in a day."
 Foreman Builder. "No, it's not; but I want to know what you're doing."
 Labourer. "No, it's not; but I want to know what you're doing."

Figure 3

Chapter 2

Pressed Reference and the Poetics of the Panorama

It seems, rather, as though a very large number of people are being held down at an appallingly low level in their reading. By now the massive publications provide worse fare than almost any individual reader requires; but that is according to their nature, as mass publications.

Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy¹

In The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists newspapers are part of the nature of working-class society. Workers in the novel exhibit a demonstrably low level of literacy, at least in relation to the way that characters voice concerns about the information presented to them in the daily papers. The press is part of the fabric of Tressell's narrative.

Foregrounded in the novel, the press mediates, as well as re-structures, narrative events in such a way that the press functions as a structural reference point for Tressell's panoramic representation of class relations and the novel's representation of ideology and social processes. This is an aspect of RTP that has been noted by writers concerned with the cultural impact of Tressell's novel. For example, The Robert Tressell Papers focus on the fact that "Newspapers loom large in the world of [RTP] as part of the system which keeps workers in their downtrodden place."² Such views see Tressell playing an instrumental role in countering the

projections of dominant ideological interests.

The most obvious of these allegorical targets are the The Obscurer, and the Daily Chloroform, the political message being synonymous with the names: that information, especially political information, is the object obfuscated by dominant class interests. As the opening pages of RTP demonstrates, the most popular aspect of the press for Owen's fellow philanthropists has to do with information that deals either with what Tressell refers to as the "cooked statistics" (information about the economy) or with a fascination with sporting columns and entertainment activities--things that keep these housepainters enthralled with events distant from their own lived relations.

As public discourse, the role of the press in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists allows for a social analysis of the press, but it does much more than that in Tressell's narrative. In its oppositional stance, RTP stands outside the mainstream press and articulates a social critique of how the press prefigures aspects of what Guy Debord has termed the "society of the spectacle." In Tressell's representation of working-class readership, he reveals how the press is instrumental in the production of subject positions, commodity circulation, and class relations among workers in the novel.³ Tressell also provides a radical supplement for informative sources, documentary procedures, and modes of

social critique that he finds lacking in the dominant press. Tressell effects this in the absence of a socially efficacious leftist press during the crisis of Labor.

Tressell's text corresponds to later social and historical investigations of the press in British culture which demonstrate the shortcomings of the left before the First World War to use journalism effectively, outside of a morale booster for those already converted to Labour. As Raymond Williams points out in The Long Revolution, "Large-scale expansion of the daily newspaper into the working-class public did not really take place between the wars, and the war of 1939-45."⁴ Furthermore leftist rhetoric failed to deliver the goods in a way that made a left press a viable option. As Stephen Koss in The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain has argued, even though the leftist press had achieved a considerable circulation among workers, it failed to politicize them because they usually "articulated the ideals and resentments of mercurial personalities."⁵

Tressell critically situates his version of what might be described as the proto-spectacle, or pre-spectacular critique, in the opening of the chapter "The Pandorama"--a pun on the panorama, the formal device that Tressell employs to represent the stratified differences of class life in Mugsborough and the various strategies of representation that frame images of the working RTP. In a particularly telling

scene, the young laborer Bert White has constructed a device that he calls a pandorama, a box resembling a miniature theater with images from newspapers illuminated by candles. The show that the children watch is described as "a lot of pictures cut out of illustrated weekly papers and pasted together, end to end, so as to form a long strip or ribbon" (RTP, 322). Bert moves the strip of images across the miniature stage, something that entertains the assembled children during the Christmas holiday. But, rather than take his spectators on an imaginary tour of exotic parts of the world, Bert subverts the spectacular aspects of the press and shows images of militant laborers being dispersed by police, scenes of worker's homes contrasted with the palatial interiors of luxury hotels, including the well-groomed pets of aristocrats. Bert angrily "projects" a critique of consumption and desire within mass-culture through a commentary that frames the string of images for the young spectators. Tressell thus realizes the power of the spectacle to position its spectators ideologically; the point of the pandorama, beyond its function as meta-sign for RTP, is to suggest the power of the press to reproduce the social order in a way that naturalizes cultural mythology. As I will demonstrate Tressell depicts this in the way the press affects the construction of Owen's subjectivity.

The Terrible Domestic Tragedy

Tressell's depiction of the press and its readership in the working-class community of Mugsborough (in which the headlines of the papers blast messages to their readers such as "GREAT DISTRESS IN MUGSBOROUGH") documents how ideology and power in the press affect those whose voices are effectively excluded from dominant representation. Through the main character Owen, Tressell's relationship to the press also reveals the subject position of the worker through discourse, in this case the allegorical figure of Owen, whose social role as a father is mirrored by the story of the "Terrible Domestic Tragedy" which appears in the Daily Obscurer. As Owen reads the paper, we find that the news story details the sensational account of a murder-suicide, involving a destitute father who puts an end to his family's misery by slitting the throats of his children, and then killing himself. Owen's reading of the story activates a series of reflections regarding the nature of the murder, the possibility of his own family's condition.

Owen reads the story in such a way that the suicidal worker is--on a symbolic level--criminalized, framed by conditions beyond his control, and therefore symbolically representative of others who have been placed in similar circumstances. The headline "Terrible Domestic Tragedy" functions on various levels in Tressell's encoding of social values. To a dominant middle-class readership, which the

newspaper's editorial interests express, it is a terrible tragedy, signifying failure, guilt, and--in the context of the chapter, "It is Not My Crime"--criminality in the sense that someone has been framed. To Owen, whose voice is effectively excluded from the focalization of the Obscurer, the domestic tragedy also registers these emotive and moral categories, but the power relations inherent in the journalistic form--that is, the power between Owen and the press--reveals that the story is something to be resisted, painfully, but nevertheless through a social and textual analysis of how the language and form of The Obscurer function as a form of social discourse in relation to ideology. But Tressell transcends the level of social critique and deploys a symbolic resistance to hegemony.

Poison to Relieve Misery

An analysis of the representation of the press and how it mediates the subject-position of the allegorical father (Owen) allows for an understanding of how these dynamics work in RTP. It is necessary to quote from RTP at length. The story happens as follows: as Owen returns from work one evening, he, like many of his fellow workers, sits down to read the paper and discovers a shocking story that has more effect on him than it probably does on the majority The Obscurer's readership. While drying his clothes near the fire, he looks for his favorite evening distraction:

Whilst doing this he noticed the newspaper, which he had forgotten in the coat pocket. He drew it out with an exclamation of pleasure. Here was something to distract his thoughts: if not instructive or comforting, it would at any rate be interesting and even amusing to read the reports of the self-satisfied, futile talk of the profound statesmen who with comical gravity presided over the working of the Great System which their combined wisdom pronounced to be the best that could possibly be devised. But tonight Owen was not to read of those things, for as soon as he opened the paper his attention was riveted by the staring headlines of one of the principal columns:

TERRIBLE DOMESTIC TRAGEDY

Wife and Two Children Killed

Suicide of the Murderer

It was one of the ordinary poverty crimes. The man had been without employment for many weeks and they had been living by pawning or selling their furniture and other possessions. But even this resource must have failed at last, and when one day the neighbors noticed that the blinds remained down and that there was a strange silence about the house, no one coming out or going in, suspicions that something was wrong were quickly resolved. When the police entered the house, they found in one of the upper rooms, the dead bodies of the woman and the two children, with their throats severed, laid out side by side among the bed, which was saturated with their blood.

[. . .] No particle of food was found in the house, and on a nail in the wall in the kitchen was hung a piece of blood smeared paper on which was written in pencil:

"This is not my crime, but society's."

The report went on to explain that the deed must have been perpetrated during a fit of temporary insanity brought on by the sufferings the man had endured.

"Insanity!" muttered Owen, as he read this

glib theory.

"Insanity! It seems to me that he would have been insane if he had not killed them." Surely it was wiser and better and kinder to send them all to sleep, than to let them continue to suffer.

At the same time he thought it very strange that the man should have chosen to do it that way, when there were so many other cleaner, easier and more painless ways of accomplishing the same object. He wondered why it was that most of these killings were done in more or less the same crude, cruel messy way. No; he would set about it in a different fashion. He would get some charcoal, then he would paste strips of paper over the joinings of the door and windows of the room and close the registers of the grate. . . .

[. . .] Or one could take poison. Of course, there was a certain amount of difficulty in procuring it, but it would not be impossible to find some pretext for buying some laudanum: one could buy very small quantities at different shops until one had sufficient . [. . .] Then he remembered that he had read somewhere that vermilion, one of the colours he frequently had to use in his work, was one of the most deadly poisons: and there was some other stuff that photographers used, which was very easy to procure. Of course, one would have to be very careful about poisons, so as not to select one that would cause a lot of pain. It would be necessary to find out how the stuff acted before using it. It would not be very difficult to do so. Then he remembered that among his books was one that probably contained some information about this subject. He went over to the bookshelf and found the volume; it was called The Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine, rather an old book, a little out of date, perhaps, but still it might contain the information he wanted. Opening it, he turned to the table of contents. Many different subjects were mentioned there and presently he found the one he sought:

Poisons: Chemically, physiologically and pathologically considered.

Corrosive Poisons.
 Narcotic Poisons.
 Slow Poisons.
 Consecutive Poisons.
 Accumulative Poisons.

He turned to the chapter indicated and, reading it, he was astonished to find what a number of poisons there were within easy reach of whoever wished to make use of them: poisons that could be relied upon to do their work certainly, quickly and without pain. Why it was not even necessary to buy them: one could gather them from the hedges of the road side and in the fields.

The more he thought of it the stranger it seemed that such a clumsy method as a razor should be so popular. Why almost any other way would be better and easier than that.
 (RTP, pp. 92-94).

As Owen continues to contemplate this act, along with other possible, less painful ways of killing his family, his son Frankie bursts into the room, crying out to him, Dad, Dad! telling Owen, or trying to tell him that he has been calling out to his father but that Owen must not have heard him. Lost in suicidal speculation, his son brings him back to the present and, for a while the thought of suicide leaves Owen's mind.

It is not only Owen's contemplation of suicide that is significant here. Of major importance is the chronotope employed by Tressell in which he dramatically presents Owen to us in this scene. Briefly defined, the chronotope is Bakhtin's idea of a space-time configuration, in which dialogues or decisions take place.⁶ On one level Owen is outside of the "Cave," the building he and his mates are

working in. The "Cave" is in reality a house being built for the wealthy, perhaps a house similar to one under construction for Soames Forsyte in A Man of Property. In RTP this house is the site where significant dialogues about public discourse take place. In the "Cave" Owen engages in discussions about practical economics, the nature of socialism, arguments about the press and so on--in short, what matters for workers as the difference between illusion and reality.⁷ While he lectures to his fellow workers, Owen feels somewhat secure; it is in the domestic hearth that he experiences anxiety, insecurity and despair over the information delivered in the daily press. In some ways, Owen's possible suicide alludes to a Socratic form of suicide, given his position in the dialogue of labour, therefore alluding to a shifting subject-position as a dialectician and family man.

In the domestic sphere Owen's subject-position--his role as a father--exhibits a less stable relationship to the language of the dominant press; and the relationship between discourse and power reveals that Owen belongs to that group which is statistically "ordinary," as in "ordinary poverty crime." Owen addresses the ethics of the general ("Insanity! It seems to me that he would be insane if he had not killed them.") and calls into question the social grounds on which this opposition rests. Therefore, he articulates the crime as a rationalized activity and imaginatively considers a

course of action which symbolically calls into play the course of action not pursued by the dead worker: asphyxiation, poisoning, even strangulation, all symbolic actions that correspond to a destructive impulse regarding the health of the social and familial body.

The shift in Owen's subject-position from rebellious worker to suicidal family man brings into play the institutional discourse which transforms his daily activity into a form of domestic incarceration; hence the passage from the chapter "It is Not My Crime" (the same words left in a note by the dead worker). Owen transfers his own domestic situation into an imaginary substitution, a possible final act of defiance based on desperation and destitution. He internalizes these conditions as signs of failure and criminality on his part. But if, like the "ordinary poverty crime," he is going to break the law, he will do it differently: "He would set about it in a different fashion." Hence Owen transforms a poverty of means into a macabre display of self-destructive wealth, his own working materials can be used for these purposes. Vermilion, a blood-red pigment, becomes a useful chemical, a practical poison, as if the blood of the laborer's family body is itself predisposed to poison, polluted and contaminated from the outset, and therefore prevented from action. Yet there is the issue of using photographer's chemicals. But why these, given the range of poisons available to the average laborer, with many

of these substances commonly available? These substances are also employed in the production of individual and social images, and it is this elaborate version of suicide which forms the image-construction of social allegorical image--the deadly (news)print (The Terrible Tragedy), the deadly and bloody (literally a blood red) paint--vermilion, which the sign painter uses--and, finally deadly images (photography), the discourse of the panorama--in this sense the emergence of the "society of the spectacle."

Owen's recourse to the "Cyclopedia" functions as a form of symbolic overstatement for the case of the crime, presenting evidence for questions to which he already holds the answers, and the various poisons function as metaphorical categories for working life, regarding the overall health effects on the working community: physiologically and pathologically considered, the pathological nature of the community is metonymically corrosive, regarding the attrition of workers' lives, as in Philpot and Lindley; it is narcotic, as in the humorous references to drink; it is slow, in the sense that social change is practically non-existent; it is consecutive, in that the death toll merely mounts and paupers graves, as the Lindens and other nameless subjects in the narrative are reduced to the status of statistical figures; it is accumulative, in that the condition in Tressell's Mugsborough keeps happening.

Owen's suicide fantasy--on the level of a semiotic analysis--encodes the intersection of institutional discourses and enacts an interplay between power and ideology in which various cultural codes and discursive practices regulate--even in an imaginary suicide--the social practices of the laboring body. Therefore if the image found in The Obscurer was originally supposed to be a distraction for Owen, it ironically turns out to motivate his own crime of suicide and activates a discursive chain regarding the rhetoric of everyday life. As Owen contemplates suicide, we find an intersection of various discourses which establish his social role in relation to his imaginary crime: madness is in relation to medicine, legality is in opposition to criminality. But the absent discourse here is that of organized religion in the form of Mugsborough's "The Shining Light Chapel." Later in the novel, Tressell symbolically links the rhetoric of the poisoned body with the discourse of religion, a discursive feature which is absent from Owen's response to the "Terrible Domestic Tragedy."

Poison to Believe, Misery!

It is not, however, until the chapter "The Open Air," in which Owen and his son Frankie venture out into the market area to buy groceries, that Owen connects the issue of religion to the "crime" that he was thinking about earlier in the narrative, killing his family, like the person involved in the "Terrible Domestic Tragedy." While walking

through the crowded streets with his son Frankie, Owen experiences a similar kind of feeling toward his present situation and the larger problem of his identity versus the faceless crowd. It is at this point that the thought of continuing under the present conditions is realized as a state of pure exploitation, individually unbearable. But more importantly, it is at this point in the narrative that the "Terrible Domestic Tragedy" reappears in the discourse of the narrator.

At this specific moment during Owen's walk through the crowd that Tressell effects a structural equivalence between his own subjectivity as a member of that crowd and of the public "readers" engaged in the consumption of the naturalist "pre-spectacle" of journalism. The press that stands back from tragedy and merely describes with a popular sense of causality. Therefore Owen is a member, but an alienated member of the faceless crowd that consumes the news that he reads. But this crowd does not understand his social position as it is represented by The Obscurer. In other words, the asymmetrical relationship between Owen and the general readership of the press pushes Owen into a very defensive posture, dislocating him from the crowd as an other that they will not be able to "read" if he himself becomes the victim of the "story." This scene elicits a disparity, a social, structural asymmetry, between Owen's subject-position and the crowd, as he recalls the "Terrible Domestic

Tragedy." Hence, Tressell recontextualizes the discursive space of the public portrayal of private tragedy in Owen's recognition of himself in the crowd.

As he walked through the crowded streets holding Frankie by the hand, Owen thought that to voluntarily continue to live such a life as this betokened a degraded mind. To allow one's child to grow up to suffer in turn was an act of callous, criminal cruelty.

In this matter he held different opinions from most of his fellow workmen. The greater number of them were quite willing and content that their children should be made into beasts of burden for the benefit of these people. As he looked down upon the frail little figure trotting along by his side, Owen thought for the thousandth time that it would be far better for the child to die now: he would never be a soldier in the ferocious Christian Battle of Life.

. . . .He had been working like a slave all his life and there was nothing to show for it--there never would be anything to show for it. He thought of the man who had killed his wife and children. The jury had returned the usual verdict, 'Temporary Insanity.' It never seemed to occur to these people that the truth was that to continue to suffer hopelessly like this was evidence of permanent insanity.

But supposing that bodily death was not the end. Suppose there was some kind of a God? If there were, it wasn't unreasonable to think that the Being who was capable of creating such a world as this and who seemed so callously indifferent to His creatures, would also be capable of devising and creating the other Hell that most people believed in.

Looking out into the unfathomable infinity of space, Owen wondered what manner of Being or Power it was that had originated or sustained all of this? Considered as an explanation of the existence of the universe, the orthodox Christian religion was too absurd to merit a second thought. But, then, every other

conceivable hypothesis was also--ultimately--unsatisfactory and even ridiculous (RTP, 245-46).

Owen's private discourse here avoids advocating the worn-out principles of Christian Socialism championed by previous socialists; rather, it encodes a kind of pessimistic naturalism, similar to Hardy; the "Terrible Domestic Tragedy," perhaps resonates with the suicide in Jude the Obscure. But instead of affirming a form of pastoralism, based on traditional Christian metaphysics, Owen rejects, at least under his present circumstances, the possibility of the theological sign as spiritual deliverance. We might say that there is a kind of naive negative theology at work here, in league with the naturalism that vanquishes the subject, especially the laboring subject. On the other side of Owen's rejection of conventional theology lurks the handmaiden of naturalism, evolution. In relation to this problem Owen's thought shifts from the social to speculative metaphysics regarding problems of cosmology and material existence.

To believe that the universe as it is now has existed from all eternity without any Cause is surely ridiculous. But to say that it was created by a Being who existed without any Cause from all eternity is equally ridiculous. In fact it was only postponing the difficulty one stage. Evolution was not more satisfactory, because although it was undoubtedly true as far as it went, it only went part of the way, leaving the great question still unanswered because it was unanswerable (RTP, 246).

This private discourse takes place while Owen is walking through the streets, in the realm of the social, as it were, and away from the "Cave," where the most public dialogues take place. What Tressell presents here is a situation that avoids real public dialogue. Owen, we are told, would like to accept the belief system of Christian discourse in the sense that it could represent a truly ethical form of social action. But as soon as Owen affirms the refined ethics of Christianity, they are negated by the present "State of things"--hence there is a dialectic between the abstract possibility of Christian Socialism and the regulated cynicism of everyday life in the open air marketplace.

"In one sense," he thought, "how good it would be if Christianity were true, and after all the sorrow there was to be an eternity of happiness such as it had never entered into the heart of man to conceive? . . . But no one really believed this; and as for those who pretended to do so--their lives showed that they did not believe in it at all. . . . their ferocious determination to secure for themselves the good things of this world--were conclusive proofs of their hypocrisy and infidelity (RTP, pp.246-247).

The word Infidelity here becomes the contested term for Tressell. And throughout the narrative of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Tressell opposes religious or quasi-religious terminology against Owen's oppositional social rhetoric. In one sense, the word "infidelity" has to do with the press and other discourse that sustains power and

maintains the hegemony of culture through a regime of religious discourse.

Similar to the earlier scene in which Owen's attention shifts from the contemplative to the real, the interior to the exterior, Frankie's voice again startles Owen and forces him to confront the immediate situation. In this case it is a rally of the Shining Light Chapel, which has gathered in the marketplace, and is conducting its own act of faith, in which Biblical verses are read, hymns sung, and proclamations of faith are put to the test. This occurs while the devoted commune in a rather solemn manner: "During the singing their faces were a study, they all looked so profoundly solemn and miserable, as if they were a gang of condemned criminals waiting to be led forth to execution" (RTP, 248). The members of the Shining Light Chapel include Hunter and others of Owen's co-workers. They are led by a reader, who warns his flock of the dangers of eternal damnation; a heckler challenges the preacher, who offers proof in the form of additional scripture and heightened rhetoric. However, the evangelist is apparently angered by the behavior of two well-dressed infidels, who challenge his authority.

Then, having heartily denounced all those who--as he put it--'refused to believe,' he proceeded to ridicule those half-and-half believers who, while professing to believe the Bible, rejected the doctrine of Hell. That the existence of a place of eternal torture is taught in the Bible, he tried to prove by a long succession of texts. . . .(RTP, 248-49)

The exchange that takes place between the hecklers and the preacher mirrors many of the dialogues between Owen and his fellow workers on the issues of poverty, economic reform, and the possible promises of socialism. But the comparison is minimal at best, as the preacher's oratory is directed, for the most part, at those already converted, whereas Owen is usually arguing with those he cannot convert. Here, the audience consists of the likes of Hunter, Misery, and Slyme, who fervently profess their faith, at least until they are asked to perform a somewhat "liquid" test after quoting Biblical verse in which true believers can oust demons, handle serpents, heal the sick, and ingest "deadly things."

"Well, you can't heal the sick, neither can you speak new languages or cast out devils: but perhaps you can drink deadly things without suffering harm." The Speaker here suddenly drew from his waistcoat pocket a small glass bottle and held it out towards Misery who shrank from it with horror as he continued: "I have here a most deadly poison. there is in this bottle sufficient strychnine to kill a dozen unbelievers. Drink it! And if it doesn't harm you, we'll know that you really are a believer and that what you believe is the truth!" (RTP, 250)

The astonished Misery, of course, refuses to drink the poison and attempts to discredit the preacher, saying, "I suppose you're one of them hired critics wot's goin about the country doin the Devil's work?" Misery's disbelief thus forces the crowd to a political recognition, while Hunter and the others still proclaim their faith in God, ignoring the

embarrassing demands of the preacher.

Earlier in the narrative, poison is the means by which Owen will kill his family, the domestic body. In this context the means of destroying the social body--or an allegorical member of it, Misery,--through a poison which stands in as the object of faith (believe and you will live, even through you will probably die). Poison is thus the metaphorical link within a structure of symbolic equivalence, present in the discourse of the press.

Tressell makes it clear that the values inherent in the press are therefore ideologically equivalent to the values of the Shining Light Chapel. Hence the substance of poison is the vehicle which allows the institutional discourses of criminality, insanity, and religion to be linked onto a socially contiguous plane, regarding the opposition between the private and public, the domestic and the social. If Owen will commit a murder suicide, he will use poison; if Misery will drink the poison to reaffirm the values of the community, he will not only kill himself, but allow the preacher to symbolically murder him. Thus Tressell employs the Shining Light Chapel to mirror the disruption of these values, which form the moral bedrock of the middle-class community and disseminate from the informational organ, The Obscurer.

The relations of power between the working-class

subject and the press entails a self-destructive violence or the possibility of violence regarding the domestic body (Owen and his family) and the social body (the crowd). Hence, Tressell's transvaluation of social codes is a violent and defensive response to a situation from which his voice is excluded and the possibility of communication effectively stifled.

Thing in Black and White

If the press affects Owen so powerfully, then how does the press, as a commodity, effect the subject-positions of other workers in RTP? As I pointed out earlier, most workers in RTP seem to be content with forms of passive consumption; they read the sporting columns and the race results. For these workers the newspaper provides cultural distractions and displaced gentlemanly pleasures. But when political concerns enter the picture Tressell immediately politicizes the representation of the press, pointing to representational gaps between the forms of class relations and literacy. For example, when Easton reads The Obscurer, on the issue of tariff reform and fiscal policy, "he was not able to understand exactly what the compiler of the figures was driving at--probably the latter never intended that anyone should understand--but he was conscious of a growing feeling of indignation and hatred against foreigners of every description, who were ruining this country, and he began to

think that it was about time we did something to protect ourselves" (RTP, 19). Economically under-literate, Easton, like many of the subjects in Tressell's narrative, is "hailed" by the reigning myths (ideologies) of dominant culture, which are to some degree demystified by Owen's didactic dialogues. But if Owen momentarily dislodges workers from their investment in dominant myth, workers quickly reinvest themselves in its discursive features in the press. Like many of the didactic passages in Tressell's text, the news-text creates a sphere of discourse in which these obscured positions become naturalized.

And so the talk continued, principally carried on by Crass and those who agreed with him. None of them really understood the subject: not one of them had ever devoted fifteen consecutive minutes to the earnest investigation of it. The papers they read were filled with vague and alarming accounts of quantities of foreign merchandise imported into this country, the enormous number of aliens constantly arriving, and their destitute conditions, how they lived, the crimes they committed, and the injury they did to British trade. These were the seeds which, cunningly sown in their minds, caused to grow up within them a bitter indiscriminating hatred of foreigners. To them the mysterious thing they called the "Friscal Policy", the "Fistical Policy", or the "Fissical Question" was a great Anti-Foreign Crusade. . . . Therefore, down with the foreigners and all their works. Out with them. Drive them b----s into the bloody sea! The country would be ruined if not protected in some way. This Friscal, Fistical, Fissical or whatever the hell policy it was called, was Protection, therefore no one but a bloody fool could hesitate to support it. It was scarcely necessary to think about it at all.

This was the conclusion reached by Crass and

such of his mates who thought they were Conservatives--the majority of them could not have read a dozen sentences aloud without stumbling--it was not necessary to think or study or investigate anything. It was all clear as daylight. The foreigner was the enemy, and the cause of poverty and bad trade. (RTP, 21-22)

This passage suggests that information about fiscal policy proffered by both Liberal and Tory papers, when ingested by the members of Owen's community, "mysteriously" transforms itself into a vulgar nationalism, and, watered down to polarize issues, reinforces a cultural xenophobia among the working classes whose interests have been deflected from the primary economics. But the exasperated distance of the indirect discourse from the generic voice of the community reveals a problem of literacy, power, and ideology. Although Crass will later say that he reads both the Ananias and The Obscurer to find out "wot side is right," he merely reproduces dominant ideology by falsely aligning himself with class-interests, that for all practical purposes exclude him.

Tressell presents several problems here regarding the commodification of information and its consumption. On one level the narrator ridicules the working class because of its inability to recognize its own activity as a class and its relationship to the power and domination of popular discourse which effectively functions as social control, creating the voices of Crass and others who mis-recognize their own discursive positions. Another voice assesses the scope of

the ideological dimension of literacy and power, and sarcastically chides the workers. Tressell reveals a problem here regarding the "use of literacy." Many of Owen's fellow workers can read, but they are not literate enough to understand how specific issues are couched within wider spheres of discourse alien to their own subject-positions. Commenting on the status of literacy in nineteenth-century England, Terry Eagleton once remarked, "What is now most problematical is not illiteracy, which is after all a sort of absolute, determinable condition, but those who, while well able to read, are not quite able to 'read'. . . ." In Eagleton's sense:

. . . what is most ideologically undermining is a literacy which is not literacy, a form of reading which transgresses the frontier between blindness and insight, a whole nation which reads but not in your sense of reading. . . neither quite literate nor illiterate, neither firmly within one's categories nor securely the other of them.⁹

Eagleton refers to the status of literacy in relation to the rise of criticism and the institutions that condition and govern its cultural dissemination. Tressell's representation of literacy and power appears to echo a very similar sentiment. Those who are figuratively illiterate and socially disempowered cannot read, in one sense of the word, whereas they can read in another. The point is that this other sense of illiteracy benefits hegemony, more than it runs the risk of undermining it. Tressell presents

characters who are competent in the sense that they are literate, but their reading is entrenched in a state of perpetual "non" literacy, as their comprehension of politics seems to be little more than an auxiliary grasp of dominant expressions. Tressell thus outlines how against a wall of reference that anchors the signified of social truth through the dominant interest of the middle-class press, possibilities for intra-class dialogue are severely curtailed.

Proving One's Principles

As Tressell's narrative brilliantly demonstrates, social reference is expressed through a modality which often finds expression in the press, as an extension of the institutional discourses reinforced by dominant--in the case of the Obscurer and other papers, middle-class--commercial interests. The emergent ideology of Labor threatens the privileged modes of distribution and circulation, by these oppositional forms of discourse. As evidenced time and time again in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, the propagation of "useful" information to the working community is limited at best. By virtue of the form of this information, its consumption--in the asymmetrical power relation involved in this process of production and consumption between the press and its working-class audience--involves a struggle in which the reproduction of dominant interests effectively establishes a level of high affinity or

alignment among workers who accept these values. As Hodge and Kress point out in Social Semiotics, "Modality expresses affinity--or lack of it--[through] speaker with hearer via an affirmation of their affinity about the status of the mimetic system. Affinity is therefore an indicator of relations of solidarity or of power, that is, relations oriented toward the expression of solidarity or of the expression of power (difference)." Also significant, as Hodge and Kress point out, is the degree to which a subject expresses affinity, signifying levels of solidarity or power difference.¹⁰

Of course, in Tressell's novel characters such as Owen, Barrington, Easton, Philpot, and others express power differences--Owen and Barrington most prominently, while Hunter, Misery, Crass, especially Crass, and others express solidarity with a hegemonic naturalism expressed in the dominant cultural values of the press.

Perhaps the major issues regarding the discourse of labor in RTP deal with a definition of socialism that makes sense to Owen's fellow workers. But the ideological fissures within the working community, most notably the high degree of affinity with dominant interests, effectively prevent Owen from making inroads that can progressively transform the collective consciousness of workers and therefore motivate them to social action.

Crass confronts Owen on the true nature of

socialism in a scene that also reflects perceptions of Labor in the liberal press. This happens early in the novel in the chapter "The Exterminating Machines," in which Owen has again argued with Crass on the issue of employment, machinery, and tariff reform. Frustrated with his inability to challenge Owen, Crass resorts to the use of material evidence--a clipping from the Obscurer, with which he can steamroll Owen.

Crass did not feel very satisfied with the result of the machinery argument, but he consoled himself with the reflection that he would be able to flatten his opponent on another subject. The cutting from The Obscurer which he had in his pocket would take a bit of answering! When you have the thing in print--in black and white--why there it is, and you can't get away from it! If it wasn't all right, a paper like that would have never printed it. (RTP, 108)

Crass' perception of the modality of the press confirms the power of information as print-commodity. His utterance, "the thing in black and white," underscores the form in which the modality of the press suggests that truth values are proffered as binary relations, black and white implying the implicit veracity of the press as a value-free realm of discourse; hence Crass' naive assertion and high affinity with The Obscurer's version of social mimesis. The realm of social facts is thus located within the commodity form for Crass--as it is for others of the working community--and Crass' solidarity with the dominant values is further

strengthened, while the possibility of a discourse that assesses facts outside of the dominant press is imbricated within the social process's commodity consumption.

It is not until "The Oblong" chapter, in which Owen has conducted a miniature seminar on the principles of socialism, engaging in long debate and countering claims that socialism is merely a leveling of wealth, that Crass produces his weapon, the clipping from The Obscurer. Remarking that the print was too small for his own eyes, he [Crass] passed the slip of paper to Harlow, who read aloud as follows:

PROVE YOUR PRINCIPLES; OR, LOOK AT BOTH SIDES

"I wish I could open your eyes to the true misery of our condition: injustice, tyranny and oppression!" said a discontented hack to a weary looking cob as they stood side by side in unhired cabs.

"I'd rather have them open to something pleasant, thank you" replied the cob.

"I am sorry for you. If you could enter into the noble aspirations-----" the hack began.

"Talk plain. What would you have?" said the cob, interrupting him.

"What would I have? Why equality, and share and share alike all over the world," said the hack.

"You mean that?" said the cob.

"Of course I do. What right have those sleek, pampered hunters and racers to their warm stables and high feed, their grooms and jockeys? It is really heart sickening to think of it," replied the hack.

"I don't know but you may be right," said the cob, "and to show I'm in earnest as no doubt you are, let me have half the good beans you have in in your bag, and you shall have half the musty oats and chaff I have in mine. There's nothing like proving one's principles."

Original Parables by Mrs. Prosser
(RTP, 282)

Of course, Crass responds with a "there you are" position, feeling triumphant with his piece of paper that "objectively" supports the failure of Labour as a viable discourse. Understandably, Owen is somewhat startled by this vulgar display, and strikes back, "that if the Editor of The Obscurer put that in his paper as an argument against Socialism, either he is of feeble intellect, or else he thinks that the majority of his readers are" (RTP, 283). As Owen further attacks Crass, he claims the clipping from The Obscurer is "an argument against the hypocrites who pretend to be Christians. . .and that they do not love the world or the things of the world and say that they are merely 'Pilgrims on their way to a better land.'" Owen's response here points to the modalizing activity of the press and the press's ability to effect social control through a modality, which ultimately prevents a rational exchange of discourse from taking place within the working community. Moreover, Crass' rejection of Owen's response reveals the limitations of the dialogue--or the non-dialogue--as Crass maintains, "We're not talkin about religion," when Owen swiftly counters that the affinity of Crass's clipping is indeed aligned with the politics of popular religion as part of the institutional base of The Obscurer.

The press, then, as a commodity that lends itself to a

fetishization of value, is also a very problematic and complicated thing in Tressell and accounts for a good part of the novel's discursive view of culture. It could be said that Tressell's novel is itself a journalism of resistance in addition to its status as a novel. It would be difficult to find a writer who so thoroughly charts out the signs of the press, its uses as an organ of power, and its relation to literacy within a community. In this respect it has to be said that Tressell is mapping out an anthropology of sorts that reveals the processes of literacy in relation to the reification of information. The left may have failed in its attempt to produce a viable alternative that would move workers. Tressell, in his disgust with such a problem reveals the dynamics that underlie the problem of mass-culture, hegemony, and social resistance to dominant mythology.

Section Two: Working-Class Naturalism and the Problem of Gender

Chapter 3

Admirable Sentiments: Oppositional Naturalism and the Problem of Women's Representation in the Labor Movement

One of the first things I sensed in public life was the strong undercurrent of anti-feminism which pervades most public bodies. The Labor party itself was only lukewarm on such matters of 'equal pay,' while on the employment of married women most of them were definitely reactionary. But they dressed up their objections, either by admirable sentiments about the "domestic hearth" with "mother's influence" thrown in as a tear-raiser, or else they went all Marxian and stressed the bad economics of two incomes going into one home, while men with a capital M were unemployed. Whichever reason was given, the results were the same when the vote was taken.

From The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel¹

It is difficult to characterize the problem of gender, ideology, and history in the labor movement without being culturally reductive or redundant. It is risky, to say the least, to make comprehensive assessments regarding the production of an oppositional naturalism by women, in light of the production of naturalist myths about women produced by men that subsequently were naturalized in the labor movement. As the above-mentioned passage by Hannah Mitchell makes clear, the primary issues that men in the labor movement focused on often produced representations of women

that were either condescending, hostile, or patronizing toward materialist problems and concerns of gender roles and relations. Due to the multiplicity of these problems, a proper charting of an oppositional naturalism would entail a re-mapping of a great deal of ideological territory, and so many lines of historical force would have to be re-configured, that there is no clear-cut historical or sociological approach--at least no singular approach--as to how issues of gender and class can be defined without producing methodological or rhetorical conflicts. The dominant issue facing women's movements centered around the role of suffrage; suffrage was a crucial aspect of larger interrelated issues: women's rights in the work-place, the role of women in progressive movements, domestic issues, legal issues, the politics of the body, religious issues and progressive forms of spirituality, class conflicts centering on the problem of the domestic and the public spheres, and other matters that were suddenly intensified and problematized by the politics of the "Woman Question."²

Given the diversity of women's issues, a truly proper assessment of the problem of gender and labor would demand a more rigorous cultural examination than my study permits; it ought to include both empirical and theoretical modes of inquiry to account for the varied inflections of ideology and power in issues such as political enfranchisement, domestic politics, feminist autonomy, and community structure. But a

look at how the politics of language and the ideology of gender were shaped in various political tracts and novels by both male writers and women writers in the labor movement will provide some insights into the discursive aspects of gender constructs. As oppositional discourse or oppositional naturalism, the fault lines inherent in the discourse of labor, especially where it cannot admit them, come to the forefront of an analysis of myth regarding gendered subject positions. On a cultural and ideological level, this fragmentation occurs in the form of a dominant discourse by men and an emergent discourse by women. Male writers often relied on the unchallenged tenets of evolutionary discourse or a philosophical naturalism that upheld mystifications of the feminine body; often these various discourses maintained vulgar empirical assumptions that upheld crude essentialist conceptions of biological difference. In other words, progressive men often consciously or unconsciously perpetuated these myths and stereotypes, many of them hold-overs from Victorian concerns about the family. For progressive women, then, the ideological imperative was very clear: to produce forms of resistance to these stereotypical myths of the feminine and to strategically situate oppositional naturalism within a social and material context.

In this section, then, I will examine pertinent representations of women by men articulating both pro-feminist and anti-feminist positions within the labor

movement. The specific documents that I examine are not widely known in the sense that they are read today--in fact they are obscure--but these texts certainly express a dominant side of paternalist ideology in the labor movement. In reading these documents my strategy is not only to see how they fit into a larger cultural problem regarding the role of gender in the labor movement; but also to examine these texts closely and demonstrate how they served to reproduce, reinforce, and re-domesticate an ideology of gender based on naturalistic assumptions. In the second part of this section I will examine texts produced by women in the labor movement and show how specific women enacted a resistance to the conservative, naturalistic myths produced by men in the labor movement. The point of this is to illustrate how problematic gender issues were in relation to naturalism, in light of the paternalism prevalent during labor's turning point.

The paternalism inherent in the labor movement often cast labor in the dubious role of a new-fangled men's club, promising to restore a naturalized body of traditional gender roles once a socialist state was established, once the degradations of industrial capitalism were corrected. On some levels, the sentiments expressed by labor leaders of the time and the troubling sense of vulgar paternalism characteristic of workers hostile to labor manifests itself in Tressell's The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists. A dramatically charged sense of paternalism forcefully asserts

itself in the writings of Robert Blatchford's Clarion Press, as well as the pamphlets of the Independent Labor Party (ILP) and other groups. Furthermore, in Lawrence's representation of male voices in the mining community of Bestwood, men are threatened by radical women, or, in the case of Mrs. Morel, even women who participate in the local guilds, in addition to those women involved in socialist and suffragette causes such as Clara Dawes. The dominant message that these various voices keep repeating is the paternalist implication that if working **men** are to control their own lives, as well as take control of the processes of production, they are also to regain control of their families, either through advanced unionism, socialism, or some other form of revolutionary activity.

It could be said that in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists Tressell deploys a condescending form of patriarchal discourse when he excludes women in the labor movement and fails to include active women's voices. But perhaps the most powerful evidence of this problem occurs in Tressell's novel in the scene in which Owen contemplates killing himself and his family.³ By enacting an exclusionary strategy that denies the working-class woman (in this case Owen's wife Nora) a say in matters that determine the health of the family, Tressell encodes a kind of paternalist negation or what I would call a simple act of finality, by fantasizing a murder-suicide scenario, which can ultimately

be seen as a cynically hostile gesture toward cultural hegemony, but also can be seen as a profoundly naturalist gesture of defeat, as the male worker destroys the microcosm of the family, symbolically wiping out the allegorical community of the family. This sense of paternalist finality operates through a logic of extreme defeatism, a pathos that suggests that if the economically disempowered male cannot provide for the family, the subordinate (even more disempowered) wife embodies no recourse to social change, and the family, the naturalist vehicle of the novel, is extinguished by social conditions. Ultimately it is better to put the family unit out of its misery. Granted this may not seem like an adequate way of dealing with the woman question in Tressell's novel, but what is clear is that a treatment of the woman question was not adequately addressed, and that such extreme moments of economic distress forcefully elicit that problem.

(Paternalist) Woman. . .The Progressive?

For men dealing with the issue of gender, this was an awkward problem, indeed, if not for some men on the left, an impossible problem altogether. Some of the documents in this discussion devoted specifically to the issue of gender will allow us to understand more fully the cultural shape of labor and the idea of socialism in a historical and social context, rather than presenting a narrow ideological version of gender

in the labor movement. During the crisis of labor we find that these representations of gender forcefully elicit these problems, and in some ways stand as parodic examples of gender, because of the historical distance between contemporary theoretical views on gender and male-representations of women early in the century.

We find that specific issues and specific problems become clearer as to how myths of gender reproduced retrograde, rather than radical, roles for women. Social tracts written by men that addressed the "Woman Question" reveal why the appeal to a dominant naturalism was so pervasive and how men could conveniently idealize the role of women as domestic producers in order to minimize the threat of actual social and sexual emancipation. Some ideologues in the labor movement could support highly emotional issues such as suffrage, but still insist on the essential features of woman's conservative nature so nothing in the social order would be fundamentally altered. Men could guarantee, at least on a rhetorical level, a distinct pledge of liberty, while comfortably banking on the idea that life in a socialist state would not necessitate the institutionalization of such liberties. Therefore, by upholding traditional metaphysical assumptions about gender, and by disseminating these assumptions through a populist metaphysics of socialism--that is socialism idealized as a complete, nearly immediate historical transformation--the

domestic security of traditional family life as well as a new future in which emancipation, enfranchisement, and rejuvenation was due to the female subject, could finally happen, after centuries of degradation wrought by the industrial bourgeoisie.

Perhaps the most outspoken and widely known male critic of the period on this matter is George Bernard Shaw. Shaw's writings on Fabian socialism, most prominently his Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, come to mind when the issue of gender and socialism is discussed in most historical treatments of the issue. In his witty, benevolently paternal style Shaw's idea that women are the most oppressed subjects of industrialism is made clear when he says that "under the Capitalist system women find themselves worse than men because, as Capitalism made a slave of the man, and then, by paying the woman through him, made her his slave, she became the slave of a slave, which is the worst sort of slavery."⁴ Certainly Shaw's doubled sense of social degradation, ascribed to the body of woman, reinforces a stereotype of gender as much as it attempts to address a a distressed situation. Yet much of Shaw's writings were associated with a kind of middle-class socialism or seen as a rationalist discourse that failed to address the lives of working men and women.

An examination of specific pamphlets and texts produced by men in the more active--that is the more directly

political--factions of the labor movement need to be looked at seriously, given the spectrum of competing voices in the labor movement. While these other, lesser known pamphlets were not very numerous, in terms of the number of pamphlets devoted to the issue of gender, paternal voices that attempted to represent women surface amidst the turbulence brewing in other quarters of the labor movement. One of these examples can be found in the discourse of the socialist ILP, a moderate faction of the left that perhaps led the consolidating forces of what would later become the Labor party. A close reading of one of these pamphlets that was repeatedly advertised in other ILP tracts, reflects a "progressive"--such a term has to be bracketed--attitude toward women that will help us understand the problems that they engender.

An ILP pamphlet published in 1906 titled Woman. . .The Communist by T.D. (Thomas Duckworth) Benson posits a contradictory version of women that conflates divergent assumptions about evolutionary theories of human development with mystified notions of biological essentialism.⁵ Benson defines "Woman" in terms of a cosmic, ahistorical essence, a mythologized phantasm, as divine as any romantic poet's binaristic vision of cosmic harmony, and as rooted in the material world as the mechanistic naturalist's assumptions about humankind and evolutionary history. Unconscious of the fact that he reproduces one of the most archaic paternalist

stereotypes, Benson links the metaphysics of woman with conservative principles, the timeless, cyclical, and regenerative forces of Nature. Man, on the other hand, is guilty of degrading the innate, cooperative tendencies of the female principle, the essence of woman; his essential qualities reside in the linear, mechanistic, and destructive forces of capitalist-bourgeois culture. Because of man's brutality, his reckless quest for profit, woman's fundamental role as the nurturing body--in short, the idealized cosmic version of Mother--has been ruthlessly degraded and subsequently dehumanized by the lacerating machinery of the Industrial Bourgeoisie (along with earlier generations of the bourgeoisie) which have prevented women from actualizing their true potential, although what women were estranged from was actually their ability to become the mothering agents they are destined by nature to become. If in some ways this sounds like a watered down version of D.H. Lawrence's metaphysics of gender, to some extent, at least in the bare expression of its oppositional stance, it is. On the level of expressing an oppositional form of gender politics, Benson attempts to correct for the abuses of a culture seen to be out of balance; yet his hybrid version of 'woman' simultaneously encodes a naturalistic ideology that legitimates an ahistorical construction, a fusion of various elements of romanticism, social organicism, and Darwinism.

These contradictory positions proceed uninhibited in

this pamphlet; and a kind of rhetorical seduction seems to be the dominant aspect of its composition. It could be argued that Benson directs the discourse of "Woman" toward both men and women, but such a strategy is by no means clear. If Benson's pamphlet is intended for a male readership, then the masculine proletarian perhaps would be more sensitized--certainly not threatened. If the content of "Woman" was directed toward a feminine audience, then women were to be informed that they are the Victorian cosmic 'angels' of the household. But whatever the rhetoric of the pamphlet suggested, the metaphor of writing is central in framing the naturalistic scheme of things regarding the story of "Woman." The human species is to be comprehended as a text in which nature inscribes or "imprints" its specific features in the human subject, especially when it comes to gender. Benson argues that a temporal-biological record is "embedded" in the human subject, as if there is a coded copy of humankind, something meta-historical: "Nature," Benson writes, "does not cease inscribing her records on man when he is born, but on the frame of each one of us after an entrance into the world, she has impressed the history of mankind."⁶

Mythologized and metaphorized as a cosmic printing press--nature replicates its imprint through gendered subject--it follows that gender traits thus figure as part of an eternal code. Nature encodes sexual difference outside of social and historical forces. Feminine essence is something

to be restored, and this is something that men, through their activities as revolutionaries, must strive to reclaim. Benson contrasts a kind of feminine purity against a degenerate male essence, which he aligns with the dirty material business of capitalist culture. Through labor struggles and the inevitability of historical processes, he argues that men must regain the essential features of a world to be restored, a community of the future.

But before Benson further defines the issue of just what exactly is to be restored to women, he apologizes to women for the sorry state of things caused by centuries of male domination. Benson admits that patriarchy, especially capitalist patriarchy, is responsible for the degradation of women, even if he does not see himself as one of the capitalist class responsible for this degradation. In general, this degradation has brought about conditions in which culture has fallen from a state of grace, a previous golden era; before the dawn of industrial capitalism, he argues, it was "highly probable" that "the golden age was no mere fancy of the poet"⁷ According to Benson, the historical movement of civilization proceeds in a linear direction; it starts "fresh from the hearts and minds of a semi-communistic people, full of the energy and vitality of a moral race, but as the concentration of power and property [falls] into fewer hands apace, luxury enervates the race at the top, and slavery at the bottom, till it passes others

before it"⁸ This naive conception of primitive communism, combined with an equally naive concept of race exhibits some affinities with Spencer's ideas about historical progress and social organicism.

Benson is closer to Spencer, however, on the issue of social evolution, as he relies on the model of the individual as an analogy for cultural development, a model that further explicates the causal relationship between patriarchy and the industrial organization of society. But when he attempts to re-humanize the issue more fully to endow a socialist version of history with an aesthetic, he appropriates poetic discourse. Specifically he quotes Wordsworth to articulate this more fully: "Whilst the history of the degeneration of the race is strongly impressed upon the male child from the third year onwards, when as Wordsworth says: 'Shades of the prison house begin to close/Upon the growing boy,' woman strangely enough bears out few traces of this decadence. She, through life, retains those high human attributes that the child possesses."⁹ Situated within the category of the cosmic child, woman is thus ontologized as a static essence. Benson then claims that the body of woman is closer to the first stage of individual development--that her purity is the purity of the child; she is closer to an originary state of innocence. Again, employing the metaphor of writing he views this regressive disclosure as a progressive feature of womanhood:

This is a curious and unexpected revelation in the book of nature which shocks our sense of masculine superiority, but one which no amount of explanation will explain away. Yet it is one which is exceedingly comforting to the Socialist, when we see the explanation.¹⁰

Given the logic of this version of "woman," one would expect Benson to limit the role of women in public and circumvent the issue of enfranchisement. But he does insist that women be given the right to vote. Benson advocates enfranchisement and greater equality, implying that this will lead to greater participation by women in the public sphere: "The increasing opportunities in public life for women are helpful in preventing the rising generation of women from becoming mere pleasure seekers and parasites."¹¹ And as a corrective to capitalism, socialism would mechanistically produce such a world in which woman functions "naturally" in her "womanhood." If this is indeed the result of an evolutionary process, it follows that the authority of Darwin can be cited to uphold this as part of a deterministic naturalism.

Is it not rather a natural sequence that, as industry prepares a socialistic environment, woman, the survivor of the old communism, should enter in and take possession of her kingdom by right. It is but another instance of the truth of Darwin's doctrine of survival of the fittest. A change takes place in the environment, and immediately, a different flora and fauna are produced, the more harmonious at once enter in and possess. Woman has not yet grasped the idea that her entrance into public life is permanent, and not merely an episode in her career that will

soon pass.¹²

The inaccurate and misleading appropriation of Darwinian discourse here--immediate change?--along with the preposterous phrasings--"not merely an episode in her career"--reinforce a reliance on natural selection as something that socialism mysteriously engenders. The appeal to a mechanistic naturalism actually signals a conservative gesture because it forestalls true social change, and erroneously calls into play the notion of natural selection as a discourse that can be applied, at will, to the complex, material dynamics of social struggles.

Benson's "Woman" pamphlet appears to be written from an altruistic perspective by a male writer who openly welcomes emancipation, and principles of mutuality. Hence the reason for my extensive reading of this pamphlet. And given the sentiment of Benson's pamphlet how could he not sincerely desire these things? Perhaps through the significant gaps in the content of the pamphlet we can see how a strategy of patriarchy lurks below the sincerity of the writer's stated position. First, Benson's elision of the simple issues of labor, the material conditions of work, reveals his preoccupation with a determinism that would serve to block the genuine entrance of women into culture. Secondly, Benson conceals a competitive impulse, one that covertly enforces power relations between men and women. It is implied, simply, that women will not need to work once the golden age

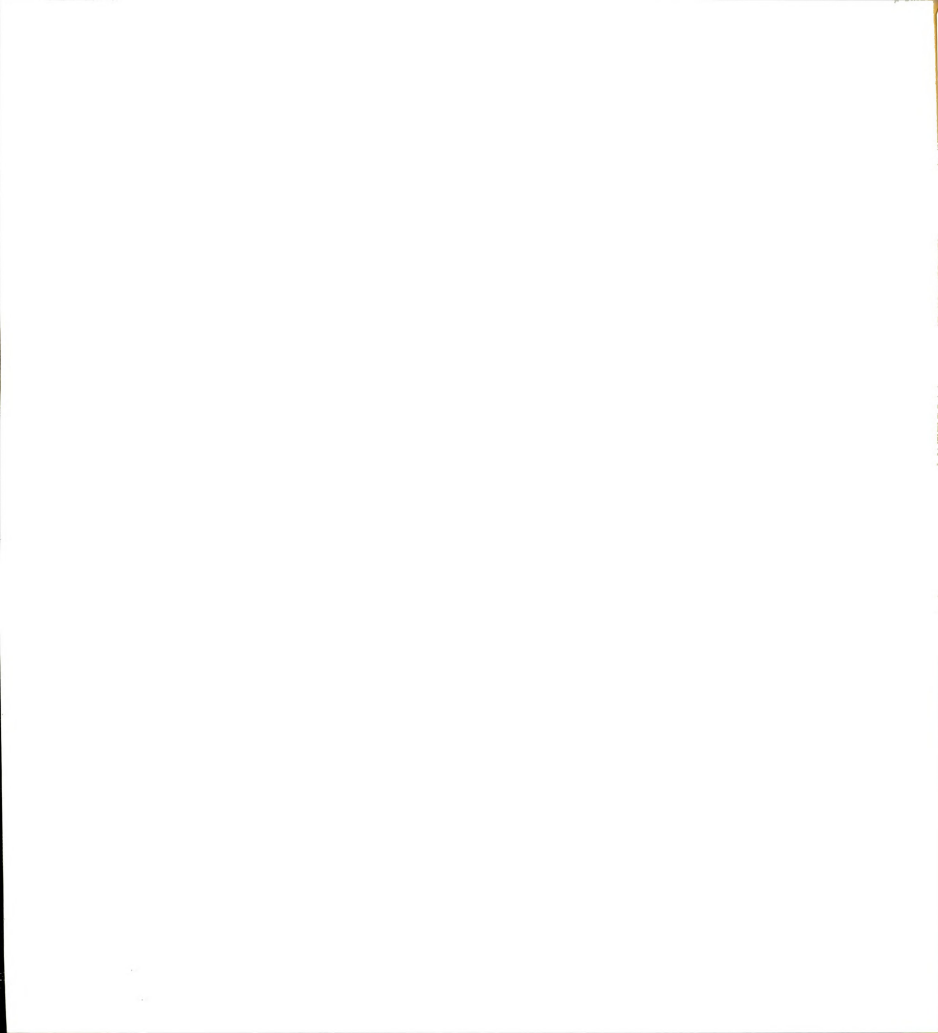
has been restored. But this problem transcends theories of evolutionary change, and is affected by the status of property relations and capitalist competition.

Benson also tries to allay a very real anxiety over the possibility of radical-feminist emancipation. The implied threat is embedded in the earlier premise that the true communism of a retro-golden age falsely invests woman with mythical powers and assigns her to a realm in which the essence of "woman" belongs, one which men must endeavor to restore. Besides the fact that he fetishizes the notion of woman, by conferring a timeless power onto the body of woman, such an ideology of gender also fetishizes the idea of historical change: that is, that one stage of history can be mechanically exchanged for an "other." But on the level of fetishism, woman is idealized as the sacred vessel, the primitive mother archaeologically unearthed from the historical sedimentation of capitalism.

These problems make a reading of Benson's pamphlet seem like the entire content of Woman. - the Communist is a parody itself, as if it could not be taken seriously outside of the political site of its production as a pamphlet within a restricted social and historical context. Yet a very similar view of woman surfaces in the discourse of more prominent socialists writing on the metaphysics of women. In the preface to the "Revolutionist's Handbook, " in G.B. Shaw's

Major Barbara, the notion that woman is nature's producer, reinforces the belief that in a socialist system "woman" will expand her understanding of her natural sense of reproduction both domestically and publicly. This sentiment parallels aspects of Benson's pamphlet, as Shaw raises the nature of woman to the highest ideal of man--those "high human attributes" of the genius artist. Shaw merely repeats this as an indispensable feature of paternal ideology coded through the language of emancipation. Passionate, stubborn, self-sacrificing often manipulative, and certainly different in his psychological composition from that of ordinary men, Shaw writes that "we observe in the man of genius all unscrupulousness and all the 'self-sacrifice' (the two things are the same)," Shaw writes, "of Woman." Shaw's statement that "Home is the girl's prison and the woman's workhouse," echoes the position of "Woman" in that once freed from the confines of the domestic sphere, women are more free to carry on 'Nature's work.'¹³

The point of this is not to identify Shaw with Benson on a discursive level. Certainly Shaw's writings are more complex, and a further examination of his ideas about gender would be necessary to do justice to the body of his work. But Shaw, like most socialists who claimed to be feminists as well, runs into severe difficulties when theorizing gender. And while Benson, like many labor activists of the time, expresses a desire to see present conditions rectified,



he fails to refer to specific proposals that would alleviate the plight of working women and non-working women alike. Moreover, references to sexual emancipation are absent, and can be seen as the repressed threat to men in the labor movement. The metaphorical linkage between "woman" the innocent child, and the cosmic Mother attempts to efface the issue of sexuality and heighten a kind of socialist purity that can be seen to be closely aligned with middle-class morality. "Woman" thus poses no threat to the stability of the family and the patriarchal community. And if we extend this to Shaw's position, the natural genius of woman neutralizes the threat posed to ordinary men and everyday workers.

One final aspect of Benson's "Woman" involves her innate sense of domestic, social stability, another naturalistic component of her ontological status, which, in terms of social conflicts, translates into what Benson describes as woman's inherently conservative nature. Benson raises this issue as a way of soothing the savage beast within the male worker, who might actually fear a radical tendency in "Woman." Hence, deeply aware of the fears, tensions, and anger in the labor movement over the woman question, Benson urges his fellow socialists to loosen the paternal reins and allow her conservative nature to shine forth:

Some socialists are apt to look askance at

this demand of woman and consider her a conservative force which is to be feared by them rather than welcomed, but still admitted to equal rights because justice demands. The conservatism of woman is, however, not the conservatism of man, of individualism; it is rather the individualism of the old communistic spirit which will find, in the individualism of the day, nothing that appeals to it. The conservatism of women will be a revolutionary force in a society still founded on individualism, competition and private property, a combination which has secluded woman in the home, shut her out from life and subjected her to degradation unmentionable.¹⁴

Domestic life in the new society is thus redefined and re-described perhaps within expanded political parameters, but only with paternal and regulatory restrictions. The object of woman, positioned through various evolutionary and sexual discourses, is thus re-inscribed within an imaginary and allegorical future, in which woman briefly steps out onto the steps of the house to make a public appearance, only to return to a mythical, re-naturalized workshop of domestic production. This is more apparent as the pamphlet appeals to a revised form of social ethics in which a fusion of the domestic and the public formulates a model for gender relations. Ethical matters are to be re-thought from the locus of the family: "She will insist that the ethics of home shall be the ethics of public life, and the morality of man not lower than the morality of woman. The entrance of this communistic force into a semi-communistic society will quickly bear fruit."¹⁵ As the opening quote by Hannah Mitchell attests, statements like these could win very few

converts among women. The usage of the family metaphor, in the minds of radical men, enabled a new form of conservatism to prevail, rather than allowing a new form of radicalism that would enable women to participate within social struggles. Not surprisingly, this new fruit that Benson refers to drops from a very **familiar** patriarchal tree.

The implication of Benson's pamphlet is that it conclusively reveals that laboring men would have nothing to fear because, as it is 'written in nature's book,' the family, as the operative metaphor for culture, rules over nature. The historical, material problem of the structure of the family and the social formation that it upholds-- something that Engels addresses in The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State--is something that Benson glosses over.¹⁶ "Woman" as the true progressive in actuality becomes the true regressive, the conservative force that supplements patriarchal rule over the family and, correspondingly, over culture. Hence, complacent with the rule of the family, male writers like Benson who could posit such a mythical image of woman could effectively deny her an active role in the dynamics of cultural change. Restricted to the domestic sphere, the essential qualities of the feminine are structurally isolated and assigned to the realm of inert values: stasis, physical passivity, as well as a child-like silence. The contradiction is telling: Woman is as

progressive as she desires but only in a way that she herself could not express. Only through men's voices were women to be granted a legitimate politics of the body and the community. As long as that was the case, the possibility of a truly radical voice by women would either be denied or refuted.

Chapter 4

Dangerous Sentiments: E.B. Bax and The Fraud of Feminism

Alarmed by an emergent and rapidly growing feminist movement, some male writers in the labor movement resorted to desperately hostile measures in order to silence feminist voices. Ernest Belfort Bax's The Fraud of Feminism¹ (hereafter Fraud) was a case in point. As we have seen in Benson's pamphlet, Woman. . .the Communist, the projection of a contradictory version of the feminine (woman's progressive ethic and her innate conservatism) merely re-inscribed a traditional nature/culture metaphysics, and gravely misread the basis of feminist politics. Benson's pamphlet demonstrates that such assumptions could be conveniently naturalized among men. If the tendency was for certain male ideologues to essentialize feminine nature through a naive, philosophical naturalism, the body of woman subsequently could be subjected to the deterministic values of a vulgar empiricism and a crude psychology. In the service of such a paternalist form of positivism, such assumptions could be deployed in the most forceful manner as a vicious rejoinder to the question of emancipation and suffrage. Bax's Fraud embodied such misogynist tendencies, as he attempted to posit women as being biologically inferior to men, justifying subordination and upholding hierarchical gender divisions. That Bax was a socialist makes a reading

of Fraud reflective of specific reactionary tendencies within labor on the issue of gender.

As an influential, prominent and veteran socialist of the time, Bax's significance in the discourse of labor until very recently has gone unnoticed. Bax was an early associate and friend of William Morris, H.M. Hyndman, G.B. Shaw and others, whose socialist ideas often attended to a stern, Victorian treatment of social morality, psychology, spirituality and other issues. As Jonathan Rose points out in The Edwardian Temperament, Bax was a "Marxist and Hegelian lay philosopher," who "preached socialism as a 'new religion' that would supersede Christianity and effect 'a synthesis of human solidarity and human freedom'."² Of course, it is questionable as to how much of a Marxist Bax could have been at the time, due to the general inaccessibility of Marx's writings, but Bax's ideas were dramatic, influential, and provocative for the time--so much so, that he was instrumental in the composition of Shaw's Major Barbara. It is interesting to note that Bax's name also pops up in the writing of some very significant literary figures. In 1918 Virginia Woolf referred to Bax as a "Victorian Socialist" and praised him for his radical activities. In 1926 Woolf commended Bax's autobiography, Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid and Late Victorian, and commented that Bax's

. . .deepest source of gratification lies in the enlightenment of the working classes. His

hope for the future is so deeply founded that it bridges the gulf cut by the war. The Socialist ideal reaches beyond 'any mere material transformation'; and, believing in its attainment, he looks forward to a time when the working classes of the world will be united in such an international society that the struggle of race with race will be for ever impossible.³

It is indeed puzzling that Woolf either overlooked or ignored Fraud, in which Bax would tenaciously cling to the idea that even if the world is united and racial equality is achieved, the sexes will, for Bax, rightly be at odds with each other, or else they will be in an antagonistic and hierarchical relationship.

In Fraud Bax appropriates and deploys a diverse set of discursive practices, including legal theory, vulgar empiricism, contemporary ethnography, "expert" medical and psychological discourse, and, generally speaking, whatever implements of textual demolition he could muster in order to support his misogynist attack on what he referred to as "Modern Feminism." Granted, it might appear gratuitous and excessive even to read Bax given the violence of his argument, but if in the case of Benson's Woman. . .the Communist, overblown naturalizations of the feminine essence could be produced as idealized domestic producers, then they adequately reflected one side of the collective male psyche of labor. It is safe to say that Bax's attack in Fraud stood for a more dangerous anti-feminist component among men in the labor movement.

For Bax, "modern feminism" was, in metaphorical terms, a double edged sword. In discussing the 'two sides' of the feminist movement, Bax, on the one hand, appears to realize how principles of feminism function as a strategy of liberation for women; but on the other hand Bax fears that changes in the superstructure that favor emancipation will lead to a general state of 'house arrest' for men. Bax's castration anxiety over the supposed covert objectives of feminism can be discerned in his absurd fear that women were after more than equality and enfranchisement; that they wanted to overturn extant gender relations so that equality was a subterfuge for a domination more insidious. This is apparent in Bax's overview of the problem. He defines "modern feminism" as having "two distinct sides to it: (1) an articulate political and economic side embracing demands for so-called rights; and (2) a sentimental side which insists on an accentuation of the privileges and immunities which have grown up, not articulately or as the result of definite demands, but as the consequence of sentimental pleading in particular cases."⁴ Obviously, the second side troubled Bax most deeply. Unable to grasp the problem adequately as part of a larger problem involving a more developed form of social critique, Bax denounced feminism from a rather paranoid perspective, falsely accusing women's movements as struggles for outright dominance via a "transvaluation of values, assisted by a sentimental cunning

by organized women," something that for Bax would result in an undermining and a seduction of male hegemony.

Bax launches his argument in Fraud by attacking the visible efforts of women in the suffrage movement (the causality implied in this move is that having the right to vote will lead to a political takeover). Bax appeals to an imaginary construct, the "average view" of public opinion, nothing more than the common-sensical view of the world held by a mythical body of subjects. This allows Bax the comfort of assuring the reader that he is empowered through an aura of public authority and therefore reveal the marginality of the feminist position. If Bax meant to address a socialist audience, as his other works did, one has to question the logic of appealing to a dominant sentiment, although what Bax perceives as the dominant is a particular male sentiment embedded within the labor movement. Bax appropriates a public voice to make such a position appear reasonable. He then employs this public sentiment in order to refute what he perceives as the overtly "sentimental side" of the feminist question, a kind of discourse that he sees as a threat to public (male) rationality. Feminine rationality is something other than male logic; it functions for Bax as a fundamentally different kind of rationality altogether.

On this issue he attacks the idea that women have the intellectual capacity--that is, the appropriate kind of

logic--to exercise proper judgment in civic matters. Bax attempts to disprove a popular argument for feminism: the argument that there are indeed women who have demonstrated, through intellectual and aesthetic accomplishments, the extraordinary achievements of males. In this case Bax cites the figure of George Eliot. Bax then compares George Eliot to a working-class male of significantly lesser educational and intellectual training, in order to demonstrate how the argument is faulty. As for the exceptional woman, the act of being extraordinary in a man's world results as an aberration of nature, as an insignificant (in the long run) instance of an inversion of naturally gendered values. In rather empty defenses like this Bax appeals to the so-called "logic" of a spurious argument rather than addressing the specific, gendered facts, regarding the role of the person of letters and the social facts that enter into the production of political discourse.

The pretended absurdity of "George Eliot having no vote, and of her gardener having one" is really no absurdity at all. In the first place, given the economic advantages which conferred education upon the novelist, and not upon the gardener, there is not sufficient evidence available that his judgment in public affairs might not have been even superior to George Eliot herself. Moreover the possession of exceptionally strong imaginative faculty, expressing itself as literary genius or talent in works of fiction, does not necessarily imply exceptional power of political judgment.⁵

If this were the case for all literary authors, would Bax say this

about William Morris, Shaw, or other writers deeply invested in the politics of the labor movement? As imaginative writers, Bax's male compatriots are able to produce ideas that make good sense for the future, but women are denied this power.

But for men whose sympathies might be allied with progressive women, men who affirmed that the suffragette movement and emancipation movement embodies the key for a progressive and radically democratized society, Bax reacts angrily, violently. Bax sees this as a violation of the nature of men. He claims that men have a tendency to disagree violently with each other, that they have a natural propensity to argue and fight about differences--that is, differences between men. In short, rivalries are a part of male nature. As a male essentialism, this has to do with traditional values: "chivalry, feelings, perhaps inherited, dating possibly back to the pre-human stage of man's evolution, derived from the competition of the male with his fellow-male for the possession of the coveted female, etc."⁶

For Bax male willingness to support feminism transgresses the boundaries of a historically naturalized rivalry, and can only be explained as a kind of male self-hatred or an inversion of male principles. Bax stops short of providing any solid explanation for this, but is clearly threatened by "a host of literary men and journalists of varying degrees of reputation who contribute their quota to

the stream of anti-manism" and thereby weaken the bonds that hold men together within the social structure.⁷ The paranoid, hysterical implications of Bax's argument has its legacy in similar debates of the time. Spencer would employ a very similar kind of rhetoric in order to describe a drift toward centralized control of the state. And just as Spencer was threatened by what he perceived to be the increasing tendency of the state to centralize power and enact restrictive legislation to subordinate the bourgeois subject, Bax targets--strangely enough--the entire bourgeois superstructure as harboring the forces of 'anti-manism--the legislature, judges, juries, parsons'--all of these he sees as dupes in a hateful, conspiratorial campaign that will undermine patriarchal authority and hand power over to women. Bax's exaggerated fear (again, his castration anxiety returns with a vengeance) is that women, by co-opting the institutional forces of patriarchy, will subjugate men if not out of a sense of naturalistic necessity, then out of a spirit of revenge.

It follows, then, that the legal sphere should be the primary site of this ideological battle against men. The courts are the locations where Bax views developments in marriage law, property law, and even criminal law; except as he views it, judicial decisions have favored women overall; that progressive efforts to reform the legal system is part of an "anti-man crusade" that desires to subvert institutions

and the courts. Women, he argues, have been allowed to employ a sentimental guile to win favor in courts of laws and that patriarchy has been considerably and consistently more lenient on women--not only during the Victorian era, but throughout history as well. Feminists, according to Bax, would thoroughly subvert the legal establishment in their drive to undermine male authority. To demonstrate this, Bax cites numerous court cases involving issues of gender that appear in legal discourse; he refers to adultery cases and property disputes; he probes court records for specific examples in criminal cases in which women have received special treatment due to an ability to plead in a way that men cannot. For women, Bax argues that the courts yield for affect, dispensing a leniency that men are subsequently denied. And after documenting decision upon decision from the pages of selected courtroom dramas, Bax maintains that there is "not to be found a single case. . .of one [judicial decision] favoring the man at the expense of the woman."⁸

Essential Evidence

Bax's rather faulty examination of the legal system perhaps indicts his own methodology and undermines his arguments about the general nature of the legal system. But much of Bax's Fraud is structured like a legal defense, with much of its testimony resting on the documents of experts in the form of medical and psychological texts in order to

support sociological and biological claims against feminism. In Bax's vigorous, practically evangelical appeal to specific authorities, he prefigures what Michel deCerteau states in The Practice of Everyday Life on the issue of philosophy and social authority. Although the contemporary context in which deCerteau defines the notion of the expert authority is certainly different from the specific context in which Bax is writing, the relevance for the "expert" voice of the social philosopher is clear when deCerteau maintains that "In the expert competence is transmuted into social authority; in the philosopher ordinary questions become a skeptical principle in a technical field."⁹ Bax's strategy of deploying "expert" discourse subsequently displaces the practical (and skeptical) question of woman's body from the voice of the social philosopher. In other words, Bax realizes he needs all the ammunition available in order to appeal to the norms of a vulgar positivism, which remains a technical matter. Expert discourse--as clinical discourse--discursively defines the subject of woman. Bax's reference to medical documents of the time therefore falsely constitutes the object of sexuality in the guise of such social authority.

The appropriation of clinical documents, as a means of constituting the body of woman is perhaps the most significant discursive gesture made by Bax in the course of his anti-feminist treatise. Culled from so-called expert texts, he marshals this evidence to support an authoritarian

referent of the body, one that is based on a concept of (a vulgar) empirical sense of closure. Bax resorts to a biologically descriptive coding of woman's physiognomy that marks biological difference as being naturalistic in a mechanistic, determinist sense. Along these lines Bax effects a crude, schematic, positivism to do the rest of his dirty work; he figuratively dissects the female body into its component parts by citing medical reports that anatomically quantify the female body as being inferior in its vital dimensions to the male body. Bax quotes studies that contrast the size and weight of female organs against the size and weight of male organs. His totalizing conclusion reads as follows: "All authorities on the physiological question are agreed that woman is less well-organized, less well-developed, than man. . . .this fact is traceable throughout the whole female organism, throughout all its tissue and all its functions."¹⁰ These bodily facts are in conjunction with Bax's conviction that woman "is subservient to the functions of child bearing and lactation."¹¹ Such a claim fixes woman's social role squarely within the domestic sphere (as if Bax needed such evidence to say this) and exempts woman from any active role in shaping the public sphere.

For Bax and other writers of the time "scientific" theories of sexuality on the continent surpassed the cultural barriers of Victorian England. The appeal to outside

authorities on the matter of sexuality of the time is characteristic not only of Bax's work but of most attempts to define the body in either progressive or reactionary forms of psychology or social philosophy. Given the context of the state of psychological theory and theories of the body in England it is culturally significant that some of the most progressive works on the subject of women were also imported from more technically 'advanced' continental sources. Freud of course, comes to mind, but on the left, regarding the emancipation of women, Woman Throughout History by the German radical August Bebel proved to be a highly influential text in socialist circles.¹² Of the variants of imported theory--that of the body and psyche of woman--Bax quotes the influential German physician Otto Weininger, a reactionary physician whose theories of sexuality centered on the inferiority of the female sex. Bax seems to have ignored Bebel completely. Yet at the historical moment he is writing this action by Bax is something a socialist of Bax's stature would find unthinkable, given Bebel's influence. However, Bax invests his technical authority in Weininger's treatise, fetishizing its contents with a mysterious power to explain the female. On the issue of sexuality, Bax writes that Weininger's

Geschlecht and Charakter (Sex and Character). . . [is] the most complete I know. The truth in question consists in the fact, undeniable to all those not rendered impervious to facts by preconceived dogma, that, as I have elsewhere put it, while man has

a sex, woman is a sex. Let us hear Weininger on this point. "Woman is only sexual, man is also sexual. Alike in time and space this difference may be traced in man, parts of his body susceptible to sexual excitement are small in number and strictly localised. In woman sexuality is diffused over the whole body, every contact on whatever part excites her sexually." Weininger points out that while this sexual element in man, owing to the physiological character of the sexual organs, may be at times more violent than that in woman, yet that it is spasmodic and occurs in crises separated by intervals of quiescence. In woman, on the other hand, while less spasmodic, it is continuous. The sexual instinct with man being, as he styles it, "an appendix" and no more, he can raise himself mentally entirely outside of it. [quoting Weininger] "He can view it [sex] objectively. With woman this is not the case; the sex element is part of her whole nature. . . .For this reason the man is conscious of the sexual element within him as such, whereas the woman is unconscious of it as such. It is not for nothing that in common parlance woman is spoken of as 'the sex.'¹³ (Bracket mine)

At first glance this crude definition of sexuality appears to be similar to Benson's; he situates the physiognomy of woman as synecdoche of an evolutionary order. But on a deeper level, the differences between women and men are to be seen in terms of a deterministic, developmental logic. The female body is contrasted to male as a different kind of development. Woman, similar to popular views of the working-classes in Victorian England, remains in a naturally arrested state of development. This ahistorical, binarist logic of gender difference produces a conception of gender that leads to a parody of itself as scientific discourse.¹⁴

The male body possesses the qualities of localized or

concentrated control; woman is lost in the flow of unrestricted desires. Echoing Freud's idea of infantile polymorphous perversity, woman is child-like, while man, having control over his phallic drives is mature, on his way to adulthood. The male's supposed control over his phallus analogously allows him to control the processes of culture, while woman's unrestricted desire gives her no control over her body; hence the surface of woman's body continuously experiences libidinal drives beyond regulation. Man, on the other hand, experiences a sense of control over his body, exerting conscious restriction over sexual desire. But the regulation here is that inscribed by the politics of male projection. The fetishized gaze that Bax/Weininger inscribe into theory figuratively opens Woman's body to a libidinal imaginary of the male clinician. From this perspective woman's body remains foreign to herself, alienated as a circuit of desire that controls her actions.

Weininger thus depicts woman's body as a continual surface of libidinal intensities; whereas for man the conscious recognition of drives and instinct involves a locus of control--innate restraint, through a recognition of how desire operates, a self consciousness: "With men sexual instinct manifests itself locally, and at intervals its satisfaction is an urgent and pressing need. With women this is not so."¹⁵ The reductive binary nature of such a statement insists on a caricature of gender relations.

Given the damaging language and the reductive nature of such a position, the question has to be raised as to how one struggles with this vulgar essentialism without unconsciously reproducing this terminology in a study of the Labor movement. Such questions might best be dealt with later when it is shown how women in the Labor movement countered such myths. It is easy to see, however, that Bax's appropriation of Weininger produces a doubled sense of male hysteria in its misogynist stereotype of the female body. Similar to Benson's naive metaphysics of gender, woman is aligned with the reproductive flux of nature; man with the regimented, disciplinary rhythms of culture. Bax's appropriation of Weininger's clinical definitions of gender (or these gendered definitions of the clinical) parody a theory of the body in its near caricature of phallocentric discourse. But there is little, if nothing really, to laugh at, given the historical and cultural force of such arguments, for such a design of the body allows Bax to suppress further any discussion of equality, rights, or claims that women possess the same mental powers as men. Spencer then enters the picture. Bax quotes Spencer to provide additional support. Spencer's argument, which compliments Bax's, is that it is a matter of "physiological necessity" that woman's mental powers are less than man's, and that "no amount of culture can obliterate it."¹⁶

Finally, Bax addresses the issue of labor and autonomy in

relation to women's rights in at least one area of work in which a high degree of exploitation occurs: prostitution. Although Bax appears to deplore prostitution, he examines the material conditions that produce it. Bax admits that laboring women whose wages leave them too poor to live properly, "gain part of their living by their reputable avocation and part in another way." But as soon as he realizes this, he quickly ties the issue of prostitution to the men who benefit from the employment of prostitutes, arguing that the employers of women who turn to prostitution are socially culpable for paying such wretched wages, and that "Many of these employers. . .are doubtless to be found among the noble band of advocates of White Slave Tariff Bills, flogging and social purity".¹⁷ Therefore once class struggle and the role of labor enter the picture, Bax's representational concerns shift dramatically from the issue of gender to the issue of social relations between men. After all, men who accept the wages of prostitution are the men who have most likely been displaced from the work-world and end up as the "parasites" that Spencer mentions in his attack against labor and what he perceives to be the self-induced poverty of the unemployed.

An alliance with Spencer is indeed not surprising, especially in a context in which the subject of prostitution is brought up and the "class of women" that Spencer refers to in "The Coming Slavery" are indeed the subject of one of Bax's few critical moments in Fraud. Bax's writing on gender

suggests that he regarded women in nearly the same vulgar manner that Spencer viewed the working-classes. It is in Bax's willful and malicious blindness, his refusal to see women as active subjects within community formations, then, that Bax falls woefully short of even beginning to inscribe an adequate account of gender or gender relations. What Bax signals so clearly, perhaps more clearly than anything else in Fraud, is a total disregard for the virtues that the passage from Woolf recognizes in his radical writings. As a "Victorian Socialist," who feared masculine disempowerment, Bax dragged along some of the most pernicious features of that period's repressive views on women and sexuality. Perhaps it might seem unfair in some respects to examine Bax in such a negative light. Is it fair to be critical of such an obnoxious work in view of his more positive accomplishments? It is necessary, however, in order to understand the negative side of gender representations by men in the labor movement. As women were concerned with undermining myths of gender, we should also be concerned with the undermining of specific myths produced within a dominant context rather than an oppositional one.

Chapter 5

Robert Blatchford's "Determined Little Creature"

Bax's vulgar essentialism of gender alerts us to the the overdetermined and overbearing weight of a condescending sentimentalism that infiltrates working-class naturalism, one that typified a kind of paternalism prevalent throughout the labor movement. It can be said that in fictional discourse this paternalist sentimentalism is less harsh, less authoritarian than the strident tones of pamphlet strategies, although such strategies are at times in complicity with tendency fiction.

What I would like to show in this section is how paternalist ideology, in the form of a hybrid naturalism, is expressed by writers in the labor movement in the production of novels that mirror the forms of popular, consumable fiction. Robert Blatchford's novel Julie: Study of a Girl by a Man¹ (1901) refracts the dominant sentiment toward women in the labor movement, but approaches a more sympathetic position than other male writers were able to achieve.

Blatchford's attitudes toward women certainly were not as inflammatory as Bax's. But to some degree Blatchford could be as naive and as crudely metaphysical as Benson's conception of Woman. . .the Communist; yet, he did not attempt to mark women as archetypal, primitive communists.

Nor were Blatchford's views on women as complex as Shaw's. From the surface features of Julie, it seems that Blatchford wanted to produce a sentimental romance that would read as a romance, allowing the political message of the novel, like a soft sell advertisement, to follow naturally. We can surmise from Blatchford's political activities, that social subversion may have been what Blatchford was after, a subversion of the reified narrative structure of easily consumable sentimental novels. Blatchford's shadowy role as the author of Julie complicates this, especially since he effaced his name from the work, desiring perhaps to "slip imperceptibly" into the stream of mass-culture.

Before explaining the significance of Blatchford's Julie, it is necessary to situate the novel in relation to Blatchford's brief but significant status as one of the most influential proponents of the labor movement. Therefore, in order to better understand the political context from which Julie arises, it is necessary briefly to examine the wider aspects of Blatchford's political perspective, especially since he had, for a short time, a very significant impact on working-class politics.

Robert Blatchford was the founder of the radical Clarion Group, a faction of the labor movement dedicated to publishing and dramatizing the cause of socialism-- in Blatchford's case, a nationalistic form of socialism that would unite the working classes with the middle classes. A

self-styled socialist, Blatchford published widely, and, for a time, had achieved significant success with his radical publications. Writing under the pseudonym of "Nunquam," in his Clarion pamphlets, Blatchford addressed, in evangelical fashion, nearly every social issue on the political map, while spreading the gospel of socialism (a term that, as I shall demonstrate shortly, was filled with complex meanings for Blatchford, possessing religious, romantic, and populist connotations). Blatchford had also achieved considerable success with two of his books Merry England and Britain for the British, both of which urged far-reaching, dramatic populist and nationalist solutions for the imperialistic morass into which England was rapidly sinking. Blatchford's rhetorical strategies were often designed to capture the affective side of working-class and middle-class audiences. Blatchford's pamphlets were often marked by their sharp-witted jabs at the ruling class, as they appealed to the vital sentiments of working-class communities--mostly those situated in the north of England. Blatchford also took socialism to the streets in the form of the Clarion cycling clubs. He also traveled the countryside in a socialist van championing what he referred to as the "new religion" or the "new altruism." Tressell documents the arrival of the Socialist Van in Mugsborough in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, and reports on what Blatchford's radical strategies with workers were like.² What Tressell pays less

attention to, however, was Blatchford's flamboyant style, his quasi-military fanfare, and Blatchford's uncanny ability to characterize issues in a concise concrete manner with Dickensian overtones undoubtedly had a considerable impact on concerned members of some working communities, but Blatchford's rather eclectic and often unspecified principles drew the ire of rival socialist factions nationwide.

Blatchford's theoretical grasp of the principles of socialism was tenuous at best. He was skeptical of "scientific socialism," and he was opposed to militant solutions. Blatchford's criticisms of other militant organizations at times was strident. He often viewed these groups with a paranoid distrust, specifically the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), as being in league with foreign powers that had plans to subjugate England both economically and politically. However, Blatchford was instrumental in the establishment of the Independent Labor Party (ILP). The public aspects of political life, however, disagreed with Blatchford's temperamental personality, as he devoted his energies to writing.

Blatchford's romantic, evangelical version of socialism ran against the grain of more established forms of European radicalism. Blatchford had not read Marx, but he had read William Morris (the experience that he later referred to as a religious type of conversion). For Blatchford socialism was

something that could be aligned positively with a heady form of nationalism that had the power to unite classes, and hence unite all of England politically and economically. This would be an England in which the working-classes would share the fruits of industrial and imperial wealth. But a socialist England would be one in which there was an enormous transfer of wealth; moreover, once this transformation occurred England conceivably could become economically independent from its overseas concerns; England could even--through the development of state-run hothouses--produce enough citrus for England's population.³ Yet Blatchford's nationalism had its contradictory moments. Blatchford wanted to see England extract itself from its foreign entanglements; yet, loyal to a sense of national pride, he backed British involvement in the Boer War--something that tarnished his image with the left and led to his political divorce from certain factions of the labor movement.⁴ For Blatchford socialism was a fusion of various ideologies transfigured into a unified, populist message. Perhaps the following passage on the nature of socialism sums up the diverse strands of Blatchford's vision of "the new movement" of British socialism:

If you ask a London Socialist for the origin of the new movement he would refer you to Karl Marx and other German Socialists. But so far as our northern people are concerned, I am convinced that beyond the mere outline of State Socialism Karl Marx and his countrymen have had but little influence. No; the new

movement here; the new religion, which is Socialism, and something more than Socialism, is more largely the result of the labors of Darwin, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman. . . . the new religion which is rousing and revivifying the North is something much higher and greater than a wage question, an hour's question, or a franchise question, based though it be on those things; it is something more than a mere system of scientific government, something more than an economic theory, something more than political or industrial liberty, though it embraces all of these. It is a religion of manhood and womanhood, of sweetness and of light.

For this we are indebted to the idol breaking of Carlyle, to the ideal-making of Ruskin, and to the trumpet tongued proclamation by the titanic Whitman of the great message of true Democracy and the brave and sweet comradeship of the natural life--of the stainless, virile, though human life, lived out boldly and frankly in the open air and under the eyes of God.⁵

Blatchford's flair for alliteration, his metaphorical flourishes, and his evangelical and exhortative tone in this pamphlet reveal a hybrid construction of various strands of diverse naturalist and romantic humanist ideologies, some progressive, some reactionary, but all based on Blatchford's inspired belief in immediate social change. Perhaps this could best be described as the result of a localized attitude toward socialist reforms in the north, where a history of rebellion and social experimentation left strong impressions in the cultural memory in a region that witnessed industrial strikes, the Chartist movements and the socialist experiments of radical leaders such as Robert Owen.

As the passage suggests, Blatchford's urgent appeal to

a religiously inspired humanist ideal--one that encodes diverse but traditional ideologies--fails in its attempt to signify anything more than a reintegration of traditional humanist as well as religious ideals. Moreover, Blatchford's insistence on the "Northern" inheritance of a romantic ideal here relies on the premise that one can simply reject what he refers to as "scientific socialism" or state socialism, for an idea of socialism that lacks a concrete critique of economy and relations of production.

In spreading the gospel, Blatchford may have been enormously important, but as James Callaghan has pointed out, the Clarion group never really had the cohesion that other radical groups, such as the SDF, had.⁶ Neither did the Clarion seem to have the desired social arguments. Perhaps it is no accident, then, that in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists Owen's son Frankie mentions a book entitled England for the English as a book that he and his young friends read for radical inspiration. Owen and his wife Nora both agree that it is one of the best books, but the implicit point is that Blatchford provided a primer of socialism for the young. In Tressell's novel it could be said that Owen's son Frankie signifies the value of injured innocence that children in Dickens signify within patriarchal and oppressive community structures. Tressell intertextually sentimentalizes Blatchford's discourse as being little more than kids' stuff, something that the adults approve of and

have left on the shelf as part of the family library.⁷ Blatchford's publications are thus implicitly parodied by Tressell as an impassioned primer of socialist thought, which, from the more "scientific" position of the SDF, implies that Blatchford did not address the underlying issues regarding the domestic culture and an adequate understanding of the politics of Empire.

While the Clarion Press was in full swing, Blatchford produced numerous pamphlets and several books on about every social issue facing England during the crisis of labor. In the midst of this social turmoil, Blatchford also had the time to compose several novels. Blatchford's apparent desire to reach mass-culture is evident in his impossible romances, and his romantic utopias inspired by Morris and others. For some reason, perhaps because he did not wish to announce the political ambitions of Julie with his signature, Blatchford decided to publish the novel anonymously. In short, Blatchford's narrative attempts to undermine sentimental conventions dealing with the intertwined issues of gender, the subject and environmental forces of working-class culture. As a popular romance, Blatchford's Julie subverts the dominant notion that the working classes embody essential and/or biological qualities--that, in a determinist sense, the working class represents an underdeveloped part of the social body. However, one has to wonder if Julie is Blatchford's covert attempt to represent a masculinist view

of culture in a novel that certainly would have conflicted with the rhetoric of his pamphlets on social issues. Of course, the majority of pamphlets and books produced on socialism and labor were directed toward the concerns of working-class men. Blatchford, like most labor writers, was not known or regarded for his insights on gender.

A Study of A Girl?

The complete title of Blatchford's eponymous novel is somewhat misleading; Julie is less of a "study" than it is a combination of a social narrative in the guise of an 'impossible' romance. Julie represents an attempt to subvert a popular medium but not to alienate its readership because of its subversive tendencies. Julie is a radical twist on the Cinderella myth. Possibly intended to capture a domestic, middle-class readership, Julie aspires toward the status of a political fairy tale with shades of Dickens dominating the novel's political rhetoric.

Julie is also a storybook romance. A young waif of eleven, Julie Flack, finds herself--actually she is found--to be naturally endowed with a prodigious talent and a heart of gold. In the midst of the horrible urban squalor of the East End's "Flowery Dean," Julie is discovered one day by a Mr. Morton Guineagold, a philanthropist, cello virtuoso, master music teacher, and occasional wine-sot. Almost miraculously, Julie appears untainted and unscathed by the local violence

of a hostile world. Guineagold bargains for Julie's release from her brutish parents, and whisks her away from a life of wretched poverty to a world of outlandish opulence in a Wimbledon mansion.

Julie might be best described as a kind of Arnoldian fantasy cast in Dickensian tones in which the feminine subject of labor is inscribed into culture with a capital C. Blatchford creates a sentimental figure who is adopted by the bourgeoisie, or perhaps it is better to say that she is a figure who sentimentalizes her bourgeois adoption of higher taste. Blatchford endows Julie with what Tressell calls 'the benefits of civilization' the amenities of culture denied to most of the working class, but produced by the surplus of their labor. Blatchford enacts a narrative transition that can be seen to be analogous to his utopian desire for the historical transformation of the working class in general. As Julie leaves the "Flowery Dean" of the East End, she undergoes a dramatic, dreamlike change from a working-class waif to a demure young woman adorned with luxury and a surplus of natural talent. Julie excels at virtually every new instrument of learning she attempts. Julie's special talents lie in the study of violin, and Guineagold molds her into a prodigy of sorts. So talented is she that she plays solo for huge audiences. But soon after Julie displays her talent in musical circles, she is visited by a figure from her past community. Charlie Chigwin, militant worker and



well mannered bloke tells her that her class is in her blood (it certainly isn't in her accent anymore), and that she should put her gifts to work for the benefits of labor. Julie agrees to do so on a limited basis, feeling guilty over the fact she is from the Flowery Dean, but no longer sees herself as part of the working class. While visiting the "Flowery Dean," she learns that the father she has been estranged from might still be alive.

But all of this ends in tragedy. One night, on another visit to the East End, her father, drunk, derelict, and deranged, walks into the middle of a crowd. He is brandishes a pistol (why he has it or where he got it is not explained) in the square of the Flowery Dean. He fires into the crowd, and, unknowingly, he shoots his own daughter in the wrist. Likewise, Julie never realizes the identity of her assailant. Her father then flees and in a drunken, diseased stupor staggers into a ditch and dies. Of course the incident ruins Julie's violin career. But the paternal Guineagold urges Julie to employ her natural talents to study voice. Julie does so, and after spending time in Italy, she comes back and sings in England. She returns to the East End to assist the distressed workers and to entertain her old community. But exposure to the wretchedness of the Dean contaminates her. Julie contracts Diphtheria, which nearly kills her, damages her voice, and also kills her singing career. Ruined by the ravaging environment of the Dean,



Julie leaves England.

During Julie's absence in Germany, her surrogate father Guineagold takes ill and dies. Julie resigns herself to a life of poverty in the Flowery Dean, the place she belongs to, at least biologically. However (in conformity with the conventions of the sentimental romances) Julie is rescued by Guineagold's long lost nephew, an officer in the Royal Navy who inherits Guineagold's fortune. She marries Gale, is spirited away, and lives happily in her new role as the wife of an officer in the Royal Navy.

It would be difficult to say that Blatchford intended Julie to be read or consumed by a politicized working-class audience--at least in the way that Tressell had hoped The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists might have been read. But was Blatchford even hoping that his audience would be aware of the possible political messages embedded in the sentimental romance novel? Probably not. In fact it is doubtful that Blatchford intended the novel to have a wide working-class readership at all. In Julie Blatchford never addresses the localized, political contests involving different labor factions. No factions are described as such; nor are they voiced as regional movements. There is a considerable difference, then, between Blatchford's political writing and his novelistic ventures. For example, Julie takes place in London, the place where Blatchford blasts the SDF most forcefully in his pamphlets; London is the locale

that lacks the religious spirit of the north. But in Julie Labor is simply a generic form of Labor: militant workers voice their grievances without references to specific movements or parties. As I will show later, Blatchford represents characters who voice Labor as a sentimentalized allegory of itself. Such a position would never surface in the prose of his political writings.

In this sense, Blatchford seems to have been more concerned in Julie with the possibility of infiltrating the popular romance with a radicalized, populist sentiment. Therefore, in the context of Blatchford's activities in the labor movement, Julie proves to be a significant novel because it dramatizes Blatchford's social rhetoric on the issue of gender, but also because it reveals a politically regressive aspect of recuperation in which Blatchford's didacticism reconciles itself with the dominant middle class, something Blatchford tended to avoid in his polemical writings. Julie thus incorporates the rhetorical pyrotechnics and the exhilarating commentary of the Clarion and other aspects of Blatchford's polemical writing. (Blatchford was one of the better political stylists of the time; his journalistic talents provided him with a dramatic if not a sensational edge.) But in Julie Blatchford attempts to deploy narrative structures that mediate political conditions--the disparity between the bourgeois and working classes--through the body of a sentimental figure; moreover,

Blatchford's novel attempts to effect a change in the structure of feeling of an audience that consumes the sentimental romance. But given his preoccupation with regional and nationalist politics it is perplexing that Blatchford did not situate this novel in Manchester, since he was so concerned about a truly Northern phenomenon.

Blatchford's Julie is in many respects in conformity with dominant ideology regarding perceptions of class. Working-class environments are represented through a tropology of naturalism that entails various positions. Naturalism, it could be said is a mixture of dominant and oppositional positions in Julie. Blatchford encodes evolutionary assumptions about social relations and class relations that correspond with prevailing views of the working classes. But he also deploys the documentary mode of a more rigorous type of naturalism in order to account for the squalor of the East End and the general state of despair that its inhabitants cannot escape from. Hence, there is a tension in the narrative that Blatchford cannot avoid. He finds himself caught in a very contradictory sense between two distinct poles that constitute meanings of naturalism. On the one hand, Blatchford sides with a naturalism that sees notions of class bound up with biology and essentialism. On the other hand, he posits a naturalism that has a radical potential.

Perhaps a way of accounting for the problematic notion of naturalism in Blatchford's Julie concerns the various ways that Blatchford addresses the notion of determination. For example, Blatchford describes Julie as a 'determined' creature, but the notion of "determination" operates on different levels of linguistic and social signification. On one level, Julie is determined to utilize her talents; she is motivated to succeed in order to compensate for her lack of social status. But the figure of Julie is also defined by determining features, social traits or class markers that appear like signs that are symptomatic of her status within a genetic and evolutionary order. In this sense she appears as a member of a lower class that remains locked in a lesser state of natural development. But there is a third element to the way the idea of determination operates in Blatchford's Julie that has to do with the way Blatchford represents Julie as being a "determined" genius. In this sense Julie is determined as she possesses the inherent qualities that allow her to rise above her genetic and environmental conditions that paradoxically have marked her past but not necessarily her present. This is about as close as Blatchford gets to articulating a progressive position for the gendered working-class subject. Consider one of the early passages of the novel in which Blatchford didactically addresses this issue of environment and the rare genius that nature occasionally yields.

Nature, who would seem to be indifferent to class distinctions, and regardless of all systems save her own, has a strangely perverse way of dropping the divine seeds of genius upon the starved and stony soils, to the neglect of well placed, richly fed, and highly cultivated gardens. Thus it is we often find lackey souls in royal bodies, sages in rags, and heroes in corduroy or fustian. Nature's caste is of the soul, not of the purse.⁸

'And we also find brilliant, unspoiled talent in the worst of slums' is what is implied but cannot be stated. This is the social fantasy that Blatchford spins out for us as a utopian possibility within a naturalism contingent upon a dominant 'narrow' version of natural selection. For Blatchford, the poverty that Guineagold finds his 'determined little creature' in is a self-perpetuating misery produced by creatures who are naturally disposed to such misery, squalor and vice--at least that is the voice inscribed in this passage. Whether or not Blatchford maintained such a position, in light of his radical writing, is perhaps a different question. Nevertheless, such a passage exhibits affinities with dominant representations of the poor, that poverty and ill-breeding is an essential problem of heredity, as much as it is a problem of wretched environmental conditions. Yet is this the voice that a labor leader would want to inscribe as a reflection of authorial ideology or is this a voice that Blatchford presents to an audience predisposed to such notions? Again, the fact that Blatchford did not affix his signature to the work keeps historical readers from deciding this question.

But there are those moments in the narrative in which it would be very difficult to separate Blatchford from dominant ideology, regardless of his progressive views. For example, Blatchford's depiction of the East End's "Flowery Dean," Julie's natural habitat, appears to be a mixture of bad genetics and a hopeless social environment. It is dramatic in its content and in its tone.

Julie's father was a drunken labourer; his father and his father's father had been drunken laborers. Julie's mother had been an ill-fed, untaught drudge in her youth, and had died pathetically, a broken-spirited life-weary old woman at thirty. Her mother's mother was a maid-of-all-work, who fled sick and miserable from her state of middle-class white slavery to seek refuge at the altar, and two years later gave up the unequal struggle with the gods, and sank back, bewildered, white, and, and wistful, into death's kindly arms.

Farther back than these generations the archives of Julie's family did not go. But a keen student of racial characteristics, knowing Julie, might have deduced that somewhere in the bygones, and on the mother's side, there had been progenitors of hers possessing character and imagination--light and heat.⁹

Speculating on Julie's lineage, Blatchford plays out a 'narrow' restricted version of naturalism as natural selection. Given the concerns of heredity in the rigidly class-bound society that Blatchford is writing within, the passage appears to naturalize itself for the reader. "But things really are that way!" seems to be the statement that attempts to 'hail' the reader, in order to clear an

ideological space in which the conditions are set for a narrative strategy of sentimental romance that will triumph over a delimiting naturalism.

Blatchford's essentializing of the East End through the fixtures of biological discourse aligns his representational strategy with that of the recuperative efforts of the social 'explorers' of East End slums. What makes the above mentioned passage interesting is precisely the way Blatchford reproduces aspects of this restrictive naturalism: 'racial' characteristics are metaphorically situated outside the text (the archives) that can account for records of heritage, a sign of ill-parentage and class markings. Affixed to matrilineal descent, these genetic and 'racial' qualities link Blatchford's discourse more firmly to the evolutionary assumptions concerning essentialized features of the working classes. Spencer's voice surfaces as the cultural dominant, the voice of philosophical naturalism. And similar to Bax's biological essentialism, the feminine subject is represented as a being more 'marked'--in a semiotic sense--than the normative features of male subjecthood.

Blatchford presents Julie, however, as an extraordinary creature of nature, a subject whose genius is allowed to flower once she is released from the hellish conditions of the "Flowery Dean"--the den of impoverished alcoholic misery from which she has emerged. An innate talent emanates from

both her body and soul such that Julie is transfigured from the position of the narrator. Determined, overdetermined and self-determining, Blatchford's Julie is the fetish object of the working-class female body. How could this not be the subject of enjoyable romance?

Self-Conscious Contradictions

Throughout Julie, Blatchford appears very conscious of the fact that he is presenting a political romance and producing a populist version of the feminine subject as social muse; yet his energized rhetoric pushes his plot at a lively pace. In this delightful but somewhat quirky romance, Julie figures in the embodiment of a paternalistic fantasy that attempts to reconcile the evolutionary and naturalistic essence of woman. But woman remains a static object, devoid of original thought and revolutionary energy. Blatchford refuses to admit a progressive, utopian role for women outside the position of an accessory. This is evident at one point in the novel when Julie decides that in order to engage in social struggles she should not merely perform, but she should write songs and compose as well. And when she shows one of her revolutionary compositions to Guineagold, he informs her that she is not a poet or a composer but a musician and singer. "You are not a giant, dear child," Guineagold informs her. "You are a kindhearted, earnest lassie, with bright, artistic gifts. . . . You have grace and spirit, and a certain rare quality of sympathy and sweetness;

but no great power."¹⁰ The business of revolution, then, lies with men. In scenes like these Blatchford concedes to a regressive view of women--it doesn't really matter if these are women in the labor movement or women in general. He views women as possessing passive, subordinate, or secondary qualities. It has to be kept in mind, though, that Blatchford never seems to agree with the harsh views of Bax in The Fraud of Feminism, although Blatchford's reliance on the delicate and fragile nature of Julie's genius seems to conspire tacitly with an essentialism.

As the young waif turned educated and skilled virtuoso, Julie is cast in the position of social muse; or, perhaps more deliberately, Julie's body assumes the form of an "instrument" of affect: she projects the pathos of class struggle, in musical form, onto her displaced comrades in the labor movement. In one scene Julie plays at a strike rally. Local strikers think it would be a good idea that she should play for her "own." Her music thus soothes the savage rage of angry workers, civilizes them when the rationality of social discourse fails. Again, Blatchford's complicity with a middle-class value system seems apparent. He allegorizes Julie's violin skills as a civilizing force in what is depicted as a genuinely uncultured lot possessing a deformed sense of what music is or could be. In short local working-class traditions take a back seat to "Culture" in a place in which an instrument such as the violin represents something

out of reach and exotic to "a wild, motley, unwashed mob of ragamuffins."¹¹ Blatchford goes as far as to identify the violin and the body of Julie with their concomitant class-images:

In the Flowery Dean the violin was associated with a certain kind of squeaky, jarring, burlesque of music, which at its best, like Clonglockett's bagpipes, "distinctly suggested an air," and at its worst might be endured because it would soon move on. The clear mellow tone of Julie's "darling old fiddle" was a new thing--a surprise, a silver voice coming out of unknown worlds, to speak strange messages in notes of sweetness hitherto undreamed of.¹²

These "strange messages" that Julie plays are tunes that are both familiar in the sense that the audience understands the emotional valences expressed in the materiality of sound; but Blatchford describes the violin as a "silver voice coming out of unknown worlds," as if high culture embodies an alienating force that the working-classes will not understand until they themselves can apprehend the 'benefits of civilization.'

Julie's return to the Flowery Dean estranges the middle-class reader, making the reading of a consumable novel seem strange in the political context of Blatchford's politics. This is manifest when Blatchford shifts to a more direct political voice in Julie, describing the social conditions responsible for other less fortunate women living in the East End, the feminine social casualties. Julie

presents various images of destitute women, battered wives, lost waifs and drunken street women who inhabit the Flowery Dean in a way that allows the reader to see the formulaic, reified narrative of the popular romance as pure fantasy against the backdrop of documented class conditions. Against these social factors, Blatchford's contradictory naturalism essentializes male and female identities in the novel, but it is also significant in essentializing class conflicts as part of a larger form of a mystified sense of naturalistic struggle. It is not clear, however, if this is a position that can be attributed to Blatchford himself, or if he appropriates this discourse to dramatize a cultural dialogic.

Direct speech in Julie signals this problem more clearly, as characters on both sides of class lines voice concerns that echo a vulgar naturalism. When workers rail about class inequities and social struggle, they often discuss social struggles as if they were a part of natural struggle or Darwinian struggle in the grand scheme of things, not only in world-history, but as a form of meta-historical biological history that runs deep within what D.H. Lawrence might have referred to as a primordial form of consciousness or "blood consciousness." This appeal to the dark side of nature, the ensuing struggle of the species, can be seen as an encoding of a populist us-versus-them mentality; in Julie Blatchford pits rival classes against each other as if it were a form of inter-species rivalry. For example, when

Chigwin delivers his speech to the assembled workers, he mythologizes his discourse as part of a natural struggle.

This was war, he told them. It was war between the worker and the idler, the earner and the robber, the producer and the exploiter. . . .The middle class and the upper class were always against the workers. Must be, just as the hawk was against the pigeon.¹³

Likewise, Blatchford is sure to represent naturalist assumptions about the working-classes as they are voiced by members of the local Wimbledon bourgeoisie. During a cocktail party at Guineagold's, while various members of the ruling class (many of them having allegorical names) exchange quips on Shelley, Swineburne, Dickens and others; they also discuss the fate of the unfortunate "lower orders" of culture.

The allegorical force of Blatchford's Julie is most apparent during this party scene, in which Blatchford dramatically airs out tensions over the labor question. While Julie plays piano for the guests, a Mr. Rufus Moneyply expresses his thoughts on the natural order of things and the rank of the working-classes within that order:

"They are just as poor as they deserve to be," said Moneyply. "They are just where they fit. They get what they are worth. If they pig in the slums, it is because they are too idle and dirty and drunken to live in decent homes. What are they? The failures and the good-for-nothings of the world. Society keeps the dog in his kennel and the horse in his shafts; but if the dog bites or the horse kicks he gets

the whip. It is only the human lower animal who is allowed to vote and to make speeches.¹⁴

This seems like an extreme example of rhetorical overstatement on Blatchford's part, if it were not for the pertinent examples of Herbert Spencer, who makes nearly the same points in his article, "The Coming Slavery."

In this scene, Julie, after overhearing Moneyply's remarks, objects harshly. She informs Moneyply that she too is from the the East End, is really a member of the working class, and will not sit passively as members of her own class are described in terms of animals. Moneyply insists, as has Blatchford throughout the novel, that it is her talent--a seemingly innate property of her nature--that saved her from a life of misery and drudgery. But guests at Guineagold's party join Julie in her defense of the working classes, admitting that many of them were also of humble origins; that it was talent or cunning, somewhere along the family line, that pulled them out from the lower orders. It is at this point in the narrative that Blatchford's attempt to rescue the working-classes from the vulgar assumptions of the bourgeoisie caves in on itself, because he legitimates the mechanisms of power that perpetuate restricted class mobility.

An obviously allegorical figure such as Moneyply, then, might appear to be little more than a caricature of an extremely conservative position; but with the figurative

language of Herbert Spencer's "The Coming Slavery" and other anti-labor tracts, Moneyply's discourse is simply representative of a branch of Tory politics of the time. Julie later tells Guineagold that she was offended by the way that Moneyply insulted the working classes. But when it comes to the issue of class, Guineagold sits Julie down and, offering a humanist corrective on the matter of class, informs Julie that social matters certainly do come down to the level of individual will.

My darling, there is no working class; no classes, Julie. What we call Society is like a flight of steps. It is a long and gradual descent from the throne to the shoe box. There are thousands of classes in this country, and all of them marred and stained by snobbery and mean envy and dirty pride. But what about the Flowery Dean. What good could you have done, little creature, that you were in that place?¹⁵

Class, then, is merely a chimera for the reformer-- certainly a chimera for the well-meaning philanthropist. But where does Blatchford stand on this issue? It seems less problematic that he sides with Guineagold in the sentiment that class is something that he would like to see as part of the inside of the subject in the form of a utopian wish-fulfillment; that class is something the radical-humanist socialist can eliminate with the power of rhetoric. Blatchford's earlier references to the "New Religion" are now more telling in that they provide the ideological framework for a leveling of class and a desire to unite working-class

subjects with middle-class ideology. This appears to be an ideological position that Blatchford cannot escape from, and a position from which he certainly does not rescue the narrative of Julie. Even though Blatchford employs the metaphor of a ladder (a hierarchical, class ladder)--rather than a more organic metaphor--this has the irrevocable social effect of trivializing the issue of class, by stressing traditional categories of subjective choice and individual will. But it can be argued that Julie's subjectivity has never been free or unrestricted, that her choices have been determined, in advance as it were, by Blatchford's construction of Guineagold as an authorial mask that determines feminine subjectivity.

Blatchford attempts to resolve conflicts engendered between class relations and the subject, but he disavows the possibility of the narrative form to take a truly progressive stance. (Strangely enough, we begin to forget that this is a novel written by the person who runs the "Socialist van" in Tressell's novel.) This is evident in Blatchford's solution to Julie's dilemma. After her musical talents do not represent viable forms of producing a livelihood, she is faced with life back in the "Flowery Dean."

But Julie ends on a happy note as the heroine finds her prince in Douglas Gale, a wealthy nephew of Guineagold, who is also an officer in the Royal Navy. Julie is rescued, so to speak, by the forces of capital. (Guineagold's estate, now

in the hands of his nephew) and the Royal Navy (a homogenizing component of class and a synecdoche of Empire). This resolution, however, pushes Blatchford into a more conservative position. If there are no classes, in the way that parts of his narrative argue that there are not, there is no real insistence for the progressive resolution that he urges in his pamphlets. With the novel's recuperative ending, Blatchford appears apologetic for having put such a poor, young waif through all of this. Julie has never been herself, has never been granted subjectivity through the conditions that Blatchford's discourse attempts to promise.

For Blatchford, then, the female working-class subject serves Guineagold's interests as far as she can, and the novel serves the interests of labor in a very limited sense. Ultimately this has to be seen against Julie's labor as a violinist--that is, it has to be seen in the context of what is termed unproductive work. As a novelist then, Blatchford, in the guise of the progressive offers us a social muse who merely plays for the masses but cannot inspire them. That he should title his work a "study" of a feminine subject signals the contradiction of his very project. He plays the part of radical reformer through the figure of the displaced feminine subject, one whose polished and refined talents ultimately withdraw her from the processes of real social change. Blatchford re-domesticates his narrative project, in light of what could have been a far more progressive project

for the sentimental romance; but, rather than attempting to transform such a novel, Blatchford allows it to settle comfortably with a projected middle-class readership, which can easily sweep away the dirt of the Flowery Dean.

Nevertheless, Blatchford's incorporation of radical discourse in the sentimental novel was significant in relation to other discursive developments in culture.

Chapter 6

Myth and Anti-Myth: Notes on Oppositional Naturalism, Labor and the Politics of Gender

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the paternalist rhetoric of the labor movement and its concomitant strains of anti-feminism evoked mythical projections of the feminine under the sign of progressive liberation. All too often such rhetorical strategies turned violent, and, as we have seen in the case of Bax, were propped up by a vulgar empiricism. While Bax's The Fraud of Feminism can be perceived as an extreme example of the misogynist tendencies of male writers in the labor movement, it can also be said that writers such as Tressell and Blatchford, along with others who were more politically active as organizers or labor leaders, had significant difficulties realizing women's subjective roles in labor struggles and realizing women's roles within community-formations. As I will suggest in a later chapter, if radical female subjectivity could be represented in any capacity by male writers--that is, with some degree of mimetic power that did not pander to the most sentimental aspects of patriarchy--it would be found in the early narrative of D.H. Lawrence.¹

Obviously the problem of representing women during the crisis of labor is one of the most complex issues of the time. It is necessary, then, to return briefly to the most important novel during the crisis of labor to further elucidate this cultural problem. We find that an example

of paternalist exclusionary practices surfaces in Tressell's The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists as Tressell appears unable to inscribe a progressive voice for women or a progressive woman. In contrast, Lawrence's Mrs. Morel, and certainly Clara Dawes, are more vocal than Tressell's Nora or Ruth, and Lawrence's females have more mimetic power than Blatchford's Julie. If, as Tressell puts it, politics is not for "the likes of us" (the laborers in Tressell's novel), then in a double sense, politics are not for the likes of others (women as the other of Labor), who are hopelessly trapped in domestic situations. It would be difficult to suggest that Tressell was insensitive to the plight of women workers or to the stifling conditions of domestic life. Tressell's negative attitude toward the direct speech of fellow worker's discussions about women, including the one voyeuristic scene in RTP, in which workers spy on Rushton while he spends an illicit moment with his secretary, suggest Tressell's awareness of sexist discourse in the workplace. When one realizes how overwhelmed and frustrated Tressell was when he attempted to engage in dialogues with fellow workers, one gains a better perspective on what a tremendous act it was for Tressell to incorporate so many features of working-class culture.

Tressell's novel reveals a significant problem in working-class culture on the issue of how men were hailed by domestic strategies that excluded women from the production

of practical consciousness. Scenes in RTP reveal the domestic sphere as the site or training ground for radical activity and tactics in counter-hegemony. But the home is where young workers' education initiates young lads like Owen's son Frankie; it is not a place for radical women. Owen encourages his son to read pamphlets that illustrate the building blocks of social change. His wife Nora approves, but she never really says anything vital about these concerns. Neither does Nora attend radical meetings, or cooperative guilds; also, she does not participate actively in dialogues concerning radical politics. As for Tressell's other significant female character, Ruth, she is portrayed as a passive victim. Moreover, Ruth becomes the passive sexual victim of Slyme, Easton and Ruth's lodger. Interestingly enough, in one of the few distinct feminist moments in the earlier published version of RTP (the 1914 and 1918 versions published by Grant Richards) Ruth successfully resists the advances of Slyme. That scene was the result of a feminist intervention by Jessie Pope, the original editor of RTP. In the restored 1955 Lawrence and Wishart edition of RTP, Pope's intervention is lost.²

The problem of an excluded, authentic political voice by women in male representations, however, did not seem to be a troubling issue for most men in the labor movement. As we have seen earlier, women generally were not considered to be equal to men; but rather, were constructed as the objects of



exploitation, or metaphysical agents of reproduction who have been degraded by capitalism. However, the general sentiment of labor insisted that once a natural balance is restored through socialism, the proper domestic nature of women would be correctly (re)dressed. This sentiment is also evident in William Morris' utopian News From Nowhere, in which the women often resemble glorified servants.³

It is beyond the task of this project to attempt to fully account for these problems of representation. Such a study would have to trace through ideology and gender representation in the suffrage movement. Such a project would necessitate a cultural examination of writing by women, including an assessment of working-class women's autobiography. Since the the prevalent attitudes of Labor were unremittingly patriarchal there was rarely a moment during the crisis of Labor in which women were not simply dismissed or reduced to the metaphysical status of cosmic and/or biological essences. The moment was rare when women's voices were taken seriously on the matter of production and social change, as the majority of writings published by radical groups focused on wages, work, and the general promise of public benefits. Furthermore, most radical writing circulated within the discursive boundaries of naturalism and evolutionary theory. This aspect of oppositional discourse laid a heavy stress on the evolution of a class of bodies, primarily those of male workers. Such

tactics played into the hands of a vulgar empiricism, and therefore reinforced the idea that women were biologically inferior to men.

Some Examples of Feminist Radicalism and Resistance

If women writers were to resist male myths, they had to do so by situating gender within a wider social and ideological context, one that either circumvented the problem of "woman's nature" or directly refuted confronted the myth of "sex-helplessness." This task proved to be an indication of the monolithic force of paternalist ideology in the Labor movement. Against the oppressive discourse and lived relations that women were subjected to in the rest of culture--in the sense that dominant ideology naturalized extreme forms of exploitation--the problem of devising a unified movement, in concert with Labor, seemed to be highly problematic.

Women's resistance had to do with the priorities of various issues: suffrage, domestic labor, labor in the workplace.⁴ Under these conditions how could an oppositional form of writing arise that might transcend the limited strategies of the pamphlet or the demonstration and hope to educate women through drama, fiction or other vehicles of creative expression? Could there be a politicized fiction produced by women in the labor movement or by working-class women?

Virginia Woolf, perhaps the most prominent and the most accomplished of modernist women novelists, would later address this problem in her references to working-class women and the problem of aesthetic production. But Woolf's response, which condescended to most of these previous organized efforts, seems, in retrospect, to misread these organized attempts, without adequately examining the material conditions that produced these specific kinds of writing. In Woolf's "Memories of a Working Women's Guild," she discusses a collection of autobiographical writings by working-class women. In 1930 Woolf was given a collection of letters by a former member of a women's guild. Woolf's essay reflects on events concerning working-class women around the year 1913.⁵ In her essay, Woolf aligns herself with the concerns of working-class women, as a sympathizer for reformist programs. Extremely self-conscious of her privileged class-position, Woolf realizes that there is little she can identify with in her view of this other world, with the exception of a naive essentialism. Quite bluntly she says, "Our sympathy is fictitious not real."⁶ Woolf is acutely aware of working-class life as fragmented and degraded. Woolf painfully perceives the lives wasted by industry, repetitive labor, and abusive domestic situations. Woolf sees these conditions as that which produces severe limitations in the subject. Understanding how debilitating these conditions are, Woolf says that the writings she has

are incapable of approximating the status of literature, because the conditions necessary for the production of literature do not exist for these women. Woolf uncovers glimpses into writerly imaginations, but she sees them as limited insights because of the lack of an organic, totalizing impulse necessary for the production of real literature. As she examines the writing of working-class women writers, she comments that:

Here are no reflections; no view of life as a whole; no attempt to enter into the lives of other people. It is not from the ranks of working-class women that the next great poet or novelist will be drawn. Indeed we are reminded of those obscure writers before Shakespeare who had never been beyond the borders of their own parishes and found expression difficult and words few and awkward to fit together.⁷

The very criteria that the production of literature rests on for Woolf is something denied to these women. In this respect, there is an element of dominant naturalism operative in Woolf's assertions that is both circular and repetitive. If working-class women write, they can only do so in a way that reflects the fragmentation of working-class environments. These women's incomplete experience fails to allow for the production of novelistic discourse; therefore, the more they write the more they are incapable of producing true fiction. According to Woolf these women appear condemned to this poetic disability as long as they are subjected to present conditions. Simply, her point is that

working-class culture, until it rises to the level of bourgeois culture, cannot produce the fullness of the novel, because it lacks the fullness of subjectivity from which the novel blossoms. Strangely enough, Woolf echoes the young Lukacs of Theory of the Novel, lamenting the fragmentation produced by the modern novel in lieu of the organic wholeness of a lost classical age. For these working-class women whose fragmented writing Woolf generously surveys, such an organic world, much less the production of subjectivity in the modern novel, remains constantly deferred, and can never be realized; neither can any aesthetic possibility of transformation take place for these poor souls. That is not to suggest that Woolf did not consciously align herself with a desire for social change; Woolf's sentiments reveal her limitations in perceiving class difference as a form of cultural difference.

The Woman Question

The problem of theorizing class and gender difference was not one of producing a proper aesthetic, but more of a philosophical problem. In 1887, Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx published a pamphlet titled "The Woman Question," which addressed the historical nature of women's degradation and oppression in industrial culture.⁸ For Aveling and Marx this had to do with a closer examination of the historical forces that constituted the "evolution of society." The authors of

"The Woman Question" did not quote Marx or Engels to discuss the role of capitalist relations in the historical oppression of women. For revolutionary guidance they turned to the example of the German Socialist August Bebel. Aveling and Marx were in agreement with Bebel that "the death of the capitalistic method of production, therefore of the society based on it, is . . . within a distance measurable in years rather than in centuries."⁹ In this respect, the "Woman Question" shunted the primacy of suffrage as the first step toward equality, something that most in the women's movement viewed as the primary element of emancipation. For Aveling and Marx women's emancipation hinged on the abolition of existing property relations, which, they argued, would bring about a necessary transformation of the social order. Real change for women begins with a transformation of the social order:

We will suppose all women, not only those having property, enabled to vote. . . the actual position in respect to men would not be very vitally touched. . . . But it is essential to keep in mind that ultimate change, only to come about when the yet more tremendous social change. . . has taken place. Without that larger social change women will never be free.¹⁰

For this to happen, however, women would have to align themselves with the struggles of working-class men in order to effect this social change. Aveling and Marx's vision of a possible future is something that could take place in years

rather than centuries, but given the paternalism of the Labor movement, it seemed doubtful that such a strategy was efficacious for social change.

On the level of theory Aveling and Marx were far more sophisticated than most Labor pamphlets, even later pamphlets that discussed the social position of woman. Women, Aveling and Marx argued, were doubly exploited due to their dual roles, and general forms of exploitation had to be overcome in order to clear the path for revolutionary naturalism to reconfigure gender relations: "Women are the creatures of an organized tyranny of men, as the workers are organized creatures of an organized tyranny of idlers."¹¹ The dismantling of this state of legalized tyranny required the transformation of a basic tenet of bourgeois social relations: marriage and its social consequences for the reproduction of hegemony. The development of revolutionary consciousness partly depended on acquiring a critical distance from the structures of ideology that reproduced hegemony and hailed--that is "interpellated"--subjects as gendered subjects in a bourgeois social order. Aveling and Marx presented their own example of how myths circulate in dominant culture, pointing to illustrations in Punch as a graphic example of how such myths patently endorsed the myth of the bourgeois marriage.

We have said that marriage is based upon commercialism. It is a barter transaction in

many cases, and in all, under the conditions of things to-day, the question of ways and means plays of necessity a large part. Among the upper classes the business is carried on quite unblushingly. The Sir Gorgius Midas pictures in Punch testify to this. The nature of the periodical in which they appear reminds us that all the horrors they reveal are regarded as foibles not as sins.¹²

As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is not clear as to whether or not Tressell had read Punch in order to debunk common, stereotypical assumptions about workers; but it is evidently clear that Aveling and Marx had certainly studied the illustrations in Punch in order to understand the way dominant ideology in graphic form addresses its spectators.

But if the nature of marriage was based on a commercial transaction, it could be argued that there was also something about marriage that was natural, outside of myth--in short, a counter-naturalism that disputed the social and commercial base on which the institution of marriage rested: "Some favored individuals, kings, princes, aristocrats, marry, or are married, at the age to which Nature points as fitting. Many of the working class marry young--that is, at the natural period."¹³ Male and female subjects trapped in exploitative conditions were thus denied the possibility of experiencing their natural capacities to the fullest. This naturalism, they argued, also had to do with one's sexual emancipation in addition to overthrowing conventional notions of marriage and divorce. As for prostitution, that could be negotiated as an undesirable effect of bourgeois social



relations, something that middle-class men benefited from at the expense and collective injury of a great many of working-class women. Once capitalism had been overthrown, prostitution would "pass away."

Aveling and Marx argued that the position of women would improve immensely under socialist relations. As the equal of men, and under no pressure to conform to conventional marriage arrangements, the course of social evolution would proceed in a positive direction. Similar to Marx's projections in the German Ideology of the harmonious interplay between labor, philosophy, and art in a communist society, women would have to put in their "one, two, or three hours of social labor to supply the wants of the communityThereafter she will be free for art or science, or teaching or writing, or amusement in any form."¹⁴ Aveling and Marx's "Woman Question" addressed the materialist issues that most male writers in the labor movement, with the limited exception of Shaw, could not theorize adequately. In Aveling and Marx's view, women would have complete power over their bodies rather than being re-domesticated as the cosmic phantasm of a mythical form of primitive communism. What Aveling and Marx insisted on, though, was that there was something inherently natural in the institution of marriage. Perhaps marriage was an institution that had to be upheld in the "Woman Question" in order not to alienate their audience. It must be remembered that in Tressell's novel, the idea of

socialism, as it is voiced by workers hostile to it, is equated with sexual dissolution. Such propositions were perhaps too strong for a population caught up in the contradictory throes of Victorian attitudes about sexuality and the family. However, the troubling presence of paternalism in radical movements and its complicity with dominant ideology was something Aveling and Marx could not take into account.

Olive Schreiner: Labor and Imperialism

On the level of social ontology the woman question was often transformed into an aesthetic issue. Olive Schreiner was one of the most influential women to write on the subject of labor and women's roles, producing both social tracts and novels. As a novelist, she had received recognition. (In fact, Aveling and Marx quote a passage about gender difference from Schreiner's novel The Story of an African Farm in "The Woman Question.") Schreiner's treatises on the subject of sexual difference and the gendered nature of cultural myths appeared in her major theoretical text on women, labor, and culture. Woman and Labor (1911) was an attempt to deploy the discourse of philosophical naturalism to counter specific assumptions about vulgar myths and essentialisms that valorized dominant notions of gender. Schreiner attacked gendered myths based on culturally received notions of sexuality.¹⁵

Schreiner claimed that the value of women's productivity in differing forms of labor had not been realized. More importantly, such categories of work as mental labor against manual labor were not subject to a discourse that essentialized biological difference or associated intellectual skill directly with the body. "It may also be stated," Schreiner argued, "that women's adequacy in the modern fields of intellectual or skilled manual labor is no more today an open matter for debate. . . ."¹⁶

Schreiner's immediate task was to set up a discursive space in which she could theorize a mode of resistance to dominant myths in culture. One of the primary objectives of Schreiner's Woman and Labor, was to undermine the myth of what she referred to as women's "Parasitism," or women's helpless dependence on men. Modern parasitism was a condition arising from the historical forces of production. For Schreiner the movement of culture through imperialism produced significant changes that had profound effects on women. The expansion of capitalist technology, the growth of urbanism, and the regimentation of the body in modern culture, produced a disciplinarity that excluded women from meaningful labor and productive roles in the social order. Even though more women had access to leisure, it was a false sense of leisure or a false consciousness of leisure. Schreiner argued that women were more the prisoners of patriarchy than ever before. Modernity had thus left women

with less compensating activities and values. To restore to modernity a lost form of spiritual and material value and build for the future, women would have to overcome an increasing state of this insidious form of parasitism. Schreiner was acutely aware of the implications this had for women of differing classes. For middle or upper class women, this appeared primarily as a problem of leisure; however, for working-class women this was entirely another matter:

The position of the unemployed modern female is one wholly different. The choice before her, as her ancient fields of domestic labor slip from her, is not generally or often at the present day the choice between finding new fields of labor, or death; but one far more serious in its ultimate reaction on humanity as a whole--it is the choice between finding new forms of labor or sinking slowly into a condition of more or less complete and passive sex parasitism!¹⁷

Schreiner relies heavily on evolutionary ideology here, but she appropriates the discourse of philosophical naturalism for progressive purposes. Spencer's voice inscribes itself in a way that Spencer would have disapproved of. Ruth First and Ann Scott have demonstrated that Spencer's First Principles was crucial to Schreiner's philosophy. Spencer's evolutionary discourse, seen as a progressive theory, displaced theological concerns that had earlier impeded the successful production of progressive thought. As First and Scott point out, ". . .the Bible had been the only explanation available to her [Schreiner]; now she learned that 'all matter is alive', that the social order

reflected a deeper biological order, and that progress was not an accident but a necessity--indeed a law underlying the whole of organic creation."¹⁸

The majority of Schreiner's work, of course, is devoted to issues of labor and feminism, imperialism, and patriarchy--specifically with colonial politics. Schreiner is perhaps best known for her Story of an African Farm (1883). In one of Schreiner's most significant and under-read novels, Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonland (1897), she narrativizes an allegory, a feminist morality tale, that assails the dangerous brew of colonialism, patriarchy and the inevitable effects caused by the politics of gold prior to the outbreak of the Boer War. As Patrick Brantlinger has noted, Halket was Schreiner's "fictional diatribe against Cecil Rhodes."¹⁹

In Halket, Schreiner employs a dream narrative in order to establish linkages between the forces of capital, symbolized by gold, the ideology of racism, and its structural relation to the male psychology of imperialism. As the young Halket dreams of the possibility of establishing a mining company or a syndicate in South Africa, he projects a fantasy in which he imagines himself, or at least his signature, connected to the social and political arena of London financial markets: "'The Peter Halket Gold Mining Company Limited'". . . .Give some shares to men with big names



and sell out; they can sell out, too, at the right time."²⁰
 But when Halket reflects on the atrocities committed against indigenous South Africans, the image of his mother intervenes in his fantasy:

His mother didn't understand these things; it was all so different in England from South Africa. You couldn't be expected to do the same sort of things here as there. He had an unpleasant feeling that he was justifying himself to his mother, and that he didn't know how to.²¹

This image of the feminine appears to the male imperialist as a moralizing force, who attempts to check or de-cathect the phallic impulses of imperialist excess. If women were represented as cosmic mothers, Schreiner's image of such figures could be nothing other than confrontational cosmic mother, issuing her divine powers against the forces of imperialist corruption, racism and capital. In Halket, Schreiner employs the confrontational dialogue in order to disrupt stereotypical notions about empire, class and race. For example, in one scene, the Halket imagines that he sees his mother who confronts him in his dream. Halket experiences a bewildered sense of cultural and subjective dislocation before lapsing off into a dream state in which he can no longer control his actions. During the dream-narrative Halket encounters other allegorical figures, most significantly a Christ figure. Schreiner articulate Halket's desire through his imperialist ambitions that lead to the novel's tragic end.

Schreiner employed the dream mode in Halket as a political allegory against imperialism; yet there is another kind of ironically inscribed allegorical feature that inscribes itself in Schreiner's intertextuality. The Boer war itself, as Anna Davin has demonstrated, dramatized the issue of motherhood and the necessity of reforms for working-class mothers in England. As Davin points out, "A poor military performance in the Boer War and Empire had dramatized fears of national inadequacy and exposed the poor health of the working-class in England."²² Hence, another mythical image of women and maternal labor had sprung up, over the issue of reproductive labor. As Davin points out, "Motherhood was to be given new dignity: it was the duty and the destiny of women to be 'mothers of the race,' but also their great reward."²³ With the exception of Woman and Labor, Schreiner's writings focused on South Africa; nevertheless her presence in mainland political circles in Britain was considerable.

Working Women and Dominant Myths

In England, if most men in the labor movement could circulate a non-threatening image of woman as the essential primitive communist, then they could address other matters more vigorously. It is a simple fact that women were the "dark continent" of the labor problem. The issue of women's roles in the labor movement failed to be publicized in the

manner that other issues were. In the years between 1898 and 1907, one notices a dearth of titles that refer to the problem of women in the workplace. Labor leaders, feeling the pressure to make speeches about enfranchisement and women's rights, contributed to the cause.

As late as 1912, Kier Hardie would argue that enfranchisement (voting rights) should be extended to women. Hardie's reasoning was based partially on the recent history involving the rights and powers granted working-class men during the reformist acts of the nineteenth century. As Hardie argued, in a pamphlet entitled Radicals and Reform, "We all cry out the shame we feel at the way the middle classes sold the workers time and again in the Reform movement; but shall we not be even greater dastards if we allow a further installment of reform for ourselves form which women are shut out."²⁴ Hardie criticizes previous radicals including the Chartists arguing that "they excluded women from the Charter."²⁵ Hardie invokes a common theme in the radical movement that could be used interchangeably with the rights of working-men or women: that life was better before the muddled attempts of reformers--that "Prior to the Reform Bill of 1832 there was no statutory disability imposed upon women, and there is a good deal of evidence to show that in the earlier stages of the country, and particularly from the 14th to the 18th century, women exercised all the functions of citizenship on the same terms as men. . . ." ²⁶



Hardie's pleading attempts seem unconvincing, to say the least. The argument that life was better until liberal reforms was not what women on the left were eager to hear, given the general tone of labor politics.

A significant contrast is evident in representations by male writers about women's issues. Women on the left seemed to appeal directly to material matters that traversed both the domestic sphere and the public sphere. In an early SDF tract in 1884, Annie Besant in "Free Education and Free Maintenance" makes an appeal on the behalf of impoverished children, based on a report to the London School Board, that almost 25,000 school children were going hungry. Besant stressed the need for the working-class to realize that their children were "fundamentally of much more importance. . . than the children of princes. . . ." ²⁷ Appealing to the more militant strains of feminism, some women urged others to join the fight for feminist socialism. In Women in Rebellion Mrs. Wibaut and Lily Gair Wilkinson co-authored their pamphlet for the struggle against capitalism. They argued that state socialism should include a "State Endowment of Motherhood, an expansion in the types of work women do because of new forms of machinery, and that women must "claim back from the possessing classes as many as possible of the numerous things which are stolen from her." ²⁸ Careful not to alienate themselves from men or men from women, they argued that women "must begin the political struggle also for the man's sake,



who has become her labour-comrade and with whom she has the same interests."²⁹

Among women actively writing for the labor movement, Isabella Ormiston Ford was one of the more dynamic writers. An engaged political writer as well as a fiction writer, Ford had written several short stories and other articles for the Labour Leader. Similar to men in radical movements, Ford had relied on a diverse range of literary perspectives to shape her ideas about women, politics, and history. If Robert Blatchford had synthesized his romantic, naturalist and humanist positions from the ideas of writers like Ruskin, Carlye, Whitman and others, women writers such as Ford turned to significant women for an understanding of history and what Raymond Williams refers to as "structures of feeling," in order to more fully address the multi-valences of issues facing women in the midst of the crisis of labor. As June Hannam points out in her critical biography Isabella Ford, "Quoting from tracts on women's education written in the 1820's and 1830's, from Hannah Moore's advice on how women ought to dress, and from the novels of Charlotte Bronte, George Elliott and Mrs. Gaskell, Isabella showed how women's lives had been restricted, colorless, and 'devoid of real living interest' for most of the nineteenth century."³⁰ As this had slowly changed and more educational and professional opportunities were opening to women--it is important to note that Hannam relates this to material factors such as the



bicycle--Ford's optimism "wanted to convince Labour men that middle class women would use their new energies to help the cause of socialism after fighting against terrible odds"31

Ford actively resisted paternal myths that focused on the biological essentialism of gender; instead, she focused on material issues, matters that involved women in the workplace and women's roles in social movements. While Ford's writing on women is not directly aimed at attempts by men to confer either a mystical or a physiological status of woman, it provided a base of practical resistance. In her pamphlets and fictional writing she attempted to engage women more actively in labor struggles, to free them from traditional roles, and to enlist their support for a variety of issues facing the women's movement in England. Ford stressed the importance of women as factory inspectors, as opposed to their characterization by men as figures of domestic support for men's struggles. Ford was keenly aware of the fact that "the Labor Party was suspicious of the women's movement because of its middle-class character, and that members of the women's movement feared the development of socialism. . . ."32

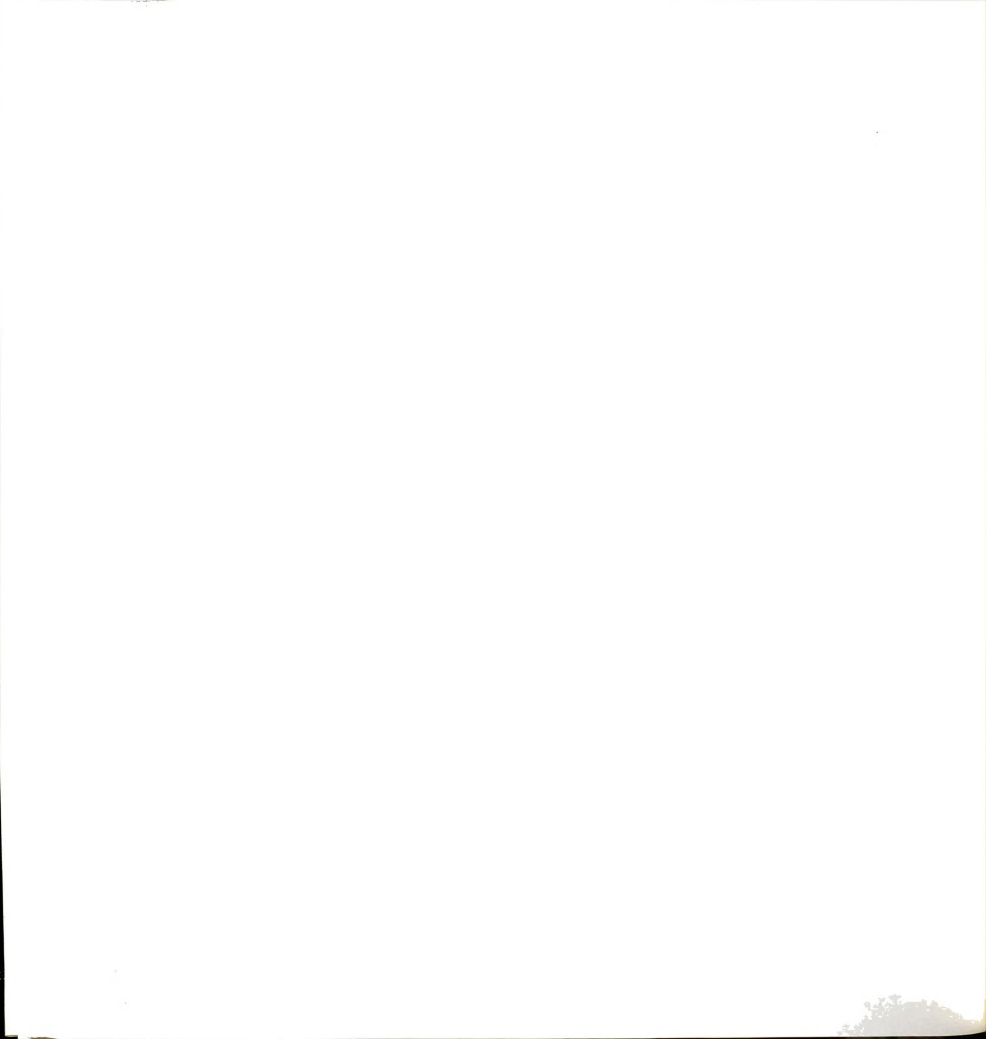
Foremost among Ford's concerns was the improvement of the status of women in the industrial world. Ford appreciated the attempts of various organizations to improve



the well-being of women, but she realized that traditional efforts did not adequately confront the problems of the workplace. In her pamphlet Industrial Women and How to Help Them, Ford opposed dominant attempts to assist industrial women, stressing an examination of the immediate material issues, rather than relying on traditional, middle-class assistance. Ford appreciated the ameliorative intent of organized philanthropy but downplayed its pretension to effect changes in the overall social structure.

The philanthropically minded take it up in the shape of girls' clubs, classes for amusement, prize givings, teas, "socials," etc. . . . District visitors and Bible readers frequent the mills and factories in the dinner hour and read to the girls. Self sacrificing women are everywhere engaged in rescue work.³³

Such a depiction of women being taught virtue while working in the mills, marks a distinct contrast from Tressell's world, which is a place where working women are mostly absent, but organized efforts at social amelioration are conducted by the local evangelical "Shining Light Society." Ford's sentiments toward charitable organizations, however, express a similar cynical attitude toward the ineffective role of such organizations: "The earnest-minded band of women who spend their lives in rescue work, also, it seems to me, tend to perpetuate the evil they detest, since everyone who works on curative rather than preventative lines must do so in some degree."³⁴ Ford's emphasis on preventative measures rather than curative measures points to

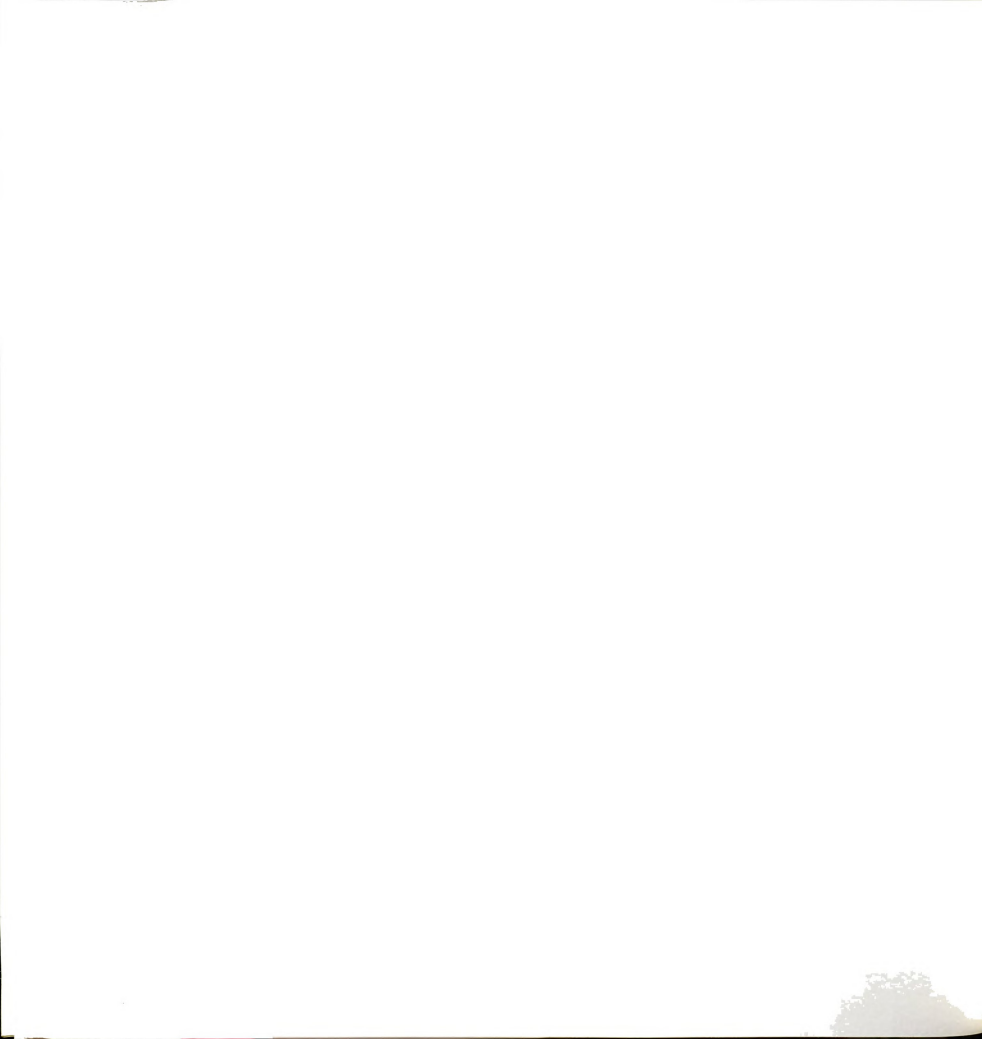


the entire inadequacy of middle-class efforts to alleviate stagnated and distressed conditions. Ford's distance from the actual conditions of working-class life (as opposed to Tressell's internal position) might allow her to sound less bitter and more sociologically formal than Tressell's narrator; but she expresses a voice whose absence in Tressell marks one of the major problems of male tendency fiction.

Ford also confronts the whimsical, sentimental naturalism of Robert Blatchford's naive novel Julie. Blatchford presents Julie as a creature who is cured by capital through her prevention from following the natural course of her social and physical environment. Julie's demise takes place in reverse of the causality of naturalist conditioning: only after attaining the status of what could never happen in the violent and squalid community of the "Flowery Dean" does Julie fall; she is damaged by the Dean's environment **after** she returns to help those whom she feels a natural alignment toward. Blatchford's sentimental novel implies that if you return to your East End class roots, it catches up with you, like the recurring symptoms of a hereditary disease. Ford's writing confronts these fantasies, which possess the same social impact as do well intended people who sing uplifting songs and quote from etiquette manuals during lunches at mills and factories.

In a voice that neither Tressell nor Blatchford could appropriate, Ford addresses the issue of prostitution as a social matter tied to industrial matters; and here she voices a note of cynicism and sarcasm in a way that Tressell, Blatchford, or other male writers on the left certainly could not. (Unless we would want to include E.B. Bax) As benevolent women rescue women who have resorted to prostitution from the streets: "They, as it were, keep the market from being overstocked, thus preventing its unpopularity by any great fall in prices."³⁵ We see this social concern marked in naturalist fiction somewhat later. For example, Irene Heron, wife of Soames Forsyte, in Galsworthy's The Man of Property, offers a very brief study of the type of woman Ford refers to. Irene's new life in Chelsea is her way of paying back the women of the streets because of her scandalous affair with Bosinney, the architect of the Forsyte home.

Ford sees prostitution primarily as an economic issue, one tied to wage issues. She argues that it should be legalized. Ford differs considerably with Aveling and Marx on this issue; she does not project a communistic future in which prostitution will, like the state, wither away. From Aveling and Marx's perspective, however, the reformist side of Ford's politics would have extenuated the miserable circumstances of a great many women. However, where socialist aspirations fall short, present-day material



conditions have to be understood outside of a desire for future utopian concerns. Ford views the problems of women's emancipation, conditions in the workplace, and prostitution as problems that have to be solved through a more active participation by women working in history.

Ford published most of her pamphlets, including "Woman and Socialism" through the ILP, but her politics also exhibited affinities with the Fabian Society. Like Blatchford and others in the Labor movement, Ford wrote novels that addressed women's issues and social issues. Although Ford was not from a working-class background, she did write a novel that dealt with factory life and labor politics in a mill town in northern England. In Mr. Elliott: A Novel of Factory Life, she explored the issue of community. Ford's novel does not represent the conditions of the working world in a way that a novel like Tressell's does; nor does it capture the textures of local environment in the way that Olive Schreiner was capable.³⁶ Nevertheless, Ford's Mr. Elliott in the style of a naturalist-realist novel akin to George Eliot--the title of the novel is not a coincidence--presents a sociological, ecological and economic critique of a phallogentric mill owner whose lust for profit and expansion, tears a community apart, damages the environment, and brings misery to his own family.

In Mr. Elliott Ford traces the motives and frustrations of a Mr. Sam Elliott, a mill owner in the northern town of



Stannerton. Ford's treatment of politics involves discussions about community, the environment, and working-conditions, but does so from a detached, quasi-rationalist perspective. In a convincing scene, Ford depicts a strike by workers employed by Sam Elliott that tears the community apart and disrupts daily life. Ford's novel has difficulty in its representation of labor, however, dialogues in the novel record the exploitation of women workers, and stresses an emphasis on community.

The plot of Mr. Elliott appropriates the form of Gaskell or George Eliot. Sam Elliott is himself a former mill worker who becomes a mill owner. The major conflicts of Mr. Elliott are set into motion after a strike in which Sam Elliott calls in armed guards who ruthlessly smash the strike breakers. This violent action creates tension within the family and within the community. Ford uses the domestic sphere as a model for the community. As Mrs. Elliott (Margaret) is progressively alienated from her former friends, who include working-class women and middle-class women, she becomes isolated and bitter, while Sam Elliott becomes more adamant in his position toward the working classes.

One of the key issues that Ford attempted to dramatize in Mr. Elliott was how symbolic exchange displaces the family--especially Mrs. Elliott--from one social level to

another in the community. This is evident in the novel because as the Elliott family gains local status, they gradually lose sight of material production, its value to the ordinary worker. New acquisitions and new objects symbolically register the Elliott family's new social position: "One had to have pins and silk dresses of course, and so they were there; but how they came there, or who made them, was not a subject that could interest anyone".³⁷

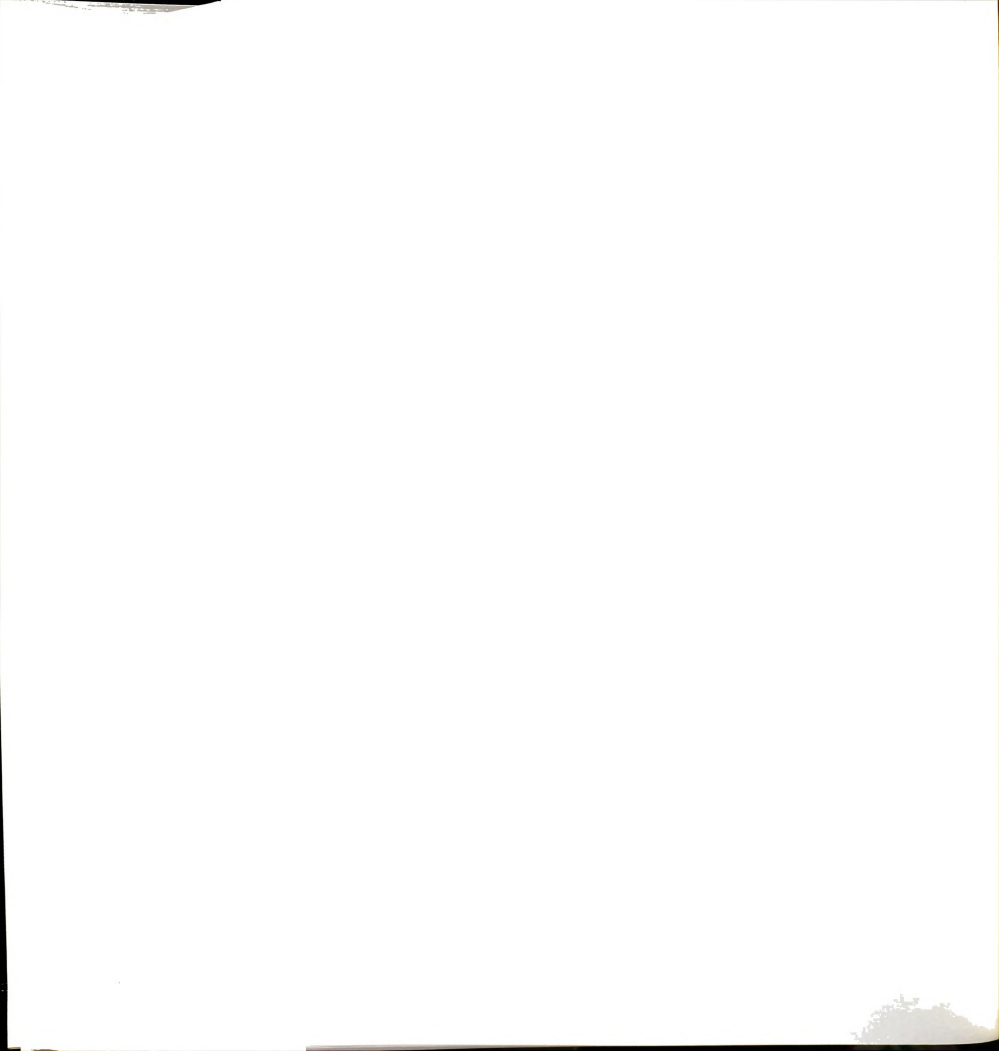
A poignant feature of Mr. Elliott deals with the issue of community. Mrs. Elliott has lost the vital connections that she once had with women from other classes. She attempts to get along with the Fairfields, the older, monied family of Stannerton, but that fails also. After a series of continuing labor disturbances, her former friends refuse to see her. The working community is now united against Mr. Elliott. Elliott's intransigence toward laborers who work for him gets him into further trouble and alienates the family more deeply. Elliott blames the strikers for any subsequent problems that the community experiences. In one scene he calls in the militia to break up a strike, and one of the young strikers is killed. The death of the worker creates a chain of disruptions in the community, and especially within the Elliott family. Former associates of Mrs. Elliott's maintain a cautious distance from her and her new class-position. As her class-position changes, she loses any ability to engage in meaningful dialogues with her family



or friends. Mrs. Elliott becomes bitter and withdrawn, excludes herself from the possibility of community. Ford encodes an ecological critique in Mr. Elliott. Toward the end of the novel she is stricken with cancer and dies. Ford clearly equates disease with detrimental changes in environmental and psychological factors.

In addition to its emphasis on community Ford's Mr. Elliott is critical of the way information affects the community. Similar to Tressell, Ford is highly critical of the dominant press, especially of the way it represents dominant commercial interests. An obvious example is found in the coverage of the strike in which the workers are figuratively framed for having caused the disturbance, whereas Elliott, the owner of the mill is exonerated from any public guilt. Ford thus reflects the history of the dominant press in relation to labor unrest during the nineteenth century. For example, as the local press harasses the workers for their activity in the strike. Labor leaders are described by the press as traitors to their country, and misrepresented by distorted news stories.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of Mr. Elliott is the way the novel portrays subject-positions within the family. The Elliott's son George is the most pertinent example. Interested in sport and chance, he eschews his father's business to become a gambler, and then graduates to the status of a young lounge. The novel does not focus on



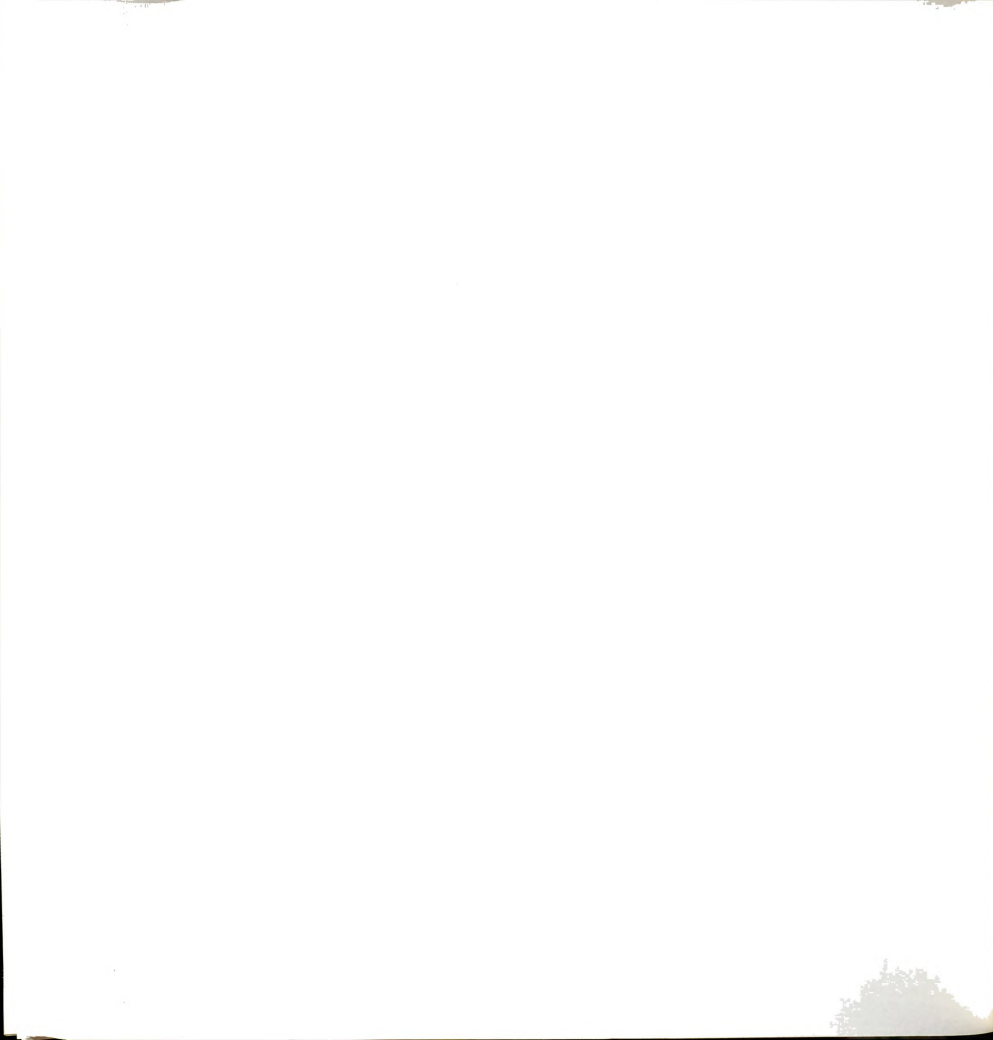
implied oedipal tensions, but George produces a paroxysm of rage in his father, telling the old man, half-seriously, that he can make the right sort of connections for him in politics. The Elliott's daughter, who goes by the name of Prissie, is engaged to the son of the Fairfields. Son George, disgusted with life in Stannerton, says he's leaving for Australia to raise sheep. At the end of the novel Stannerton is a worse place because of Elliott's mill, and Elliott himself ends up bitter, alone in his house.

Ford's attempts at fiction reveal distanced, middle-class perspective on the lived relations of working-class individuals. In her fictional work, Ford is perhaps not as powerful as she is in her pamphlet strategies, where she stresses the need for women to become more active in the Labor movement.

In conclusion, one would not want to agree with Woolf's earlier assertions about the possibility of women writing working-class fiction during this time, but an internal representation of labor by a woman writer had yet to emerge. The reasons for this could be tied to the diverse politics surrounding the issue of gender during the crisis of Labor. Through the efforts of writers such as Schreiner, Ford and others, however, the possibilities for narrative could be more fully realized.



Section Three: D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers



Chapter 7

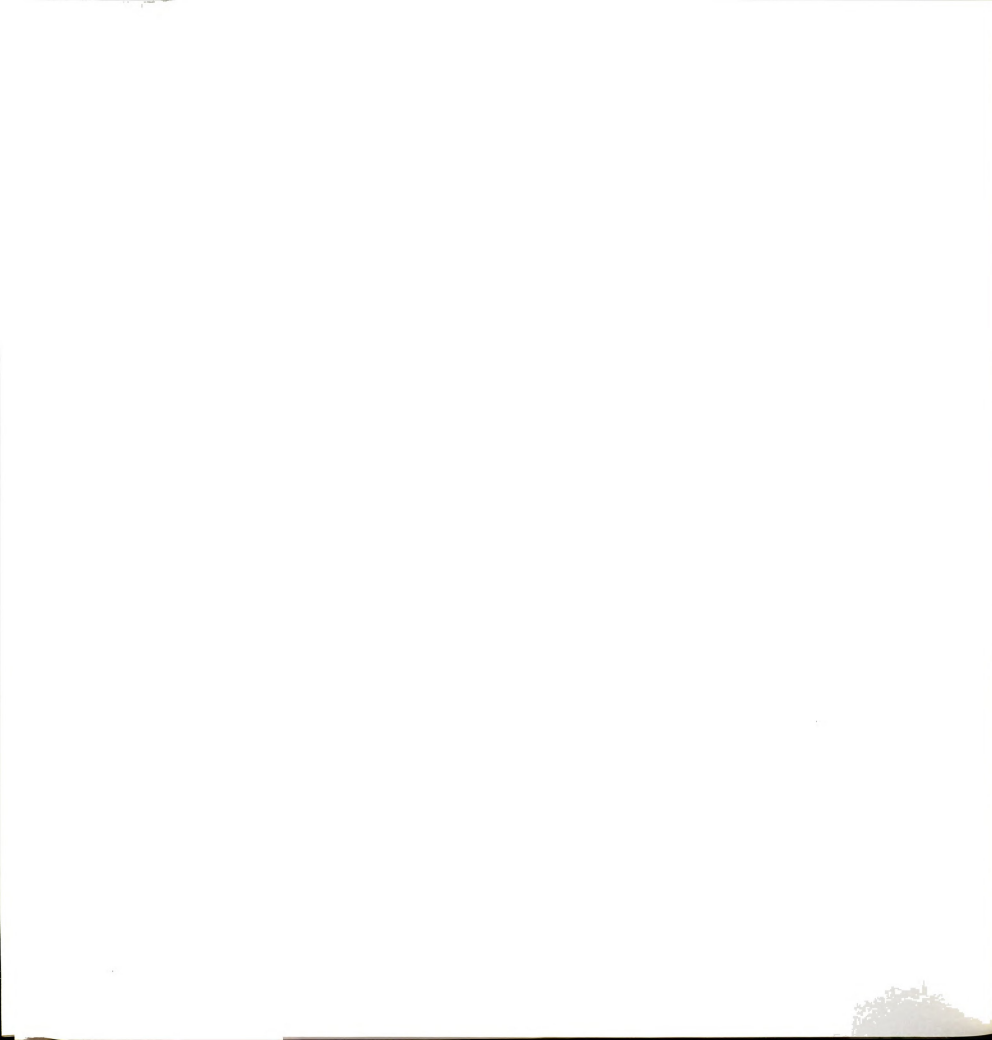
Working Through Naturalism: Lawrence and the Production of Sons and Lovers

Working-class people have traditionally, or at least for several generations, regarded art as escape, as something enjoyed but not assumed to have much connection with the matter of everyday life. Art is marginal, 'fun:' 'It teks y'mind off things;' 'It teks yer out of y'self;' 'It meks a break and a bit of a change.' Whilst they are enjoying it, people may submit themselves, may identify themselves; but at the back of their mind they know it is not 'real;' 'real' life goes on elsewhere. Art may 'tek yer out of yerself;' but the form of that phrase indicates that there is, inside, a 'real' you for which art is not expected to speak; except to reflect, by conventional means, certain agreed assumptions. Art is for you to use.

For working-class people the happy ending . . . is often a happy ending in the kind of life they have around them, in home and family; but in that life when things have 'worked out,' when the clouds have blown away. They know life is not really like that; they do not expect life to be like that in some hazy future. But they say it is 'nice to think of' a life like that; and this attitude seems to me near at times to being a kind of vision, a glimpse of another order.

Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy¹

D.H. Lawrence is the first major English author of the twentieth century to have straddled the class divide between working-class culture and bourgeois aesthetics. Lawrence's departure from a working-class community is a primary feature of his aesthetic production. The brutal oedipal themes in his early work, the complex symbolism and reconstituted



subjectivity of his later work, and his at times puzzling psychological metaphysics is often studied as an allegory of narrative psychological development. Sons and Lovers has been perceived as an autobiographical Bildungsroman; most critics, however, have focused on the oedipal themes present in the novel. It could be said that in Sons and Lovers Lawrence represents a move toward a middle-class aesthetic within the circle of a working-class community, one that for Lawrence embodies a kind of fragmented pastoralism found in the tensions between the mechanical rhythms of life in the town and the mines, and the organic features of the country. The mining village of Bestwood is situated between both of these worlds.²

Lawrence's mining community experienced some of the most intense debates on Labor; yet Lawrence never made these issues a primary part of his narrative. Socialist characters do appear in his early work, some social debates take place, but these issues in Lawrence's text are situated as external, for the most part, to the overall events of the narrative. Lawrence's rejection of labor politics is a well documented fact. Most biographies on Lawrence mention his early flirtations with radical thought and his complicated attitudes toward bourgeois culture.³ Generally speaking, critics have tended to downplay aspects of the working-class ideology in Lawrence's early narrative, as if it were only an incidental feature of his uncanny ability to discern the



mollecularization of passion, desire, and sexuality. But these same subjects in Lawrence are, paradoxically, realized only through a naturalism that has often been subordinate to other ideological modes: realism, social organicism, individualism, and so on.

Much of this has to do with the different paths that Lawrence's aesthetic wandered through, his continual, renewable sense of self-exile. Similar to his original departure from the working-class community of Eastwood (Bestwood in his fiction) on the outskirts of Nottingham, Lawrence ventured through diverse communities and continents. It can be said that Lawrence's aesthetic ideology undergoes a significant transformation in each of his journeys. But it can also be said that in each peregrination, Lawrence returns, symptomatically, to the mining village, and to the social conflicts that disrupt and dialogize his early narrative.⁴

In the context of the previous concerns of this study--the way naturalistic philosophy affected writers in the labor movement and produced an ideology of resistance, and counter resistance--it is crucial to note the way oppositional naturalism and dominant naturalism intersect in the early Lawrence's concerns, in addition to the naturalism that forms the earlier Lawrence's sense of literary realism. In this section I will focus on Sons and Lovers and demonstrate how



the novel contextualizes naturalism in light of its realist aesthetic ideology. In doing this I will focus on biographical material crucial to an understanding of Lawrence's relationship to working-class culture.

One of the questions sometimes asked by critics is why Lawrence rejected labor, why he made such a radical turn toward an extreme form of modernist--fetishized--subjectivity in his narrative, which, in its more modernist aspects, is concerned with the transformations of aesthetic subjectivity as a utopian compensation for the increasingly reified and instrumentalized social order.⁵ The question arises: Did Lawrence turn his back on the working-classes? Were they really part of an organically conceived lower order where figures such as churlish miners or despairing, bewildered miners' wives inhabit romantic landscapes, unable to realize their subjectivity? These questions might not be easily answered, but, by examining a kind of dialogic of naturalism that indeed verges on the politics of culture in Lawrence's early narrative the answer might become a little more clear as to how he dealt with these issues against the diverse ideological territory through which Lawrence traveled.

Upward Mobility

It was quite obvious to me that here was a young fellow who ought to write, who, indeed would write, so the sooner he got to it the better. One would have to find some way for him. . . .And, before he had seen my office,



he had made up his mind that I was the person to effect that translation. But the office had given him a bad shock. It hadn't seemed the proper frame for a person with influence, wealth, and the acquaintance of the titled. His own acquaintance with the world had been very limited and he imagined an office, to be reassuring, must resemble the office of the colliery company for which his father worked-- the handsomest, brick and shining granite building in the valley, with counters and swing-doors and brass and the clink of coins unceasing on the air.⁶

Ford Madox Ford

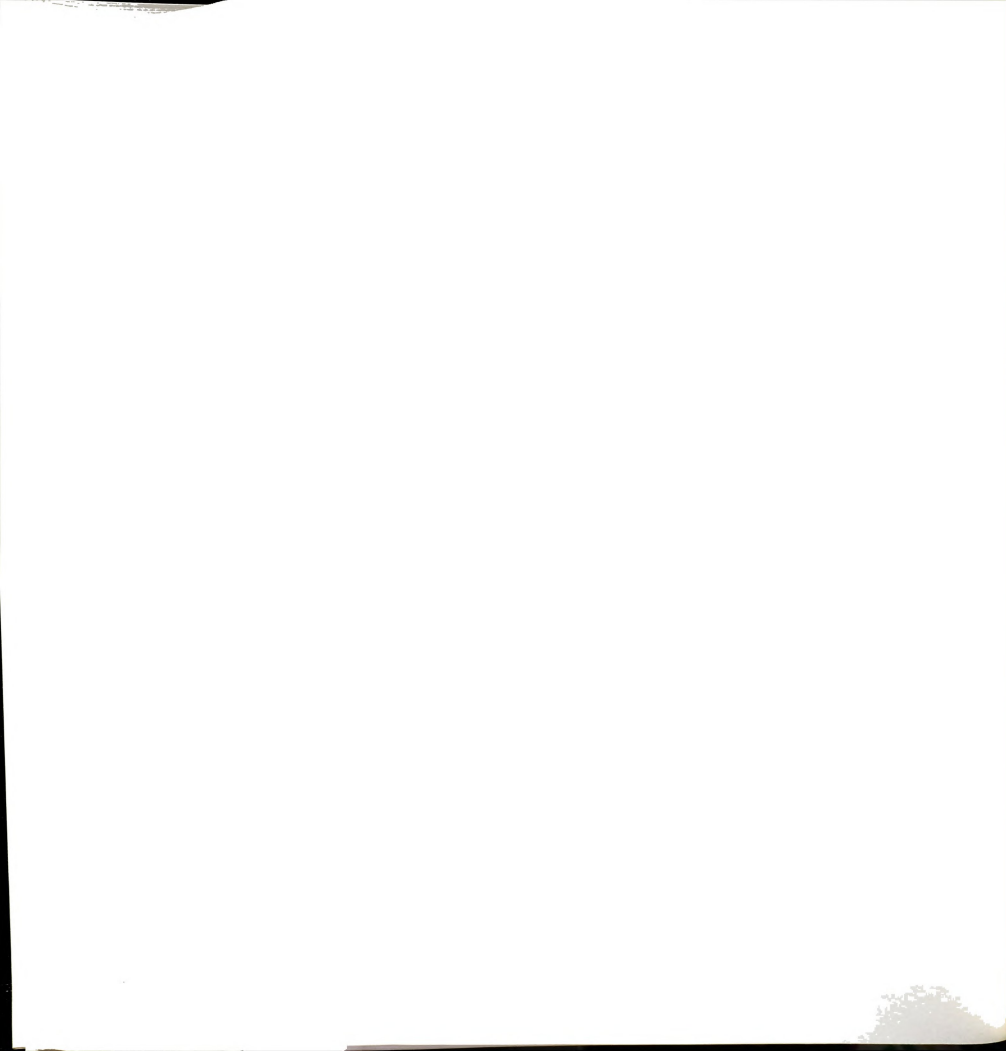
I would like to begin this discussion of Lawrence by focusing on a brief narrative that depicts Lawrence's inscription into the institution of literature and into the modernist canon. This encounter between Lawrence and Ford written by Ford represents a crucial moment, one that, if Ford was accurate, sheds light on why Lawrence did not become a socially engaged writer and why he did not follow in a distinctly naturalist tradition.

On his arrival at Ford's office, we find a youthful Lawrence preoccupied with aesthetic production and its relationship to production of money. Before meeting Lawrence, Ford was somewhat nonplused by Lawrence's class position, and what he represented--to Ford and to culture in general. Ford was fascinated with Lawrence, not only because of Lawrence's writing, but because he wrote about working-class communities. For example, Ford discusses what he found to be the inventiveness and immediacy of the image in the



opening passage of "The Odour of Chrysanthemums," produced in a style that avoided "the tiresome thing called descriptive nature, of which the English writer as a rule is so lugubriously lavish. . . ." ⁷ To Ford, Lawrence represented the "other half" of culture, but as he also states, given the strangeness of Lawrence's class-position "though we might as well have said the other ninety nine hundredths" of culture. Ford seems to be saying that he had successfully discovered someone culturally other, someone genuinely from the working class who could crack the code of bourgeois aesthetics with his vivid impressionism and his naturalistic but highly mimetic renderings of working-class life. Lawrence thus possessed a revitalizing style sought after by the modernist editor, something new, but something that editors had not seen much of, given his working-class background. Ford situates Lawrence's class position, translating into a new moment for literary production.

And it is to be remembered that, in the early decades of this century, we enormously wanted authentic projections of that type of life which hitherto had gone quite unvoiced. We had Gissing, and to a certain degree Messrs. H.G Wells and Arnold Bennett, and still more a writer called Mark Rutherford. . . . But they all wrote--with more or less seriousness--of the "lower middle" classes. The completely different race of the artisan--and it was a race as sharply divided from the ruling or even the mere white-collar classes as was the Negro from the gentry of Virginia--the completely different class of the artisan, the industrialist and the unskilled laborer was completely unvoiced and unknown. Central Africa and its tribes were better known and the tombs of the Pharaohs more explored than



our own Potteries and Black Country.⁸

Ford perhaps idealizes the discovery of Lawrence as if in his own style of author hunting, he might very well have bagged a Ford's investment in Lawrence's 'otherness' here points to his objectification of Lawrence's working-class narrative. This is evident in Ford's initial response to Lawrence. Ford views Lawrence's work as that of a decontextualized icon, like it hangs on a wall, divorced from the original community in which it was produced. It must be admitted, however, that Ford later had visited Lawrence's community of Eastwood.⁹ Here, Ford's reliance on anthropological metaphors to produce an ironic sense of distance exaggerates the production of cultural difference evoked through the spurious and pejorative equivalences linking race and class as biological types. It is as if Ford unconsciously adopts a kind of Spencerian voice in describing his close encounter with a working-class writer. Cautious about his distance, as well as his proximity to Lawrence, Ford stresses his egalitarian but nevertheless uncomfortable attitude toward this alien being. "For myself I have always automatically regarded every human being as my equal . . . But a working man was so unfamiliar as a proposition that I did not know how to bring it off."¹⁰ But as Ford describes his first meeting with Lawrence, the class-tension and in some ways the class-resentment expressed by Lawrence in Ford's reported dialogue with him, helps to explain Ford's defensiveness. When Lawrence meets Ford, differences in class and taste mark the



scene. Ford's artful recollection dramatizes his encounter with Lawrence.

Then he raised his sardonic eyes to mine and said: "That's all very well. But it doesn't look like a place in which one would make money."

I said with a sort of pained gladness that one had to put on for that sort of speech:

"Oh, we don't make money here. We spend it."

And he answered with a deep seriousness:

"That's just it. The room may be all right for your private tastes. . . which aren't mine, though that does not matter. But it isn't one to inspire confidence in creditors. Or contributors."¹¹

In Ford's reconstruction of this exchange, which he says he "found disturbing," the subject of aesthetic production and money dominates the scene similar to the way Lawrence's treatment of money forms a crucial role in some of his earlier narratives. For example, we might consider the transformative status of a single coin in a short story such as "Strike Pay." This also takes place as money serves to regulate the Morel family's health in Sons and Lovers. Ford appears irritated that Lawrence is concerned with the appearance of the office, as a site where stories are brokered as commodities. Furthermore, it is interesting that the modernist Ford reconstructs the dialogue the way he does. Would other figures of the time--those not from the working class--make comments about Ford's office? Would Ford remember such details with other writers? Ford finds the encounter "disturbing," but is so taken with Lawrence's

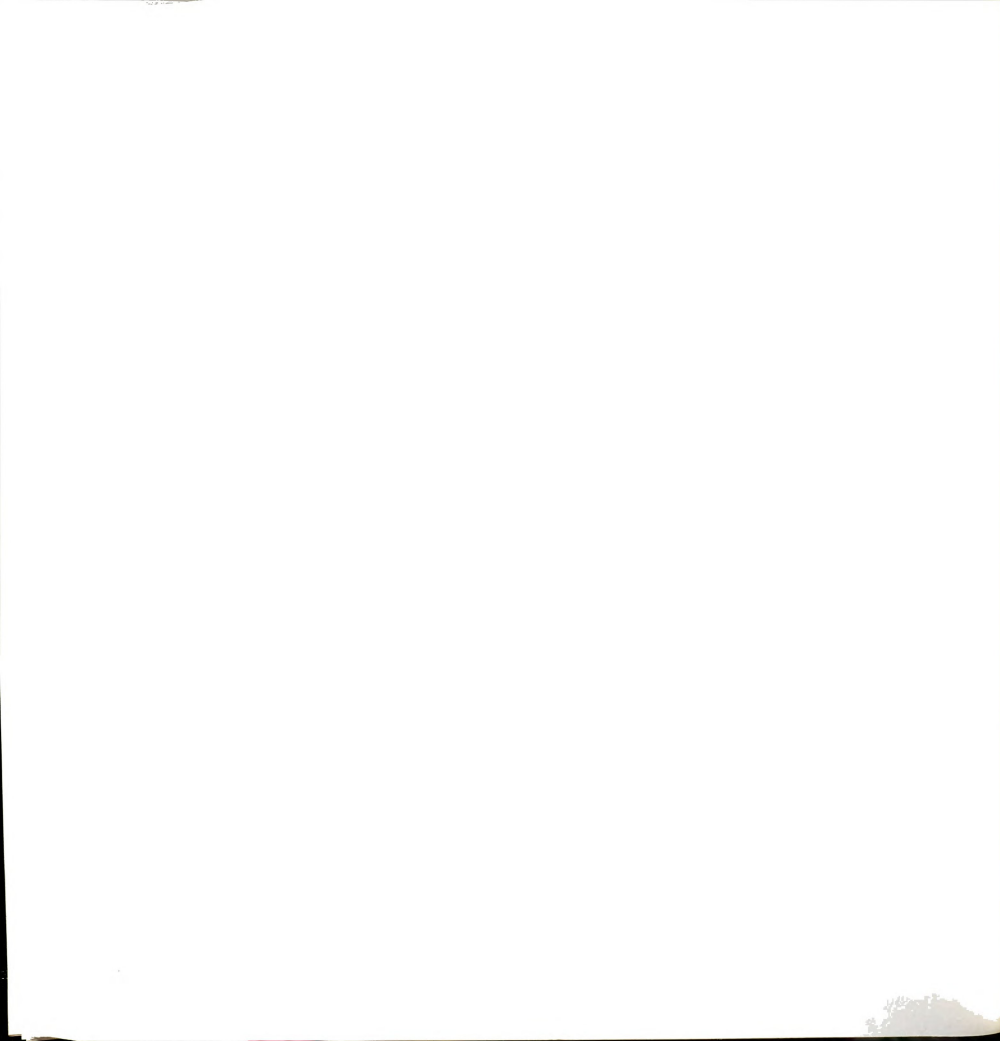


talents that he overlooks Lawrence's class deficiencies. Ford suggested that Lawrence might do best to stick to a kind of naturalist tradition, something suitable to his class-position.

I was inclined to prescribe to him a course of workingman novels, the idea of which he found oppressive. He wanted to try his hand at something more romantic and with more polished marble and gold and tilted people among its furnishings regarding aesthetic production.

I obviously could not blame him for that. A young man brought up in his circumstances would be less than human if he was not determined to have for himself two thousand a year and footmen and the intimacy of lords and, particularly, ladies. And you cannot make good novelists out of men who are less than human. They will not understand the mainsprings of humanity.¹²

Ford's point here is to suggest how desperate the young Lawrence was, as he needed money and was confronting it. Ford sounds uncomfortable, even a little bitter over the subject of Lawrence. Lawrence seems to have disturbed Ford; he appears to have committed an act of transgression. As Ford puts it, his office did not look like a place where money is made. Ford then rationalizes Lawrence's situation as a working-class writer, desperate to make money, but also desperate to climb upward into the metropolitan community. It is understandable, then, why Lawrence would reject Ford's suggestion that he write working-man's novels. Such novels, to Lawrence would not have captured what Ford metaphorically refers to as the "mainsprings of humanity." For Lawrence,

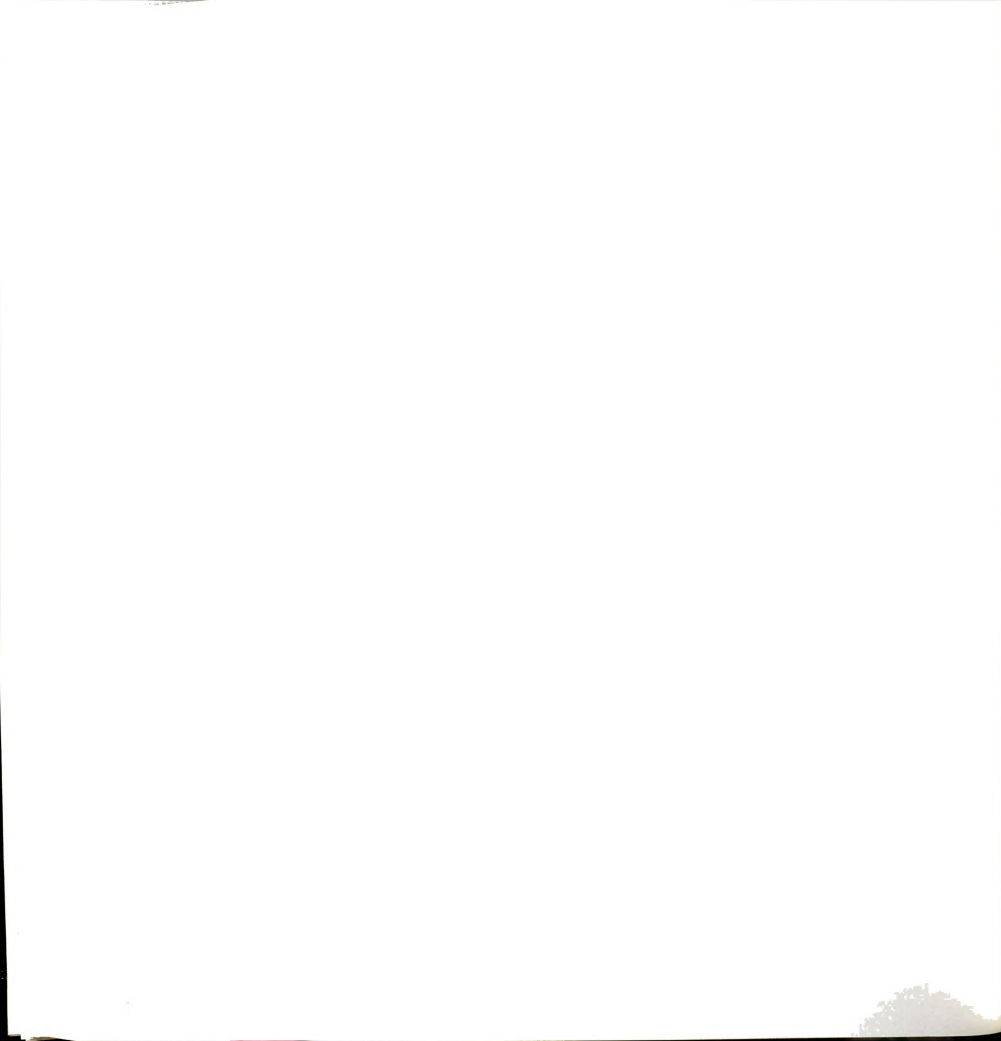


these issues would be worked out in his deployment of realist form, in a way that dramatized conflicts within culture.

The Problem of Realism in Sons and Lovers

The ideological tensions engendered in Lawrence's early narrative, particularly, in Sons and Lovers, can be understood in relation to Lawrence's desire to move upward in culture as a writer, but also, I think, should be understood in the context of various forms of naturalism. Sons and Lovers is indeed a realist novel, but its realism is contingent upon the politics of a cultural dialogic that incorporates the politics of naturalism. I will demonstrate this in relation to significant biographical information that reveals how Lawrence shaped his early aesthetic and social ideology.

I would like to begin this discussion by asking a question about the realism of Sons and Lovers.¹³ If Lawrence's autobiographical Bildungsroman is indeed a realist work, then do critical assessments of realism lead to totalizing conclusions about its aesthetic ideology? It is more than clear that Lawrence was attempting to employ realist procedures that dramatized the condition of the post-romantic artist struggling in the limited environment of his working-class community. While this community offered Lawrence the necessary raw material for his work, the mining village could offer little compensation to the artist who



found himself caught between the repetitive rhythms of the mining world and the liberating forces of metropolitan culture. Hailed by the latter, Lawrence would enter this unfamiliar but more promising world, but only through great difficulty.

Lawrence's outright rejection of the radical discourse of Labor and his eventual turn toward a radical discourse of the subject might be viewed as a reactionary move. But Lawrence works through the tensions produced between oppositional voices in early works like Sons and Lovers. Specifically, Sons and Lovers reveals that Lawrence's rejection of Labor and his representation of the aesthetic producer (Paul Morel) is deeply conflicted as it subordinates oppositional discourse by propping up naturalistic assumptions about the subject that are mediated by the discourse of dominant naturalism. What I would like to demonstrate is that Lawrence's representation of Paul Morel's development as an aesthetic producer actually produces more than an aesthetic ideology of realism. Lawrence enacts a dialogical confrontation that is resolved through narrative force, or through a kind of rhetorical violence in which dominant naturalism overwhelms oppositional naturalism.

On one hand, Lawrence's organicist voice in Sons and Lovers rejects the discourse of organized labor and socialism through his insistence on the inherent power of



subjective action (agency) within an organic social order. This view upholds the idea that the individual can see through and therefore transcend the limiting factors of the social environment. This is a view that would reject the central tenets of literary naturalism. On the other hand, the narrative of Sons and Lovers generates a critique of culture that, in some respects, cuts deeper than the positions of Labor at the time. The community enacts or enforces a limitation of aesthetic consciousness, cornering the aesthetic producer--in this case, Paul Morel--who assumes the status of a liminal figure, a subject at the margins of the working-community and at the margins of bourgeois culture. In this sense naturalism is operative as there are aspects of the community that the subject cannot transcend. Paul Morel is caught between these contradictory social forces.

On still another level of ideological tension, Lawrence's response to the inherent paternalism of Labor conflicts Sons and Lovers in a double sense. Significant women (Mrs. Morel, Clara Dawes) express an alignment with oppositional naturalism and Labor more so than men. In light of the currents of radicalism that circulated in the mining community, Lawrence denies the father figure an oppositional voice; instead Walter Morel is the brute subject of Labor, more of a figure in a traditional naturalist sense of the word than he is anything else. The under-world of the mine



shapes his behavior, even his physiognomy Walter Morel's inability to speak about Labor programs has to be seen as symptomatic of Lawrence's rejection of Labor in general.

Paul Morel's distance from his father and his development as an aesthetic producer is as much an ideological struggle, then, as it is a psychological struggle. Lawrence thus authorizes his subject-position against dominant culture, but also against the doctrinaire aspects of oppositional discourse. But before I look at the narrative incidents that evoke Lawrence's problematic relationship to naturalism and oppositional naturalism (something that I take up in Chapter 8) it is necessary to examine some biographical material that bears this out, if only in a tangential sense.

A Possible Context for the Production of Sons and Lovers

It has been argued that in his early years Lawrence was attempted to work towards a kind of naturalism, both philosophic and literary. How we characterize Lawrence's relationship to naturalism--either as oppositional or dominant--will remain problematic. What we can safely say, however, is that Lawrence incorporates various aspects of the discourse of naturalism into his early writing. Emile Delavenay has illustrated Lawrence's relationship to oppositional naturalism in his study of Lawrence and the radical philosopher Edward Carpenter. Although it is not certain



whether or not Lawrence had been in direct contact with Carpenter, Lawrence had more than likely read Carpenter and had been exposed to his ideas. Carpenter theorized a radicalism that derived its force from the discourse of naturalism.¹⁴ Daniel Schneider echoes the importance of Delaveney's study saying, "Lawrence's debt to the climate of opinion in the Midlands at the turn of the century cannot be overemphasized."¹⁵ As Schneider notes Lawrence's was passionately concerned with currents in feminism and socialism, and the opening of the door to a "freer wider life."¹⁶ But the metaphor of debt pushes Lawrence's exchange with radical currents too far to the side of "influence." I would suggest that Lawrence was involved in a **transactional** relationship with oppositional ideologies. These transactions can be better understood by briefly examining how the early Lawrence negotiated the politics of naturalism through his own ambitions and his concerns with his fiction. Lawrence's transactions with naturalism and radical thought affect the realist position of Sons and Lovers. But it must be noted that realism, for Lawrence is a strategy of representation that shatters the transparency of the (literary) naturalist project of detached description. Therefore, as Graham Holderness has demonstrated realism in Sons and Lovers attempts to structure a balance between the outer reality of nature and the interiorization of experience.¹⁷



Lawrence problematizes the usage of realism in Sons and Lovers with a naturalist causality that implies connections between the industrial environment and the fate of the subject who is not strong enough to stand up against its debilitating effects. In the first part of Sons and Lovers, which is also the most conventionally naturalist part, when Paul Morel begins work as Jordan's--a shop that makes fittings for false body parts--Lawrence characterizes Paul's drudgery and his general unhappiness as an unhealthy effect of the work-world. Lawrence refers to Paul as a "prisoner of industry." But if Paul is a prisoner, his brother William is condemned by industry. William is figuratively and literally done in by the gears of commerce in the metropolitan context of London. But if industrial culture is seen as oppressive, limited, and stifling for the individual, there is, on an aesthetic level, a way of realizing how a subject can provide a space and work against the reified structures of industrial culture. (This is indeed a formal aspect of the novel's realism.) Paul therefore sees through things, sees their surface value and also understands the living system underneath appearance. Paul possesses a kind of double-sided knowledge, one that focuses on the surface of things, but also on an underlying system. Lawrence therefore opens up a narrative space in which he can work through the problems of naturalist representation that conflict the realist novel.



This problem of representation in Sons and Lovers also shapes Lawrence's depiction of work. If work takes place among individuals in a positive, communal form, it is represented in the warm, pastoral overtones through which Lawrence romanticizes farm labor. Or, in another context, in the work-place at Jordan's, labor is seen as tolerable when Paul becomes part of a community with the women who work in the shop. However, such depictions of work are contrasted with scenes that reveal conflicts or struggles in the work-place. These scenes evoke the underlying ideological tensions of Sons and Lovers. Paul generally does not work well with other men; he appears to be on distant terms with other male workers--those who might be inclined toward the more radical programs of Labor. Lawrence cannot embrace a specific discourse that addresses the problem of work in culture--that is, as something to be addressed directly by the narrative.

In contrast to the way writers in the Labor movement characterized the subject of labor, Lawrence has a tendency to view the subject of labor as part of layered, organic strata whose dense archaeology situates workers below the liminal point of political consciousness, subjecting them to the brute stimulus responses of the body. As mentioned earlier, they are silenced politically--Walter Morel is perhaps the most glaring example. If we look at the young Lawrence's responses to labor and to local authorities, we



can more specifically contextualize Lawrence's response.

Lawrence's Early Responses to Radical Discourse and the Problem of Culture

Letters written by Lawrence in 1907 to a local cleric, a Reverend Robert Reid, while Lawrence was a student at Nottingham University of the same year, document Lawrence's concern with the ideological problems inherent in the ideological (institutional) conflicts embedded in Sons and Lovers. The letter, which I will quote at length, reveals how Lawrence expresses an individualist position, embracing Spencer's evolutionary philosophy, while simultaneously rejecting radical proposals.

Lawrence identifies his reading material as texts that highlight confrontations between social philosophy, evolutionary theory, and theology. In the very act of writing this letter to a member of the local clergy, Lawrence prefigures the oedipal conflicts with paternal voices that his early narratives will encode with much more dramatic force. By disputing or confronting the claims of clerical authority, Lawrence displaces his anger and his inability to communicate with his own father and addresses the paternal figure in local religious authority. Lawrence informs the Reverend Reid that he is reading Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Renan, and Robert Blatchford, among others. The major themes of these texts revolve around the issue of philosophical naturalism. In a mining village in the north, these writers



would shake the bedrock of any traditional upbringing, much less that of Lawrence's. Therefore, as the young Lawrence considers the potential revolutionary value of these evolutionary and polemical writings, he asks a very expected question. In a subdued, self-effacing posture Lawrence writes, "And I would like to know, because I am absolutely ignorant, what is precisely the orthodox attitude--or say the attitude of the nonconformist Churches--to such questions as Evolution, with that of the Origin of Sin and Heaven and Hell."¹⁸

It would not take long for Lawrence to formulate an answer to his own question. Later, in December of the same year, he becomes well informed on the matter. By this time, however, Lawrence is convinced that the individual is the sole producer of theological value. In an educated and humanistic tone--one close to the 'rationalist' position of anarchists, and certainly not far from the attitudes of various socialists of the time--Lawrence responds that subjects such as faith, truth, religious conversion, and the contradictions between religious doctrine and social conditions are issues that should be resolved through the values generated within subjective experience, and not from external sources such as those offered by radical reformists or those proffered by traditional orthodoxy.

The young Lawrence desires egress from restrictive



religious values. But as the letter makes clear, he does not want to trap himself in a solution that appears formulaic or devised along the lines of social reform. Somewhere in the scheme of things the subject can find his own path, without the aid of the community. As Lawrence replies to Reid, we find confirmation of this position:

A man has no religion who has not slowly and painfully gathered one together, adding to it, shaping it; and one's religion is never complete and final, it seems, but must always be undergoing modification. So I contend that true Socialism is religion; that honest, fervent politics are religion, that whatever a man will labour for earnestly and in some measure unselfishly is religion.¹⁹

The reference to socialism here is a response specifically directed toward Robert Blatchford's God and My Neighbor, a book Lawrence describes as a "vulgar attack" on Christianity.²⁰ Clearly, Lawrence has no use for a critique of Christianity that doubles as a political pamphlet. Lawrence's emphasis that the development of "one's religion" is a slow and painful (subjective) project bears this out. But in his rejection of Blatchford, Lawrence nevertheless affirms a notion of community (true socialism via inter-subjective lived relations).

In some respects Lawrence desires a community in which traditional values can be realized: honest, fervent politics, earnestness, unselfish virtue. This may sound like an idealized version of Carlyle, but on the



other hand Lawrence prefigures a version of what Raymond Williams posits in his notion of structures of feeling, or aspects of lived experience of a community "to which the fixed [institutional and analytic] forms do not speak at all, which indeed they do not recognize."²¹ Moreover, if we cross out the word religion and substitute for it "social consciousness" we realize what Lawrence implies: that discourse shapes the subject's world-view--that one's subject position, and the social system that one lives in, is always subsumed within a network of ideological relations.

Lawrence desires the establishment of an organic community; but such a community does not necessarily have to be seen as a utopian gesture. A sense of community partakes of various structures of labor, values, belief systems. Therefore whatever men might labor for--whatever comprises individual desires and social goals--is also, by nature, part of an intricate web of socially determined relationships. As I suggest in the next chapter Lawrence is perhaps not all that ideologically distant from the young Marx of the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts; he affirms the capacity of the individual, while sincerely desiring a sense of community that transcends the present-day order of things.

The desire for subjective authenticity, a hallmark of Lawrence's thought, is clearly signaled in Lawrence's letter to Reverend Reid. But such a belief seems also to approach the ideas expressed in Herbert Spencer's First Principles.



The fact that Lawrence names Spencer as one of his influences in these letters is significant for a reading of Sons and Lovers. As we have seen before in the case of Tressell and other writers, Spencer's cultural influence is present in both conservative and radical philosophy on the issue of individualism and collectivism. Many of the attitudes and values in Sons and Lovers seem to be derived from Spencer's social philosophy. Lawrence's early work incorporates individual struggle, generational change, and the delicate relationship between the subject and the community. All of these concerns might be rooted in a romantic and humanist heritage, but more specifically they are linked to local currents in evolutionary and naturalist ideology.

In First Principles, Spencer addresses the vital elements of religion that depict traditional theology as an attempt to deal with an ultimate mystery. Spencer, however, is more concerned with the relationship between science and religion. Spencer cannot maintain traditional beliefs but neither can he dispense with the ethics of the Christian tradition. Similarly, the young Lawrence is concerned with these problems. For Lawrence, such ultimate mysteries are beyond comprehension; religious concepts, in light of science and new developments in social evolution and philosophy, must be negotiated by the individual subject.

Lawrence's concerns with individualism and religious



authority thus point to the authorial ideology that informs the content of Sons and Lovers. In the following passage from Lawrence's letter to the Reverend Reid, he assumes the position of the radical humanist social critic. Lawrence cannot reconcile official versions of religion with existing social conditions, and in a Carlylian voice protests what he sees as a society of excess and poverty that breeds its own hypocrisy in spite of its official doctrine.

'It cannot be'--I said to myself 'that a pitiful, omnipotent Christ died nineteen hundred years ago to save these people from this and yet here they are.' Women with child--so many are in that condition in the slums--bruised, drunk, with breasts half bare. It is not compatible with the idea of an Omnipotent, pitying Divine. And how, too, shall I reconcile a belief in a personal God. I cannot be a materialist--but Oh, how is it possible that a God who speaks to all hearts can let Belgravia go laughing to a vicious luxury, and Whitechapel cursing to a filthy debauchery--such suffering, such dreadful suffering--and shall the short years of Christ's mission atone for it all?²²

In the subject-position of the angry young social critic Lawrence then draws upon evolutionary and biological metaphors to express a quasi-reformist position. Lawrence throws the determinist voice of Spencer right into the face of official religion, while simultaneously rejecting radical proposals:

But sir, there must at least be a harmony of facts before a hypothesis can be framed. Cosmic harmony there is--a Cosmic God I can therefore believe in. But where is the human harmony, where the balance, the order, the

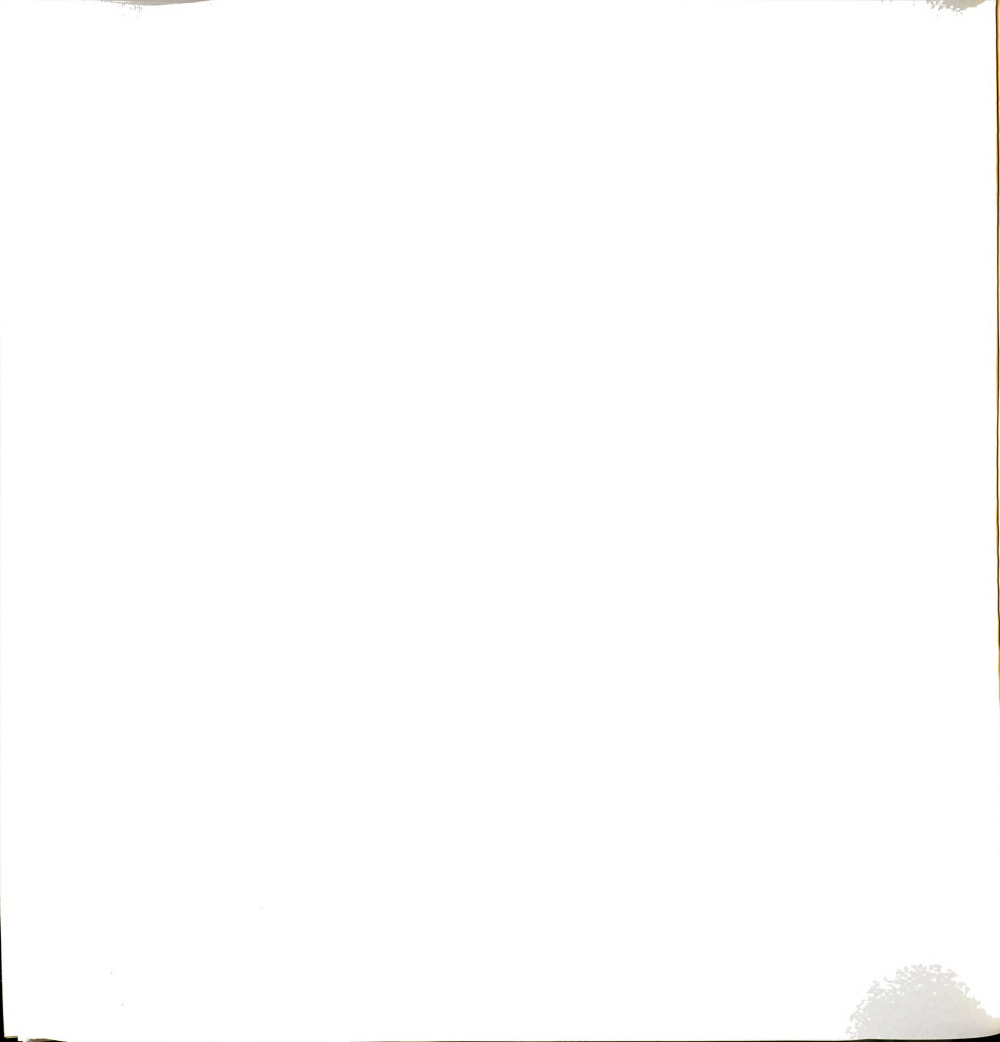


'indestructibility of matter' in humanity? [. . .] Men--some seem to be born and ruthlessly destroyed; the bacteria are created and nurtured on Man, to his horrible suffering. Oh for a God-idea I must have harmony--unity of design. Such design there may be for the race--but for the individual, the often wretched individual?

I care not for Blatchford or for anybody. I do not wage war against Christianity--I do not hate it--but these questions will not be answered, and for the present my religion is the lessening, in some pitiful moiety, the great human discrepancies.

I have tried to write you honestly--this is the first time I have revealed myself.²³

In purporting to 'reveal himself,' Lawrence appropriates the Spencerian voice of evolutionary discourse in order to refute the authority of the local clergy as well as the radical challenge offered by Blatchford. **But Lawrence does not reveal himself as much as he speaks through the voice of Spencer.** The young Lawrence's denial of traditional Christianity, his use of biological metaphors to explain the cosmological status of man, and his insistence on harmonious design within the universe, enacts a virtual recitation of Spencer's First Principles. Lawrence admits that he writes from the perspective of youthful arrogance. His rejection of Blatchford's radical thought echoes Spencer's attack on the SDF and other radical factions, including the Fabians. As I will demonstrate later, Lawrence specifically encodes this discursive drama in Sons and Lovers, employing the culturally dominant Spencerian voice to silence oppositional discourse.



Spencer's evolutionary organicism, as we have seen in the case of Tressell, justified the organicist, cooperative efforts of organized labor, guild cooperatives, and even some socialist groups. And as we know all too well, Spencer forcefully expressed the individualist, competitive side of the public sphere that saw intra-species competition as a model for "natural" human relationships, along with a mystification of the competitive forces that ran the marketplace. This side of Spencer, which eventually became the most vocal, argued that all interventionist solutions inevitably fail to rescue the social order from its perils, because state-induced solutions cannot affect the inner nature of each flawed individual; instead, regulations and interventions are little more than superficial dressings: even though the wound may heal, the infection is still present and the body--individual or social--will be progressively debilitated.

In Spencer's First Principles, where he constructs his "Law of Evolution," Spencer explains that the idea of progress is not a simple transformation; such an "ordinary idea of Progress is in great measure erroneous. It takes in not so much the reality as its accompaniments--not so much the substance as the shadow" (emphasis mine).²⁴ What produces real change in social structures is what lies below the surface:

That progress in intelligence seen during the



growth of the child into the man, or the savage into the philosopher, is commonly regarded as consisting in the greater number of facts known and laws understood; whereas the actual progress consists in those internal modifications of which this increased knowledge is the expression.²⁵

The sentiment here is not all that different from the later, more polemical Spencer, who places the blame for social ills on the unemployed and impoverished for possessing an inferior moral nature; in other words, those undeveloped subjects within the working classes.

In tacit agreement with Spencer, Lawrence seems to be suggesting that there is a quasi-teleological principle at work in the individual and the social system, and that those who "deny the god in themselves"--such as Walter Morel--fall by the wayside. There is a direct, ideological alliance between the early Lawrence and the Spencer of First Principles. A wider parallel can be seen if we consider Spencer's dictum that this "law of organic evolution is the law of all evolution." This applies across the cultural spectrum:

Whether it be in the development of the Earth, in the development of Life upon its surface, in the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, Art, this same advance from the simple to the complex, holds uniformly. From the earliest traceable cosmic changes down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of the homogenous into the heterogeneous, is that in which Evolution essentially consists.²⁶



Such an all-encompassing definition of evolution indeed provided the framework for discursive developments in anthropological currents of the time, especially in the projection of Victorian society as the highest cultural achievement in world history. It must be admitted that Spencer's evolutionary thought had the appeal of transcending local ideological concerns, and thus provided a master narrative that not only revealed the workings of nature and culture, but also provided a teleological master narrative. Hence, we can see its appeal to the young Lawrence looking for a way to refute religious dogma without invoking radical social solutions. More than anything else this demonstrates that Spencer's influence on social theory was so pervasive and influential at the time that dominant anthropological conceptions of the era were inevitably Spencerian. 27



Chapter 8

Principled Subjects: Naturalism, Ideology, and Social Discourse in Sons and Lovers

Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with natural powers of life--he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities--as instincts. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being, he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs--essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers.

Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844¹

A state of universal brotherhood is so tempting an imagination, and the existing state of strife is so full of miseries, that endeavors to escape from the last and enter into the first are quite natural--inevitable even. Prompted by consciousness of the grievous inequalities of conditions around, those who suffer and those who sympathize with them, seek to found what they think an equitable social system. . . .After contemplating the useless being who now lounges in club-rooms and now rambles through game preserves, the weary artisan may well curse a state of things in which pleasure varies inversely as desert; and may well be vehement in his demand for another form of society.

Herbert Spencer, "Labour in Industrial Society," from The Principles of Sociology, 1896²

The above mentioned passages here point to the issues



that partially characterize an oppositional naturalism. For Marx, the "suffering, limited and conditioned" aspects of humanity have to be realized in order to transcend oppressive conditions and activate human potential more fully. That is not to say that Marx is a naturalist, but that his early work incorporates naturalism. For Spencer it is "quite natural" to wish to escape from the "grievous inequalities of conditions around." Quite natural, but useless, Spencer would argue. And it is in this sense that Spencer upholds a dominant "narrow" version of (evolutionary, philosophical) naturalism that Labor vehemently contested.

In a very broad sense, oppositional writers, as I have argued, implicitly and explicitly articulated "naturalist" implications of social change. Oppositional writers employed this diverse discourse of naturalism in order to transform public consciousness. Spencer might have seen these efforts as misguided, utopian, and injurious to the overall health of the social body; but Spencer positioned his own discourse, as we have seen earlier, in a way that could not fully grasp the degradation of life.

Lawrence, especially the early Lawrence, occupies a pivotal position between these dominant and emergent ideologies--somewhere between the early Marx and the later Spencer--that express values of naturalism. Lawrence could not have read the early Marx because these texts were not accessible to him. Lawrence's early writing, however,



expresses a concern with the needs of the subject as a "suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants." In some respects, it might be argued that Lawrence mirrors the strategies of Labor in his critique of culture. Yet Lawrence appears to side with Spencer's assertion that the establishment of a new order "is so tempting an imagination" that its realization cannot be achieved. At least this is what he have observed about Lawrence in the last chapter, in which the young Lawrence adopts a Spencerian tone toward social matters. It is through a reading of Sons and Lovers, Lawrence's most autobiographical novel, that I would like to conclude this study with. As I have indicated earlier, there is a dialogism of naturalism at work in Lawrence. The fact that Lawrence had read Spencer, Blatchford and other writers tells us little, if the way his narratives re-construct the relationship between history and ideology does not allow for a more dialogic understanding of naturalism.

In the production of his early narrative Lawrence appears to be "hailed" or "interpellated" in an Althusserian sense by forms of dominant naturalism, but any reading of Sons and Lovers ultimately demands that the reader read more closely.⁴ Sons and Lovers implicitly refutes oppositional naturalism, and thus calls for a reading that closely examines the modes in which the novel elicits ideological positions within its dialogic structure. I would like to say

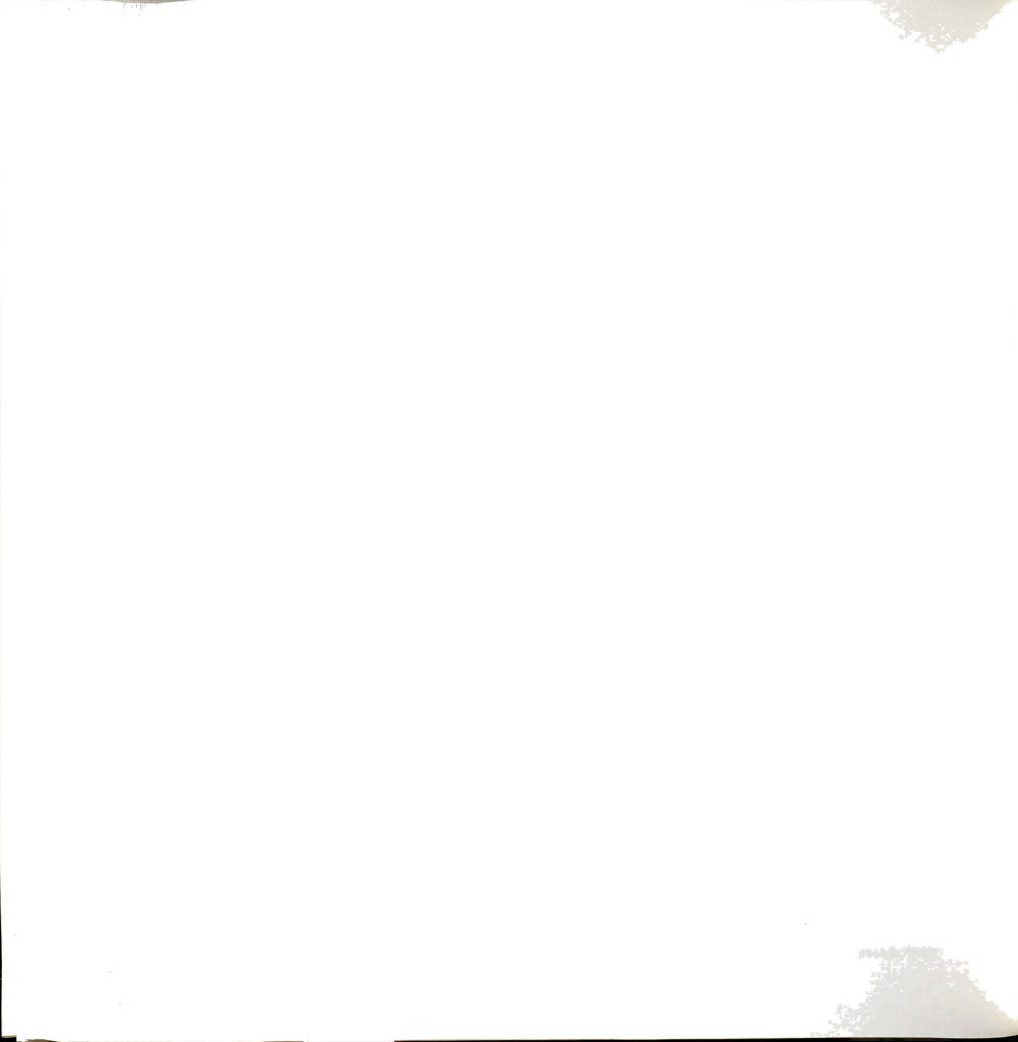


that we can employ an Althusserian critique of Sons and Lovers in a weak sense and a dialogic reading in a stronger sense. What I will do in this reading is view Lawrence's dialogues closely, and show how Lawrence positions subjects in relation to dominant naturalism, oppositional naturalism, and the subject of labor.

Women and Naturalism in Sons and Lovers

In Sons and Lovers what Paul Morel reads during his youthful aestheticization of the world is parallel to Lawrence's own literary progression in the working-class, mining community of Eastwood. As I suggested in the previous chapter, Lawrence's ideological transactions with these texts avoids the reductive category of "influence," as the narrator of Sons and Lovers informs the reader as to what Paul is reading or what stage of intellectual development he is in. Therefore, the narrative of Paul Morel's aesthetic development establishes an intertextual battle between oppositional naturalism--in the discourse of labor and in various socialist ideas--and dominant naturalism--a valorization of the individual subject within an organic conception of the social order.

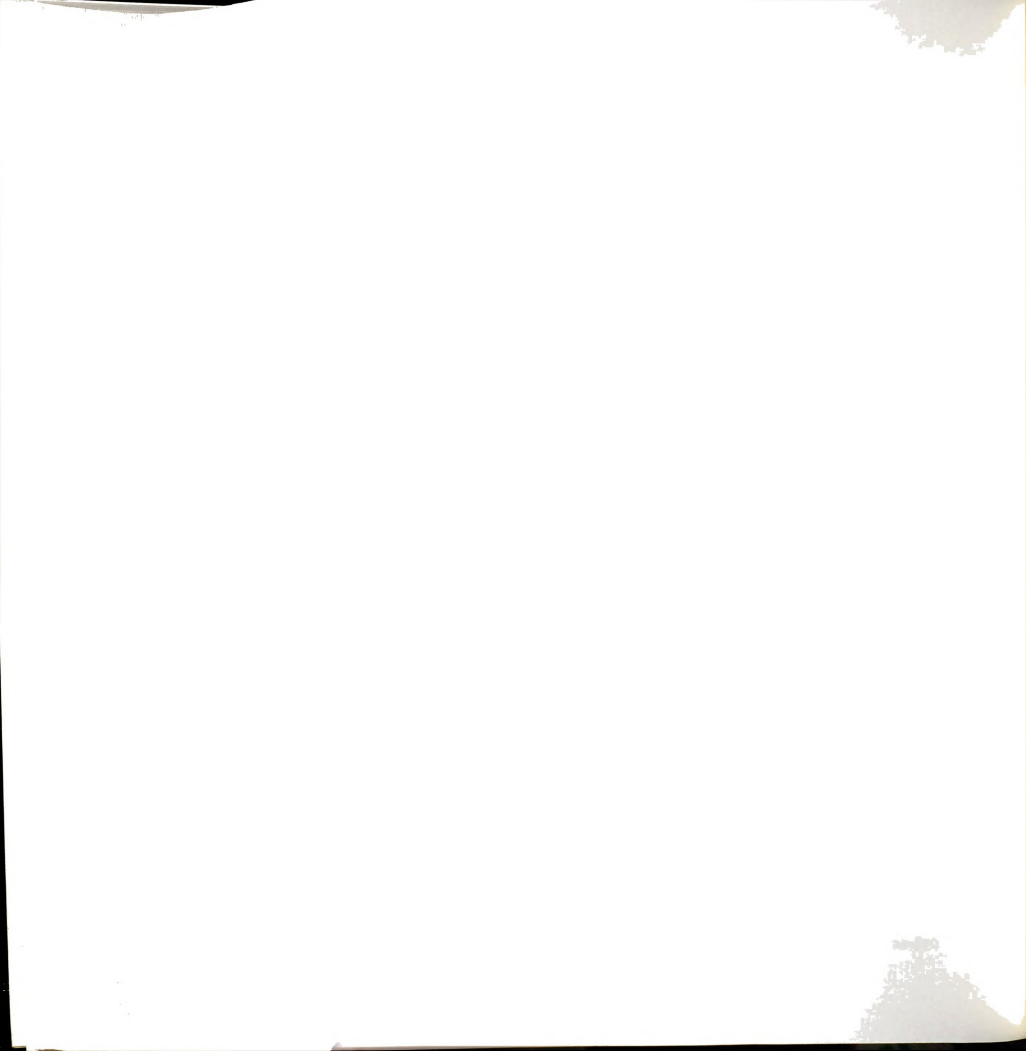
Paul Morel also sees himself as the subject of aesthetic production in terms of the post-romantic or modernist artist as the subject who must exile himself from the community. As Paul escapes the monotonous confines of



Bestwood, he also finds social refuge and aesthetic compensation as an artist, a painter, whose work brings him an uncertain future at the close of the novel. But Paul's aesthetic development entails a series of ideological conflicts with other subjects in the community. Early in Sons and Lovers, it can be seen that Lawrence subordinates oppositional discourse directed toward the role of women and the family, in exchange for an individualist position that idealizes the artist as one who sees through things, and, consequently, resists seeing the social nature of the aesthetic work.

The social facts of Paul Morel's life in Bestwood offer no possibility of aesthetic self-realization, if Paul were to remain within the mining community. Trapped in the position of a clerk, who aspires to become an artist, Paul reads widely, engages in dialogues, and contemplates the aesthetic values of life and nature, art and reality. Eventually he is forced either to remain in the community, or, after the death of his mother, leave altogether. But Paul's transformation is not a distanced act of contemplation. He often exerts symbolic violence toward political discourse that threatens either an individualist ethos or the idea of aesthetic autonomy.

In Sons and Lovers, symbolic attacks against oppositional positions do not reveal Lawrence as a Spencerian



ideologue in any specifically identifiable way, but the irreducible traces of dominant naturalism occulted from Spencer's social philosophy materialize at distinct points in the narrative, especially in the contexts of Paul's relationships with women (Miriam, his mother, and Clara Dawes). How these ideological positions are voiced (or unvoiced) in the novel is crucial for a cultural reconstruction of Sons and Lovers and its implicit rejection of oppositional discourse. Lawrence fashions Paul's subjectivity against hostile odds. Lawrence thus produces an authorization of Paul against the community. But in inscribing the subject of Paul Morel, he refuses to acknowledge the social voices that constitute his own subjectivity, save for the fact that they are "stages" to be worked through. Hence, Paul views himself as self-subjected or self-constructed through this struggle; yet he denies the same possibility for others, and identifies others in the novel as culturally limited, or he labels them, as in the case of the feminist-socialist Clara Dawes, as representing positions that they cannot transcend.

As we have seen earlier, Lawrence's implicit refusal to acknowledge the affirmative role of community in subject formation is well documented in his letter to the Reverend Reid. In Sons and Lovers, however, Paul refuses to engage in debates with local authority figures. Lawrence channels these problems of cultural and aesthetic authority onto



dialogues in the novel that center on ideas such as nature, art, and theology. Ironically, Paul does not engage in dialogue with significant male figures in the community. Walter Morel's semi-literate, bruteness prevents political discussions. Labor issues, and local politics, with few exceptions, are exempted from dialogues between men in Sons and Lovers. However, Paul's father and his work-mates are very articulate when it comes to doling out the week's wages; Paul's father is also quite dexterous and inventive when he fixes things in the house. But on the issue of politics or working conditions he is silent.

Paul does not engage in political discussions with his father. Lawrence figuratively prevents Paul from having significant polemical discussions with other men in the community as well. As a rule, Paul generally avoids politics. In the few instances in Sons and Lovers when examples of political discussions are mentioned in the narrative, they are reported as events that take place off-stage, so to speak. Paul's direct speech--as political discourse--never really reaches the intensity of Lawrence's political concerns apparent in his letters on the subject of politics and religion. It is safe to say that none of Paul's discussions in the novel approximate the passionate intensity Lawrence acts out over religion and politics in his letters. Lawrence over-idealizes the role of the artist, in relation to his life, as a figure who rises above politics.



Lawrence portrays Paul's discussions with other men in the community as being severely limited. For example, Miriam's brother Edgar, "a rationalist, who was curious and had a sort of scientific interest in life"(195) never shares the discourse of rationalism with anyone. Paul and Edgar spend more time learning songs than they do talking politics. Neither does Paul's speech directly engage the reader in any of the debates at Willey farm, even though discussions there revolve around some of most significant issues of the day: "all the men. . .had bitter debates on the nationalizing of the land and similar problems"(195). The narrator tells us that Paul participates in these discussions, but Paul's politics are conveniently displaced to his mother's tongue and not yet defined for himself: "Paul had already heard his mother's views, **and as these were as yet his own, he argued for her**"(195) (emphasis mine).

Instead of representing the direct speech of these discussions, Paul establishes his basic ideas toward life, religion and politics in dialogues with Miriam. But the question had to be asked: Why Miriam? Why not other men in the community who would be more disposed to discuss theological and political matters? Lawrence denies Paul participation in a male community of political discourse. Instead, Paul's ideas, which could have been worked out in debates with other men in the community, are figuratively "thrown at" Miriam. Miriam stands in as the figure who



absorbs Paul's assertions about politics, theology and art. But Miriam submissively declines to contest Paul's assertions about life; she dutifully listens to his ideas on art; and she masochistically subjects herself to his diatribes against religion. Unlike Mrs. Morel and Clara Dawes, Miriam appears to register at a degree-zero level of social and political discourse: "After all," she said within herself, "If the land were nationalized, Edgar and Paul and I would be just the same"(195). Miriam is the sensuous embodiment of a spiritualized organicism--"Anthropomorphic as she was, she stimulated him into appreciating things thus, and they lived for her"(184-85). Against Miriam's sensuous, ideological passivity, Paul's subjectivity grows in value, as she becomes the "threshing floor" of his ideas. Through this uneven exchange, Paul articulates a more heightened sense of subjective authority. However, Paul's emergent authority in the novel derives from his working through the socio-theological conflicts evident in the young Lawrence's letters; but these conflicts are absent in the narrative of Sons and Lovers. The rage, despair, and helplessness that Paul experiences in the novel result from the actual social conflict that Lawrence refuses to inscribe in his autobiographical novel. This refusal, however, is the unconscious element of social symbolism, the repressed aspect of Lawrence's authorial ideology, something that he would act out dialogically throughout his writing life.



In Sons and Lovers, therefore Lawrence represses actual conflicts with local social authority, and deflects these conflicts off of the passive body of Miriam. But he does this at the expense of Miriam's subjectivity. Paul projects onto Miriam his own desire to restrict the other's subjectivity, and projects that desire as a restrictive gaze or "spell" that limits his own sense of subjectivity. The "spell" that Miriam exerts over Paul is thus the sublimated power of an ideological authority that he sees as a repressive kind of agency in the concrete expressions of the local clergy. As Paul struggles with ideas he cannot yet define for himself, he aggressively tests them on the anthropomorphic Miriam:

He was more or less under her [Miriam's] spell again. As usual they were discussing the sermon. He was setting full sail toward an Agnosticism, but such a religious Agnosticism that Miriam did not suffer so badly. They were at the Renan "Vie de Jesus" stage. Miriam was the threshing-floor on which he threshed out all his beliefs. While he trampled his ideas upon her soul, the truth came out for him. She alone was his threshing floor. She alone helped him toward realization. Almost impassive, she submitted to his argument and expounding. And somehow, because of her, he gradually realized where he was wrong. And what he realized, she realized. (280) (brackets mine)

Through this mapping of Paul's textual and metaphysical trajectory, Lawrence provides the illusory impression that he is dramatizing the process of consciousness-formation as dialogical interaction and ideological production. But the



process of this violent drama is stage-play rather than dialogic interaction. As Paul develops his aesthetic ideology, his monological voice effectively excludes the ideologically passive Miriam from truly speaking, and prohibits the possibility of a dialogic exchange. Lawrence represents Miriam as a mirror for Paul's narcissistic triumph over an absent textual and ideological authority, the figure of the local political-theological father(s). The repetition of the masculine pronouns parodies dramatic action and reveals a voice directed elsewhere.

Even the name Miriam connotes her servile status as a reflective surface for Paul's narcissistic subject-formation. We see this if we break down the simple sound components of the name Miriam. The first syllable "mir" suggests mirror, with a hard working-class r sound, "mirrer;" the second syllable, the "i" functions as the subjective "I" which is conjoined with the last syllable, the "am." All in all, the name Miriam connotes the sound equivalent of mirror-I-am (for Paul).

It will not be until Paul's relationship with Clara Dawes that he is forced to confront an actively political voice. Miriam, however, is subjected to a symbolic violence imposed on her by Lawrence's conflicted naturalism. Miriam is metaphorically threshed for ideas. The metaphor of threshing also suggests organic transformation. The



threshing of Miriam is cast in terms of a naturalized process of struggle. Miriam never offers resistance to Paul, and thus symbolically absorbs the shock of Lawrence's repressed polemic.

But this isn't the case with Mrs. Morel, whose politics are never clearly defined, but are indirectly aligned with and sympathetic toward the sentiments of radical movements. Paul never openly confronts "her views," but neither he nor the narrator ever states them precisely or presents them in the public sphere (as opposed to what Lawrence does with the politics of Clara Dawes). The partial silencing of Mrs. Morel's ideological positions prevents political contagion of the domestic body; in effect, Lawrence protects the private sphere against the threat of the local public sphere, whose politics he cannot countenance. In theory, Mrs. Morel's activity is similar to the discursive positions of radical women writers such as Isabella Ford, Olive Schreiner and others who advocated progressive social change. Also, in a very limited sense, Mrs. Morel is somewhat of a "new woman." Mrs. Morel's politics re-produce Paul's distress over social conflicts and eventually cause him to confront her with the name-of-the-political-father of dominant naturalism (Herbert Spencer). Mrs. Morel's political position, furthermore, complicates the development of Paul's aesthetic consciousness, as much as it does his relationships. Paul will strive toward a modernist aesthetic that focuses on a



heightened awareness of form, materiality, and the work's fetishized status as a commodity--something Mrs. Morel will not understand from her limited perspective. Therefore, the ideological distance between the son as an artist who distances himself from the community and his mother as a socially progressive member of women's guilds is marked by a conflicted attitude toward oppositional discourse and dominant naturalism. Hence, things are even more conflicted when a lover, Miriam, complicates the politics of Paul and Mrs. Morel's relationship.

Mrs. Morel's guild activities are an instance of how the paternal voice of Labor is culturally sublimated to the feminine voice. However, her involvement in this group is discussed from a distance; the reader doesn't know what she's saying in these meetings, or even how she's saying it, only that she writes papers to be delivered. Early in the novel Mrs. Morel's participation in the guild society is portrayed reverently, with respect for her entrance into the public sphere, and her participation in public life outside of her domestic role.

It was a little club of women attached to the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which met on Monday night in the long room of the Bestwood "Co-op." The women were supposed to discuss the benefits to be derived from co-operation and other social questions. Sometimes Mrs. Morel read a paper. It seemed queer to the children to see their mother, who was always busy about the house, sitting writing in her rapid fashion, thinking, referring to books, and writing again. They felt for her on such occasions the deepest respect. (66)



Even if the politics of the guild society opposes Lawrence's conservative naturalism, the guild represents an activity that threatens the father's patriarchal subject-position. Walter Morel rudely mocks the guild as the "clat fart shop," and as Lawrence says, ". . . from the basis of the Guild, the women could look at their homes, at the conditions of their own lives, and find fault. So the colliers found the women had a new standard of their own, rather disconcerting" (77).

Lawrence makes it clear that it is the working men who perceive the guild societies as a threat to local, patriarchal authority. The tone of the narrator's voice when he discusses Mrs. Morel's activity in the women's guild, and the reverence expressed toward it, produces a positive model for intellectual and/or aesthetic activity in the public sphere, something that Paul strives to emulate, but not identify with. In this respect, then, Mrs. Morel is as responsible for Paul's desire to be an artist as is the displaced oedipal anger Paul harbors toward his father. Paul's fascination with his mother's public role assumes a crucial role in the development of his aesthetic consciousness. Because he moves toward the subject-position of an artist, whose work becomes public, and is subject to possible ridicule by an insensitive public, Paul thus engages in an activity that simulates his mother's public voice. Paul's

concerns about theology, and his passionate devotion to aesthetics may repress issues of community, but mirror the religious intensity of his mother's social engagements. Moreover, Mrs. Morel's activities in the guild suggest a strong political opposition to Spencer's evolutionary naturalism, and very possibly an adherence to the kind of mutual aid proposed by Kropotkin and others, although Mrs. Morel is certainly not an anarchist, nor is she portrayed as a radical by any stretch of the imagination.

But as Paul's aesthetic ideology takes a more definite form, his unconscious political aggression towards his mother's attitudes becomes more marked. Of course, Paul's anger is linked to Mrs. Morel's interference in Paul's relationships, but one of the weapons he uses against her is his relationship to art, something she cannot understand or really discuss with Paul in a way that achieves the status of fruitful dialogue. Paul's artistic success pleases his mother, but it is also a factor that Paul uses to silence her.

The emotional tension between Paul and his mother over Paul's relationship with Miriam evokes an example of how this silencing takes place. As Paul "educates" Miriam, his absence from the family angers his mother. Moreover, Paul unconsciously estranges his mother by informing her about their philosophical and literary conversations. This creates a tension not only on an emotional level, but on an



ideological level, as Paul makes a point of stressing educational and generational distance--hence, the cultural and psychological separation from his mother heightens the ideological friction. In one instance, Paul proudly announces that he is teaching Miriam algebra, and even though Lawrence implies that this is a difficult subject for the "anthropomorphic" Miriam to comprehend, Paul's newly found pedagogical authority has the effect of unnerving Mrs. Morel. She replies coldly, "I hope she [Miriam] gets fat on it." Such a reply not only signals Mrs. Morel's devouring jealousy, but also expresses a symbolic gesture on her part directed towards Paul and Miriam's acquisition of an abstract language (algebra) which itself signifies a level of education and class mobility denied to Mrs. Morel, whose position in the community, despite her middle-class background and literacy, has been fixed.

The increasing sense of distance between Paul and his mother represents the now traditional components of the novel's oedipalized battle. But a closer reading of these dynamics reveals how the psychological reading can be projected to the plane of ideology, which reveals a deeper social drama unfolding beneath the surface features of the narrative dynamics.

The ideological aspect of Paul's relationship with his mother occurs after Paul's negative transaction in the



domestic sphere. Paul has offended his mother by accidentally burning a loaf of the bread she bakes each Friday. This happens in his mother's absence. When she returns home, Paul is not there; he is on his way back from escorting Miriam home. When Paul returns, he finds his mother silent and very angry. Paul attempts to lighten the situation, but to no avail. He raises the subject of the bread and offers to pay, but this is not an issue of pennies and bread. Mrs. Morel then confronts Paul over the real issue: Miriam. Mrs. Morel scolds Paul for taking Miriam home: "Is she so fascinating that you must follow her all that way?" she asks. Lawrence describes her as appearing visually disturbed: "She sat still with averted face, stroking with a rhythmic, jerked movement the black sateen of her apron. It was a movement that hurt Paul to see"(261).

Mrs. Morel then raises the issue as to why Paul spends so much time with Miriam, why she is so fascinating and Mrs. Morel and the family so uninteresting. Realizing that his mother is in ill health, and that the issue of Miriam is so distressing to her, he offers to sacrifice his love for Miriam in exchange for his mother's affection. The exchange seems to work, but it is not a real exchange. Paul is already attracted to Clara Dawes at this point in the narrative and his feelings toward Miriam are mixed. In a cruel way, Paul enjoys his power over Miriam, and in another cruel way, he also enjoys the suffering that it produces in



his mother.

Paul's power over Miriam and his mother has to do with the defeat of Miriam, but not in the terms that he expresses to his mother. The defeat of Miriam is, on an ideological level, also the defeat of Mrs. Morel's oppositional voice, as Paul effects an emotional double-deal, an exchange with his mother that will, in effect, render her former political voice powerless. Mrs. Morel guarantees a renewal of motherly affection in exchange for the abrogation of Paul's romance with Miriam; however, the narrator implies that Paul wants out of his relationship with Miriam anyway.

Paul's sacrifice of Miriam, as I will show here, hinges on Lawrence's sacrifice of the mother's progressive voice, a sacrifice for the reader as much as it is a sacrifice for Mrs. Morel. At one of the most tense moments between Paul and his mother, he tells her why he does not find her, his family, the community, or much of anything in Bestwood interesting, to say the least, or stimulating. As the reader already knows, Paul's aesthetic development has led him elsewhere. When Mrs. Morel asks Paul about Miriam, she cannot contain her jealousy--if Paul doesn't love Miriam, then why does he spend so much time with her:

"Then why do you fly to her so often!"

"I do like to talk to her--I never said I didn't. but I don't love her."

"Is there nobody else to talk to?"

"Not about the things we talk of. There's lots of things that you're not interested in,



that--"

"What things?"

Mrs. Morel was so intense that Paul began to pant.

"Why--painting--and books. You don't care about Herbert Spencer."

"No," was the sad reply. "And you won't at my age."

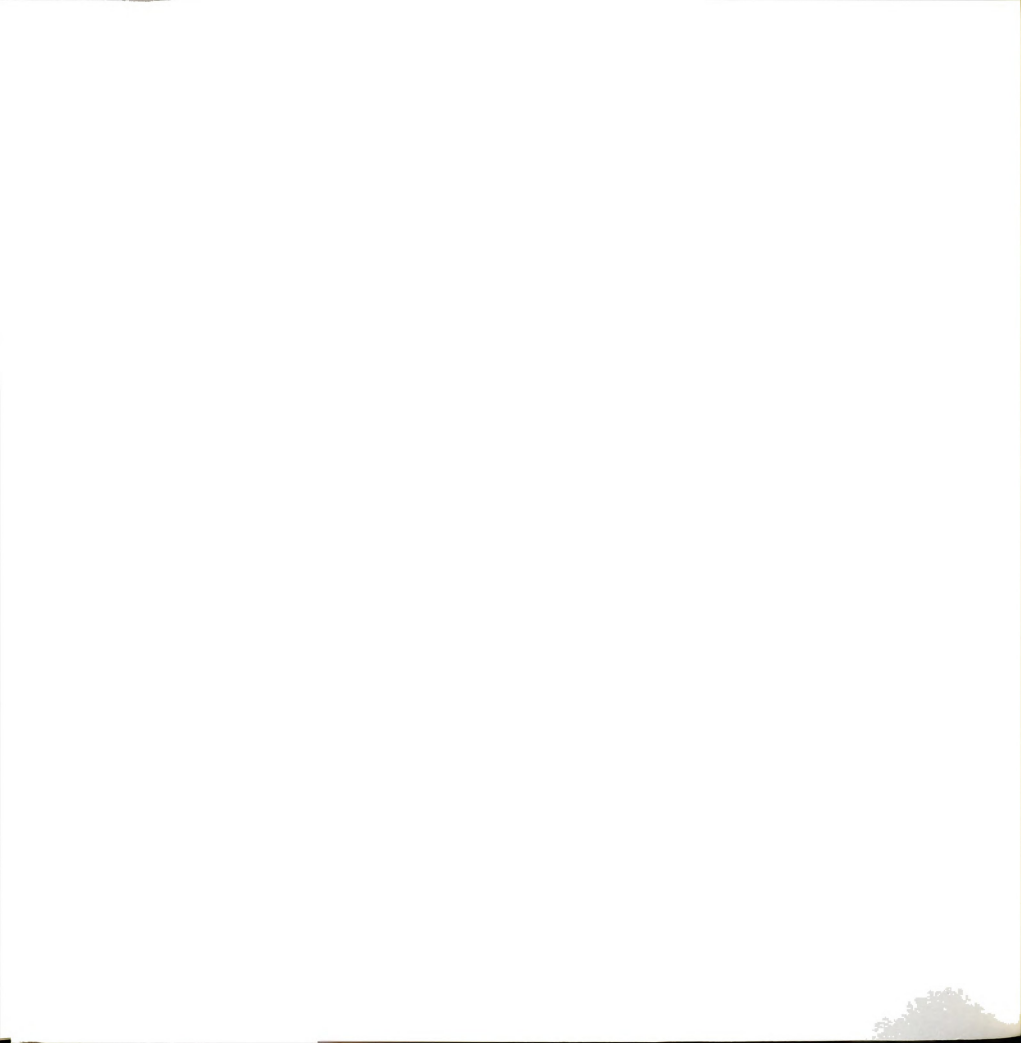
"Well, I do now--and Miriam does--"

"And how do you know," Mrs. Morel flashed defiantly, that I shouldn't? Do you ever try me?"

"But you don't, mother, you know you don't care whether a picture's decorative or not; you don't care what manner it is in"(261).

Paul responds rather strangely. He shifts the emotional issue to the issue of texts and cultural discourse, calling into the discussion his mother's relationship to the discourse of social evolution, naturalist philosophy, and aesthetics. Paul does this in a very psychically charged moment. But why--to merely deflect what cannot be spoken? As the narrator has informed us throughout the novel, these philosophical issues for Paul have been transformed into ideological weapons. Paul informs his mother that the subjects he and Miriam discuss transcend the limitations of his mother's subject-position. These subjects certainly transcend the limitations of his father's subject-position, but that is an irrelevant issue: Paul's entrance into the world of art is based on a rivalry with his mother's former interests in social cooperation and guild activities.

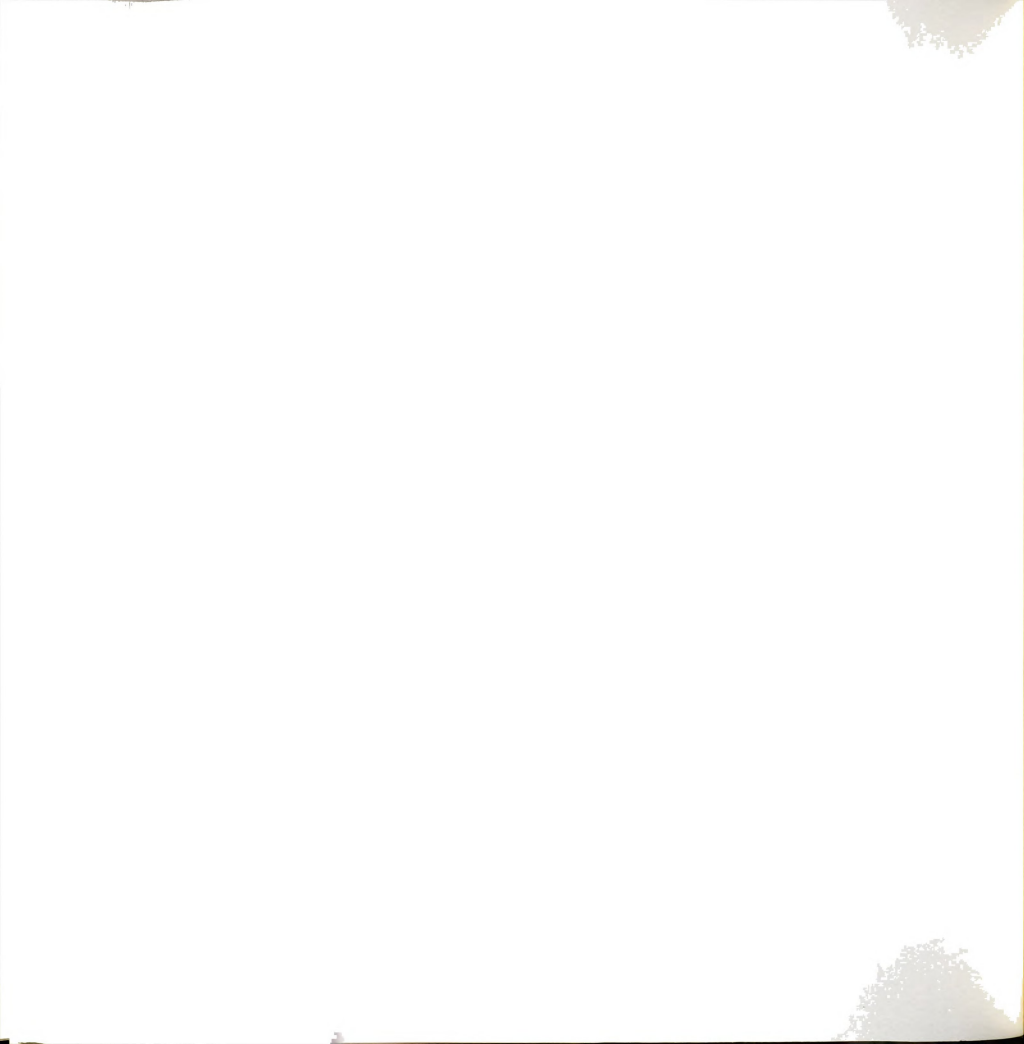
As this dialogue continues, Mrs. Morel appears more visibly shaken. The emotional rupture produced by the possibility of losing Paul to Miriam--over her discursive



limitations--has reduced her to a quivering wreck, a shell of the subject she once was. Dumbfounded, she cannot articulate a position that she was once able to. Hence, in a very different moment here, Mrs. Morel is silenced by the paternal name of Spencer, which is aligned with the power of her son's discourse, over the exchange of a lover. Mrs. Morel cannot utter a response that invokes the former self that the young Paul had so much respect for. Hence, when Mrs. Morel says that she doesn't care about Herbert Spencer at her age, she figuratively empties her voice of social power. Lawrence thus memorializes her former status as a subject concerned with social issues that he now deeply opposes.

Paul symbolically usurps the position of the father by evoking the name of a dominant paternal figure in culture (Herbert Spencer). Mrs. Morel bargains away what little autonomy she had left in return for the security that Paul will return to the domestic circle by refusing Miriam. But the name of Spencer is significant, since it symbolically elicits an ideological force that leaves Mrs. Morel speechless, numb, and shaken. Realizing the emotional damage he has inflicted on his mother, Paul then attempts to reduce things to the level of simple generational differences, saying:

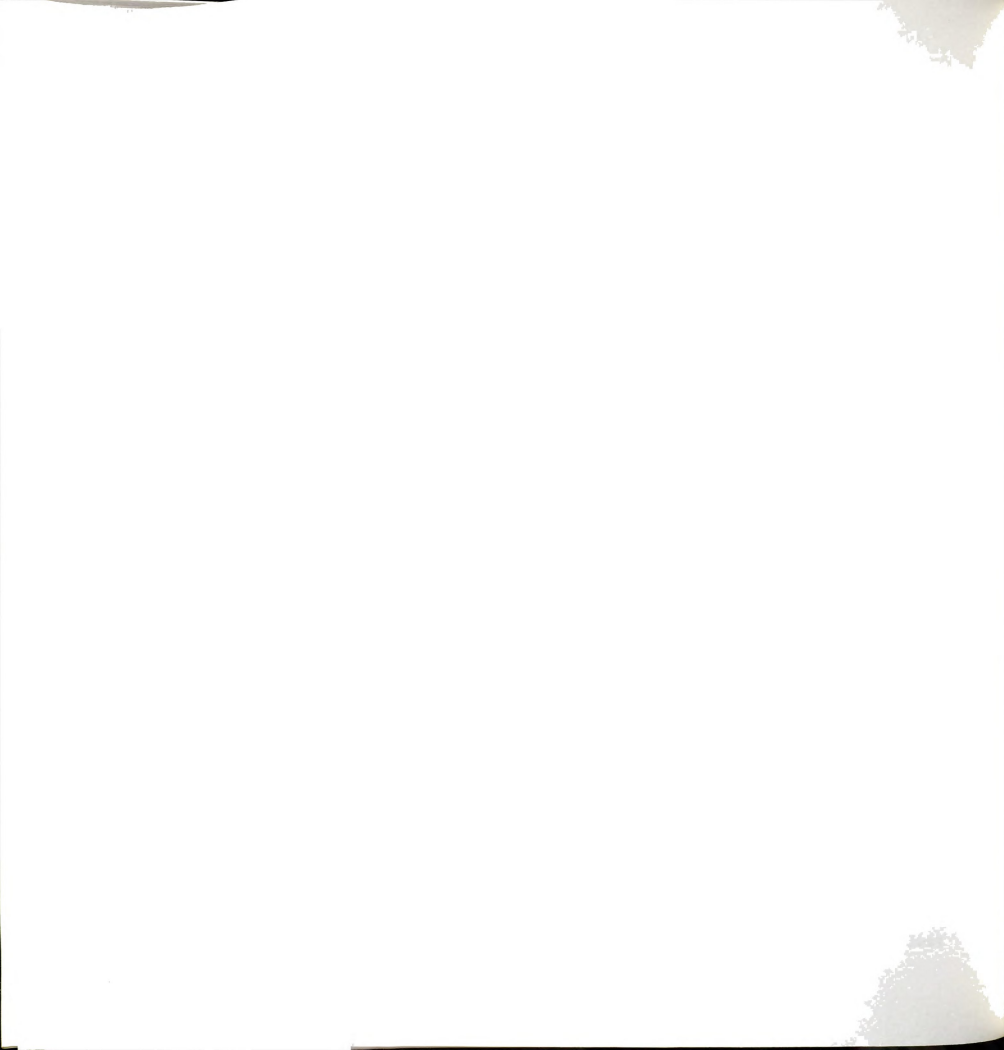
"You're old, mother, and we're young."
He only meant that the interests of **her** age
were not the interests of his. But he
realized the moment he had spoken that he said



the wrong thing.(262)

Distraught and distressed over this exchange, Mrs. Morel "cried, in a whimpering voice, **so unlike her own** that he [Paul] writhed in agony." 262) (Emphasis mine) The force of this moment traumatizes both Paul and his mother. But Lawrence directs the reader's attention to the effect that this exchange has on Mrs. Morel's subjectivity rather than Paul's. What is at stake here is the disempowerment and subsequent de-materialization of Mrs. Morel's former social self, one constructed through ideology and one that was empowered through her participation in an emergent public sphere.

Lawrence inscribes a state of an intense emotional drama through an oedipal exchange that encodes ideology as much as it does a mother-son bond. The middle figure in this exchange is Miriam, who is described as a subject who deploys a discourse inaccessible to Mrs. Morel. After all, Paul's attraction to Miriam has brought about this intense scene, as well as Paul's utterance of a name of a symbolic father in order to silence Mrs. Morel. But what is intriguing about Lawrence's dialogue here is that Paul and Miriam have never discussed the subject of Spencer. Paul and Miriam have discussed a range of cultural subjects, but neither Spencer's name nor his social philosophy are directly referred to in a novel that makes conscious references to cultural figures in Paul's aesthetic development.



Lawrence overpowers oppositional discourse in a way that allows the oedipal drama to mask the ideological aspects of the narrative. He substitutes a symbolic image of a social father through the name of Spencer.⁵ The name of Spencer, as it drops into the dialogue, is endowed with ideological and social value; here it possesses the force of law that enables the son to silence the mother. Lawrence thus fetishizes the name of Spencer as if it contained power in itself, as if it were an emblem of the law. It works. Mrs. Morel trembles at the sound of Paul's invocation of a discursive form that she cannot speak to. Lawrence's imaginary identification with the paternal Spencer fills in for the lack of a social voice, for the displaced authority of the real father (Walter Morel). In this sense Lawrence attempts to decisively resolve the novel's conflicts between progressive or cooperative ideology and the conservative forces of naturalist struggle.

Lawrence unconsciously represents the social forces that symbolically animate Paul's authority, which problematizes this struggle in the social dynamics of Sons and Lovers. Lawrence's invokes the name of Spencer and forces the narrative to reveal the limitations of the subject's material construction through ideology. Literally a moment after Paul has silenced his mother, his implicit recognition of this silencing doesn't seem to count for much



as a way of covering up the institutional tracks that mark these subjects. Lawrence's indirect discourse ("He only meant. . . .") more powerfully reveals the mechanisms at work that shape the subject. Hence, Lawrence shows us what he cannot tell us: that desire is bound up with ideological forces as much as it is with the psychological drives that he would later focus on. Subjects in narrative, then, are constructed by institutions and ideology, something that Lawrence's valorization of naturalistic ideology could not escape from.

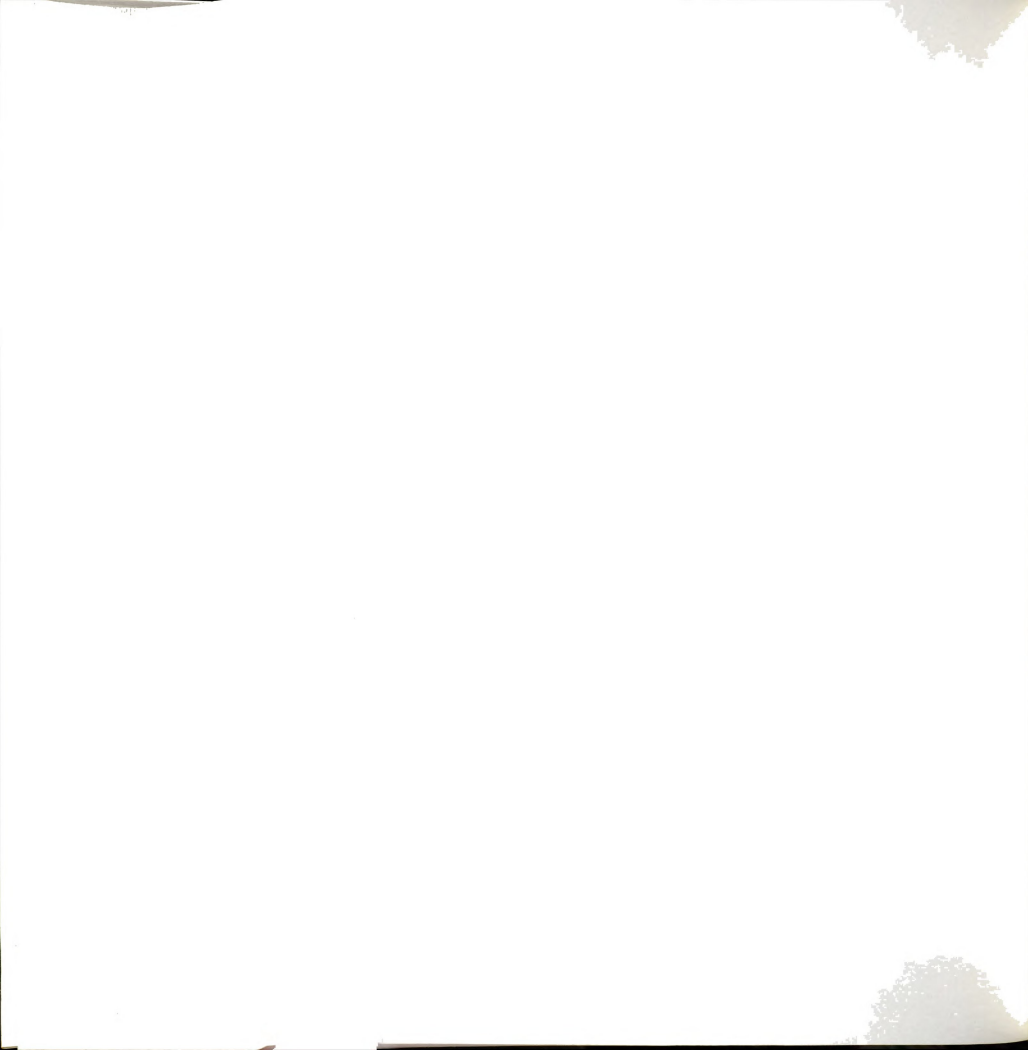
From the Private to the Public: Clara's Complaint

Lawrence discredits Mrs. Morel's oppositional discourse and the subject that participated in the guilds, the community, and hence in history. As social drama, Sons and Lovers ideologically shapes itself through struggles in the domestic realm, the private sphere. Lawrence represents this drama as a private struggle--between Miriam and his mother. The discourse shifts, however, to the public sphere through Paul's relationship--the most passionate and most physical in Sons and Lovers--with Clara Dawes. Unlike Miriam and Mrs. Morel, Clara is a worker, well versed in labor politics and active in local struggles. Separated from her husband, the irascible Baxter Dawes, she challenges Paul's values and ideological positions. Clara is older than Paul Morel, and her "public" status as an avowed feminist and socialist marks



her as a different kind of woman, a new woman in a way that rivals the liberal Mrs. Morel as a mother figure. Lawrence's subordination of oppositional discourse takes a different, and within the scope of the novel, a decidedly more public turn.

Paul's proximity to local radical factions in Nottingham--those groups whose ideas are most likely associated with Blatchford and to some extent the Fabians--metonymically transports him to Clara Dawes via a letter. "The months went slowly along. Paul had more or less got into connection with the Socialist, Suffragette, Unitarian people in Nottingham. One day a friend of his and of Clara's, in Bestwood, asked him to take a message to Mrs. Dawes" (319). Immediately, Paul enters into a scene of production in which he finds Clara doing lace-work at her mother's house. "He had surprised her in her drudgery" (322). Clara's response to her work sounds similar to one of Tressell's characterizations of the conditions of labor as being part of a large scheme of trickery. When Paul asks her if the work is "sweated," she replies scornfully, "Isn't all women's work? That's another trick the men have played, since we force ourselves into the labour market"(322). Paul remains silent on this issue and asks Clara whether she would prefer to go back to work at Jordan's, where he, possessing supervisory power over the work-place now, can get Clara her job back.



Lawrence represents the activity of Clara's lace-work in a way that embodies Sons and Lovers' contradictory attitudes toward doctrinaire features of the discourse of Labor. Both Paul's proximity to Labor and his ideological distance from it become the focus of the narrative. He can present Clara sympathetically, but he cannot agree with her; he can report the degradation, futility, and exploitation of Clara's sweated labor, but he cannot link this to structures of domination and exploitation that figure into the community at large. Lawrence isolates Clara as a denatured figure, as Paul directs his gaze toward the objectified body of Clara. Paul thus reduces Clara's subject-position not to the actual subject of labor and the social structures that produce levels of personal misery, but to her status as a subject in a scene that he finds unnatural. Moreover, the presence of Clara's mother, described as a predatory spider, who attempts to silence her when she bad mouths men, compounds the pathos of the scene.

Paul appears to realize Clara's complaint: "Wasn't he to take Clara's fulminations so seriously after all" (323). On one hand, Paul contemplates Clara's sweated work as a form of incarceration, a restriction of the body, and the objectification of the woman worker who has imitated the unnatural movement of a machine. On the other hand, Paul's position as a spectator figuratively controls Clara through



his gaze. Paul's distance from Clara is defined by power; he is repulsed by the unnatural exploitation he witnesses in her labor, but he is also attracted by her helplessness:

She spun steadily at her work. He experienced a thrill of joy, thinking she might need his help. She seemed denied and deprived of so much. And her arm moved mechanically, that should never have been subdued to a mechanism, and her head was bowed to the lace, that never should have been bowed. She seemed to be stranded there among the refuse that life has thrown away, doing her jennying. It was a bitter thing for her to be put aside by life, as if it had no use for her. No wonder she protested. (323)

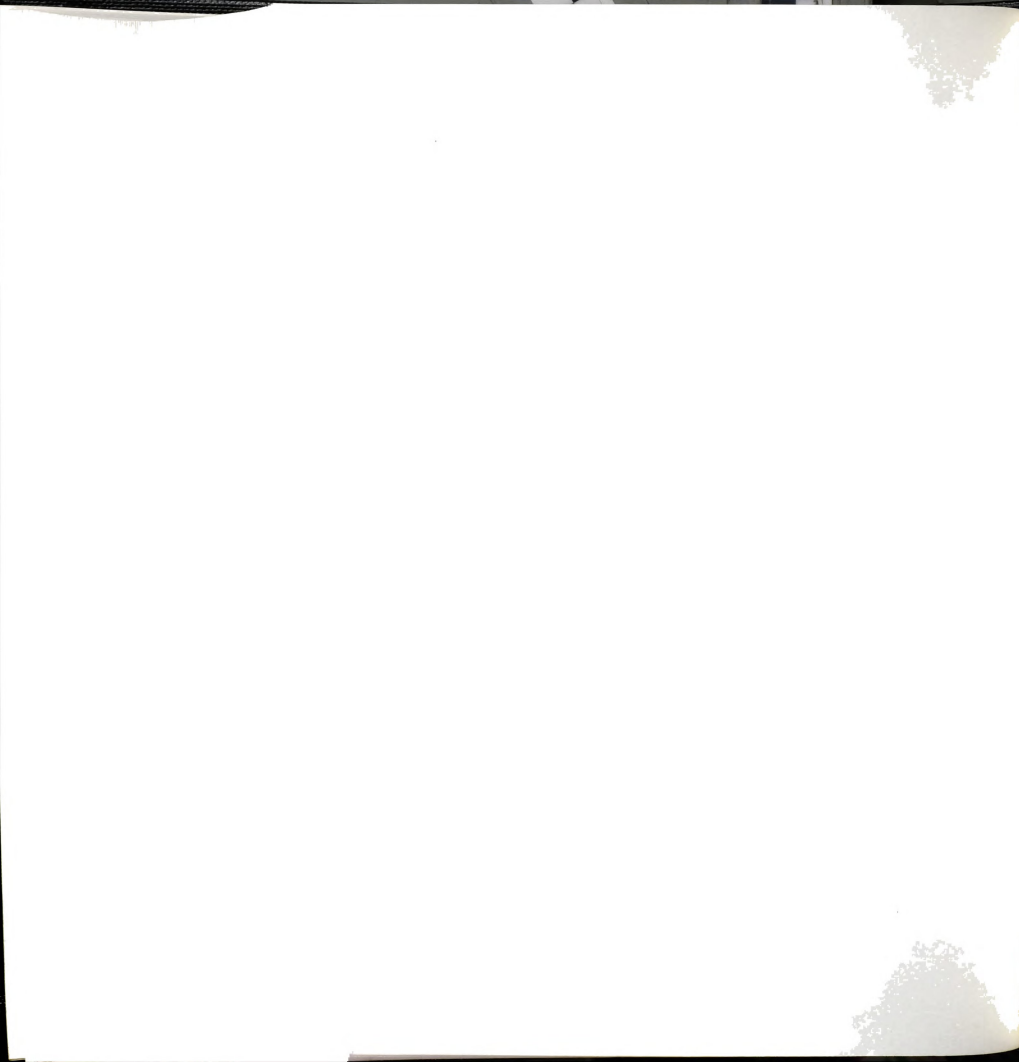
In light of Lawrence's general attitude toward Labor, the effect of the discourse here is to play out the other edge of Lawrence's attitude toward work and culture. Like Spencer, Lawrence clearly resists reformist efforts to explain exploitation as the result of social forces. Hence, Lawrence decontextualizes Clara's protest as the result of personal circumstances, as if she is "put aside by life," not in the sense that her work has been marginalized and sweated as women's' work, but as if this condition were something essential to her individual nature.

Lawrence thus deracinates the figure of Clara from a wider community and grounds her misery, and the narrator's misery, in the realm of subjective choice. Clara's protest is thus framed by Lawrence as one that is inadequate to deal with her own situation, as if she possessed power to change



it in the first place. Paul's desire for Clara subsequently represses the material forces that determine her subject-position in culture, as his gaze subjects her to the sexual force of his desire. In this light, the power dynamics of the above mentioned scene, runs against the grain of the critique of labor and commerce that Lawrence produces for Paul Morel, the "prisoner of industry." Simply put, Paul wishes to "liberate" Clara from her unnatural labor, but not in the way she desires liberation. Clara is thus in a double bind: As a worker, she is under Paul's spell; he will restore her to a position at Jordan's. As the estranged wife of Baxter Dawes, her (re)productive role in the community has been de-naturalized through her independence from Dawes. This is something that Lawrence employs in the narrative in order to complicate her life in a very public way.

Paul's relationship with Clara incorporates some of the most ideologically vigorous dialogues in the novel, and certainly forms the most dialogical aspect of the novel. As a feminist and radicalized worker, Clara confronts Paul's assumptions about the social order and the nature of things. Clara also plays the role of an art critic of sorts. She responds to Paul's painting in a way that Miriam and Paul's mother cannot, criticizing his work, rather than allowing Paul to didacticize unchecked on the function of art and the metaphysics of nature and life.



Paul's authority over Clara in the work-place, his position as a supervisor of sorts, enables him to control the politics of the relationship. Clara resists this power, which Paul enjoys. The dynamics between Paul and Clara's courtship within the work-place allows Paul to manage and therefore contain Clara's radicalism. Paul finds Clara's radical discourse threatening on many levels, one that supersedes his mother's guild meetings. The contradiction here, among other things, is that as Paul gets Clara out of the house and back into the workplace, her house--actually her mother's house--is at least a place where she can speak her mind. When she returns to Jordan's, Clara is transported to a workplace where Paul maintains surveillance and has power over her as a superior, a power that he uses to re-domesticate Clara by issuing demarcations or social lines that determine the rules of passion versus the rules of the workplace.

Moreover, Paul turns back on his earlier emancipatory assertions about work, life, subjective liberation and the role of art. When Paul is with Clara his paternalist, authoritarian ambitions speak out more forcefully as the temporal restrictions on the subject of labor produce contradictions within culture. For example, Paul's re-conceptualizes passion. While he is subject to the work-world he announces that love is equivalent to leisure-time. He wants it kept out of the work-place: "I don't want



anything to do with love when I'm at work. Work's work--" (438). Clara responds angrily to this, establishing a position that seems more akin to the voice of a later Lawrence who rebels against the mechanistic confines of the social order: "And you'll regulate it [love] according to Mr. Jordan's closing time?" Paul says he would, "according to the freedom from business of any sort." Asserting primacy over both domains of experience, Paul reorganizes the temporal rhythms of the work-world and private life along the lines of time expended during passionate activity, against the reified grid of the working-day. Again, this action undermines the sentiment of Paul's earlier views on work and art, life and the politics of love.

During his relationship with Clara, Paul is invested with a bizarre passion for the reified mechanisms of business and commerce, something that he earlier experiences as nothing but a form of horrible drudgery. In effect, Lawrence overrides any possibility that the workplace can be anything but mechanized, something Clara must reconcile herself to, while Paul later escapes. Of course, Clara really does experience the numbing effect of the working day, something that is compounded by her status in the community as a divorced suffragette. Her response to Paul's authoritarian rule in the workplace counters the libidinal, utopian aspects of Paul's own desire right back at him. Desire, when it threatens to blur the lines between reified time and private



(domestic) space, as it is voiced by Clara, pushes Paul into a conservative, rather managerial position. Passionate activity becomes little more than a form of leisure time.

But the conflicts that shape the private/public structure of Sons and Lovers reveal an incorporation of naturalistic ideology that structures a confrontation between oppositional discourse and the embedded tenets of naturalism. Lawrence thus resolves the narrative problem of refuting radical discourse by positioning Clara as a public figure, a radical suffragette who "talks on platforms," a woman "already singled out from the sheep"(388), so to speak, as much as she is a figure for Paul's desire.

Lawrence materializes this ideological conflict between a grounded naturalism and a potentially de-stabilizing radical discourse (Clara's) in the institutional space of the brief courtroom drama that features Paul Morel, Baxter Dawes and Mr. Jordan. But rather than settling the trial over the issue of Baxter Dawes' assault on Jordan, the judgment, and hence the exoneration of Dawes, is decided through the absent figure of Clara. Paul's mention of Clara's name frees Dawes, angers Jordan, publicly humiliates Clara, and jeopardizes Paul's standing in the community, and, more importantly, his relationship with Clara. Ironically, Lawrence depicts the trial as a minimal interjection between the scuffle with Dawes and his subsequent conversation with Clara:



At the trial Paul Morel had to give evidence. Asked how the trouble began, he said:

"Dawes took occasion to insult Mrs. Dawes and me because I accompanied her to the theater one evening; then I threw some beer at him and he wanted his revenge."

"Cherchez la femme!" smiled the magistrate.

The case was dismissed after the magistrate had told Dawes he thought him a skunk.(431)

Lawrence minimizes the potential drama of this scene. Certainly he could have extended its temporal dimensions, in order to highlight the tensions between Paul, Dawes, and Jordan, especially in light of the narrative function of legal scenes in traditional novels and social fiction. But as if to make a point about collapsing institutional hierarchies, Lawrence does the opposite. Lawrence accelerates narrative time to the point of collapsing the real time of the trial. Like a book, it is easily opened and quickly shut. More importantly, Lawrence renders this scene as if it is part of a larger cultural script, as if it is a passage in a legal text that has been recited as part of a natural law. As the destabilizing force, Clara need not be present, nor does she have to be a material player or witness in the drama. The mere mention of her name involves the element of elemental passion, reducing the trial to a cultural cliché, a joke. Clara protests to Paul:

"Why need **my** name have been dragged in?"

"Better speak it openly than leave it to be whispered."

"There was no need for anything at all," she declared.

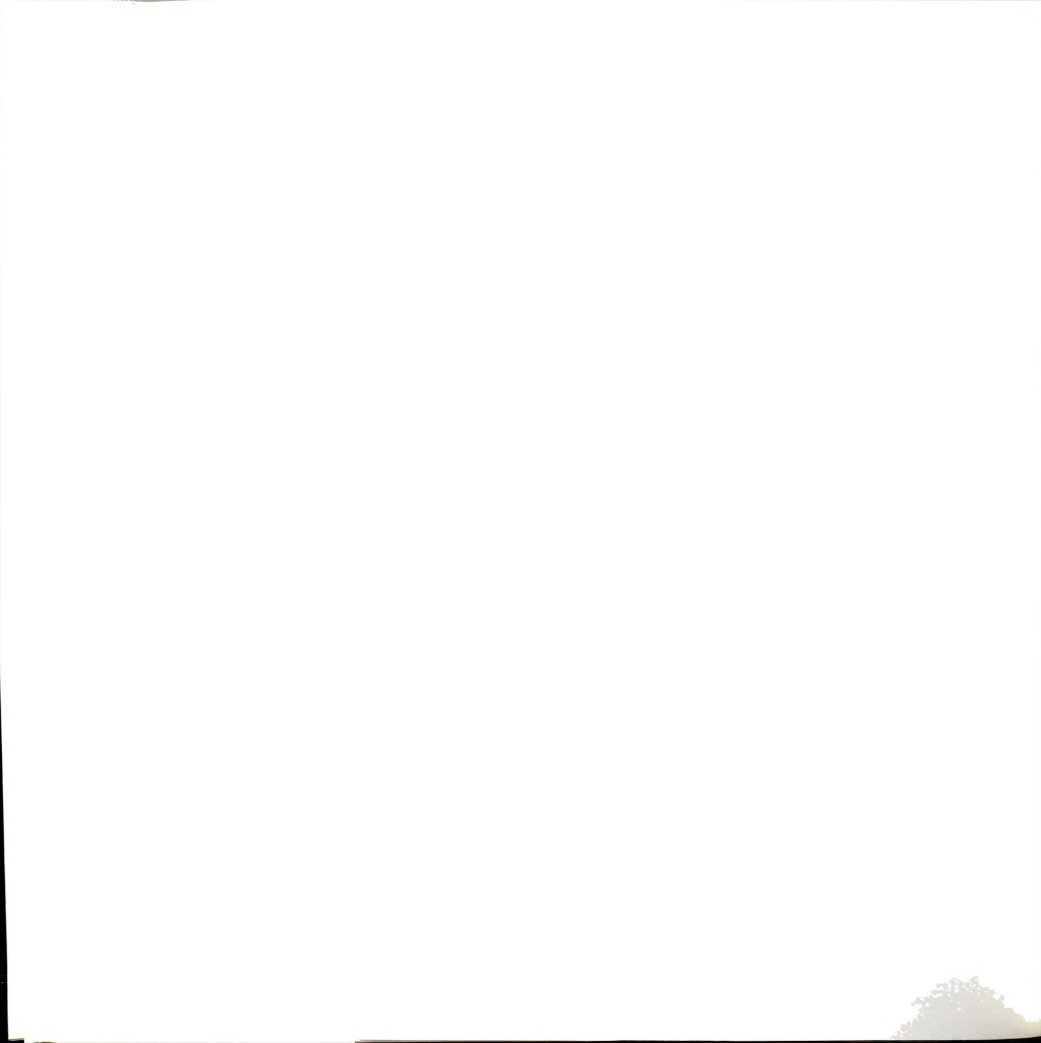
"We are none the poorer," he said



indifferently.

"You may not be," she said.(432)

The mere mention of Clara's name reduces her status within the community, lessening her symbolic capital as it voids the power of her oppositional social voice. Paul's insistence that his mentioning of her name is something better said in public redresses the earlier drama between himself and his mother over the issue of social and aesthetic discourse. Soon after this incident he speaks to his mother about the matter, who sternly asks him if he really considers Clara's perspective at all. Clara doubles for Paul's mother--yet far from being another woman who stands in the way of Paul's psychological development, she represents a discursive point of resistance, as Paul has difficulty engaging in dialogue with Clara. She is referred to as having two sides, one physical, one discursive. As Paul says to his mother, "Sometimes when I see her just as the woman, I love her, mother; but then, when she talks and criticizes, I often don't listen to her"(432). Mrs. Morel replies that Clara has "as much sense as Miriam," a statement that acknowledges Paul's inability to work through genuine dialogue, as well as signaling a recognition that returns the narrative to Lawrence's contradictions within naturalist discourse. Here, Mrs. Morel assails Paul's contradictory desire. Paul wants to cling to a somewhat progressive vision of the feminine while retaining traditional (essentialist) notions of the female. In this instance, however, the name of Spencer need



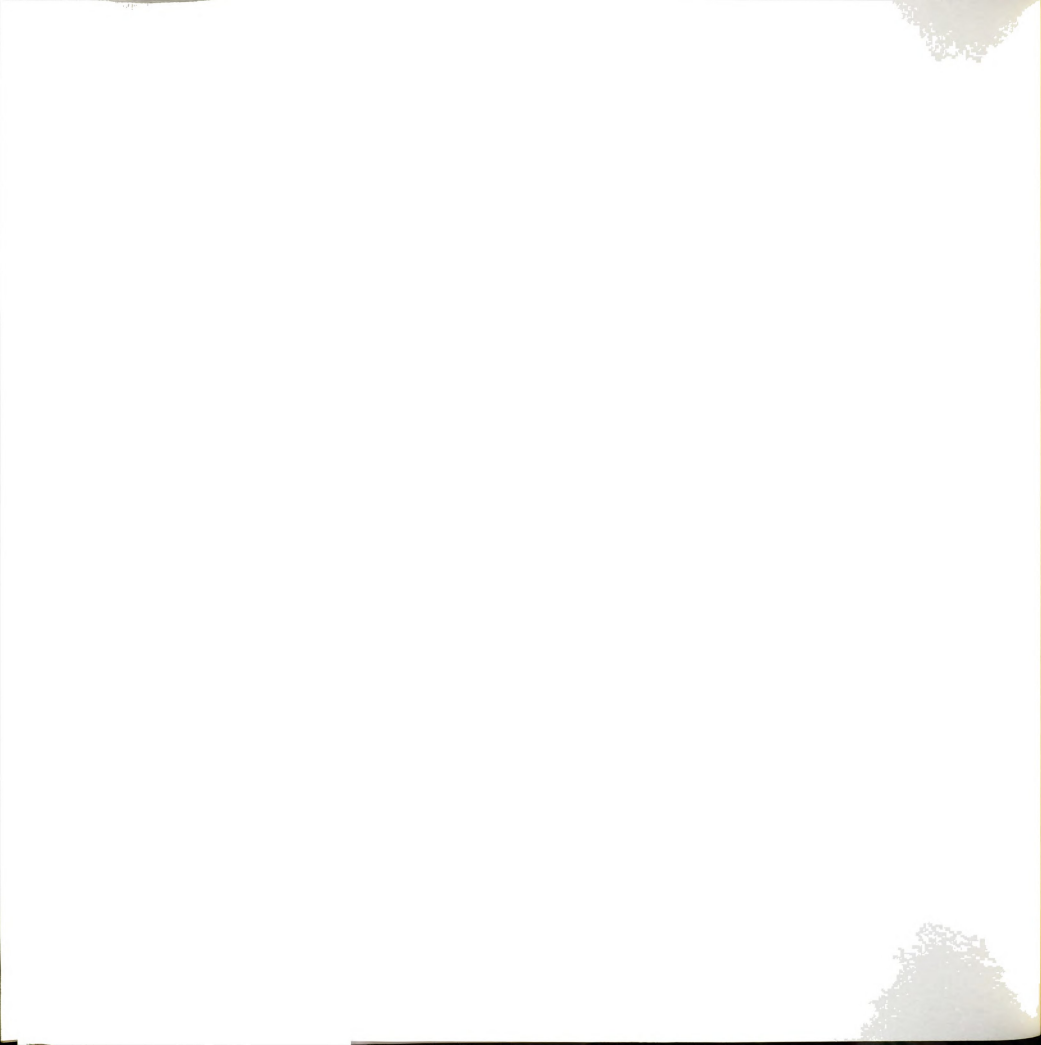
not be called upon. The name of Miriam, as mentioned by Mrs. Morel, elicits this contradiction through a kind of double-displacement, one that recalls the earlier scene between Paul and Mrs. Morel.

The body of Clara is thus divided into two parts: the essential and the inessential. One Paul constructs as a natural force; the other he silences by blocking her words, silencing the body that speaks through oppositional naturalism. Lawrence re-domesticates Clara in a way that consigns the woman to the private, a move that mirrors versions of the feminine popular in both progressive and conservative discourse of the time. Paul facilitates the reunion of Baxter Dawes and Clara. Paul thus hands the emancipated Clara over to the elemental and brutish figure of Dawes. Like the stern supervisor he has matured into--at least for the moment--Paul arranges for Dawes to get a job in Sheffield. During Dawes' convalescence, the two have become friends in a manner that suggests a ritual bond ("The two men, between whom was such a big reserve, seemed faithful to each other" (495)), which signals that an agreement has been reached through dialogue.

On a very abstract level, Lawrence symbolically prefigures the reunion between Dawes and Clara earlier in the narrative when he stays at Mrs. Radford's house, after escorting Clara to the theater. This has to do with the



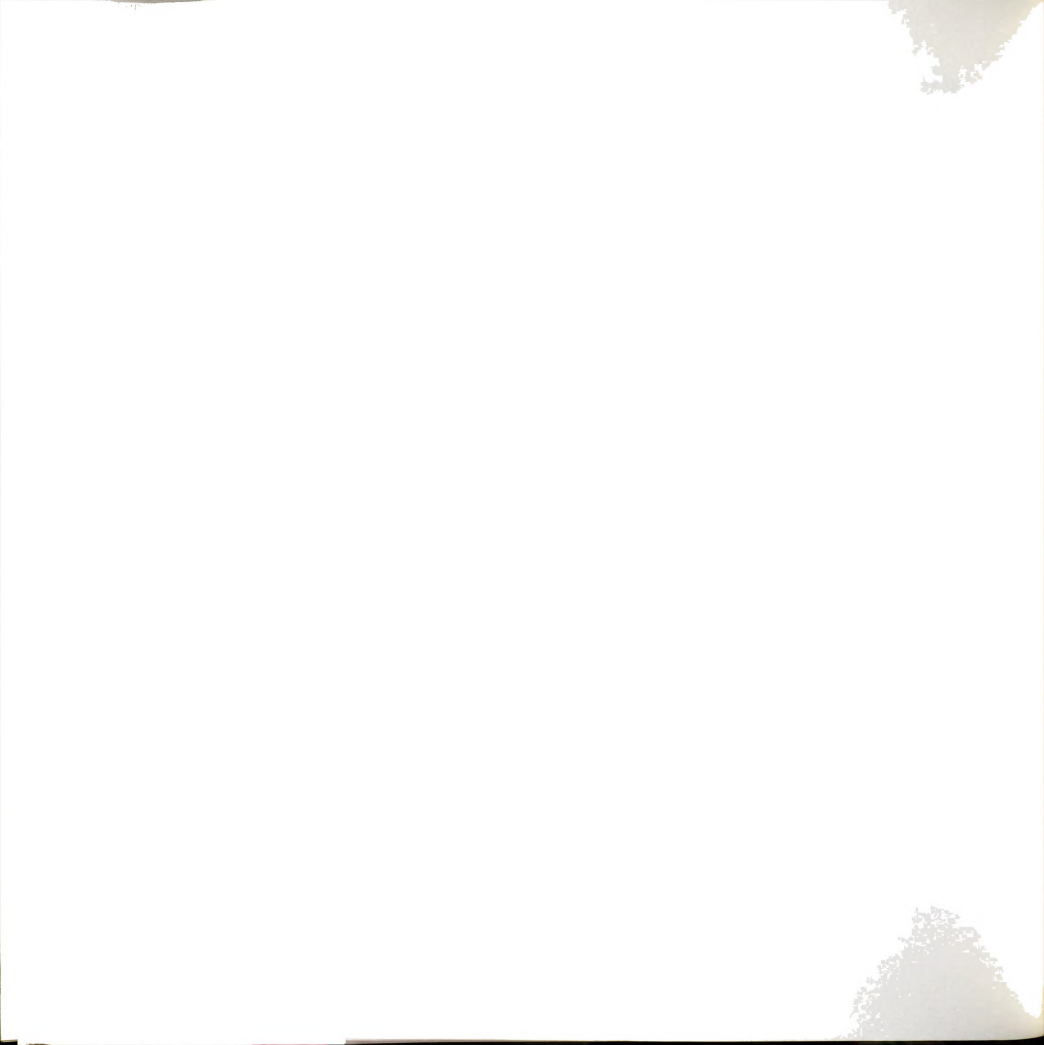
narrative fabric of what I would call displaced coverings, more specifically the symbolic status of various clothes that Paul is forced to wear at specific scenes in the novel that relate to his identity, but more importantly to the masculine subject positions: i.e., successful sons or successful lovers. This is evident as Paul spends the night at Mrs. Radford's. Paul is forced to wear the pajamas that were intended for Baxter Dawes to sleep in. Mrs. Radford jokes cruelly in her working-class accent, "'Said he reckoned to do wi'out trousers i'bed. She turned confidently to Paul, saying: 'He couldn't bear 'em, them pyjama things.'" In effect Mrs. Radford enforces her daughter's estranged chastity and suggests Dawes' rightful, elemental place in the family by making Paul wear the sleeping suit. But wearing displaced clothing of tragic males is something Paul has done before. Paul had also worn the day-suit of William's, the suit Mrs. Morel tailors for Paul after William's death. These two scenes, which involve displaced coverings, point to Lawrence's desire "to try on" subject positions that signify a framework of unity, a desire to reintegrate the displaced and fragmented elements of an essentialized family structure. Yet displaced clothing is something that the narrative reveals as Paul's very lack of belonging to that family picture, as something that he can only try on. (As an artist Paul will reject the suit, leave town.) During one of the final dialogues between Paul, Clara and Dawes, Lawrence self-consciously dislocates Paul from any sense of the elemental or primal union that he



sees as natural between Clara and Baxter Dawes. As Lawrence shifts the focalization from Paul to Clara this does appear to be the case:

And as he went about arranging, and as he sat talking, there seemed something false about him and out of tune. Watching him unknown, she said to herself there was no stability about him. He was fine in his way, passionate, and able to give her drinks of pure life when he was in one mood. And now he looked paltry and insignificant. There was nothing stable about him. Her husband had more manly dignity. At any rate he did not waft about with any wind. There was something evanescent about Morel, she thought, something shifting and false. He would never make sure ground for any woman to stand on.(500)

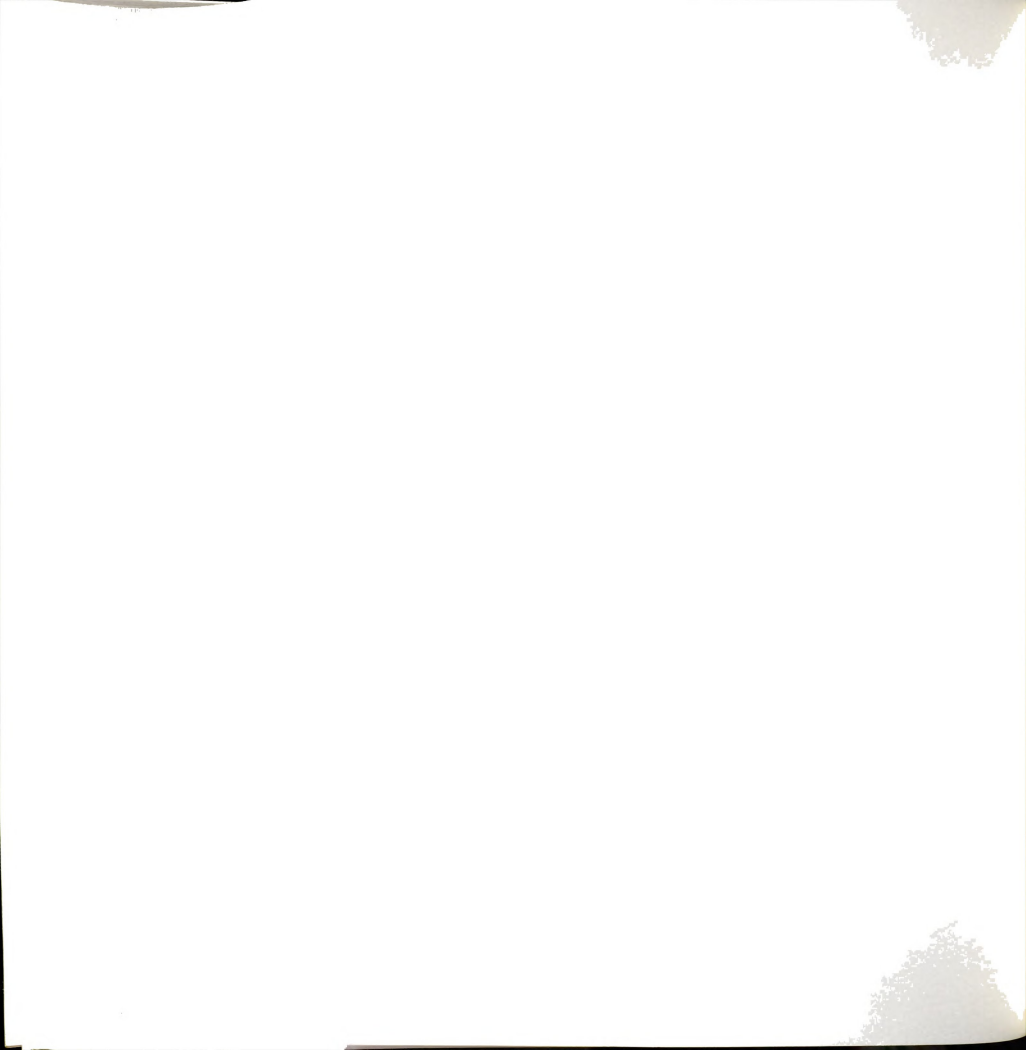
While Paul's subject-position undergoes a radical destabilization here--arranging, wafting, shifting--Clara is radically restabilized in the discourse of working-class domesticity. Lawrence re-affixes Clara to a private discourse. Clara's views on the social struggles will be reduced to the same kind of trivial sentiments that Mrs. Morel's are reduced to by Walter Morel earlier in the novel. That Dawes should bear a resemblance in his brute helplessness to Walter Morel completes the narrative transaction that deflects the subversive power of women's oppositional discourse. Lawrence is thus able to contain the threat and re-naturalize the feminine voice through a reverse projection: everything that Clara desires in Baxter Dawes--stability, strength, and sureness, is refracted through Clara



herself.

The dialogue between Paul Morel and Baxter Dawes presents itself as one of the few moments in the narrative where actual dialogue takes place--two working-class men deciding the terms of a transaction, the exchange of Clara. Yet their direct speech is supplemented by the narrator's recognition that this dialogue merely represses a naturalist sense of struggle or of primal violence: "The triumphant male came up in Dawes. He showed his teeth more distinctly" (497). Dawes' rank in the male tribe, so to speak, is annexed by his rightful marriage to Clara. Clara may desire Paul but she does not "belong" to him as she belongs to Dawes.

Finally, the reunion of Dawes and Clara symbolically ensures an ideological resolution of a dominant naturalism over a possibly subversive oppositional discourse. Lawrence's flirtation with radical discourse--the socialism of Blatchford, Fabianism, the possible incorporation of Carpenter's radical naturalism, and other forms of radical discourse, is conflicted with a naturalism that re-asserts itself paternally, keeping essential oppositions in place, re-domesticating the division of labor between the public realm and the intimacy of the private sphere in the working-class community. The aesthetic producer--Lawrence/Paul--maintains his distance, finally, by detaching himself from the community where these conflicts were originally produced.



Notes to the Introduction

¹ Eric Hopkins, A Social History of the English Working Classes (London: Edward Arnold, 1979) 122.

² J.F.C. Harrison, The English Common People (London: Croom Helm, 1984) 338.

³ Raymond Williams, Writing in Society (London: Verso, 1978) 235.

⁴ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986).

⁵ L.S. Dembo, Detotalized Totalities: Synthesis and Disintegration in Naturalist, Existential and Socialist Fiction (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1989) 39.

⁶ Peter Keating, The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914 (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989) 115-121.

⁷ David Baguley, Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 41.

⁸ Baguley 44.

⁹ Paul Eden, Socialism and Science (Keighly: Rydal Press, 1909) 8.



Notes to Chapter 1

¹ See E.L. Hunt, British Labor History, 1815-1914 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981) 334. Also see J.F.C. Harrison, The English Common People (London: Croom Helm, 1984) 333-347 for a concise overview of the various factions in the labor movement. Harrison also mentions the importance of Tressell's novel. For a picture of how utopian and anarchist radical groups were during the early 1880s see Logie Barrow, "The Homerton Social Democratic Club 1881-1882," History Workshop 5 (1978): 188-200.

² Stephen Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, 2 vols. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981) deals with the problems faced by the left during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Also see Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (New York: Columbia UP, 1961).

³ My usage of the ideology/mythology term here is derived from post-structural theory and semiotics, most notably the work of Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977). Also, see Patrick Brantlinger's Crusoe's Footprints (New York: Routledge, 1990) which, among other things, addresses the problem of agency and social formation regarding the problem of ideology. Brantlinger assesses the impact of such theorists as Barthes, Althusser, Raymond Williams and others, and succinctly locates this problem in the context of ideology and cultural studies. Brantlinger uses the "ideology/mythology" term in this context. Also, on the subject of ideology and myth see James J. Liszka, The Semiotic of Myth: A Critical Study of the Symbol (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989).

⁴ All references to Tressell are from The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955). While Tressell was not part of a specific community of writers, there is a forgotten genealogy of leftist and feminist writers, including Margaret Harkness, Olive Schreiner, Isabella O. Ford, and Robert Blatchford. Most of these writers produced social tracts as well as novels, and further problematize the politics of naturalism. For an understanding of how these networks produced oppositional discourse see June Hannam, Isabella Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). Also see Deborah Epstein Nord, "Neither Pairs nor Odd," Signs 15.4 (1990): 733-754.

⁵ Other relevant material on Tressell can be found in the following critical books and articles. Jack Mitchell's critical study of Tressell, Robert Tressell and The Ragged



Trousered Philanthropists (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969) offers an assessment of Tressell, including his relationship to other writers and the influence of Carlyle, Ruskin, William Morris and others on Tressell's novel. Raymond Williams, "The Ragged Arsed Philanthropists," Writing and Society (London: Verso, 1974): 239-255. On the issue of Tressell and the problem of realism, see Wim Neetens, "Politics, Poetics, and the Popular Text: The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists," Literature and History 14.1 (1988): 81-90.

⁶ Fred Ball, One of the Damned (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973) 207-212.

⁷ Raymond Williams, Problems in Materialism and Culture (London: Verso, 1980) 217.

⁸ Ball 78-83.

⁹ See Alan Silito's introduction to Tressell in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (New York: Monthly Review, 1962) 1-4.

¹⁰ Ball 254.

¹¹ P.J. Keating, The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971) 132.

¹² Diane Smith, "Confronting Socialism: The Naturalist Novel and Its Reception in Europe," Works and Days 14 (1989): 81-90.

¹³ Smith 82.

¹⁴ Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford UP, 1983) 218-219.

¹⁵ Terry Eagleton, Against the Grain (London: Verso, 1986) 24.

¹⁶ See David Wiltshire, The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978).

¹⁷ Williams, Problems 88.

¹⁸ Williams, Problems 96.

¹⁹ Robert Blatchford, Altruism: Christ's Glorious Gospel of Love Against Man's Dismal Science of Greed (London: Clarion, 1898). Blatchford, one of the most idealistic of the socialists and one of the least Marxist, writes in his usual evangelistic tone, that ". . . Socialism has behind it the strongest sentiment of modern times--the



sentiment of human love and mercy called Altruism" (4).

20 E.P. Thompson, William Morris: From Romantic to Revolutionary (New York: Pantheon, 1977) discusses the uneasy relationship between Hyndman and Morris and provides a concise overview of SDF politics.

21 H.M. Hyndman and William Morris, Socialism Made Plain: Being the Social and Political Manifesto of The Democratic Federation (London, 1883).

22 A reprint of Spencer's "The Coming Slavery" can be found in Truxton Beale, ed., The Man versus The State: A Collection of Essays by Herbert Spencer (New York: Kennerley, 1916) 370. This volume also contains an introduction to "The Coming Slavery" by Henry Cabot Lodge, (31-35).

23 Frank Fairman, Herbert Spencer on Socialism: A Reply to the article entitled "The Coming Slavery" (In the "Contemporary Review" for April, 1884.) (London, 1884).

24 H.M. Hyndman from the 1889 reprint of Socialism and Slavery: Being an Answer to an Attack Upon the Democratic Federation (in the "Contemporary Review" 4 April, 1884) (London, 1889). Among Hyndman's response to Spencer, other comments reveal his attitude toward Spencer on extremely radical ideas: "Such being, in brief, the view of the Socialists it is natural that Mr. Herbert Spencer, the principal living champion of individualism, should take the field against us" (5). Also, "That nationalization of the land accompanied by 'industrial armies' gives our individualist philosopher another shock (14), [and] socialists are perfectly satisfied with the exposition of middle-class philosophy by its principal champion"(24).

Hyndman also employs metaphors from the discourse of natural selection in order to challenge Spencer. For Hyndman, socialism addresses these problems with the aid of science: "There are few really unprejudiced thinkers who do not now admit that capitalists and the middle-class generally are quite incapable of handling the growing powers of man over nature for the benefit of the race. The fact comes out more clearly as each year passes by. Socialism therefore--the organised co-operation of men and women educated from early childhood to take their share in light, varied and pleasurable labour--must come into control and develop those forces which individuals did not invent, and which individuals cannot turn to the advantage of mankind. This evolution, I say, is inevitable, it is going on all around us at this hour. Shall we help its peaceful development by thoroughly understanding its growth and clearing away its obstacles, or shall we render violent revolution inevitable by sheer determination not to see? In either case such



harmonious association of workers, such as adaptation of surroundings and application of the increasing powers of science to the highest physical, mental, and moral development of man--such socialism, in a word, as we champion, means for all future generations not Slavery but full and never ending FREEDOM" (24).

25 In his pamphlet against Spencer, Fairman looks at earlier comments in Spencer's writing on social questions. He quotes Spencer, who in "The Coming Slavery" seems to do a turnaround on the vantage point of the middle class against the poor: "It is very easy for you, oh respectable citizen, seated in your easy chair, with your feet on the fender, to hold forth on the misconduct of the people, very easy for you to censure their extravagant and vicious habits, very easy for you to be a pattern of frugality, of rectitude, of sobriety" (5) See Herbert Spencer, Social Statics (New York, 1873).

26 Spencer, "The Coming Slavery" 37.

27 Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977) 123.

28 Williams, Writing 253.

29 Hyndman, Socialism and Slavery 6.

30 Williams makes an interesting comparison regarding different representations of working-class subjects in Tressell and Orwell. Williams writes, "Indeed there are parts of this book, which, taken on their own--which is quite wrong to do, but analytically you can hypothesize it--have such savage things to say about so many working-class people. . . . This is the kind of position which becomes a problem again in a writer like Orwell, who typically did not include in his diaries or notebooks those working-class men and women he met who were well-read, articulate, politically conscious or active in some pursuit which is conventionally not assigned to the class. If, on the other hand, he met somebody who fitted a middle-class vision of the drunken or feckless or ignorant or helpless working-man, down it went" (Writing 249). While Williams chides Orwell here, Tressell could very well have been one of the significant texts for Orwell's representation of the proles.

31 George Orwell, Keep the Aspidistra Flying (London: Gollancz, 1936) 44. While there are accounts of characters having to pawn their possessions to survive in RTP, Orwell's reference to the aspidistra seems to be a fabrication of Gordon Comstock's rebellious poesy.

32 Illustration from Punch 18 Sept. 1906: 205.



33 Illustration from Punch 9 Oct. 1907: 87.

34 For a while, social historians have noted the role of the press in maintaining this attitude toward Empire and the state. Elie Halevy in his A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, vol. 5 of Imperialism and the Rise of Labor, trans. E.W. Watkin (New York: Dodd, 1961) addresses this problem. For an excerpt of this, see "Public Opinion and Imperialism: The New Journalism" in Robin W. Winks, ed., British Imperialism: Gold, God, Glory (New York: Hindsdale, Ill.: Dryden; New York: Holt, 1963) 51-55. In RTP, the most visible target of Tressell's social critique is the press--or an image of the paternal language of the press. Clearly, it is the dominant social signifier in the novel. It is the paternalist organ of hegemonic social processes that reforms and re-shapes social perceptions of politics and nature. Its Neo-Spencerian representations of hostile struggle is instrumental in regulating and preventing the pragmatics of discursive action among workers. This is evident in RTP dialogues in which we find Owen's co-workers speaking, literally, in garbled tongues. For example, when discussing economic issues--fiscal policy or Tariff reform--Tressell has them slur words, i.e., fiscal policy as "fissical" policy--in order to stress difference and to mirror the alienated distance between these subjects and the commercial interests of newspaper production.

35 E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," Past and Present Series 2 (1967): 56-97.

36 Illustration from Tressell, 428.

37 Illustration from Punch, 22 Jan. 1913: 57.

38 Joseph Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus (New York: Norton, 1979) 61-62.

39 See Frederic Jameson's essay on Conrad in The Political Unconscious (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 206-280.

40 John Galsworthy, The Man of Property (New York: Scribners, 1918) 67-68.

41 Eagleton, Against 24.

42 Eric Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 193.



Notes to Chapter 2

¹ Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957) 193.

² Worker's Education Association, The Robert Tressell Papers (Kent: Robert Tressell Workshop, 1982) 43.

³ See Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle (Detroit: Black and Red, 1967). Debord presents a critique of consumer society in late capitalism. The spectacle is a term that Debord employs to characterize global relations of capital, power, and ideology in post-industrial culture. Tressell's self-conscious usage of the panorama prefigures aspects of Debord's notion of the spectacle. Tressell also represents the press as a naturalist vehicle of the spectacle in that journalism merely stands back and describes accounts of worker's misery through a quasi-scientific causality. The press is thus that wall of reference consumed by workers, but not necessarily opposed or negotiated.

⁴ Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (New York: Columbia UP, 1961) 204.

⁵ Stephen Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, vol. 2 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981) 267.

⁶ M.M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P) 84-258.

⁷ The cave metaphor in Tressell's novel and its relation to platonic dialogue and ideology is analyzed in detail by Roger Raby, "Propagande ou est ta victoire? Dialogue didactique manifest et dialogues latents dans *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* de Robert Tressell," Essais sur le Dialogue, ed. Jean Lavedrine (Grenoble: Publications de L'Universite' des Langues et Lettres, 1980) 165-177.

⁸ Terry Eagleton, The Present Function of Criticism (London: Verso, 1984) 52.

⁹ Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, Social Semiotics (Cornell UP, 1988) 176.



Notes to Chapter 3

¹ Hannah Mitchell, The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel, ed. Geoffrey Mitchell (London: Faber and Faber, 1968) 217.

² I will explain these issues later in Chapter 6. Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx, The Woman Question (London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1887), addresses the politics of the public and private sphere more forcefully than most pamphlets written by men in less militant radical factions.

³ See Chapter 2 for my discussion of "The Terrible Domestic Tragedy" in Tressell's The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists.

⁴ George Bernard Shaw, The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism (New York: Brentano, 1928) 197.

⁵ Thomas Duckworth Benson, Woman. . .The Communist, (London: Independent Labor Party, 1906).

⁶ Benson 4.

⁷ Benson 4.

⁸ Benson 5.

⁹ Benson 6.

¹⁰ Benson 6.

¹¹ Benson 7.

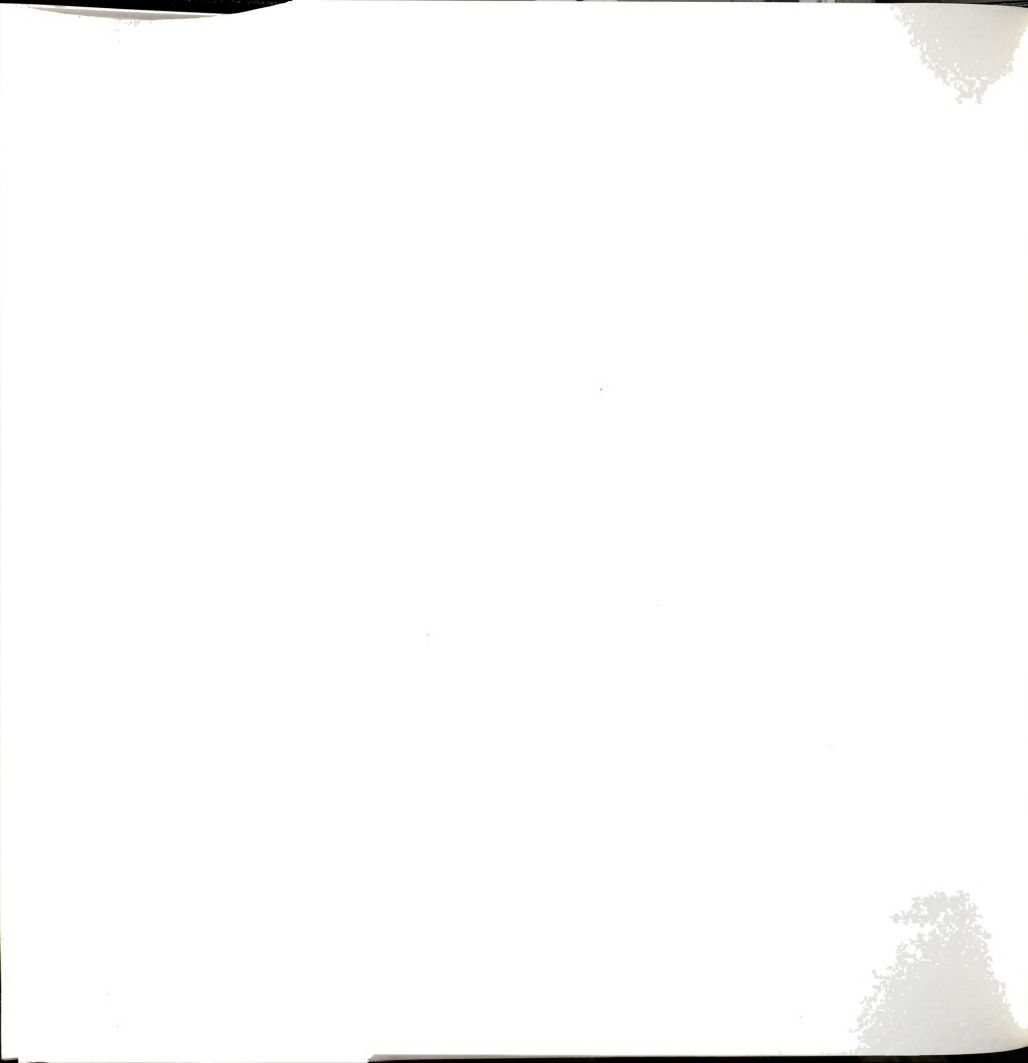
¹² Benson 9.

¹³ George Bernard Shaw states this in the "Epistle Dedicatory" to his play "Man and Superman" in Man and Superman (London: Constable, 1931) xviii.

¹⁴ Benson 11

¹⁵ Benson 12

¹⁶ See Frederick Engels, "The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State," The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978) 734-759.



Notes to Chapter 4

¹ Ernest Belfort Bax. The Fraud of Feminism. (London: Richards, 1913).

² Jonathan Rose, The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919 (Athens: Ohio UP, 1986) 29.

³ Virginia Woolf, Collected Essays, vol. 2, ed. Andrew McNellie (London: Hogarth, 1987) 263.

⁴ Bax 12.

⁵ Bax 23-24.

⁶ Bax 24.

⁷ Bax 53.

⁸ Bax 79.

⁹ Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984) 7.

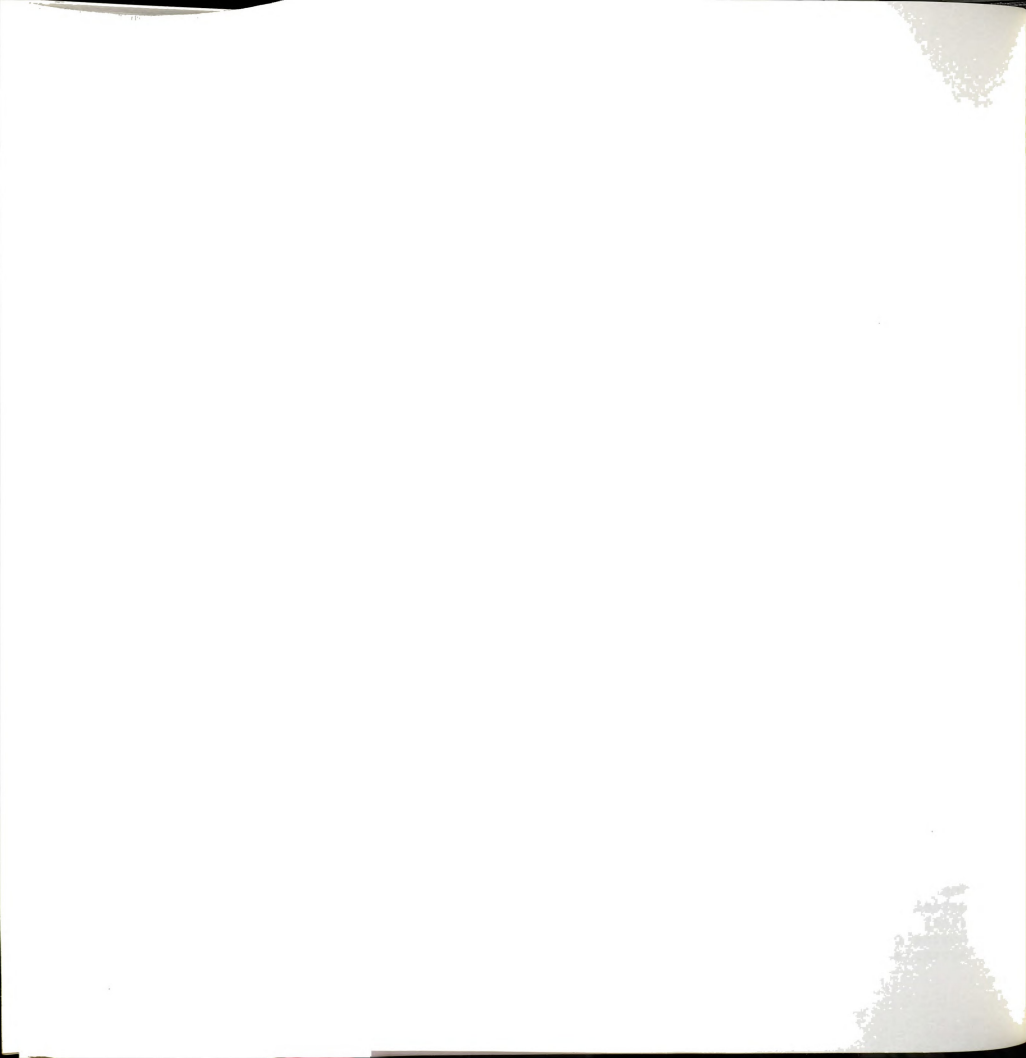
¹⁰ Bax 30.

¹¹ Bax 32.

¹² As I point out in Chapter 6, Bebel was very influential for the production of Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx's The Woman Question.

¹³ Bax 28.

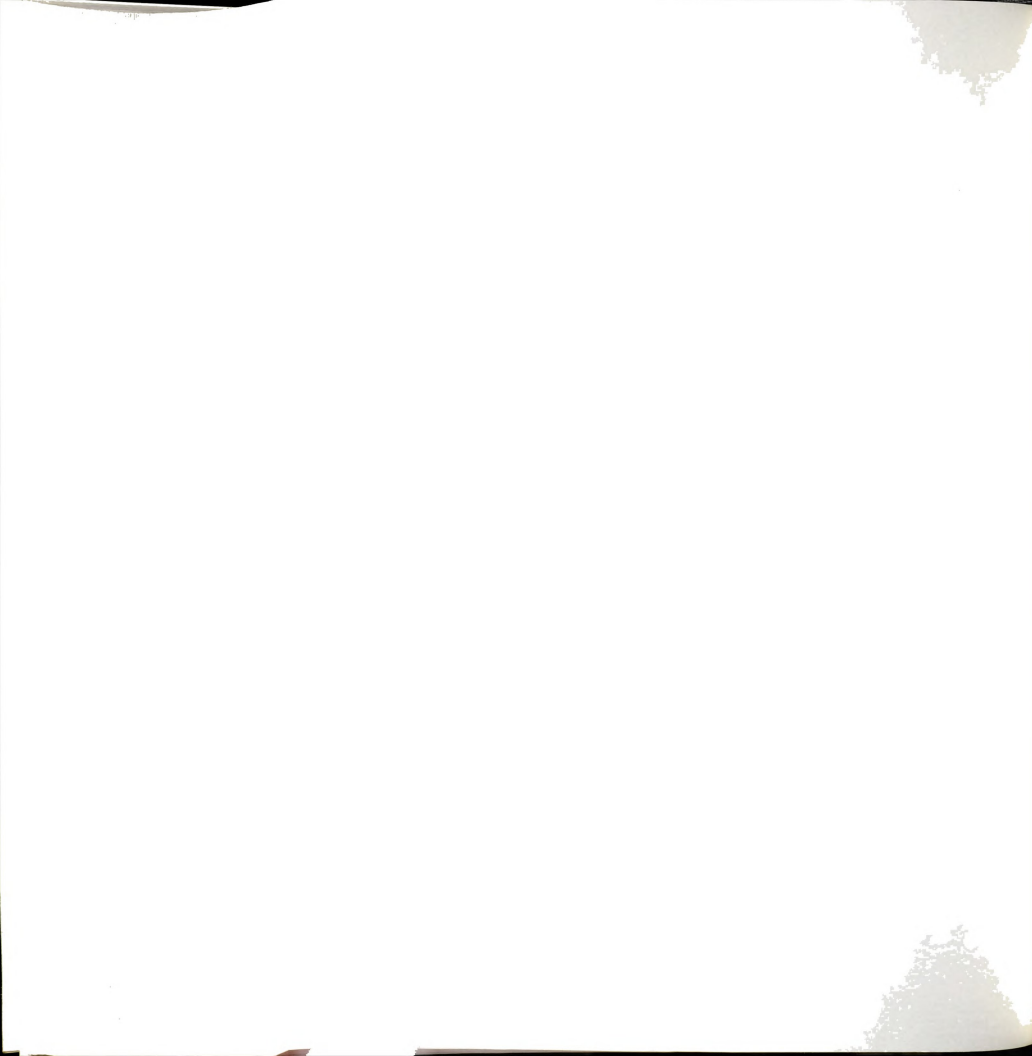
¹⁴ It is worth noting that a cinematic parody of Weininger's position is evident in the Hungarian director Idiko Enyedi's recent film "My Twentieth Century" (Hungary, 1990). In the midst of political turbulence at the turn of the century in Eastern Europe, one of the film's central characters, Lili, a young anarchist who reads, among other things, Kropotkin's Mutual Aid, attends a lecture on feminism given by Weininger himself. Weininger begins the lecture calling for the emancipation of women, but then qualifies that emancipation, by arguing that women are not rational in the sense that men are--as a result of biological difference. The film then subverts Weininger's representation of sexuality by depicting Weininger's position as hysterical itself. As women in the audience disagree with Weininger, he begins ranting and raving to the point where his theatrical hysteria has silenced the audience.



15 Bax 28.

16 Bax 48.

17 Bax 75.



Notes to Chapter 5

¹ Robert Blatchford, Julie: A Study of a Girl by a Man (London: Walter Scott, 1901).

² Robert Tressell, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955) 584-587.

³ See Lawrence Thompson, Robert Blatchford: Portrait of an Englishman (London: Gollancz, 1951) 137. Also, Blatchford in his autobiography My Eighty Years (London: Cassell, 1931) reflects on his role in the formation of the Independent Labor Party and hints at his dissatisfaction over his role as a politician, rather than a polemical writer: "The I.L.P. was founded, I think, in 1892. It was founded or started by seven men. I believe I was one of the seven; but I am not sure and it does not matter" (199).

⁴ Robert Blatchford, Merrie England (1894; New York: Monthly Review, 1966).

⁵ Robert Blatchford, The New Religion (London: Clarion, 1898) 6.

⁶ James Callaghan, Socialism in Britain (London: Blackwell, 1990) 54.

⁷ Tressell 244.

⁸ Blatchford, Julie 3.

⁹ Blatchford, Julie 10.

¹⁰ Blatchford, Julie 159.

¹¹ Blatchford, Julie 140.

¹² Blatchford, Julie 139.

¹³ Blatchford, Julie 162.

¹⁴ Blatchford, Julie 114.

¹⁵ Blatchford, Julie 116.



Notes to Chapter 6

¹ See my discussion of this issue in Chapter 8.

² Fred Ball, One of the Damned (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979) 170.

³ The issue of gender is indeed a problem in William Morris, News from Nowhere (New York: International, 1967) 179-401. However, it must be admitted that the progressive aspects of Morris' novel overshadow the residual, paternalist aspects of his views toward gender. On the issue of marriage, divorce and property a scene occurs in which Morris appears to be in agreement with Aveling and Marx. In Morris' utopia, divorce courts are a thing of the past, as are property disputes of former times, but some problems of gender remain: "We do not deceive ourselves, indeed, or believe that we can get rid of all the trouble that besets the dealings between the sexes" (238). Similar to Aveling and Marx, Morris posited an alternative to capitalism through a progressive, oppositional naturalism, which liberated gendered subjects from oppressive conditions.

⁴ For an example of how women viewed the ideology of the Labor movement, see Jill Liddington, The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper, 1864-1946 (London: Virago, 1984).

⁵ Virginia Woolf, "Memories of a Working Women's Guild," Collected Essays by Virginia Woolf, vol. 2, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1964) 134-148.

⁶ Woolf 141.

⁷ Woolf 147.

⁸ Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx, The Woman Question (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1887).

⁹ Aveling and Marx 4.

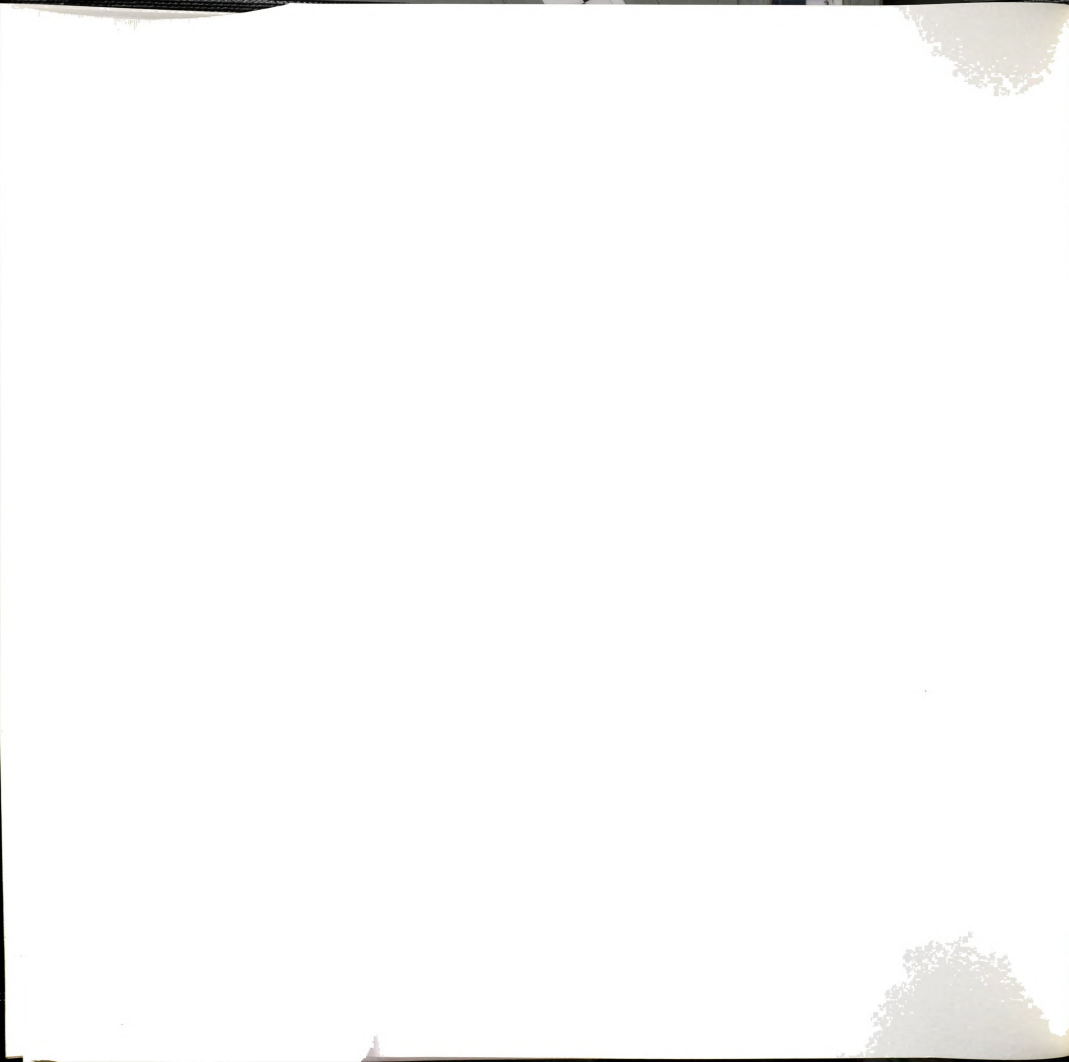
¹⁰ Aveling and Marx 5.

¹¹ Aveling and Marx 6.

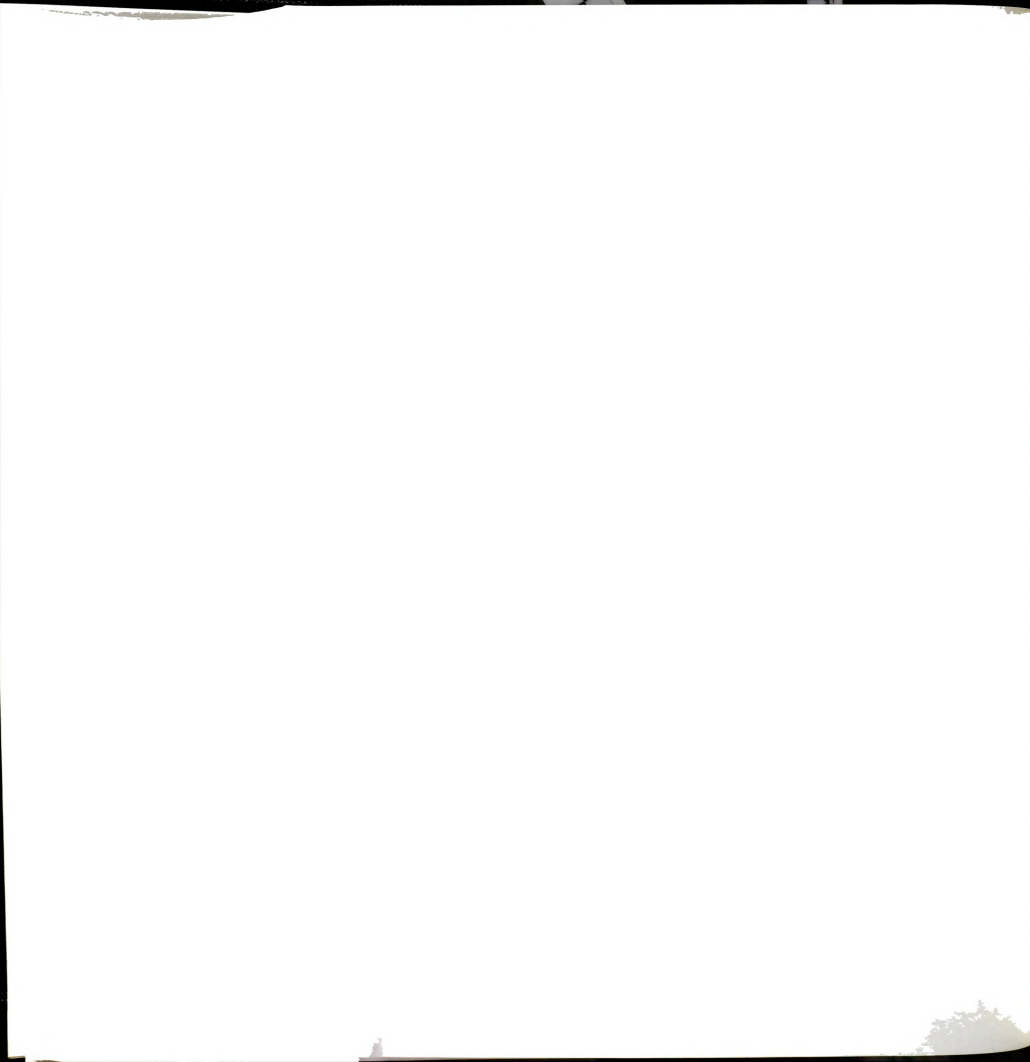
¹² Aveling and Marx 9.

¹³ Aveling and Marx 9.

¹⁴ Aveling and Marx 11.



- 15 Olive Schreiner, Woman and Labor (1911; London: Virago, 1976).
- 16 Schreiner, Woman and Labor 221.
- 17 Schreiner, Woman and Labor 77.
- 18 Ruth First and Ann Scott, Olive Schreiner (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990) 59.
- 19 Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988) 176.
- 20 Olive Schreiner, Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonland (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1897) 10-11.
- 21 Schreiner, Halket 16.
- 22 Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," History Workshop Journal 5 (1978): 12.
- 23 Davin 13.
- 24 Kier Hardie, Radicals and Reform (London: National Labor, 1912) 5.
- 25 Hardie 5.
- 26 Hardie 6.
- 27 Annie Besant, Free Education and Free Maintenance (London: Social Democratic Tracts, 1884) 1.
- 28 Mrs. Wibaut and Lily Gair Wilkinson, Women in Rebellion: Two Views on class, Socialism, and Rebellion (1900; Leeds: ILP, 1973) 10.
- 29 Wibaut and Wilkinson 10.
- 30 June Hannam, Isabella Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) 100.
- 31 Hannam 100.
- 32 Hannam 102.
- 33 Isabella O. Ford, Industrial Women and How to Help Them (London: Humanitarian League, 1900) 1.
- 34 Ford, Industrial Women 8.
- 35 Ford, Industrial Women 9.



³⁶ Isabella O. Ford, Mr. Elliott: A Novel of Factory Life (London: Edward Arnold, 1901).

³⁷ Ford, Mr. Elliott 5.



Notes to Chapter 7

¹ Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957) 196-97.

² Jeremy Hawthorn discusses the cultural aspects of Lawrence's representation of the lived relations of working-class subjects, "Lawrence and Working-Class Fiction," in Rethinking Lawrence, ed. Keith Brown (Milton Keynes: Open UP, 1990) 67-68. Hawthorn establishes a linkage with Lawrence and other working-class writers--presumably naturalist and realist authors--by focusing on the tensions that characterize issues of mobility in working-class fiction. Hawthorn writes that "Such a concern is found again and again in working-class fiction, but where many other working-class writers **state** their interests in a clash of values, Lawrence **enacts** this clash through the language and behavior of the characters, and without overt narrative statement or sermonizing or, most importantly, romanticizing working-class life" (70). Hawthorn's point is interesting, especially when we consider Lawrence's early representations of working-class culture, but he fails to address the politicized context of working-class narratives and the ideological tensions inherent in dominant forms of naturalism. Hawthorn thus relegates other working-class writers to a position of social pleading.

³ Until very recently, the working-class aspects of Lawrence's early life seemed to have taken a back seat to his later. Most criticism on Lawrence focused on the affective and psychological aspects of Lawrence's writing.

⁴ Of course Lady Chatterly's Lover would figure into this ongoing conflict. But two later examples of Lawrence's fiction reveal this tendency to imaginatively return to the scene of Labor conflicts and struggles. This is certainly the case with Kangaroo, a novel that takes place in Australia and concerns the ambitions of a labor leader and the failed attempts of a "diggers'" movement. The second novel would be The Plumed Serpent, a travel narrative set in Mexico, which resolves the conflict of labor and culture through a return to primitivism. The Plumed Serpent, by all accounts, harbors specific, proto-fascist desires, and also reinscribes Lawrence's concern for an organic culture unified under a communal sign. In many respects, The Plumed Serpent returns to the scene of the young Lawrence's concerns with religion and the politics of Labor. Lawrence may have rejected radical solutions, but his rejection of these solutions becomes more symptomatic of his narrative during his



leadership period and in his travel fiction.

⁵ Lawrence articulates these utopian moments in his narrative, it can be argued, in a more direct way than a writer like Conrad does, according to Fredric Jameson's ideas about aesthetic production and the rationalization of culture in The Political Unconscious (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.) 206-279.

⁶ Ford Madox Ford in D.H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography, vol. 1, 1885-1919, ed. Edward Nehls (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1957) 117.

⁷ Ford 108.

⁸ Ford 109-110.

⁹ Ford 114.

¹⁰ Ford 110.

¹¹ Ford 112-113.

¹² Ford 116.

¹³ Graham Holderness, D.H. Lawrence: History, Ideology, and Fiction (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities P, 1982) 130-158.

¹⁴ Emile Delavenay, D.H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter: A Study in Edwardian Transition (New York: Taplinger, 1971).

¹⁵ Daniel J. Schneider, The Consciousness of D.H. Lawrence (Lawrence: Kansas UP, 1986) 53.

¹⁶ Schneider 54.

¹⁷ Holderness 148-50.

¹⁸ D.H. Lawrence, "To Reverend Robert Reid," 15 Oct. 1907, letter 37 of The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. James T. Boulton, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 36-37.

¹⁹ Lawrence, "To Reverend Robert Reid, 3 Dec. 1907, letter 39, 39-40.

²⁰ The reference is to Robert Blatchford, God and My Neighbor (London: Paternoster P, 1902). Blatchford's radical humanist attack against organized Christianity. Interestingly enough, Blatchford's recommended reading material in the preface of his book urges readers to read some of the very same material that Lawrence had been



reading.

21 Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976) 130.

22 Lawrence, "To Reverend Robert Reid, 3 Dec., 1907, letter 39, 40-41.

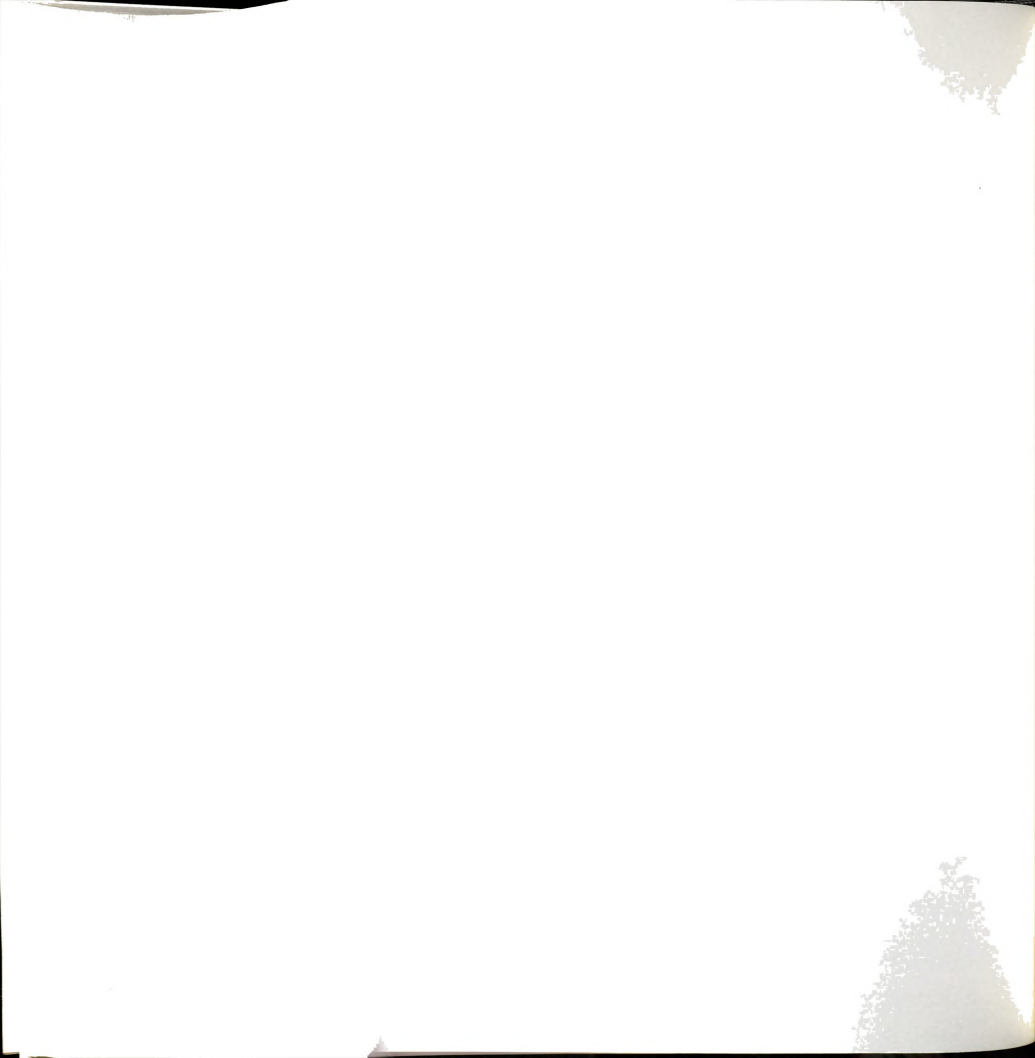
23 Lawrence, "To Reverend Robert Reid, 3 Dec., 1907, letter 39, 41.

24 Herbert Spencer, First Principles (London: Williams and Norgate, 1862) 145.

25 Spencer 147.

26 Spencer 148-49.

27 George Stocking, Race Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1968) 178.



Notes to Chapter 8

¹ Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (New York: International Publishers, 1964) 181.

² Herbert Spencer, "Labour in Industrial Society," Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution, ed. J.D.Y. Peel (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1972) 244-45.

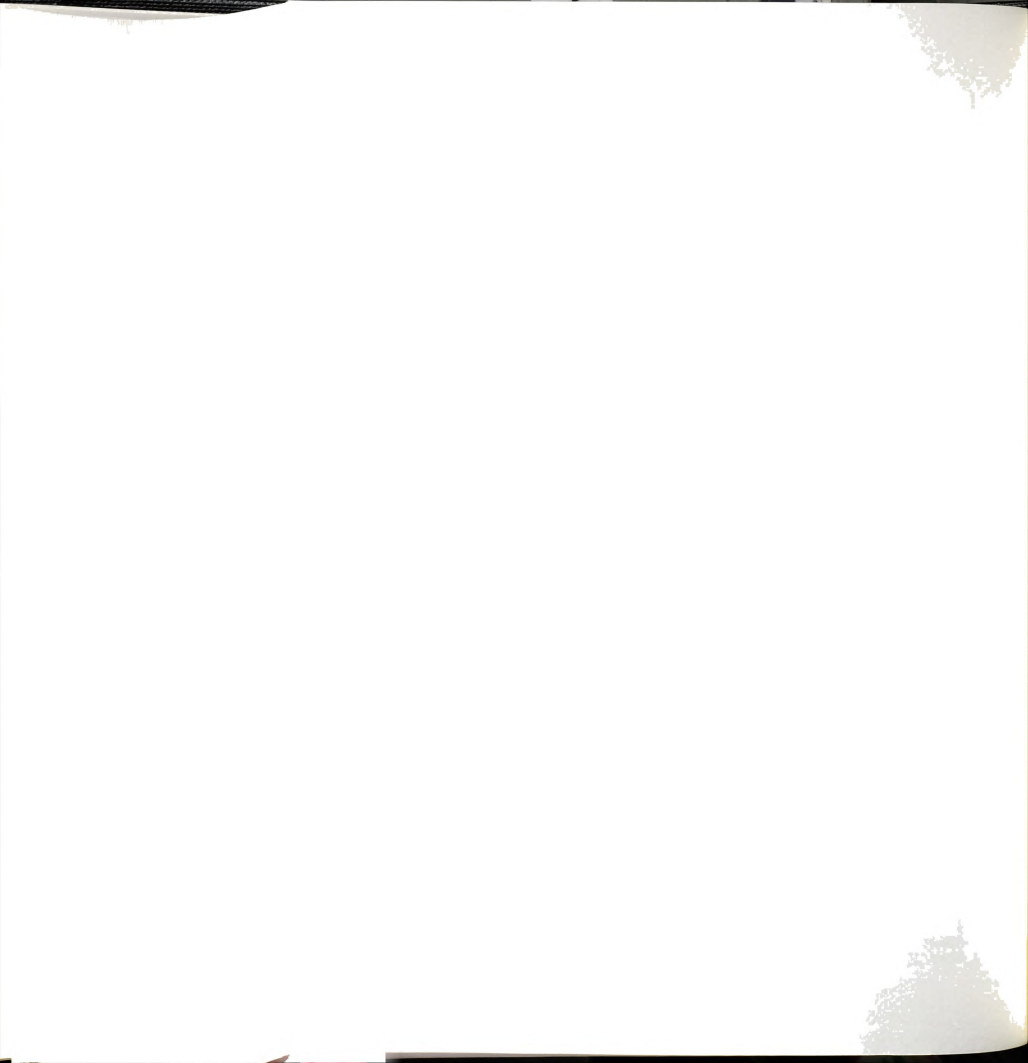
³ All quotations are from D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (New York: Modern Library, 1922).

⁴ According to Louis Althusser in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in Essays on Ideology (London: Verso, 1976) Ideology "'acts' or 'functions' is such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "'Hey, you there!'"

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a **subject**. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was really addressed to him, and that it was really him who was hailed (and not someone else)" (48).

Similarly, the young Lawrence is hailed or called by Spencer's discourse in the way a symbolic father hails a symbolic son. As we saw in the last chapter, Lawrence informs the Reverend Reid who he is not hailed by--namely Blatchford and other socialists. He does not say anything about Spencer. As I point out later in this chapter, Spencer's name drops into the narrative of Sons and Lovers while Paul is arguing with his mother over his relationship with Miriam.

⁵ Rarely would I turn to Jacques Lacan for support when discussing Lawrence and the problem of ideology, but there is a passage in "Function and field of speech and language," Ecrits (New York: Norton, 1977) 30-113, in which Lacan states that "It is in the name of the father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law" (67). The point of my quoting Lacan here is not dispute or support Lacanian theory, but to argue that Spencer has become a textual (symbolic) father for Lawrence. When Paul addresses his mother in such a tone in this scene,



he invokes an authority figure--one who authorizes Paul's discourse.

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