

THE RHETORIC OF WORK IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND: A DISCOURSE  
ANALYSIS

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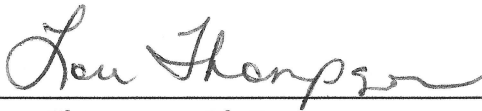
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To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Elizabeth Hamm entitled "The Rhetoric of Work in Victorian England: A Discourse Analysis." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Rhetoric.

  
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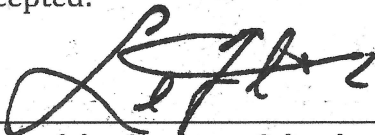
We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

  
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## DEDICATION

*For Mom and Dad—whose voices I hear stronger than any others.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the following people who have believed in me over the years. Without my parents, Steve and Karen Hamm, I would have never learned the value of work or its place in our everyday lives. They are the embodiment of what it means to work while loving and serving others despite its challenges and endless responsibilities. Also, Dad “held down the fort” while Mom accompanied me to England and gave me the gift of allowing me to spend three blissful weeks in research and sightseeing, without which this dissertation would be half of what it has become. Throughout it all, Mom always told me that I could do anything, and although I only believed her half of the time, without her encouragement and belief, this dissertation would not be in existence. To my siblings, Lindsay, Allison, Josh, Justin, and Andrew, I thank them for their encouragement, for understanding the many hours that I had to write, and the endless suggestions that provided inspiration and fodder for discussion, and ultimately what led to this product. Also, to Dr. Kelle Keating-Marshall and Rebecca Abbit, who remain life-long friends whose passion for learning and writing continue to inspire me. Their most valuable gift to me was their friendship and their listening ears as they sympathized with me throughout this long journey.

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## ABSTRACT

ELIZABETH HAMM

### THE RHETORIC OF WORK IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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This research examines the discourse of the rhetoric of work in Victorian England by primarily examining the primary documents of newspapers, autobiography, poetry, and the Blue Book deliberations of Parliament. My purpose is to show how the underrepresented and “silenced” groups of the working man, the child, and the woman in Victorian England became part of the struggle surrounding the discourse of work. However, minority groups were not able to enter into the discourse surrounding work alone. In order to understand the primary documents from a rhetorical perspective, the theorist Michel Foucault’s ideas will be studied and utilized. Foucault claims that power is an interconnected web, and it is through the efforts of all classes that the plight of the “forgotten” was able to be remembered and given a voice in their own society.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A Gallup report released just before Labor Day weekend in 2014 showed that the average American work week has increased from the standard 40 hours to about 46.7 hours, an increase of nearly one extra day per week. The report also found that only 40 percent of Americans who work full time say that they are on the job the standard 40 hours. Therefore, it is not surprising that another 50 percent of Americans say that they work more than 40 hours per week (McGregor). In contrast, a study reported on by *The Guardian*, found that workers in the UK spent about 42.7 hours per week working (Stewart). In any case, it is not surprising that *Business Insider* reports that a person will spend over 90,000 hours of his or her life working, but only 20 percent of people are happy in their current jobs (Shontell). Work is a force that drives the planning and shaping of our lives. Even after people stop working and have “retired,” it is reported that 40 percent said that they had stopped working through no choice of their own, and 30 percent of retired people said that if a job became available they would happily return to work (Garver).

Not only do people spend most of their lives working or planning and thinking about work, but many leisure activities are related to work as well. For example, some of the most popular TV shows in the past few decades have been related to people at work. Shows like *The Office*, *30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, *ER*, and *Grey’s Anatomy*, to name

only a few, highlight the inner workings of various professions and the personal lives of the characters involved. Oftentimes the characters have a difficult time balancing their private and professional lives and seem to have a sort of obsessive dedication to this entity that we call work. A recent example of this occurred in the Series Finale of *Downton Abbey*, when one of the main characters, Tom, turned to his new brother-in-law, Henry, and said that a man identifies himself through his work. As the TV show *Downton Abbey* is based on British life in the early to mid-twentieth century, it seems that it is building on an already long-held belief embedded in British culture and history.

Job satisfaction is also increasingly important because people spend so much of their time working. An article in *The Atlantic*, reported that in 2013 284,000 Americans “with a BA or higher were working in jobs that paid minimum wage or less, about double the pre-recession total” (Weissmann). One might conjecture that based on this statistic, most of the workers were employed in jobs that were paid below minimum wage, meaning they were most likely working for tips. Many college graduates have been happy to take jobs being baristas if it means health care and are also happy to work as waitresses if it means they are able to pay the rent. It is no wonder, then, that *Forbes* reports that 52.3 percent of Americans are not satisfied at work. This statistic has gone up slightly—just after the 2010 recession, the job satisfaction rate was 42.6 percent (Adams). While it is not necessary to be happy with one’s job and the amount of time that one spends working, if most of one’s time and attention is given to this pursuit, how sad

it would be that people would be perpetually dissatisfied in the activities that take up their days.

### **Work and Education**

Educators have been given conflicting messages by members of the administration and by employers to impart to their students as a result of the above realities. The first is that just because students have made the smart and brave decision to go to college, they will be successful. A sub-point of this message is that the *experience* of college is more important than what they actually *learn* in college. The second message that educators impart to students is that everything they learn in college will prepare them for their future career and the rest of their lives, so they had better pay attention. Of course, as mixed messages go, there are partial truths in each of these perspectives. Students learn many things in college outside of the classroom that will prepare them for their lives, such as time management and social skills, how to obey rules, and how to discover who they are in the midst of the rules, but they also learn many skills and new ideas in the actual classroom.

Educators have been given the task of not only teaching their respective subjects, but they are also required to teach something called “critical thinking.” Critical thinking has become a buzzword in education. Students who are “critical thinkers” are able to think outside of normal parameters and solve problems. They are supposed to be able to look at all sides of an issue and come up with creative solutions to problems. The question for educators then becomes, how do they teach critical thinking along with their

chosen subject area? As a teacher and lover of words, and as a rhetorician, I believe that it is necessary to introduce our students to various discourse communities in order for them to be aware of them and be able to critically analyze their significance. By their persuasive natures, discourse communities inform not only students' identities, and decisions, but also their actions.

### **Origins**

The ideas for this dissertation were formed not only from my love of the Victorian period, but also through the persuasive nature of the messages I encountered from strong voices in nonfiction literature of the era. As I was studying for my comprehensive exams, I was most interested in the non-fiction essays published in newspapers and various book publications during the Victorian period. The words of Thomas Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, John Henry Newman, William Morris, and others intrigued me with their strong word choices and decided opinions on issues relating to the working classes, and above all to work and education. They were also strong in their belief that work forms a person's character and—as such—is a necessary component of every individual life. I was enchanted by the idea that a person was not “whole” unless he or she were able to marry the work of his or her mind with the work of the body in some kind of meaningful and also productive way. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, people had become unable to use their own creativity and imagination. Before the Industrial Revolution, the typical profession was that of a farmer and animal breeder, and women typically sewed or made cloth and other things in the

home. Instead of being able to see through a project from beginning to end and use creativity and problem solving skills, people who worked in the factories may have only seen a small part of the greater whole of a project, which caused boredom and major job dissatisfaction. A modern day image that is similar to what was happening in the Industrial Revolution would be office spaces with cubicles where hundreds of people spend thousands of hours looking at computer screens for most of the day or talking on telephones. Our current technological age has afforded us many conveniences and luxuries, but it seems that we encounter them all through the usage of machines that make our lives “easier” while further alienating people from personal contact and the outside world. I also imagined Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the Panopticon, which envisioned a building that essentially regulated prisoners’ behavior with or without the presence of a guard. Our technology serves this function now because of “cookies” that track every ill-advised online purchase. Employers can also install software that tracks every movement that their employees make on the Internet. These images reminded me as I read cautionary rhetoric in nonfiction work of the Victorian era that the conversations we have today about work are not so different from those that Victorians were having back then.

This dissertation took further shape when Dr. Lou Thompson informed me that the British library was making hundreds of years’ worth of newspapers available in a digital format for the first time in London. Previously the records were available in hard copy in the Northern part of the country. Through her encouragement, and that of Dr. Greer, I traveled with my mother to London to spend three weeks studying original

documents in the British Library. I perused newspaper articles, poetry, original out-of-print books, autobiographies, Blue Book documents, and Parliamentary deliberation documents to get a sense of what the discourse of work looked like during the Victorian period.

### **Purpose**

As a result of this original research in the British Library, this dissertation will explore the rhetoric of work found in Victorian England during and after the Industrial Revolution (1840-1890s). Although many sociological and historical studies on the practices of work in Victorian England have been conducted, few studies exist on the discourse surrounding work from a rhetorical perspective. However, there are many books that address the topic of work in British literature. The differences between studies of literature and rhetoric are subtle, but nevertheless, they are still present. Of the books on work in literature during the Victorian period, the ones that were closest to a rhetorical study on work were the following: *Work in the English Novel: The Myth of Vocation*, (1985) by Ruth Danon; *Forms of Speech in Victorian Fiction*, (1994) by Raymond Chapman; *Culture, Class, and Gender in the Victorian Novel*, (1999) by Arlene Young; *The Language of Gender and Class: Transformation in the Victorian Novel*, (1996) by Patricia Ingham; and *Gospels and Grit: Work and Labour in Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell*, (2005) by Rob Breton.

Ruth Danon argues in her book that there is a concept called “the myth of vocation,” in Victorian British Literature, and she goes on to say that “the myth of

vocation, suggests that work is the primary source of self-definition, psychic integration, and happy fulfillment available to a person” (1). Danon also says that writing about work in the nineteenth century seems to be restricted to the middle class. This stems from the fact that only the middle class found themselves needing to work but also having choices about where they could work (6). She also says that for women who were not allowed to work or who were threatened with not being able to work, work becomes everything, which is a similar situation to the Victorian male’s obsession with the idea of having a wife who would be happy to work at home (202). While Danon’s insight into work and literature in the nineteenth century were helpful from a topical perspective, she did not delve into deeper issues of discourse communities, language choices, or methods of persuasion, which would have been the priority in a rhetorical text.

Raymond Chapman’s *Form of Speech in Victorian Fiction* closely looks at religious patterns, slang, dialect, oaths, the speech of women and children, and conventions of fiction, among others, as a way into the Victorian culture through fiction. While Chapman takes a very specific and narrow approach to his study, this dissertation takes a broader approach. This dissertation is unique because it not only looks at fiction, but it also looks at poetry, primary newspaper documents, autobiographies, and nonfiction essays in order to show a more layered view of the topic of work and how it was used in a persuasive way to further causes relating to human rights and to persuade people to lend their talents and bodies in the service of the great British Empire.



Arlene Young also discusses the novel in great depth in her monograph, and she has many other publications that are centered around other topics in Victorian novels. She argues that the novel was “a means of consolidating its social and cultural hegemony and of disseminating its social philosophy” (1). It was interesting that Young also claims that the novel was the medium by which the middle class was able to show stereotypes about other classes, and thus they were able to control and contain other classes. They (the general population) are also “subsequently manipulated, mainly by women and lower-middle-class male writers, as a form of resistance to middle-class patriarchal dominance” (2). However, the novel was not the only medium (while it might have been the most popular) by which members of the middle class were able to control through the use of rhetoric and persuasion members of the other classes. This dissertation expands and broadens this perspective because it looks at other means of persuasion, and not only the novel.

Patricia Ingham comes close to a rhetorical study in her book, *The Language of Gender and Class: Transformation in the Victorian Novel*, by discussing linguistic codings in Victorian novels. She says that the novels “tied economic and social issues together, or appeared to do so, by ignoring the obvious clash of interests between the new class groupings, reviving the authoritarianism of the rank system and supporting it by the use of religious language” (19). Ingham seems to support ideas from Young’s work and others that the novel was a medium primarily used by the middle classes to promote their own way of thinking and way of life. Ingham specifically discusses the novels, *Shirley*,

*North and South*, *Hard Times*, *Felix Holt*, *The Unclassed*, and *Jude the Obscure*. While her observations on these novels and Victorian life are interesting, they provide a narrow perspective because she only looks at novels as part of her study.

In contrast, Rob Breton's work, *Gospels and Grit: Work and Labour in Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell*, comes closest to a book using a rhetorical perspective on literature. He says specifically in his introduction that he is "interested in a distinctive rhetoric of work," and he is using fiction as well as nonfiction to prove his points (32). He says that he thought there would be distinct differences between nonfiction essays and novels in how work was discussed, but he was surprised to find there were not many differences. The primary difference between Breton's work and this dissertation is that Breton chooses to focus on three prominent figures, Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell, for his study. While this dissertation also discusses Carlyle and some other major figures, it chooses to take a Foucauldian approach which tries to show a more balanced view of work by focusing on lesser known pieces of literature and voices during the Victorian period.

### **Significance**

The discourse of work became important because the majority of the members of the working classes were largely illiterate before the Victorian period. During that era, reading rooms and literacy classes for the working population became more readily available, which led to an increase in literacy rates within the lower classes. According to Jonathan Rose, the author of *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, "In one working-class parish the proportion of those who could sign the marriage register jumped

from 70.36 percent in 1841 to 92.69 percent in 1871” (65). These statistics seem to suggest that increased education in the form of literacy classes and mandatory education for working children was to some degree effective in providing basic reading and writing skills.

With literacy on the rise among the working classes, it became necessary for the upper classes to try to control or repress the working classes, or at least shape their educations and desires. The lower or working classes would then continue to work in stressful and often dangerous jobs that no one else of the middle or upper classes would want to do. Rose also points out, “Evangelicals, utilitarians, and radical journalists of the early nineteenth century equally distrusted literature, and for much the same reason. Each of these sects was trying to convert the masses to their own ideology, and struggling to control the flow of information to the working classes” (35). Before novel reading became popular, it was more likely that people would be reading sermons, poetry, or memoirs of semi-famous people imaginative “Literature” was distrusted because the working classes were reading mostly novels, a relatively new genre. It was thought by leading moralists of the day that novels corrupted the morals of the people (because of their melodramatic and often salacious nature). Because novels were “new,” they were often preached against and regarded with suspicion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this phenomenon, please see Jonathan Rose’s work, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*.

However, Allen Clarke (a journalist and socialist), said the following in 1899 about workers in his town:

They have no true idea of life. They believe they are born to work; they do not see that work is but a means to life. . . . They think that the masters build factories and workshops not to make a living for themselves by trading but in order to find the people employment. They honestly believe that if there were no mills and workshops the poor people would all perish.

(qtd. in Joyce 90)

In contrast to the idea that work was a means to life, the Victorian rhetoric of work, at least according to the ruling upper classes, was that work was the ultimate enjoyment and mission in life. In contrast, Sir Dudley North, in the seventeenth century, said, “‘If it was agreeable to do anything called work, it was not really so but pleasure. . . .It is incident to the true nature of work not to delight in it’” (Thomas xviii). This shift in thinking on work from toil to blessing is reflected in the nonfiction essays, literature, and other important documents of the day. The identity of an individual was intrinsically connected to his work, which makes the study of the rhetoric of work in Victorian period of England so important.

### **Theory and Methodology**

For the purpose of this study, I will use the ideas and strategies of Michel Foucault to provide a lens through which we can examine the discourse of Victorian England on the topic of work. Foucault was influential in the field of rhetoric because he

redefined rhetorical criticism for the purposes of his studies in prisons, mental health facilities, and human sexuality. One of the ways that he defined rhetoric was as an event. Martha Cooper explains, “Thus in using Foucault in rhetorical criticism, one focuses upon the experience of the discursive act . . . it leads to an understanding of how rhetoric, within the confines of any particular discursive event, interacts with knowledge and social relationships, both in regard to power and ethics” (15). While this dissertation is by no means meant to be an all inclusive or an exhaustive study of the rhetoric of work in Victorian England, many important “events” or “cracks” (Foucault’s words for minor occurrences that end up being an integral part in the chain of human history), in the rhetoric on the discussion of work are found here (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 231). Foucault would argue that history is not chronological or linear, so it should be studied as it relates to the abnormalities or the conflicts that occur to provide an opportunity for discourse and rhetoric to be used in power struggles (*The Archeology of Knowledge* 4).

I will also follow his ideas on location and description, which focus on lesser-known Victorian texts. This dissertation is inductive not deductive because I am conducting a discourse analysis of textual documents in Victorian England. This means that instead of making a claim and then showing examples from texts to prove the claim, this dissertation shows the texts first, and then an analysis and discussion of the material will then follow. Foucault also uses inductive research in all of his major texts. He first studies the research and discourse on any topic and presents those documents in his work, and then he analyzes them for similarities and patterns that can be found in the texts.

Foucault claims that the documents themselves determine the order in which they should be studied and organized. For example, he says, “I believe we can isolate another group: internal rules, where discourse exercises its own control; rules concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 220). With this in mind, I have ordered the documents according to the internal language of each text. This means that the documents are organized by theme and topic, and not chronologically.

Another key term in Foucauldian research is “archaeology.” Foucault uses this term to describe an investigation of the factors that make a certain way of thinking necessary to a certain group of people during a certain time period (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 131). “Archaeology” does not assume that knowledge has to lead to a certain historical conclusion, and it also tends to ignore individuals and their own stories. A person who is using archaeology as a method of studying discourse prefers to study structures of knowledge that don’t necessarily have anything to do with specific individuals. According to Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtic, Foucault’s archaeology “treats discourses, such as medicine, as practices that form the objects of which they speak” (64). Because archaeology studies overarching ideas and systems, it is not relevant here. This dissertation is not a true archaeology in the Foucauldian sense because I am also studying individuals and not just discourse and social structures. Instead this project is what Foucault calls a “genealogy” (*Power/Knowledge* 117).

Genealogy describes Foucault's desire to reveal discourse at the moment it appears in history as a system of checks and balances (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 234). Horrocks and Jevtic explain, "Genealogy compels Foucault to analyze literary, biological, medical, religious and ethical bodies of knowledge, and how such 'knowledges' might, for example, relate to the discourse on heredity or sexuality" (97). While this dissertation is studying the archaeology of the discourse surrounding work in the Victorian period, it is also a genealogy of sorts that provides insight into three oppressed groups of Victorian culture: the working man (who is not part of the upper echelons of society), the child, and the middle class woman.

While the term "discourse" has already been mentioned casually many times in this introduction, I think it is important to define, for the purposes of this dissertation, "discourse" in the Foucauldian sense of the term. Foucault would say that discourses are not just ways that people talk or the words on a page or the patterns of speech, but they are also practices or habits that show the inner workings of a society. It is through analyzing particular documents of a time period that we can see the limitations of a speaker and how that would situate that person in society (Horrocks and Jevtic 86). Discourse also requires "surfaces of emergence," these are groups such as a family, work groups, or religious communities where ideas and ideologies flourish and are found (87). Foucault would also say that in every society discourse (and its production) is "controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures whose role is to avert its power and its dangers" (96). Society acts as a censor

in order to “protect” its current standards or internal power structures. However, members of society may not have been conscious that their discourse contributed to the overall message that was strongest through the influence of the upper classes. Members of lower classes might have unintentionally become complicit in the prevailing discourse on work because the urge to conform (especially in members of lower or working classes) is easier to obey than the urge to resist.

In any case, it is important to keep in mind that Foucault’s lasting contribution to the world of academia is mainly as a historian and philosopher of science. He can’t be labeled and put into a certain classification or box because he was a scholar who “defies neat intellectual classification and who rejects the institutional basis of disciplinary affiliation” (Olssen 2). While some might argue that Foucault was not a rhetorician, others, such as Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg contend, “[Foucault] forcefully states that discourse is a form of social action; and he enriches and complicates the notion of context with a network of archives, disciplines, institutions, and social practices that control the production of discourse” (1434). Bizzell and Herzberg also state that while Foucault does not often use the word “rhetoric,” his use of the word “discourse” could be considered a postmodern synonym (1435).

Another important fact to keep in mind (because I am not only studying non-fiction documents, but also literature and some poetry), is the following quote by Thomas Cooper, a Chartist and a shoemaker-poet during the Victorian period:



The power of fiction to instruct, the sources of the charm it exercises over the human mind,' he wrote, cannot be explained by any one dimensional political, utilitarian, or scientific calculus. 'Perhaps, the secret of the charm of fictitious writing lies in the fact that it appeals to *all* the powers of the mind'—imagination, memory, reason, morality. (qtd. in Rose 38)

I also consulted some secondary resources, such as biographies, and social histories in order to provide a deeper context for the primary documents. However, the important part of this particular category will be the primary documents themselves.

In addition to his work on discourse, Foucault is probably most well-known for studying the workings of power and how it controls the body. He claims that the most lasting and effective type of control occurs if a person can persuade another person to change his or her own actions voluntarily, without using physical force (*Power/Knowledge* 39). The discourse of the day persuaded the working classes that their menial, meaningless tasks were actually liberating. The jobs were supposed to help them achieve financial independence. In service to their country and their fellow man, they were ultimately serving themselves.

The analytical portion of this dissertation is important because a Foucauldian analysis looks not only at the documents in order to determine what they say about society, but also looks for holes in the discourse of a topic based on documents that are *not* present, and what that absence says about society. Foucault says we must “take . . . the discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, that we should look for its external

conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its limits” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 229). The study of the texts themselves is central to this dissertation, which is why they are so heavily quoted and many are reproduced here in their entirety.

It is important to note that Foucault was a social constructivist; he believed discourse creates knowledge, and by the process of inclusion and exclusion (what is talked about and what is not) discourse is able to control a society. Discourse produces both power and knowledge at the same time. Power is circulated through discourse, but it is not necessarily hierarchical. As a result, discourse can control people in groups within a certain class, and the power structure isn’t simply the higher class controlling the lower classes. Instead, the discourse permeates society to an extent that it is difficult to determine from which class the original discourse was perpetuated. What makes Foucault instrumental in the discourse behind the ethics of work is his study of the body, power, and knowledge, and how all of these intersect. While other rhetoricians do discuss discourse communities, Foucault is unique because of his study of minority groups that are often neglected in historical and rhetorical studies.

### **Historical Background**

Because the effects of the Industrial Revolution were felt to a greater extent in Victorian England than in other parts of the world, there was an increased awareness and

preoccupation with the idea and practice of work.<sup>2</sup> Before this time, industry was localized and mainly took place on the farms, so there were not many choices as to a vocation. George Eliot, an essayist of the day, argues against the idea that the man who works in the fields has more character than a man who works with machines. The Romantics and other members of the arts and crafts movement would have had people believe that returning to their original roots would solve all the problems that the Industrial Revolution had created. Instead, Eliot states, “The selfish instincts are not subdued by the sight of buttercups, nor is integrity in the least established by that classic rural occupation, sheep-washing. To make men moral, something more is requisite than to turn them out to grass” (“The Natural History of German Life”). Instead of romanticizing a return to the past, it was necessary to change the way the workers viewed the future. If too much emphasis was placed on the past and the virtues of country life, there would be no workforce to feed the machine of the Industrial Revolution.

The rhetoric of work was effective in controlling the bodies of the workers because most of the discourse revolved around labour laws and conditions. If happy workers are productive workers, and if workers are able to be persuaded by Thomas Carlyle, that “a man perfects himself by working” (“Past and Present” 144), they would be more liable to want to work in any type of job. Controlling a man by discourse instead of by law produced much more long-lasting and effective results.

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<sup>2</sup> Great Britain was the first Industrialized Nation. According to Stephen Clarke, “By the middle of the 19th century Britain accounted for 23% of global industrial production, British workers were the richest in Europe, and comparatively few of them worked on the land” (Clarke).

The rhetoric of work was also effective in controlling the workers' minds. According to Rose, the increased levels of literacy and education were a means by which the working classes could finally have a voice in their professions and world. He goes on to say that education "represented the return of the repressed. 'Knowledge is Power' may strike us as a naïve Victorian slogan, but it was embraced passionately by generations of working-class radicals who were denied both" (23). Because the working classes were increasingly educated and literate, it was necessary for the good of the country as a whole to be able to control the discourse connected to the individual. Jack Lawson, a Durham collier<sup>3</sup> says, "I held that no man needs knowledge more than he who is subject to those who have knowledge . . . .That if there is one man in the world who needs knowledge, it is he who does the world's most needful work and gets least return because he lacks knowledge" (qtd. in Rose 52-53). While some of the workers were aware of the disingenuous nature of most of the rhetoric on work, not all of the working classes were able to separate and discern truth from the mixed messages they were receiving.

In addition to controlling workers' bodies and minds, the rhetoric of work also controlled the religious conversation about work. Many of the common people saw work as a sacred duty. Carlyle waxes eloquent about work and labour when he says, "Labour is Life: from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his god-given Force, the sacred celestial Life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness—to all knowledge. . ." ("Past and Present" 145). He also says that work is

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<sup>3</sup> A collier is someone who is involved in the mining or production of coal in some way. They also called ships that transported coal a "collier."

“making of Madness sane; truly enough a religious operation; which cannot be carried on without religion” (“Past and Present” 151). The people certainly heard these ideas in all areas of discourse, and not exclusively nonfiction.

The analytical portion of this dissertation is important because a Foucauldian analysis looks not only at the documents in order to determine what they say about society, but also looks for holes in the discourse of a topic based on documents that are *not* present, and what that absence says about society. Foucault says we must “take . . . the discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, that we should look for its external conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its limits” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 229). The study of the texts themselves is central to this dissertation.

According to F.D. Maurice, a well-known and controversial clergyman of the day, the goal that every man desires is a life of freedom and order (270-271). The discourse of work in Victorian England was trying to impose an order upon a certain group of individuals, the lower or working classes, of which women and children were even less protected as minorities than working class men were. This study of the rhetoric of work will explore all of its different uses and analyze primary documents themselves in order to gain a clearer picture of how the discourse of work impacted society.

### **Summary of Chapters**

Each chapter in this dissertation is unique because it focuses on a particular marginalized group of individuals who are “forgotten” or overlooked in Victorian

society. For example, the second chapter in this dissertation discusses the plight of the common working man. Because of the increasingly industrialized society, men were taking on more menial tasks that were repetitive. This caused them to start to separate their bodies from their minds in their work. Leading commentators such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin argue that man should be able to do work that does not separate the body and the mind. Victorian society was changing at a rapid rate, and one of the most important changes occurred with the passages of the Reform Acts in 1832, 1867, and 1884, wherein each of the bills endeavored to provide more representation and greater political enfranchisement to working class men. However, all women were not given the vote until 1928. In any case, political freedom was synonymous with physical freedom, and while the Victorian period is known for its prudish morals and busy wallpaper, it is often not given enough credit for its social progress and humanitarianism.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the problem of education for working class children. According to Emma Griffin, a professor of history at the University of East Anglia in Great Britain, “Research has shown that the average age at which children started work in early 19th-century Britain was 10 years old, but that this varied widely between regions. In industrial areas, children started work on average at eight and a half years old” (Griffin). While the Factory Reform Act was passed in 1833, the legislative attempt to regulate the working conditions for the people after the Industrial Revolution, it was still inadequate to speak to the needs of many rural children working in agriculture, or the pressing problem of children working instead of going to school in order to feed their

families. This debate, then, was over how to promote access to education for working class families. I also discuss the nature of “knowledge” and “truth” during the Victorian era, and how the understanding of these terms was regulated and distributed through either a liberal arts or a vocational education. The struggle in the discussion relating to work and education is whether or not educators should be training college students for a particular job, which would be a vocational education, or whether college officials should be training them to be well-rounded and educated individuals, which would be the upshot of a liberal arts education. This struggle is real and continues, as evidenced by the many public universities that are diminishing many core requirements that foster and promote studies of foreign languages, literature, and the arts. The theory for this particular chapter primarily comes from Foucault’s *The Order of Things* in which he discusses at length the definition and meaning of “human sciences” and how our knowledge and the “truth” of them changes our approach to them as a study and a discipline. Although Foucault does not necessarily provide any “answers” to the struggles inherent in any educational system, his discussion of life, labor, and language applies here because it promotes debate over issues in our current university system. Our lives, and thereby the way that we are productive through our labor, and the language we use to navigate our way through the systems we encounter in all categories of our lives are symbolic also of rhetorical choices that we all make in our particular discourse communities.

The fourth chapter focuses on the minority group of women, whether they were from the lower, middle, or upper classes, and their often overlooked and

underappreciated function as not only mothers, but also as workers in Victorian society. It also shows Foucault's usage of the "dividing practices," and his idea that we "classify, control, and contain" (*The Foucault Reader* 8) in order to justify our objectification of the subjective nature of individuals. In addition to the above mentioned idea about women and work, the chapter also shows the progress Victorian women made regarding sexism, sexuality, and work. They broke through commonly held prejudices against them because they were able to navigate the landmine inherent in their own sexuality and how it related to their capabilities in the work force.

Finally, this dissertation concludes with further ruminations about the idea of work and some possibilities for future study. It is helpful at this juncture to quote the words of linguist Deborah Cameron, who claims, "[l]inguistic interaction is social interaction, and therefore the study of language use is fundamental to our understanding of how oppressive social relations are created and reproduced" (133). While we examine the rhetoric behind the discourse surrounding work in Victorian England, may we be challenged, enchanted, but above all, changed, which will help us shape our own conversations on similar topics in the future.



## CHAPTER II

### IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

Following the Industrial Revolution in England, work became a universal activity spanning all classes and religions. During the Victorian era—perhaps more than any other time in British literature—commentators of the day, poets, biographers, and journalists were all talking about what it meant to work. According to Richard Altick, a scholar on the Victorian era and its literature, “Work was an ever-available means of expression, a daily satisfaction of the imaginative urge which resides in even the humblest of men” (283). Of course, the meaning of work differed for each of the various classes. The general spirit of innovation and progress that marked the Industrial Revolution across the British Empire made the new era ripe for change. Yet, even with the excitement, many of the upper classes wished to preserve their old way of life and the norms related to the social classes. Social commentator and well-known historian of the day Thomas Macaulay claims, “To almost all men the state of things under which they have been used to live seems to be the necessary state of things” (Macaulay 35). While the upper classes wanted to maintain their way of life and protect the status quo, members of the working classes recognized that the British Empire would no longer be able to survive in its current state. New regulations on working hours and restrictions on the usage of machinery were needed in order to protect the working man. The discourse

surrounding work was very gender specific. That is why this chapter focuses on the working man, and a future chapter discusses the working woman.

Because of innovations in publishing and increasing literacy rates across the country, during this era, more voices—and voices of all classes and persuasions—were heard about the various working conditions and plight of the working class people. Charles Dickens was the leading novelist of the day, and most of his stories depict some sort of social injustice that needed to be addressed. His dedication to social issues in his literature functioned as a beacon that shed light on various dark corners of society where the lower and sometimes middle classes were forced by the rules of their station to live in extremely difficult conditions because of a lack of power in their speech and actions. Most of their power was taken from them by members of the upper classes because members of the lower classes could not become part of the social fabric of change introduced by the Industrial Revolution without education and without enfranchisement. The catalyst for change was the discourse of work. By the Victorian era, the middle classes began to assert their power and to advocate for themselves. Because the discourse surrounding work provided a much needed outlet for change and advocated for human rights, it was an important part of the individual being able to grow and then be an effectual citizen in the growing British Empire.

### **Work and Ideology**

A man's work is intrinsically connected to his identity, which creates a power struggle for him between who he would like to be, who he is, and the man that others

expect him to be. The discourse of work is directly tied to a man's ideology, which is closely tied to a man's identity. Foucault's definition of ideology in his work, *The Order of Things* is as follows:

Ideology does not question the foundation, the limits, or the root of representation; it scans the domain of representations in general; it determines the necessary sequences that appear there; it defines the links that provide its connections; it expresses the laws of composition and decomposition that may rule it. It situates all knowledge in the space of representations, and by scanning that space it formulates the knowledge of the laws that provide its organization. It is in a sense the knowledge of all knowledge. (*The Order of Things* 241)

Foucault is saying that ideology is the basis by which any ideas are formed by which a person would live his life. If a person has a fixed ideology, that means he has standards by which he measures all new ideas.

Foucault adds to this discussion as well by sharing his version of "truth" which could also be characterized as some sort of ideology held by certain groups of people. He says that there are five important traits of truth, and he thinks that truth is centered around "scientific discourse" which is controlled largely by the economic climate and who has the most political power. Even though political power is the largest controlling factor, truth is also disbursed through universities, the army, through writing and media. He calls this struggle between deciding what truth is and then how it is dispersed an "ideological struggle" (*Power/Knowledge* 131-132). This "ideological struggle" was not

immediately apparent in the outward manifestations of actions, so it is up to us to look at the discourse of the day to see how discourse and historical actions are connected and form our basis of knowledge of the time period. Ideologies compete to define and control perceptions of truth. Sociologist Patrick Joyce is much more specific when he contends: the operation of “ideological hegemony” does not begin to explain the inwardness that characterized the accommodation of so many of the northern factory workers in the social system of modern, factory production. This accommodation occurred not so much at the level of ideas and values, but at the center of people’s daily concerns, in terms of their sense of personal and communal identity. This was so because work got under the skin of life. (xv)

Joyce’s phrase here, that “work got under the skin of life,” is descriptive and provides a fantastic way to view the function of work in the lives of each individual.

Norman Fairclough, the sociolinguist, says that “negotiating differences is simultaneously negotiating identities—working out how I or we relate to others is simultaneously working out who I am or who we are” (151). It is this search for a social identity that is a constant priority of anyone who lives in a social community. This search for identity also requires learning to live with different ideologies and classes of people.

### **Work and Religious Rhetoric**

According to “Life Statistics of London,” an article published in the March 15, 1860 issue of *The Morning Chronicle*, there was a natural increase in the population of

30,939 that year in London. However, an even greater amount of growth was seen through immigration. The article also reports that the “probable” increase in the population through immigration was 54,000 in a year, or over a 1,000 people per week. Not surprisingly, the article also claims that because of the Industrial Revolution, the “greatest migrations take place at the ages 20 to 30; when young people, unsettled, still maintain a connection with the homes of their childhood.” There were also “175,134 more females than males,” in London. The article goes on to say that the author thinks the population has more females because there are a greater number of female immigrants, and men were likely to have a higher mortality rate because of dangerous jobs. In the midst of all of the statistics about the population, the author says that London is not likely to be wracked with disease like previous generations, and so it is up to the population to “work out their own salvation, with God’s blessing.” Even in a highly statistical and functional article in a local newspaper, the rhetoric of working out one’s own salvation is included, which suggests that language permeated the very fabric of society. While religious language was common in nonfiction and sermon like texts, it seems that it was also common in newspaper articles, despite the message of the article that was mostly about statistics of the population of London.

The discussion of work was often used in a religious context as well. Richard Altick explains that “[w]ork, in a secular context, was the counterpart of faith in a religious one, and its efficacy too was regarded as infallible doctrine” (168). It is not clear whether or not the rhetorical choice to associate work with religion was made as a

way to call on the ultimate authority for life and living. Because God was the ultimate authority for discourse and the behavior of people during the Victorian era, it was a clever rhetorical choice to associate the discourse of work with the discourse of religion. Some of the buzzwords of the day were “industry” and “work.”

Perhaps the person most responsible for making “work” and its doctrine a household word was Thomas Carlyle. The embodiment of the Renaissance man during the Victorian era, Carlyle was well known for his essays, philosophy, histories, and even innovations in the field of mathematics. While he started out his early life as a Christian, he later he became disillusioned with the Christian faith and became a Deist. Carlyle’s doctrine on work, also referred to as the “Gospel of Work” (1843) in some circles, set the tone for all future conversations on work during the Victorian era. Carlyle’s “Gospel of Work” was just his emphatic way of saying that everyone in the British Empire should be working, no matter their class or status in the community. “Work, and therein have wellbeing” sums up Carlyle’s gospel of work in a nutshell (“Past and Present” 147). However, work was such a popular topic for Carlyle, that he was able to give a much longer explanation of his ideals in the following statement:

For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so Mammonish, mean, is in communication with Nature; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature’s

appointments and regulations which are truth. The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. "Know thyself:" long enough has that poor "self" of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to "know" it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules! That will be thy better plan. It has been written, "an endless significance lies in Work"; a man perfects himself by working. ("Past and Present" 144)

Carlyle is saying that man should not only work to receive money, but that man should work in order to participate in a greater spiritual and natural purpose. Also, through work, a person begins to understand himself. Without the vehicle of work, a person would be unable to understand himself or the greater community that he is supposed to be working with in order to understand himself.

Although this doctrine of work was universal in its message, Utilitarians and Evangelicals promoted it as well. Both of these schools of thought recognized the benefit of being able to influence a large portion of the population through this message. After all, a working people are a busy people, and busy people do not have time to question or rebel, or engage in activities like drinking or gambling, despite whatever working conditions they may have to endure. It is only to the benefit of the Utilitarians and the Evangelicals to have a happy, working populace.

In their substantial anthology of the literature of work in the Victorian era, David J. Bradshaw and Suzanne Ozment state that work was not just about the spiritual

satisfaction of the masses, but it was also about "the social recognition that was most prized: respectability" (xix). In addition to respectability, for the first time in British history workers had more choices as to what work they were able to do, thanks to the Industrial Revolution and increasing emphasis on education. Because of the great variety of work available, people finally rose above their stations into another class based on their work and financial status, widening the gap between the lower and upper classes and creating a greater middle class. More people were able to find a sense of satisfaction and purpose in their work because they believed Carlyle when he says, "All work, even cotton-spinning, is noble; work is alone noble; be that here said and asserted once more" ("Past and Present" 141). Along those same lines, Carlyle says, "All Works, each in their degree, are a making of Madness sane; —truly enough a religious operation; which cannot be carried on without religion" ("Past and Present" 151). He was saying that salvation was attached to work. At this point in time, no matter the beliefs of individuals, the predominant ideology surrounding work and how it impacted a person was tied to religion and religious philosophies.

Other leading sociologists, such as Patrick Joyce, claim that "[i]t is the intimacy of the link between work and mentality, so profusely revealed in the evidence, that justifies the degree of attention given the cultures of work" (xiv), work is an important topic because it is influenced by a person's ideology, and the type of work that one does contributes to the greater society as a whole.



## Work in Autobiographies

In this discourse analysis, it is important to examine not only the leading or loudest voices that were speaking during the Victorian Era on work, but also the softer voices that from a Foucauldian perspective might have been silenced to a certain degree in the newspapers, literature, and other print sources of the day. It is through autobiographies of the working classes as well as of people of other social stations during that time that we are able to gain a more complete picture of how discourse created power that either prohibited people from working, or encouraged them to work according to their own class and abilities. The internal power structure of society illustrated by the discourse of the day kept people in their proper places, the places that they were born into. In John Burnett, David Vincent, and David Mayall's *The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated Critical Bibliography 1790-1900*, the editors claim that autobiographies are not just documents that share details about lives at a certain point in time, but they are also "evaluation[s] of experience" (xxi). They also explain that writers are looking back over their lives, and they present facts through the filter of their age and experience. Writers are not just concerned about their own lives, but they also try to make connections with their lives and those of their community at the same time. As people weigh their own memories, they usually choose to present the most "respectable" part of their lives, as well as how their solitary stories are encompassed in the larger story of their country, their time period, and their community (xxi). Interestingly enough, Burnett, Vincent, and Mayall found that even though work occupies most of every

autobiographer's life, it isn't necessarily what the writers would choose to write about the most. Instead, authors emphasized other parts of their lives more, such as their childhoods, educations, and their lives outside of their work. The editors share that they were "confronted with the difficult question of how 'work' was perceived and defined" (xxv). The only exception to this statement is if the authors were particularly spiritual, and they viewed their work as being missional and not necessarily just vocational. If their work was connected to the spiritual, "'work' was clearly the central, dominating life interest, the whole reason for existence, not merely the means to it" (xxv). The spiritual autobiographies were most often written by the authors for the sole purpose of sharing their ministries in the hopes of converting others. Vincent says that those autobiographies were "a product of the assumption that the true state of man's soul could only be known through his experience of external reality. To discover God, man first had to discover himself" (Vincent 16). Thomas Tryon, a carpenter's son, wrote, "'The Knowledge of a Man's Self is a Key to the Knowledge of all other things,'" (16). This self-knowledge was found only through a person's normal life, which was consumed by work. By the mid-Victorian period, a normal work day was ten hours. There was not much time between when the final bell was rung signaling that their work day was finished, and the time between when their heads would hit the pillow, and the cycle continued for yet another day.

Other notable exceptions are when the biographers were writers, journalists, publicists, and poets, and one of the most famous ones was John Clare, who later became

a well-known poet associated with the Romantic period known for his pastoral poems on the plights of the everyday working man. The editors end their observations by saying, “Although few earned their livings wholly from literary pursuits, often supporting their families by menial labour, writing was for them the activity which gave meaning and purpose to life” (xxv). Historians are blessed that so many Victorians took the time to chronicle their very busy lives because they left a rich legacy of information.

### **Work and Politics**

It was during the Victorian period that the working class were discovering that they could have a political identity. Through discourse and relationships with others in the factories, they were able to start unions and negotiations for better living and working conditions. Previously, without the catalyst of the horrible working conditions in the factories, the working class would have been spread out all over the farm land, trying to eke out an existence from often over-worked and depleted soil. Farmers were also at the mercy of those who would pay for their products and the shifting economy connected to supply and demand.

As deplorable as the conditions were for the working classes in the factories, outlined by famous novelists and poets of the day such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning<sup>4</sup>, they also served to “wake up” the working

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell’s book, *North and South* (1855), helped to bring awareness to the plight of the textile factory workers in Northern areas of Great Britain. Charles Dickens wrote books such as *Hard Times* (1854), *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), and *David Copperfield* (1850), which helped to provide awareness as to the working conditions of children during the Victorian period. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem, “The Cry of the Children,” (1842) was perhaps the most famous piece of literature to advocate for change in child labor laws.

class people to a greater calling or even “ideology” of their lives and what they wanted them to be. It was through work that people were able to define the self. The following excerpt from Jonathan Rose’s *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, shows how influential the words of Thomas Carlyle were to the masses. Rose tells the story of Elizabeth Bryson, who read *Sartor Resartus*, at the age of fourteen. She said for the first time she encountered ““the exciting experience of being kindled to the point of explosion by the fire of words”” (46). It was then she began to ask questions associated with ideas from the text. Bryson says that for the first time she thought, ““Who am I? The thing that can say I. Who am I, what is this ME?”” (46). It is through this questioning of a person’s role in society that society itself began to take on a new definition. For it is only through society that an individual learns to develop himself and through the individual that the society is developed. It is a reciprocal relationship of power and dependence.

Foucault helps us to understand this relationship a little better when he explains that the intellectual has three parts to his position of privilege. The first part is his class position (which is probably upper to middle class, which is the only reason he would have access to knowledge in order to make him an intellectual); the second part are the circumstances in which he lives and works (which is also related to his class and his field of research); and the last part is how he navigates what Foucault calls the “politics of truth in our societies” (*Power/Knowledge* 132). In another work, Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he explains a person’s identity by describing distinctions in individuals. He says, “It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the

difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is this dispersion that we are and make" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 131). For Foucault, an intellectual person's identity in the community is connected not only to his class, but also to his vocation and his ability to filter the rhetoric of the discourse communities that he encounters every day.

### **Carlyle and Ruskin**

Two of the leading Victorian "recruiters" of the rhetoric of work were John Ruskin (who was known not only for his expertise as an art critic, but also as a social critic and for his books that were considered "the travel guide" of all European tourist destinations) and Thomas Carlyle, the creator of the Gospel of Work.

As we have said, Carlyle believed that a man perfected himself through work, and Ruskin claimed that man could fulfill himself only through "creative labour, which drew upon the workman's intellectual and moral strengths as well as his physical powers" (Harvey and Press 205). A great advocate of further education for the working man, and even the founder of a college specifically for working men, aptly named, The Working Man's College, Ruskin believed that there should not be a separation between a thinking man and a laboring man. Not surprisingly, for decades there have been stigmas and stereotypes about men who work with their hands versus men who were able to perform less menial tasks in order to make a living.

Ruskin claims:

We are always in these days endeavouring [*sic*] to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best sense. As it is, we make both ungentle, the one envying, the other despising, his brother; and the mass of society is made up of morbid thinkers, and miserable workers. (*Precious Thoughts* 48)

Ruskin's words above advocate for a worker who was not just a body, but one who was also ruled by his brains. Instead of separation, Ruskin argues that the most effective and happy kind of worker is the one who is allowed to use both his brain and his body in service of his fellow man. Ruskin makes his point again by emphasizing "the necessity of the whole man being in his work; the body *must* be in it. Hands and habits must be in it, whether we will or not; but the nobler part of the man may often not be in it. And that nobler part acts principally in love, reverence, and admiration, together with those conditions of thought which arise out of them" (283). Ruskin's concern was that society had become highly industrialized, which led to cheap labor, and human beings ceased to be souls. Instead, they became rather mechanical machines reduced to one or two of the same motions to perform day after day. Ruskin says that rhetoric of the day tried to call this practice "a division of labour" (*Precious Thoughts* 208) which made it seem as if a man's work would be lightened or even reduced. Instead, Ruskin argues that the labor is

not “divided; but the men: —Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin, or the head of a nail” (*Precious Thoughts* 208). He continues by saying that there should be a great cry arising from the factories and industrialized cities, whereby they should be bewailing the fact that “we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages” (*Precious Thoughts* 208). In Ruskin’s opinion, the industrialization of the nation was turning men into objects to create more objects, instead of refining them as individuals and connoisseurs of British culture. The individual’s body was separated from his mind and his spirit, with dehumanizing results.

John Burnett, David Vincent, and David Mayall, who study autobiographies in the nineteenth century, claim that it is not only skilled labor that makes a man take pride or have happiness in his work (as Ruskin claimed). People assumed during this time that if a laborer were skilled, he had done some sort of apprenticeship in order to learn his trade. The autobiographers found, though, that it wasn’t only skilled laborers who had been apprenticed that found satisfaction and ownership in their work. Also, there was “a sense of possessing individual skill is found much more widely among textile workers and miners, among some domestic servants, shop assistants and farm labourers—occupations which rank low in the hierarchy of labour” (Burnett, Vincent, and Mayall xxvii). Thus,

the important factor in job satisfaction was the amount of control and creativity that the worker had over the task. All that was needed to produce a happy worker was to give him ownership and responsibility.

Carlyle is not silent on how work affects the body and soul of an individual, either. His editorial entitled, "The Nigger Question," echoes his "Gospel of Work," in that it calls for men to perfect themselves through their work. Man had rights to "do competent work for his living," and he claims that the calling of man is to "do competent work, to labour honestly according to the ability given them; for that and for no other purpose was each one of us sent into this world; and woe is to every man who, by friend or by foe, is prevented from fulfilling this the end of his being" (54). In order for a man to "do competent work" the whole man must also be engaged. There must be no separation of the person in order for a worker to be most fulfilled in his profession. In a document by John Henry Newman, another leading social commentator and a Catholic Priest, he says, "My brethren, the simple question is, whatever a man's rank in life may be, does he in that rank perform the work which God has given him to do?" (82) Ruskin, Carlyle, and Newman were advocates for viewing the workman as not simply a body, but as a man with a soul and a brain.

Also weighing in on this issue was Charles Dickens, who arguably wrote more on the state of society in the wake of the Industrial Revolution than any other during the Victorian period. In "Years for Man to Work In," he recounts how many hours a day are available for a man to work. By Dickens' estimation, a man should have eight hours of



sleep; then it should take him half an hour to wash and dress, two hours to eat and drink, one hour to love, one hour to talk, and two hours for other entertainments. If a man happens to be sick, this inconvenience should also take an hour. Then, he says that fifteen daily hours and a half amount in all to forty-six years and six months. To these must be added fifty-two days in every year, on which days, being Sundays, my man is forbidden to work at all. These fifty-two Sabbaths amount in the aggregate to eight years, seven months, ten days, and twelve hours; and the grand total to be deducted from the span of man's life is fifty-five years, one month, ten days, and twelve hours; leaving fourteen years, ten months, nineteen days, and twelve hours, for my man to be steady and laborious in.

As Dickens was known to do, this is a sarcastic accounting of the time that a man spends in his life to be working. Dickens is making the statement that as work is the most important activity of the time period, it is a shame that a man spends so much of his time doing other things rather than working. After all, it is only through work that a man can perfect himself and save his soul.

### **Ideology and Laws**

In the May 6, 1855 issue of *The Reynolds Newspaper*, entitled "The 'Saints' at Their Dirty Work" an anonymous author rails against the injustice of a proposed Sunday Closing Bill, which he claimed benefitted the rich and was detrimental to the poor. The Bill was proposed by the Sabbatarians, a group of dissenters in the English church who were against doing any work on a Sunday. At the helm of the Bill was Lord R.

Grosvenor and (no first name provided) Ebrington. It would put a stop to Sunday trading. Earlier a Beer Bill (1830) was passed which shut down the public houses (the place where the working classes would meet to socialize and drink) on Sundays, except for between 6 and 10 p.m. However, the Bill said nothing of the Gentlemen's clubs being open, or any trading occurring between the larger business owners in the area.

The author in the newspaper says that "people can neither be made pious or sober by Act of Parliament." In a systematic manner, the author goes on to argue that the working man cannot store up provisions for the week, nor does he have enough time simply on a Saturday to do all that needs to be done. Oftentimes most workers only had one day off a week anyway, and that day would be Sunday. So, if no businesses or public houses were open during their one day off a week, this was a decided disadvantage. The rich would not be affected because my lord or my lady's butler takes special care that neither necessary or luxury shall be wanting to his employer's table on the Sabbath. Why do not those 'noble lords,' who are perpetually interfering with the industrial orders, and endeavouring [*sic*] to have them treated like children, extend their pious exertions to members and institutions of their own body?

The man concludes, "As we before observed, the 'saints' are public nuisances, and by persevering in their present vexations crusade against the liberties of the working classes, they will make the name of religion hated and defeated by the people." The author's bias toward believing that the Bill and those who supported the Bill were against the working classes is clear. It appears as if he is not only railing against the obvious

dichotomy and double standard between the classes, but he is also saying that the Bill would make it nearly impossible for members of the lower classes to be “invited” into or to work their way up to a higher class.

In addition, Karl Marx also wrote on the topic of the Sunday Trading Bill when he was in London in 1855. It is not clear whether he wrote on the topic before or after there was also a demonstration in Hyde Park (1855). Marx’s main goal in writing about the Bill was to express not only his concern about how it would shut out workers, but also his disgust with members of the religious community who he felt were imposing their belief systems and practices on the rest of the country. Marx claimed that in the case of the Beer Bill as well as the Sunday Trading Bill it was a “conspiracy of the Church with monopoly capital, but in both cases there are religious penal laws against the lower classes to set the consciences of the privileged classes at rest” (Marx). In Marx’s mind, the target for those Bills was clearly the working classes. The workers received their wages for the week late on a Saturday, so the shops were open only on Sundays to accommodate the workers. Marx finishes this discussion by saying:

In the eighteenth century the French aristocracy said: For us, Voltaire; for the people, the mass and the tithes. In the nineteenth century the English aristocracy says: For us, pious phrases; for the people, Christian practice. The classical saint of Christianity mortified his body for the salvation of the souls of the masses; the modern, educated saint mortifies *the bodies of the masses* for the salvation of his own soul. (Marx)

Marx's use of religious examples to explain his point is intentional. He is well aware that his audience is accustomed to religious metaphors in the discourse of work. Also, the law itself is being proposed to advance religious ideology. In using a chiasma, (which is a rhetorical principle where the ideas are parallel to each other and switched for emphasis,) he shows that religious principles are being used to oppress the working people.

In conclusion, the discourse surrounding work and identity is primarily tied to the interests of the working man. If a working man's ideology can be shaped and influenced by leading commentators of the day, the individual will become a greater part of the community of workers dedicated to the British Empire. Because the Industrial Revolution was separating the mind, body, and spirit of the worker, loud voices such as Carlyle and Ruskin argue for the increasing spirituality and education of the worker so that he can become a whole person and not one who is separated to fit the needs of the community.

### CHAPTER III

#### WORK AND EDUCATION

Education was the primary tool by which mankind learned his place in the community and developed his ideology in the days after the Industrial Revolution. A proper education could invite man into “better” communities of people and encourage him to be part of the culture that education played an integral role in creating. According to Patrick Joyce, “It is the intimacy of the link between work and mentality, so profusely revealed in the evidence, that justifies the degree of attention given the cultures of work in what follows” (xiv). If there is such an integral link between work and mentality, then there is also an indelible link between work and education. Like a never ending circle, a man is educated in order to be able to work, and work often provides him a different type of education that can be useful in fitting into the ideology and community. In addition to Joyce’s words on how work and mentality are related, John Ruskin also joins the debate on the nature of man and what he is called to do when he says that “[t]he most helpful and sacred work, therefore, which can at present be done for humanity, is to teach people (chiefly by example, as all best teaching must be done) not how ‘to better themselves,’ but how to ‘satisfy themselves.’ It is the curse of every evil nation and evil creature to eat, and *not* be satisfied” (*Precious Thoughts* 5). However, what would a middle or upper class person such as John Ruskin know about eating and being satisfied? The working classes were lucky to be able to eat, much less be able to pursue an education that was

considered frivolous and unnecessary by most members of their own class. In her famous work, *Cranford* (1853), Elizabeth Gaskell writes that the father of one of her characters “hated the notion of folks learning to read, and said it took all the spirit out of them; besides, he thought he had a right to every penny of my wages, and though, when he was in good humour, he might have given me many a jug of ale, he grudged my twopence a week for schooling” (387). Like the character in Gaskell’s novel, working-class parents were often afraid of education because they couldn’t understand it, and because they were not given a proper education themselves, many of them denied their children that “luxury” as well.

While many members of the middle classes were philanthropic and believed in educating the lower classes, many in the upper classes were not eager to see the working classes educated, either. After all, were not money and an education the chief things that separated the upper and lower classes? And would not education allow the latter to work for money in a more humane environment (thus promoting a longer life span)? Matthew Arnold, a prominent educator and commentator on societal issues, calls the people who “believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich, are just the very people whom we call Philistines” (464). There was such a great divide between the upper and lower classes during the Victorian era that each group was unable to understand the living conditions, (and therefore the rhetoric that would seek to improve the living conditions) that separated one from the other. It was as if each class was consumed in a world

completely separate from each other, which allowed for little to no empathy between members of separate classes. Members of the upper class had little incentive to try to understand or better the lower classes, and the lower classes did not have the time, opportunity, or education in order to understand members of any class other than their own.

However, despite these disagreements, there was a general feeling of progress and excitement during the Victorian era among all classes. This excitement was not only because of the progress, but it was also because of speakers and trade unions. For example, in an address given to the Manchester Mechanics' Institution in 1835, a man named Brougham talked about the nature of work and education. He said that "learning and improvement" enter into society through the upper classes, and then somehow it trickles down into the middle classes, and then presumably it is the duty and/or responsibility of the middle classes to distribute "the same love of learning, which they possess themselves; and so that lower class gets by degrees impregnated itself" (qtd. in Vincent 163). The idea that knowledge could come only from the upper classes and then it was distributed judiciously onto the middle and lower classes was not an unusual one.

Even Arnold, in his popular essay on education, defined his "social idea" which was that "men of culture are the true apostles of equality" (476). He saw these "men of culture" as those who were in charge of "the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; . . . to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore,

of sweetness and light" (476). Indeed, it was not unusual in any conversation about education to want to only pass on what was "best" or the ultimate knowledge of "Truth." There was definitely a sense in all of the discourse on the topic that there was a right way and a wrong way to educate the working classes, and even that there was a right way and a wrong way to disperse knowledge from the upper classes to the lower classes. Some of the "right ways" to educate members of the lower classes included night classes after work, or short classes in the middle of the working day. There was a general consensus that the classics and foreign languages made for an educated individual, so after a general course study in arithmetic and reading, educators went right to the more complicated or "difficult" subjects in order to create an English citizen who was well rounded in history and philosophy.

Arnold continues his discussion of "sweetness and light" by saying that it is "the pursuit of perfection" (475). Not only is "sweetness and light" the "pursuit of perfection" but it is also working "to make reason and the will of God prevail" (475). Even though science was beginning to offer answers as to the origin of life, and a material basis on which to base "truth," its hold was not strong enough, yet, to dispel the greater ideology that God (and subsequently His people) was ultimately in charge of defining and distributing truth.

While Arnold was discussing how to educate and distribute the "best" type of knowledge to all people, William Lovett, an early member of the Chartist movement, and by all accounts a self-educated and self-made man, argued that workers must be educated



in order to elect the “best and wisest of men” to answer a question that he felt had not yet been addressed—which was:

*how shall all the resources of our country be made to advance the intellectual and social happiness of every individual? It is not merely the removing of evils, but the establishing of remedies* that can benefit the millions; and in order to check the natural selfishness and ambition of rulers, and induce them to enact just and salutary laws, *those who possess the power to elect must have knowledge, judgment, and moral principle to direct them,* before anything worthy of the name of just government or true liberty can be established. (257-258)

Lovett’s argument for education appeals first to the community as well as the individual. He asserts that the country is “useful” only when its citizens are intellectually and socially happy. Education lifts people up from poverty and removes many social ills, but it also puts pressure on the leaders of a free country because its people know how to hold them accountable. The argument here is that we must educate people in order for them to become well rounded citizens and voters in a democracy. A “just government” cannot be established without an educated voting populace. Although parliament had been in existence for quite some time, it had fluctuated in Britain’s history from being merely ornamental to actually becoming relevant by passing laws and changing the discourse surrounding the problems of the day. With the passage of the Reform Acts during the Victorian Era, parliament solidified itself as a legislative body.

### **The Argument for Education**

A good reason for educating the working classes can be found in an article published in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, which outlines work as a means of education. The excerpt is as follows:

There can be no question nowadays, that application to work, absorption in affairs, contact with men, and all the stress which business imposes on us, gives a noble training to the intellect, and splendid opportunity for discipline of character.

It is an utterly low view of business which regards it as only a means of getting a living. A man's business is his part of the world's work, his share of the great activities which render society possible. . . . [T]he perpetual call on a man's readiness, self-control, and vigor which business makes, the constant appeal to the intellect, the stress upon the will, the necessity for rapid and responsible exercise of judgment--all these things constitute a high culture. (Bradshaw and Ozment xviii-xix)

Work was not only just a means to get a living, but it was also considered a way to be educated, a way to become a man of character, and a way to contribute to the betterment of society.

### **Problems in Education**

The discourse surrounding work and education encounters several problems. First of all, because many children were working in order to help feed and support their families, they were not going to school. How, then, could legislators encourage or

mandate that children work fewer hours so that they still receive a basic education?

Another difficulty lies in educating adults who grew up working and who had not had the opportunity to be educated as a result. The first two arguments are practical in their nature, but the third argument, dealing with the purpose of education for the working classes is more theoretical. Those members of society who advanced a theoretical argument queried, “What is the nature of knowledge and what types of education should we as a society be giving the working classes? Is it sufficient to simply give them the equivalent of a trade school education, or is their value in a liberal arts education for the working classes as well? For the matter, what is a liberal arts education?” This chapter seeks to outline these questions and present the discourse surrounding these ideas, as well as to look at the arguments from the lens of Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, which discusses how to classify and describe systems of education. Because science was a new discipline made even more important to the British people with the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* in 1859, it began to reshape and redefine the discourse surrounding work, education, and even the very purpose of life.

Foucault outlines the great fissure that happened in the world of knowledge and the sciences when he discusses not only Darwin’s theory of evolution, but also the change that occurred in language itself as it related to man and his activities. For example, there was a specific procedure for production, there was a specific system in place for how to accumulate capital, there was a model in place that regulated the economy, and each of these different systems was not dependent upon man and his

language, necessarily, in order to continue to survive. Foucault argues that the same laws apply to language, and that it is not changed by immigration, trading, and even wars, as we have supposed to be true at another time, but instead language exists outside of man and historical events. It is constrained by its own set of internal laws. In other words, “various languages are born, live, lose their energy as they age, and finally die” (*The Order of Things* 368). With this idea in mind, that language discourse is regulated by its own set of internal rules, we will look at how Foucault defines the “human sciences” which he divides into three categories: life, labour, and language. What Foucault says about these three categories can also be applied to the above “problems” in the rhetoric surrounding work and education in Victorian England. The first part of this discussion will outline the areas parliament debated in relation to providing education for children in the working classes, which surrounded the issue of access. There will also be a brief discussion about knowledge and what education should teach individuals who are in the university. One of the central arguments about work and education during the Victorian era was whether to educate people for a job or to educate people according to a more liberal view of education. A liberal view of education tended to prepare people for life, and not necessarily simply for one vocation.

The basis of using Foucault for discourse analysis comes from his definition of a “sociological region” in *The Order of Things*. Foucault says that a sociological region is where an individual who is “labouring, producing, and consuming” can be taken as a symbol of the society of which the individual is a member. The person will also be

divided amongst many groups and traditions, which are also parts of the sociological region. Man also becomes part of the sociological region through “the study of literature and myths, the analysis of all oral expressions and written documents, in short, the analysis of the verbal traces that a culture or an individual may, leave behind him” (*The Order of Things* 355-356). The study of the discourse surrounding work and education in Victorian England gives us a basis whereby we can trace the threads through our own society and take up the continuation of these discussions which have not yet been answered satisfactorily in any society.

### **Children and Education**

The first conflict in the discussion on work and education has to do with the children of the working classes, and sometimes even the middle class. In his seminal work, *The Making of the Working Class*, historian E.P. Thompson says that one of the main modes of discourse coming from the government were documents called “Blue Books.” Thompson explains, “The Blue Books (at least until we came to the great sanitary enquiries) were not the product of ‘an age’ or the fruit of ‘a generation,’ but a battle-ground in which reformers and obstructionists fought. . .” (341). These Blue Books are a powerful tool for researchers seeking to discover the motivations and arguments behind the passing or even the introduction of many of the bills. Some of the discussions noted here about child labour laws and education can be found in preliminary discussions about the “Education of Pauper Children Bill” (1855) and the “Factory Acts (Educational Clauses).—Resolution,” (1867) which will be examined from a Foucauldian perspective

on discourse, including his definition of the order of things as it relates to the human sciences.

Foucault's ideas about language and history are rather cynical. In a discussion about education and the human sciences, Foucault indicated that "[h]istory shows that everything that has been thought will be thought again by a thought that does not yet exist" (*The Order of Things* 372). To Foucault, education was important as a concept not to teach people things that they probably already knew, but as a type of classification system. The addition of the discipline of science allowed educators to shift the discourse on education from hypotheticals to a scientific method based on observation and experimentation. Perhaps this is why Foucault also says, he "The nineteenth century sought in its concern to historicize everything, to write a general history of everything, to go back ceaselessly through time, and to place the most stable of things in the liberating stream of time" (370). The process of documentation and the obsession with classifying and labeling all aspects of our world led to a shift to specialization in education as well. Foucault argues if we study the human sciences, they all "interlock and can always be used to interpret one another: their frontiers become blurred, intermediary and composite disciplines multiply endlessly, and in the end their proper object may even disappear altogether" (*The Order of Things* 358). Foucault is not only explaining how educators in previous centuries have left us with a legacy of separation and specialization, but he is saying that we need to again redefine and look at our labels for terms in our educational system. The human sciences should always "lead the sciences of life, labour, and

language back to that analytic of finitude which shows how man, in his being, can be concerned with the things he knows, and know the things that, in positivity, determine his mode of being” (*The Order of Things* 354). While this statement by Foucault seems as if he is talking in circles and perhaps not making the best of sense, it also proves Foucault’s point that our education systems and our systems of thought should not be linear and chronological as we have been taught and practicing for hundreds of years, but instead should be based upon a cyclical process. Instead of asking ourselves “What happens next?” as it relates to education, we should ask ourselves “What happened before that led to now and how will that show us the future?” With these questions in mind, we will now look at the “Factory Acts (Educational Clauses). —Resolution,” (1867) and the main sources of debate between parliamentary members as they fought to give working class children better educations.

The first member of parliament to make his opinion known according to the Blue Book discussion of the bill is Mr. Fawcett. Mr. Fawcett begins by saying that anyone who has read the “Report of the Children’s Employment Commission,” (1842) should be shocked at what it said. Mr. Fawcett was apparently so detached from the working classes and the way that they lived that he was appalled by the report because “[i]t proved that thousands of lives were yearly sacrificed, and that thousands more of young people were ruined in body and soul by premature employment.” He goes on to explain that when members of parliament first discussed the Factory Acts (which limited the hours of employment for children and helped to provide a more humane atmosphere for people

working in the factories), there were two kinds of arguments against the acts. The first was familiar: if parliament regulated labor it would “jeopardize their prosperity . . . encroach on individual liberty. . . [and] it was unjust because it was exceptional.” However, members of parliament have since learned through experience that the first argument is not true. The Factory Acts were first applied to the textile industry, and even the most staunch opponents to the bill have since admitted that they have benefited from having labor who were taken better care of as children, which then led to them growing up to be “sound in body and mind.” Another interesting fact in Mr. Fawcett’s monologue is that he learned his love for individual freedom from his hon. Friend the Member for Westminster (Mr. Stuart Mill),<sup>5</sup> who had made the most philosophic and, eloquent defence [*sic*] which had ever been written of personal liberty; but he felt sure his hon. Friend would agree with him that the State was performing one of its clearest and most undoubted duties when it rescued a child from a grievous and irreparable injury.

In any case, Mr. Fawcett goes on to propose that any child under the age of thirteen should not be allowed to work in any capacity unless he or she also spent a certain number of hours per week in school. Mr. Fawcett was very clear that even though the Factory Acts had been passed, they still did not answer or solve the problem of the children who were working in the fields. Therefore, he was advocating that a “half-time system” be applied to children in agriculture as well. Mr. Fawcett brought his point home by saying, “If a child was taken away from school at eight or nine years of age, he was

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<sup>5</sup> Despite their similarity in names, there is no apparent relation between the famous philosopher John Stuart Mill and the parliamentary member from Westminster, Stuart Mill.



certain to forget the little he had learned, and he would grow up in a state of ignorance, for it was found that the rudiments of learning were rarely acquired in after life.” He also cited the example of another friend of his, a Mr. Paget, who had been a representative for Nottingham. Mr. Paget was a “well-known agriculturist, and he had for many years adopted the half-time system on his farm with signal success. His experience was that that boys took greater pleasure in their school, and did their work better—emphatically better—for their change of occupation.” These important documents on issues in education as relating to children in the working class are important in a Foucauldian study to illustrate the areas of conflict and resolution and present a picture of the discourse surrounding one of the most important aspects of British society. Foucault says in *The Order of Things* that conflict “shows how need, desire, and interest, even if they are not presented to the consciousness experiencing them, can take form in representation. . .” (362). Each of these documents show the need of the working classes to receive an education, and a desire by most of the parliamentary members to give them one. The interest in the conversation is clear because members of parliament would not even be discussing this issue if it weren’t something that most of them thought would be of value.

It wasn’t only members of parliament who were concerned with the issues of education for working class children, but it was also a topic of interest in the newspapers. In *The Huddersfield Chronicle*, an article titled, “The Half-Time System of Factory Work and Education” outlines the issue and its advantages and disadvantages. The Inspectors

of Factories submitted this report for the half-year ending April 30, 1857 and reported it to parliament. One of the more interesting findings was that the half-time system did not work well if the schools were not good, and of course, they didn't work well if the children didn't attend even the half a day regularly. However, even more important than the quality of the school and how often a student attended is the involvement of the parents and how supportive they were of their child's education. The author of the article found that as a general rule the half-time system did not have the support of parents, and it did not open "their eyes to the value of education, which is still to them a more adjunct to employment in the factory; this is not my own opinion only, but one which is often expressed to me by those who are more conversant than myself the habits of thought and motives of the labouring population." It was also noted that a half-time system was impossible in some areas because of the children's jobs in agriculture, or the distance from the school to the children's home. As a result of these problems, an alternative to the half-day system was also suggested by members of parliament.

For Foucault, who didn't directly discuss the issue of education, often education is the tool that enables everyone to be able to have access to the discourse of one's culture. However, when education is distributed by society "in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 227). While the discourse presented here is not on what the children are being taught, but

how the children need to be taught, that is an important consideration that will be discussed later on.

In addition to Mr. Fawcett's discourse encouraging education for the working classes, there were also many opinions expressed by a Mr. Bruce, who proposed that another solution for the more rural districts would be to require children to attend school for a certain number of days in a year rather than hours in a day or days in a week. His concern was also for children working in agriculture. He wanted to make sure these children were treated well and given as many opportunities as children in the factories. Mr. Bruce also pointed out that parents and employers should be aware that "whatever increased the efficiency of labour increased its productiveness, and thus augmented the fund divisible as landlord's rent, farmer's profit, and labourers' wages. . . . Agriculture was daily becoming more and more a skilled industry, more complicated machinery was used in it, and greater intelligence was required for its management." In a rather beautiful and eloquent speech, Mr. Bruce went on to say if the laboring classes were to promote their education they would be "assisting effectually to lighten the burden of poverty which oppressed them, and to make their condition more worthy of that nation, to the wealth and greatness of which their class had contributed so much, and from whose advancing civilization and increasing prosperity they had derived so slender a share of augmented happiness." In other words, Mr. Bruce is arguing that the British Empire owes its success to the working class people. Because their work had made England a

stronger, more profitable country, did not the lower classes deserve to also reap the benefits intellectually and monetarily for the success of the British Empire?

Mr. Bruce, like Mr. Fawcett, was an advocate for the rights of working children. He seemed to be more concerned with the rights of children working in agriculture because he was convinced that they had been neglected, and it was time that these children were granted the same rights and consideration of children working in the factories.

Mr. Goldney spoke up at this point because he was concerned that people had gotten the wrong impression about employers in the agriculture industry. He said that the country Gentlemen did not “fear the extension of education among their labourers. No class of men had endeavoured to do so much towards establishing schools and encouraging education as the country Gentlemen.” While he admitted that sometimes parents wanted to add “to the comforts of their families by the earnings of their children” which made the children more profitable to the family by working rather than going to school, he also said that sometimes children didn’t go to school because they would much rather “go bird-nesting, or rabbiting, or something of that sort, and the country Gentlemen had even offered premiums for getting them to school.” Mr. Goldney appeared to be well meaning in outlining the difficulties rural people faced in getting their children to go to school, but he also seemed to be a romantic, stuck in earlier times where the motivations and desires of people were more simple and easily understood.

In contrast, Mr. Trevelyan's testimony seemed to be more concerned with facts and figures and the general literacy of the working classes. He said that in 1859 they tested the men in the army, "and they discovered that out of 10,000 men taken at random, 2,675 were unable to write, though they could read imperfectly, and 2,080 could neither read nor write." Mr. Trevelyan was disturbed by these statistics, especially since he found out that in Prussia only two out of every 100 recruits were unable to read or write. In England in the same year, out of 15,000 men who were discharged, 6,000 of them were only able to sign a mark as a signature.

At this point, Mr. Read suggested his solution to implement a night school. He said that not only are night schools good at "keeping up the slight elementary education which farm boys received, but in preserving them from bad company, and employing their winter evenings." For after all, it is idle hands that are free to do the Devil's work, which was an old adage during this time that people believed was responsible for crime and the misguided trouble making of youth.

Foucault's analysis of discourse explains that opposition is possible because analysis "relies upon the permanence of function," also upon "interconnection of conflicts," and "upon the fabric of significations" (*The Order of Things* 359). The analysis of discourse that focuses on areas of conflict or places in the discourse where it does not agree or make sense, shows what is the norm as well. After all, how can the norm be determined without first realizing what is against that norm, or the areas of fluctuation in the discourse?

Sir Francis Crossley, another member of parliament, seemed to advocate a more balanced view of education when he said that “children were not only much healthier but were more attentive at school from having to work three days a week, and more industrious in the factory from having a change of occupation in the school.” He recognized that work and education could and should go hand-in-hand, often complementing each other in their goals. He was speaking out against the idea that further education makes the laboring man discontent with his job and his lot in life. Instead, he argues that the best working men are those who are the most educated. Sir Francis Crossley is speaking out against the fear that educated men would not make good agricultural labourers. With that idea in mind, he argued that children under the age of thirteen should not be employed without a certificate of their attendance at school.

Another voice in the debate spoke up, a Mr. Alderman Lusk who powerfully asserts, “The State has as much right to compel a man to educate his children as to require him to feed and clothe them.” Mr. Lusk seems to be saying that the right to education should be a human right just as important as the need for food and clothes. If it can be argued that education is a human right, then it lands on the government’s shoulders to make sure that its citizens are able to have access to all of their basic human rights. There were several other voices in this debate, but because this section has grown rather long, it has been edited for effectiveness and brevity. In any case, it is clear that the well meaning members of parliament are concerned with the level of education of the working classes, and more specifically those working in agriculture. Because the Factory

Acts had been passed, they were adding their own influence and arguments to a new bill that would also bring a higher level of education (and thus a better quality of life) to those who were working in agriculture as well.

Another bill discussed in the Blue Books was entitled, “Education of Pauper Children.” It was concerned with children who were being raised and living in the poor houses, or workhouses. Mr. Evelyn Denison said that the children living in the workhouses did receive an education, while those not living there had no means of procuring one. He argued that the merit of the bill was if only half of the children who were extremely poor but who did not live in workhouses would be able to receive an education, then the bill was worth it. Mr. Denison then moved immediately that the bill should be passed.

In contrast, Sir Robert Peel, one of the most famous Prime Ministers of all time, in the deliberation of a bill entitled, “Leave, First Reading,” outlines the challenges in trying to educate children in a workhouse. Children under two years of age had a mortality rate of 47 percent, while those who were not in the workhouse, but who were of the same class, had a mortality rate of 16 percent. He then argued that the government needed to change the restrictions and the living conditions of those working in the poor houses from a “moral as well as a medical point of view.” While the working houses were initially designed for the benefit of the poorest of the poor, they had deteriorated into a blight on the conscience of any Englishman concerned about his fellow man. Children who were not in workhouses were not afforded the same opportunities in

education. However, having an education was the only benefit to the workhouse situation as evidenced by the higher mortality rates listed above.

Another interesting article that outlines the discussion behind the education of the working class is found in the *Manchester Times*. It was entitled “Learning and Work,” and it was published on June 2, 1855. The author of this editorial contrasts the opinions of a Mr. Wrigley with what he believes should actually happen (it is presumed according to his own opinions.) According to the author of the piece, Mr. Wrigley objected to the State interfering in the education of the working classes, in anything except for the most dire of circumstances. The author disagrees with that stance and says that he has “no sympathy with the maudlin sentimentality which declaims about the right of the people to do as they please with their children, and about the dangers of the despotism which would compel attendance at school.” Instead, the author compellingly argues that society has the right to “protect itself against nuisances of every kind—against the sources of ignorance, pauperism, and crime; and we recognize the right of helpless children to be protected from the cruelty of unfeeling and drunken parents—from mental no less than from bodily starvation.” The author rather eloquently continues that the country is only as strong as the weakest people among them, and they should not be scared to educate and take care of the working classes. As much as Mr. Wrigley would say that all parents have a right to make their own decisions regarding the education of their own children, the author argues that the parents should no more have the right to that decision than they do whether or not they should feed or clothe their children. The idea that education was a



basic human right was new in its application and in the debates noted above, and this was an important progressive step in the overall education of the British working classes.

### **College for the Working Man**

As we have previously discussed the access that children of the working classes had to education and the debates surrounding that access, we are now going to discuss what the British people in the Victorian era thought that students should be learning in the universities. The London Working Men's College was founded in 1854 primarily by F. D. Maurice, who was also the principal. Unlike other universities, the Working Men's College was open to any young man who was over the age of sixteen and who already had a basic knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. All of the teachers were volunteers, and they chose the word "college" to describe their school because they wanted to make it clear they were providing a "liberal" education, instead of the standard vocational type classes that were previously open to members of the working classes (Mitchell 240). The main discussion about what they should be learning in the universities then centered on whether a liberal arts education or a "trade school" sort of education was better suited to the working classes. This debate continues today amongst proponents of either liberal arts education or other community college and trade school options prevalent in the United States.

Even though most of the discussion here on Foucault's ideas about education and language come from his book *The Order of Things*, his definition of education comes from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: "What is an educational system, after all, if not a

ritualisation of the word; if not a qualification of some fixing of roles for speakers; if not the constitution of a (diffuse) doctrinal group; if not a distribution and an appropriation of discourse, with all its learning and its powers?" (227). The conversation about education and work shifts in the nineteenth century to include other more pressing matters that would be more relatable to a working class that had just begun to be almost universally literate, due in large part to three factors: access; the widespread usage of state funds to enhance educational facilities and provide better libraries; and the emergence of privately funded loaning libraries.

Foucault offers his perspective on this debate when he defines the human sciences and what we should be teaching in the universities as well. He breaks his argument down by examples, and his first example has to do with economics. Far from being a discipline concerned only with supply and demand or numbers, he says we should define it according to man's "needs and desires" and how he seeks to "satisfy them" (357), which creates conflict with other men who desire the same things. Due to the conflict, he either hides from them, or he succeeds in ruling over them. If he is the victor, then he usually starts to provide a set of rules whereby he regulates his product, in order to keep other conflicts out. Foucault then finally gets to the subject of language and explains that a man's body language has the same sort of meaning as the language he uses to communicate verbally. Not only do body language and oral communication play an important role in how a man fits into and interacts with society, but also "everything he arranges around him by way of objects, rites, customs, discourse, all the traces he leaves

behind him, constitute a coherent whole and a system of signs” (357). If man communicates not only orally and through his body language, but also through the objects that he chooses to surround himself with, what are the implications for education as a result? Thankfully, Foucault goes on to say that we can’t study a “science of man” unless we study the interactions of man with other people. The interactions that occur between people have to do with how man chooses to represent himself. He could be wearing a mask, and then it would be even more difficult to study his interactions with society if he is projecting an image of himself in order to somehow satisfy the dynamics of a particular group.

In the end, Foucault argues that man as an object of the human sciences is “doomed to work; is that being who, from within the forms of production by which his whole existence is governed, forms the representation of those needs, of the society by which, with which, or against which he satisfies them, so that upon that basis he can finally provide himself with a representation of economics itself” (353). If a man is “doomed to work,” then the argument for state-mandated education being a basic civil right does have merit. Working would become a basic human right, and governments have been charged with protecting and ensuring that its people are allowed to have and practice their human rights.

### **Work and the Liberal Arts Education**

John Henry Newman, a controversial figure during the Victorian period because of his return to the Catholic Church in the middle of his career, wrote “Idea of a

University” (1852) in which he argues emphatically for the validity of a liberal arts education. However, he does not argue against a trade or vocation-based education, either, but he simply states that they each have their purpose. Overall, he feels that a liberal arts education benefits the whole individual, while a trade school or vocational education prepares an individual only for a certain type of job. He defines a liberal arts education as opposite to the word “servile,” which he says is “bodily labour,” which is disconnected from the brain. His usage of the word “servile” suggests that he believes that manual labor forces the working man into the mentality of a slave. Therefore, “liberal education and liberal pursuits are exercises of mind, of reason, of reflection” (184). As Ruskin and Carlyle have noted previously, Newman was a proponent of man’s not being separated from his mind in his labour, believing instead that the happiest and best work was done in conjunction with mind and body. A separation of the mind and body in a man’s work forces him to become an object versus a subject in his work. If a man is simply a body performing menial tasks and has no creative or intellectual input on his work, he becomes essentially trapped by the actions of his body.

Newman uses several key terms that Foucault also defines in different ways. For example, “truth” for Newman is based on a religious standard, while Foucault’s version of “truth” has to do with the scientific method and phenomena that we can observe and test for accuracy. According to Newman, “truth” is what should be taught in the university. He asserts that truth “is the proper object of the intellect. . . . Now the intellect in its present state, with exceptions which need not here be specified, does not

discern truth intuitively, or as a whole” (211). While Newman believes truth is observable, he says that after it is observed it must be compared, corrected, and adapted through many processes in the mind (211). How else can a person learn to compare, correct, and adapt information except through training? Also, education, or the search for truth, occurs through “discipline and habit” (211). While observational skills do help in one’s education, for Newman, that is not enough.

One of the most famous tenets of Newman’s “Idea of the University” is that “[k]nowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward” (181). If a person is knowledgeable of past events, then he will be able to apply that knowledge to all other areas of his life as well. A truly knowledgeable man is one who has “a connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near, and which has an insight into the influence of all these one on another; without which there is no whole, and no centre. It possesses the knowledge, not only of things, but also of their mutual and true relations; knowledge, not merely considered as acquirement, but as philosophy” (200). For Newman, knowledge was not only important for what it was, but also for what it does (188). His definition of a liberal arts education should be an example to many institutions who seek to marry the ideas of education and work and to show the importance in the life of a student of both of these key philosophies.

## **What is Knowledge?**

In her book *Foucault and Education*, Gail Jardine provides a unique perspective on what Foucault's ideas about knowledge and education entail. She describes a history where humans in each period of European history have held that their own ideas and body of knowledge was "absolutely, universally true. However, even a cursory look at historical texts reveals that what was held to be knowledge differs from era to era" (81). One of Foucault's unique contributions as a historian, philosopher, and even a psychologist, was to show that at different times in history what was touted as "true, valid, and reliable knowledge *changed*. We not only see this when we examine documents, texts, and artifacts throughout European history, but also when we compare accounts of truth offered in mainstream works with those from voices marginalized within modern society" (81). It was through Foucault's study of the texts and discourse of different eras of history that he was able to conclude that bodies of knowledge are not only compiled and found by human beings, but they are also "created/constituted to serve the interests and circumstances of the human beings in each era" (81). Because of Foucault's own historical findings, he had to conclude that what was "true" was constantly changing according to the ruling classes or according to those who had access to knowledge and who distributed their knowledge to the rest of society. Foucault also says that all knowledge can be found in "a life, a society, and a language that have a history; and it is in that very history that knowledge finds the element enabling it to communicate with other forms of life, other types of society, other significations. . ."

(*The Order of Things* 373). This quote also applies to Newman's idea that all knowledge adds to other knowledge, and that is how we receive further training and preparation and, ultimately, a complete education in all subjects that relate to each other. What Newman calls "training" in order for the student to be able to develop his mind enough to critically analyze what he observes, Foucault calls this same idea "criticism."

The following passage is important to our study of discourse on work and education here, and so it will be reproduced here in its entirety:

Criticism also examines the forms of *rhetoric*; the analysis of *figures*, that is, the types of discourse, with the expressive value of each, the analysis of *tropes*, that is, the different relations that words may have with the same representative content (designation by a part or the whole, the essential or the accessory, the event or the circumstance, the thing itself or its analogues). Lastly, faced with existing and already written language, criticism sets out to define its *relation* with what it represents; hence the importance assumed, since the seventeenth century, by critical methods in the exegesis of religious texts; it was no longer a question, in fact, of repeating what had already been said in them, but of defining through what figures and images, by following what order, to what expressive ends, and in order to declare what truth, God or the Prophets had given a discourse the particular form in which it was communicated to us (*The Order of Things* 80-81).

We study rhetoric in order to understand the different types of discourse that are persuasive in their own ways. The study of rhetoric in earlier classical times made up the

entire curriculum. Indeed, it could be argued that rhetoric was another word for what we term a liberal arts education from Newman to the present day. If a man was taught to speak well and to defend himself, his mind was also developed, and he was able to live a full and profitable life. What can be learned from Foucault's ideas of language and education and Newman's definition of the liberal arts and its place in a university is that the most complete form of education is one that engages the body and the mind. I would argue that the discussion of a liberal arts education versus a vocational education should not be one of either/or but one of and/also, according to the wishes and inclinations of the student. The educational system will only survive as it adapts and changes with the needs of its students.



## CHAPTER IV

### WOMEN AND WORK

As we have seen in a previous chapter, a man's work is intrinsically connected to his identity, which creates a power struggle for him between who he would like to be, who he is, and the man that others expect him to be. For this reason, the rhetoric surrounding work is so influential in a man's life. If a man's work is intrinsically connected to his identity, which is influenced by literature and rhetoric, what about the work of a woman? A person controls many facets of his or her life because of the choices that he or she has made in his or her career. So, does the woman not also have the right to work and choose her own profession? If women are given choices as to what work they can do and where they can do it, then that is indeed powerful.

According to various documents during the Victorian period, a woman's right to work outside of the home was not as assured as a man's. The type and quantity of her work was limited by her class, and often by social constraints put upon her by members of her family. The prevailing idea of the time was that a middle and upper class woman's work was in the home, caring for her husband and having many children to expand the British Empire. After all, a man was not able to biologically fulfill that function, so it must have been ordained by God for a woman to fulfill that role which was perceived as subservient. A woman's power was tied to her biological functions instead of her ability to work and create in other careers. It is almost as if (because the woman has been given

more power biologically to perpetuate the human race), there was a plan by the government or by men in the woman's life to control her choices and her ability to work.

However, social commentators and novelists of the day did not know what to do with women who did not fulfill their biological duty to marry and procreate. Of course, a woman's role (and also a man's) was primarily dictated by class and the power structure inherent in certain classes of society. No one was quite sure work was acceptable for a middle- or upper-class woman in the Victorian era. In addition, women of lower classes did not suffer the same fate, for they had to engage in whatever work that they could in order to eat. Women of the middle and upper classes, however, were held to a higher standard because they were expected to maintain the level of social prominence that other members of their family were fortunate enough to achieve. A woman in the middle—or upper—classes would not be allowed to work in lower income jobs, such as being a maid or working in a factory, because it was considered demeaning and “beneath” her by members of her own class (Altick 55-56).

It was not surprising that women of the middle and upper classes were held to a higher standard, though, because men of those classes were also held to a higher standard. A man's career, livelihood, and wealth placed him in a certain class of society. The work he undertook was connected to a man's station or status in life, which was controlled by an interconnected web of internal power structures, largely determined at birth. The type of work men were allowed to do was tied to their class and their family connections, and their class prohibited them from obtaining a different job—one which

might have produced more revenue and enabled that person to rise into an upper class of society.

However, this vicious cycle was broken through the hope of machinery (which promised a better quality of life) and the wonders of the Industrial Revolution. Some members of the lower classes were also able to better their stations because of the rise of compulsory and universal education at the end of the Victorian period. Work that was closed to men and women of the lower classes before that time became socially acceptable, and, in general, more jobs became available.<sup>6</sup> Women were able to work in factories, become governesses, work as lady's maids, and later in the decade, to become nurses. The jobs were in the cities, though, which caused a re-shuffling of the population, and a threat to the country's ideal of family and a moral society when single women flocked to the cities in order to find work. Legislators and social commentators were afraid that if single women were not marrying because of the promise of greater revenue and a more "free" lifestyle in the city, that the population would decrease, and the family, which was the cornerstone of all civil societies, would diminish in its standing and importance.

This chapter will explore the discourse surrounding women and their work in the years after the Industrial Revolution. It will show that women were able to achieve greater equality in society through the discourse surrounding work. The discourse surrounding work argues that the right for women to work is a human right, and not

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<sup>6</sup> During the mid-nineteenth century, a third of the women were working outside of the home, according to Bradshaw and Ozment (629).

restricted by gender. When Foucault discusses dividing practices he argues that we classify (or name) things and people in order to contain them, and then to control them. Each of these elements is evident in the discourse surrounding women and work. First of all, women were restricted by ignorance surrounding their bodies, their sexuality, and their mental capacity for work. They were also restricted by class constraints as to the type of work that was available to them, and finally, they were restricted by the idea that women did not deserve the basic human right to be able to work in any capacity.

In looking at a selection of documents from nineteenth century newspapers, literature, and commentaries of the day the discourse on women and work was framed in a way to try to control a woman's choices as to what job she was allowed to do and as another way to control a woman's body, whereby she was able to work. The rhetorical function of discourse changes people's minds, and it provides the socially acceptable "standard" by which everyone else wants to measure up. If a woman in the middle or upper class is considered "abnormal" for wanting to work outside of the home, then that would force her to stay in the home. A woman who worked outside the home when she did not "have to" risked being ostracized or being called eccentric by the community. This method of control was highly effective because women did not have any other choices. Because women were not allowed to be landowners, it limited their ability to be able to support themselves without receiving help from some male relative. However, when the Industrial Revolution and the lure of the cities became viable options, then the tenor and tone of the discourse and rhetoric of work for women began to change. For one

thing, prior to the Industrial Revolution, jobs outside of the home for women were extremely limited. Lower class women were able to survive on farms, and through what were called “cottage industries,” they were able to knit and weave fabric and sew garments in their own homes. Part of the change in the discourse was because it was discovered that women could do jobs that men were not capable of doing in the mills (due to their smaller stature and smaller hands) and also because the workforce needed more people, no matter their gender. While men were out conquering the globe, only women (and children to a limited extent) were available to run the machines that obtained the revenue that allowed them to do so (Altick 46).

### **The “Woman Question”**

When beginning a conversation about the discourse surrounding women and work in Victorian England, it is impossible to understand it without first looking at what is called the “Woman Question.” In David Bradshaw and Suzanne Ozment’s anthology on work in the nineteenth century, they begin their introduction on women by saying that the “Woman Question” was the “debate over possibilities for women’s work and the way those possibilities served to define familial, social, and political roles for both men and women” (xx). As I have previously stated, though, it didn’t matter how many definitions of women’s work were talked about during this time period because they all applied only to the middle or upper class of women. The conversation was not about lower class women who were already laboring in the fields, or working in factories or in service. Interestingly enough, Foucault would likely have been more concerned about the

members of the lower classes because they typically have the least amount of power in society. They were exploited because they were the willing to work in whatever capacity was legal out of economic necessity, until later regulations were able to provide safer working conditions. However, because they could work, they did have some form of power, and this discussion centers around women in the middle and upper classes who were not allowed to work, and therefore lost whatever power they would have possessed as a result. Another idea gained precedence in the Victorian era: the idea that all people should work. If someone was not working, that meant that person was idle, and an idle person would be tempted to indulge in wickedness. This was therefore a paradox: everyone should work, but only doing what certain people thought would be acceptable for them to do.

The other difficulty was whether or not women should even be in the workforce because they were supposed to remain the “moral guardians of the home” (Bradshaw and Ozment xx). Even though this was a common idea tracing back to Biblical and religious traditions, the idea that a woman was the moral guardian of the home became even more popular through Coventry Patmore’s famous poem, “The Angel in the House” (1854). The poem was supposedly modeled after the author’s wife, Emily, who was Patmore’s ideal of the perfect Victorian woman. She was submissive, respectful of her husband, of strong character and loveliness, and above all things, pure. The irony of this fact is that Foucault argues that as much as the Victorian era was known for the repression of sex and any mention of the immoral in society, it was also a culture that proliferated the

discourse on sex, even more than ever before. While women were to lie back, close their eyes and “think of England,” (“Close Your Eyes”) in order to ensure the country’s success through procreation, the phrase makes the incorrect assumption that sex was distasteful and something to be avoided at all costs. Foucault claims that no society has been more prudish; never have the agencies of power taken such care to feign ignorance of the thing they prohibited, as if they were determined to have nothing to do with it. But it is the opposite that has become apparent, at least after a general review of the facts: never have there existed more centers of power; never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere. (*The Foucault Reader* 674-678)

Foucault claims that although Victorians are known for being “prudish,” as a historian who actually looked at the documents and discourse of the time, he found the opposite to be true. Publicly and traditionally, the Victorians were known to be a repressed people group, but Foucault claims that there were more power groups connected to pleasure than ever before (*The History of Sexuality* 33).

The subject of women and work in the middle to upper classes was also something that was not to be discussed in polite society. After all, “working” was something that the lower classes had to do in order to earn their bread, and because the middle and upper classes did not have to earn their bread in the same manner that the working classes did, they did not want to be compared to the working classes at all.

Therefore, the discussion moved from “can women work,” (outside of the home) “to should women work,” to “what work was acceptable for women to do.” Because education for women had not been as important to lawmakers as other issues before this time, because the work that women were allowed to do did not require an education, the “Woman Question” also brought the issue of women and working to the fore.

### **“Redundant Women”**

Another phrase used to describe young single women during this time was “redundant.” These women were not previously expected to work, so they didn’t have the right education to do so, but if they were widows or spinsters, they found themselves in deep financial distress.

Indeed, the fear of a decreasing population and independent and “wild” women was so great, it prompted William Rathbone Greg—a mill worker turned political writer—to publish “Why are Women Redundant?” in *The National Review* in 1862. It was discovered in the 1851 census that there were over a million women in Great Britain between the ages of eighteen and forty who were unmarried. In response this finding, Greg wrote,

There are hundreds of thousands of women . . . scattered through all ranks, but proportionally most numerous in the middle and upper classes,—who have to earn their own living, instead of spending and husbanding the earning of men; who, not having the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers, have to carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations for themselves; who, in place of



completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others, are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own. (158)

Greg's language highlights how he really feels about women working outside of the home. Jobs in the home are "natural duties" and women who are not in the home "have to carve out artificial and painfully sought" jobs, and finally, they ultimately "lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own," which shows that he believes women who are not attached to a husband and family are not worthwhile in the emerging British Empire. To him it is a tragedy if a woman is "independent" and "incomplete" without a husband and a family. The language suggests that without a man as a husband and partner, a woman is less of a human being.

However, in an increasingly imperialistic society, the threat of not having enough of a population to take over the globe was a significant concern. Not surprisingly, though, the soldiers inhabiting various corners of the British Empire where the sun never set were not blamed for the lack of population growth, but it was the unmarried women themselves who were seen as the culprits of the crime to society.

Greg's basic argument is that there are three reasons why women are redundant. The first is a result of emigration and imperialism (with men going in the army and spreading the might of the British Empire throughout the globe there were not as many men at home to marry the single women). The second reason is that the position of a woman has been sacrificed, and the third reason is that men are unwilling to "settle down" with one woman. His first argument classifies the role of a woman as a wife and

mother. Without a man, she is unable to perform those functions, and so she loses her worth (and also, arguably, according to Foucault, her power.) His second reason very neatly fits into Foucault's idea that once a person is classified, it is easy to contain him or her, which is what Greg is doing in saying that her position has been sacrificed. The third reason, that men are unwilling to "settle down," shows that women can be controlled through the threat of not having the relationship and financial stability of a man that they have been trained to see as their right from birth.

Greg sees these women who are left unmarried and financially dependent on other male family members (or else in a state of genteel poverty) as a "*problem to be solved, the evil and anomaly to be cured*" (159). He suggests many cures for his "problem," but believes it a societal issue; therefore, society should view work as an entity that should be "seeking for the women, instead of, as now, the women seeking for the work. We are disordered, we are suffering, we are astray, because we have *gone wrong*; and our philanthropists are labouring, not to make us go backward and go right, but to make it easier and smoother to persist in wrong" (163). The fact that women are not in homes performing their biological and nurturing duties shows, according to Greg, that society is sick. This idea was common among Victorian commentators: if children are hungry, if women are suffering in poverty, and if men are languishing in debtor's prison, (and all of these groups are destitute for lack of work), it is because someone, somewhere, has made wicked or evil choices. The consequences for sin is economic hardship, and, of course,

laziness is a sin. It was a common idea in the discourse of the day that many or all of the economic ills could be solved through hard work by everyone.

Greg's examples of the types of work that women are doing that he thinks that they should not be doing are in the factories, where girls are working in the mills: "In great cities, thousands, again, are toiling in the ill-paid *metier* of sempstresses and needlewomen, wasting life and soul, gathering the scantiest subsistence, and surrounded by the most overpowering and insidious temptations" (158-159). In other words, there are women who are eking out a living being seamstresses in the cities, but they are also exposed to the sinfulness of the city, where evil abounds. Women of slightly higher social standing who are more educated are working as governesses, and "old maids, with just enough income to live upon, but wretched and deteriorating, their minds narrowing, and their hearts withering, because they have nothing to do, and none to love, cherish, and obey" (158-159), comprise another category in his litany of employments unsuitable for women. What can be inferred from this rhetoric about the duties and feelings of "old maids" is that their lives are not complete without the care and consideration of men and children. He also claims a little further down, though, that "only employment can fill the dreary void of an unshared existence," (158-159) which is contradictory. On the one hand, he is saying that the ultimate employment for a woman should be that of a wife and a mother, but if that option is not available to her for whatever reason, because women have an innate desire to work, they should be involved in charity work. His final category for the work of women is that they "find solace in literary interests and work, and these,

though the fewest, are perhaps the most fortunate of all” (158-159). He seems to think that women who are engaged in “literary interests” have found an honorable profession, even though they are not being wives and mothers, since they are able to work in the home.

William Rathbone Greg concludes by saying that “[t]he very being of all these various classes is a standing proof of, and protest against, that 'something wrong,' on which we have a few words to say,—that besetting problem which, like the sphinx's, society must solve or die . . . . ” (158-159). Like many men and women of the day troubled by the “Woman Question” and the debate about whether women should work or not, and if they did, what types of work were acceptable, Greg’s document is probably the most opinionated and offers the most insight into the rhetoric of power and control that influenced women about their employment. Decided ultimatums are rampant throughout his document, and it is not surprising that if men were influenced by his words, then women would be forced to also abide by his opinions, as they were most likely still under the control of some male relative.

### **“Dividing Practices” and Sexuality**

Because Foucault discusses minority groups in detail, his ideas on “dividing practices” are relevant to this discussion. Foucault’s “dividing practices” show how women have been the gender that literally bears the evidence of their sexuality, and as a result, women must be hidden from society, especially when they are performing their duty to procreate and further the human race. Traditionally, women in English society

have been hidden from society during pregnancy because they show that they engage in sexual activity. Women also are “hidden” from society during their monthly cycles.

Foucault argues that society in our more recent time is embarrassed by sexuality, but also by stasis, or a particular gender not performing its proscribed purpose. Foucault and his theories help us discover how the discourse about women and work in the Victorian era was so vital in changing and shaping the dynamic of society. Foucault argues that the rhetoric surrounding a woman (especially in Victorian times) was designed to classify, control, and contain them in all areas of their lives, even though the speakers were very likely unaware of the power that they were wielding through their discourse.

Throughout this chapter, we will take Foucault’s methods of being “highly suspicious of claims to universal truths” (*The Foucault Reader* 4) as our methodology. Instead of giving a definition of power in Victorian literature, we will examine how the language of classification, control, and containment was practiced in rhetoric that created a discourse that shaped the way women thought about themselves and the way that they were supposed to work. According to Foucault, “there is a universal human need for creative work and free inquiry” (*The Foucault Reader* 5), and what we are doing in our present society (which is a legacy that we have inherited from the Victorians and others) is stifling the need for creativity and independence that all human beings have. The question then becomes how to bring about a society where creativity and reason flow freely (5). The Victorians also posed those questions, for the first time in a “modern era” where the perils of the Industrial Revolution were wrapped up in the fear of becoming a

society controlled by machines and automatic, repetitive movements. As a result, a discourse emerged that bewailed the level of classification, control, and containment that was inherent in the previous discourse on women and work. This discourse began to alter the power relations between the genders and was part of the spark that ignited the suffragette movement, which led to more rights for women not only in their work, but also in their right to control their own bodies, their own property, and even their own children. True independence for women could not be achieved unless she was not dependent on man or society to fulfill her economic, physical, or emotional needs. Ultimately, Foucault's aim is to "discover the point at which these [dividing] practices became coherent reflective techniques with definite goals, the point at which a particular discourse emerged from these techniques and came to be seen as true, the point at which they are linked with the obligation of searching for the truth and telling the truth" (7). Thus, the discourse surrounding women and work was a force for change and a point whereby truth was heard and acted upon.

One of the reasons that Foucault says discourse is so powerful is because discourse "had to trace the meeting line of the body and the soul, following all its meanderings: beneath the surface of the sins, it would lay bare the unbroken nervure of the flesh" (*The History of Sexuality* 20). Foucault talks about the discourse of sex and the body differently than any other social historian or linguist has done before. For Foucault, discourse "should be seen rather as a dispersion of centers from which discourses emanated, a diversification of their forms, and the complex deployment of the network

connecting them” (34). Discourse is not only the written and spoken word, but it can also be actions from people in response to the discourse around them.

However, this web of discourse is not only talking about sex, but it is talking about the ways that men and women are different, and the ways that women have not been allowed to be a part of decisions that affect their own futures. The discourse on women and work during this time period is very similar to the discourse on sex. It was connected to the discourse on power and the delicate balance that was beginning to be formed between the sexes. It was either repressed or silenced (if we ignore it is no longer there) and it was connected to economics in most cases.

Despite the best efforts of puritanical leaders and social commentators of the Victorian Age who tried to repress conversations on sexuality (and ultimately women’s issues), discourse on women’s rights (beyond just their own sexuality), flourished at the end of the Victorian period. After all, isn’t it human nature to be attracted to what one is not allowed to know or to discuss? What Foucault calls “modern Puritanism” controlled the discourse and “imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence” (*The History of Sexuality* 4-5). The taboo element produced what Foucault calls “a multiplicity of discourses produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions” (*The History of Sexuality* 33). Not only was sexuality discussed in discourse, but with the invention of photography, there was also a rise in pornographic images. When topics become inaccessible or “taboo” to certain groups of people or

speakers, the person who controls the discourse is asserting power over those whom he is trying to control.

In order to even begin to make the rights of women part of the discourse, the discourse had to be a “thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum” (*The History of Sexuality* 24). While the discourse needed to be “inserted into systems of utility,” so did women’s bodies. Therefore, women were able to gain rights such as the right to work and the right to vote during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because they were able to “disguise” the discourse on women’s rights in the arguments about the rights of women to work.

Foucault’s work on discourse analysis will be useful because his goal was “to search instead for instances of discursive production (which also administer silences, to be sure), of the production of power (which sometimes have the function of prohibiting), of the propagation of knowledge” (*The History of Sexuality* 12). Foucault never takes anything for granted or assumes he knows what is occurring in discourse during any period of time that he has studied. Foucault’s doubts will also be our own. What exactly was accomplished as a result of denying the women the right to work as they wanted and felt called to do? Foucault thinks that the discourse was a form of stripping them of their power. He wants to “locate the forms of power, the channels it takes, and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and individual modes of behavior, the paths that give it access to the rare or scarcely perceivable forms of desire, how it



penetrates and controls everyday pleasure” (*The History of Sexuality* 11). While most people did not know that they were perpetuating a patriarchal power structure, the rhetoric on the topic called women to give up their own rights and desires to work in favor of children and husbands.

### **The Role of Women**

In a review of Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Shirley*, George Henry Lewes—a philosopher and literary critic during the Victorian period, and also the long-term partner of George Eliot—wrote:

We assume no general organic inferiority; we simply assert an organic *difference*.

Women, we are entirely disposed to admit, are substantially *equal* in the aggregate worth of their endowments: But equality does not imply identity. They may be equal, but not exactly alike. Many of their endowments are specifically different. Mentally as well as bodily there seem to be organic diversities; and these must make themselves felt, whenever the two sexes come into competition.

The grand function of woman, it must always be recollected, is and ever must be *Maternity*. . . . (qtd. in *An Anthology of Victorian Prose* 236)

This quote demonstrates that one of the most liberal and forward and even controversial thinkers of the day still held a rather archaic view of the function and design of women in society. For someone who remained in an open marriage (while his wife had children with other men) and lived with one of the most popular feminists of the day, he still had a rather narrow view of women and their work during that time period.

In contrast, John Ruskin, who was known as a conservative in most of his views and interests, has this to say about women:

We are foolish, and without excuse foolish, in speaking of the ‘superiority’ of one sex to the other, as if they could be compared in similar things. Each has what the other has not: each completes the other, and is completed by the other: they are in nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving from the other what the other only can give. (“Sesame and Lillies” 627)

Surprisingly, Ruskin had a more complementarian view of women and how they must work and function in society. His personal life and relationships with women were very complicated, and not relevant here, but if one were to examine the biography of George Henry Lewes and John Ruskin and their relationships with women side by side, it would be easy to exchange the ideas that they have shared in the above quotes and attribute them to the opposite person. That is why it is so important to actually examine the discourse that was circulating on women and work during this time period, and in some cases compare the hypocrisy of the author to the idea. Foucault believed that repression had a fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age, [and] it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost: nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption [*sic*] of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required. (*The History of Sexuality* 5)

Thus, it is not surprising that the discourse surrounding women and work and the economic difficulties of the day drove women to change power structures within the government and in their own families in order to claim their human right to work.

### **A Woman's Inferior Body**

Prejudices against women working were so common in fact, that it was not unusual to see newspaper articles like the following that describes how women must be rewarded for their work in an 1870 article of *The Dundee Courier & Argus*. The article was entitled, "Why Women Earn Less Wages Than Men." The anonymous author claims that he got most of his ideas from the "new" *Woman's Journal* published in Boston and Chicago. His first reason for why women must earn less wages than men is that "there are very few things which men cannot do better than women, and vast numbers of things which women cannot do at all; therefore, their market to begin with is only a fractional part as large as that of men, and is proportionately overstocked." This language classifies what a woman is capable of, and then contains her in a specific spot. His next point is that many jobs cannot solely be done solely by women because of their "inferior strength," so even if they could work in a shop or in printing, the proprietor would still have to hire a man for his strength, and why would a shop owner want to hire a woman when a man can do the work that a woman could do, and also be superior in strength? His last point is that women's work is mostly unskilled labor, because as soon as an employer has trained the woman in her job, she may quit the job to get married and have a family, so then the boss has to hire yet another woman and train her all over again. Not surprisingly, this last

point has inevitably controlled the woman by reducing her to something that has been classified (found wanting), contained, and then rendered her powerless as a result.

Foucault offers insight when he says, “Perhaps the point to consider is not the level of indulgence or the quantity of repression but the form of power that was exercised” (*The History of Sexuality* 41). The form of power that was exercised was not only a top down kind of power, but it was pervasive as a web of tentacles that reached everywhere, because women were essentially being “punished” by a power structure inherent in a society that would not allow women’s bodies to bear the evidence of their sexuality in public, which led to unemployment or disgrace.

However, perhaps we should not be surprised about the former argument that women deserve fewer wages because apparently they are capable of doing less work. The anonymous author concludes by saying that he doesn’t think that there is any use trying to change what he views as the laws of wages and the economy because they are built into the very fiber of society and the identity of a woman. The anonymous author also shares this thought: “Women will earn less wages than men so long as economic laws bear their natural results, and we can only rejoice that they can live on rather less food than men, though far from as much less as would restore the balance.” The rhetoric and message from this newspaper article is clear: Women are not biologically capable of doing the work that men are doing, and what is valued above all in labor is strength, and not mental capacity.

Essentially, the discourse on women and work was so important and influential because it was able to gain access to the bodies of individuals and the ways that they led their lives in society. The most powerful discourse is the discourse that is able to activate change.

In contrast to the above article, the author of an 1887 article in *Cornhill Magazine* asks, “What Is a Gentleman?” The first definition states the lower classes of individuals think that a gentleman is someone who does not have to work for his living. The author goes on to relate a story an old woman he knew, a widow, who was forced to work. She went by the name Mistress Clarke until “one day he found that she had changed her designation; her neighbors took to calling her ‘The Lady Clarke,’ because, as they argued, rheumatism had invaded her hands, and prevented her from going out gleaning in the turnip-field, and she had been forced to go to the parish for half-a-crown a week, and to lay her hands on her lap and do nothing” (45). The story illustrates the common belief among the working classes that a person is more worthy of respect if that person is not working. However, in the case of this specific story, they are also mocking this older lady. Her neighbors seem to be almost jealous of this older, sick lady who is not able to work. They say, “‘I’m going to be a gentleman to-morrow and to take a holiday’ is a common saying. That young ladies and gentlemen do lead very idle and unprofitable lives is true enough, but it is not the fact that they have nothing to do which constitutes them gentlefolk” (45). It was during the Victorian era that this perception of work and status changed. Work began to be valued above idleness. Instead

of people being powerful because they were not required to work (usually because that person was independently wealthy) the conversation became about everyone finding meaning, purpose, value, and even their own power through work, even members of the upper classes.

As Foucault urges in his theories, the rhetoric behind work and women and how men controlled women through this dialogue was probably not intentional. In fact, the idea of a “gentleman” was that he was man enough to support his own family, or well-to-do enough to be able to support them without the help of his wife. Therefore, the discourse surrounding men and women’s work was also intrinsically connected. Foucault explains this relationship between the sexes when he says that “[p]ower operated as a mechanism of attraction; it drew out those peculiarities over which it kept watch. Pleasure spread to the power that harried it; power anchored the pleasure it uncovered” (*The History of Sexuality* 45). Women and men, he suggests, are caught in a struggle between attraction (pleasure) and power, which defines the status of their relationships. This give and take was also evident in the discourse surrounding women and work, and the dynamics of the home. Men had the power to control the discourse and the power to work, but as the designated head of the home and the children, a woman had the power to take the family away by choosing not to marry, not to procreate, or in the opinion of some men, not to take care of her family if she was married and had children, in order to pursue her own lifestyle and desire to work. Foucault calls the balance “circular incitements [that] have traced around bodies and sexes, not boundaries not to be crossed,

but perpetual spirals of power and pleasure” (*The History of Sexuality* 45). Men were afraid to disrupt the balance of what they perceived as a system that was working, and women knew that change had to occur in order for them to survive in a society that was changing.

If a man needed his wife to work in order to support his family, that made him less of a man, and if a woman wanted to work in order to help support her family (or just for the sheer pleasure of it) she was less of a woman. In fact, the rhetoric itself was designed to take away pieces of a person’s identity, which is how and why identity and work are also so intrinsically connected.

Further insight into the conversation about women and what they were and were not allowed to do, based on their body’s limitations, comes from Dinah Maria Mulock Craik in her 1858 essay “A Woman’s Thoughts About Women.” Craik argues that the confusion as to a woman’s work and role comes from the binary that has taken place in Victorian England

[W]hether voluntarily or not, one-half of our women are *obliged* to take care of themselves—obliged to look solely to themselves for maintenance, position, occupation, amusement, reputation, life. . . . From babyhood they are given to understand that helplessness is feminine and beautiful; helpfulness,—except in certain received forms of manifestation—unwomanly and ugly. The boys may do a thousand things which are “not proper for little girls.” (640)

Craik echoes Foucault's claim that "discourses that were interlocking, hierarchized, and all highly articulated around a cluster of power relations" (*The History of Sexuality* 30) were all part of the plan in order to classify, contain, and ultimately control women. Whether those who held the power were aware of it or not, that is how their discourse functioned in society and the path that it took in order to be so highly effective. Craik says that women were given the subliminal message that they needed to depend on their male relatives for their existence, but yet, as the women grow older and realize that they are not going to be able to get married, they have to learn to survive on their own.

Also, Craik is in fact arguing that women are more powerful because they can exist and thrive under greater constraints than men are subjected to—no matter the class. She praises women who are able to accomplish things that were "difficult, not to say distasteful, to most women, and resign enjoyments that, to women of their refinement, must have cost daily self-denial. Yet they did it; they filled their father's place, sustained their delicate mother in ease and luxury, never once compromising their womanhood by their work, but rather ennobling the work" (641). Craik's rhetoric runs contrary to the pervasive discourse that women's work was not necessarily honorable unless it was contributing to the caring of a husband and family. Craik echoes the sentiments of Carlyle and others who claim that all work is honorable.

Craik also says that women's work should be considered even more honorable because society has trained them not to work, and instead of bowing to the constraints



that society has placed upon them, women have had to labor under a power structure that is not conducive to their struggles. Her final thoughts are that

one of the very last things we learn, often through a course of miserable helplessness, heart-burnings, difficulties, contumelies, and pain, is the lesson, taught to boys from their school-days, of self-dependence. Its opposite, either plainly or impliedly, has been preached to us all our lives. “An independent young lady” – “a woman who can take care of herself”—and such-like phrases, have become tacitly suggestive of hoydenishness, coarseness, strong-mindedness, down to the lowest depth of bloomerism, cigarette smoking, and talking slang. . . . We are “the weaker vessel.” (638-39)

Craik is saying that as much as little boys are taught to be independent and protective of little girls, little girls are taught that they must be dependent and subservient. A woman who does not need a man is independent, but “independent” is synonymous with other undesirable qualities for little girls, such as a woman being stubborn, coarse, and wild. In order to appear as if she is a lady, a girl and a woman must also be seen as weak and dependent.

Probably one of the most alarming effects of the rhetoric of work was its limitations on a woman’s needs and power over her own survival. Craik says that she once heard a gentlewoman say,

that if her riches made themselves wings, as in these times riches will, she did not know anything in the world that she could turn her hand to, to keep herself from

starving. A more pitiable, and in some sense, humbling confession, could hardly have been made; yet it is that not of hundreds, but of thousands, in England. (641)

The lack of control that a woman had over her own social, physical, and mental capabilities was something that was controlled through power structures and discourse. In order to combat present power structures, women everywhere were changing the discussion on women and work, which led to an increase in their rights as individuals.

Another crusader who took up the cause of women and detested what she viewed as their helpless and lethargic lives was Florence Nightingale.<sup>7</sup> Because of her rare (for a woman) education and influence, she was able to spearhead a major change in the medical profession for women, and she also actually opened up thousands of jobs for women while doing so. Because Nightingale was also deeply religious, she wrote an 800 plus page document entitled, *Suggestions for Thought for Searchers after Religious Truth* detailing her search for truth. One of the most famous essays in that collection is “Cassandra.” Nightingale’s rhetoric here sounds like arguments made today about women pursuing careers in mathematics and the sciences. She says that little girls are drawn to more “masculine” pursuits, and then because of family members or the lack of education for women in these areas, they are forced into a life of purposelessness and idleness. She also asks the question, why are men, even well-to-do gentlemen, not allowed to be as completely idle and ridiculous as women are expected and encouraged to be? As a medical professional, Nightingale can assert with well placed conviction that

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<sup>7</sup> Florence’s father, William Edward Nightingale, was a very wealthy landowner. He also believed in giving a woman education, and so he saw to it that Florence knew Italian, Latin, Greek, and also that she studied history, philosophy, writing, and mathematics.

women who have nothing to do are miserable, and she claims that some even revert to having childish minds. It is not a surprise that at the end of her argument she claims that women who do not work are depressed and often become mentally insane from what she calls an “accumulation of nervous energy” (189).

Nightingale was not the only one concerned about the effect of not being allowed to work on women’s mental state. In his article “The Mental and Moral Dignity of Woman,” the Rev. Benjamin Parsons calls the rhetoric against a woman’s right to work “opposition” and “bigoted persecution” (110). Parsons also claims that the opponents to women’s work have been so successful because of their labels of women. He explains, “Women who have cultivated their powers have been branded as ‘*blue stockings*,’ or ‘petticoated philosophers,’ and have been shunned as a species of female monsters” (110). He goes on to despair that society is “superficial” and really the only women who are fit to be wives and mothers are the ones who are properly educated (110). The point that women are only fit to be good wives and mothers is also an echo of Mary Wollstonecraft's argument in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Parsons’s discourse illustrates Foucault’s point that society controls women through our desire to classify and then contain them. Parsons’ final call to persuade society to educate and improve the lot of women is powerful. He claims, “Never was there a crime that recoiled with greater vengeance on the heads of its guilty perpetrators than that of neglecting duty to cultivate the intellectual and moral powers of women” (110). If it were a priority for

women to be working, it would also be a priority for women to be given proper educations.

Adding her voice to other crusaders for a woman's right to work, Jane Welsh Carlyle, the wife of famous societal commentator Thomas Carlyle, wrote in a letter to him on Tuesday, September 23, 1845: "What with these unfortunate mattresses [*sic*] (a work of necessity) and other processes *almost* equally indispensable; I have my hands full—and feel '*worried*' which is worse—I fancy my earthquake begins to 'come it rather strong' for Johns [*sic*] comfort and ease—but I cannot help *that*—if I do not get on with my work—such as it is—what am I here for?" (89) Her perspective on women and work is not that surprising, considering that her husband claimed that a man "perfects" himself through work. If a woman is not allowed that same privilege, it is easy to see that she would feel worthless and useless, which is what is claimed by many leading medical, religious, and societal experts.

Foucault says that women were made to feel powerless through the very nature of their sex. Because they bore the evidence of sex through the act of childbirth, women were visual reminders of a topic that was supposed to have been silenced. Foucault also argues that this misconception is derived from most of the West's Judeo-Christian roots. Because sex was something that "had to be confessed, the Christian pastoral always presented it as the disquieting enigma: not a thing which stubbornly shows itself, [unless evidenced by a pregnant woman] but one which always hides, the insidious presence that speaks in a voice so muted and often disguised that one risks remaining deaf to it" (*The*

*History of Sexuality* 35). However, if one were to give in to his or her urges to discuss something that is “condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression” (*The History of Sexuality* 6). Victorians were well known for wanting to do what was “right” and “proper” and any hint of a connection to a forbidden topic was immediately silenced.

Another way that the discourse about women was controlled was through the “forbidding of certain words, the decency of expressions, all the censorings of vocabulary, might well have been only secondary devices compared to that great subjugation: ways of rendering it morally acceptable and technically useful” (*The History of Sexuality* 21). The larger discourse about sex was able to be controlled through language by changing it into something that was “morally acceptable” (through marriage) and “technically useful” (by procreation). In essence, changing the discourse on sex from something that was utterly taboo to a discussion that could be had in the public sphere elevated the conversation on women and work as well. While women were being silenced for their visible sexuality, they were also silenced on their right to work and control their time and their bodies. Foucault says in “order to gain mastery over it [the discussion of sex] in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present” (*The History of Sexuality* 17). For example, the following few excerpts from newspapers show the language that

was used in order to figuratively and literally silence and take away a woman's power and the right to choose the type of work that she desired.

Women were not only silenced by their future employers by too many restrictions, or simply by their sex, but they were also silenced by their fathers. In a well-meaning article in the *Daily News*, published in 1860, entitled "Female Employment," a well-meaning father writes a letter to the editor about what education he has given to his daughters and as a result what jobs should be open to them. Because he wishes to remain anonymous, he simply describes and signs himself as "Paterfamilias." The name itself dredges up an image of the father as head of his household and as such he retains the ultimate control and power over the female members of his family. He begins by saying that there has been much discussion about women being able to be clerks with the proper education. Then, he describes his ethos by stating that he is fully capable of answering the question about whether or not women should be put into that job because he has ten children—four sons and six daughters—and he has often been looking for employment for his well-educated daughters. In explaining his story and qualifications, he says that his wife knows at least two other languages other than her native tongue and has also taught all of their children. His wife has taught his daughters to play the piano, and they are capable of playing Handel, Beethoven, and Mozart, at the very least. However, as much as his daughters are educated in languages and music, he says that they have not been educated in bookkeeping, which is the type of training that they would need in order to be clerks. After he discusses a woman's lack of education, he says that other duties of

clerks are that of errand boys, who must go out with speed in every weather imaginable.

Paterfamilias argues that even if girls are capable of obtaining the same speed and efficiency in their errands, he doesn't believe that they should be doing that job. He also doesn't believe that women are capable of being managers over men, which is what they would have to do in the job of a clerk to a shipping merchant. They would be put in charge of various cargo, and the unloading and ordering of that cargo is not something that Paterfamilias thinks that women should do.

Paterfamilias' next rhetorical move is unusual. Because he is a father to sons as well as daughters, he is equally concerned about the employment of his sons. Not surprisingly, he does not want his daughters to be employed when his sons are not able to get jobs. His main reason for the belief that his sons should obtain work before his daughters is that women can work at home, while men cannot. He says that it is "contrary to all nature, contrary to all discipline, contrary to all family discipline" to have boys that work in the home. His solution to this problem for the lack of employment for his daughters is that they could become governesses. However, he recognizes that the life of a governess is not to be envied at all, and that they rarely are paid a living wage. So, his charge at the end is to law makers and philanthropists to take up the call and pay teachers what teachers are worth so that they can properly care for their children.

### **Women in Literature**

There are other examples in literature of the prevailing idea about what a woman was capable of. In most cases, education and class dictated her profession. The rhetoric

of work and women would not be complete without an examination of other cases in literature of the prevailing ideas about who a woman was and how that was attached to her work and ethics. In Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, in the "New Woman" genre, his main character, Sue Brideshead says, "'There is something external to us which says, 'You shan't!' First it said, 'You shan't learn!' Then it said, 'You shan't labour!' Now it says, 'You shan't love!'" (327) Sue eventually goes crazy because of the pressures put upon her by various discourses about what was "acceptable" or not for a lady in society. Hardy is suggesting that Sue is not an anomaly, but instead is a symbol for a "New Woman," who is caught between the conventions of regular society and her own contrary desires. She prefers a rather hedonistic lifestyle, and she does pursue that with Jude for a while, but after her children die in a series of tragic events, she views her circumstances as punishment for her hedonistic lifestyle and decides to live the life she has forsaken earlier by returning to her first husband. Of course fictional characters cannot be aware of external philosophies, but Foucault's philosophy about pleasure and power would have been helpful to Sue. Foucault says, "[p]leasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another. They are linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement" (*The History of Sexuality* 48). Foucault is saying that pleasure and power are not separate entities. Instead, they are linked together and are meant to work together. While Sue looks to Jude to be the head of the household and her authority (the distributor of power), she is also confused because there is something inside of her that wants to control and own her



power entirely all by herself. Further insight can be found because Hardy claims in his rhetoric of the story (and by using free indirect discourse throughout the novel) that Sue is mistaken in thinking that returning to a life that is acceptable in society to please anyone, makes her a version of herself that is not able to survive in society in a way that would ever make anyone happy. Through Sue, Hardy incorporates the rhetoric of the day whose aim was to control a woman by classifying and containing her, limiting her capacity to make her own decisions involving work, education, and family.

Similarly, in his novel *Little Dorrit*, Charles Dickens, well known for his characters that became stereotypes and spokespeople for various philosophies and issues of the day, tackles the definition of a lady and whether she should work. The main character in the book, Amy, has held her crazy and rather useless family together for a long time. Her father is in debtor's prison, and her brother and sister try to "work" in rather dubious professions. However, through the help of a new friend and acquaintance, the family discovers they have inherited some money, allowing them access to the upper class and providing their father with a way out of debtor's prison. In an effort to teach his girls how to be proper members of the upper class, Mr. Dorrit hires a woman to instruct them in etiquette. Dickens says,

Mrs. General had no opinions. Her way of forming a mind was to prevent it from forming opinions. . . . This was another of her ways of forming a mind—to cram all articles of difficulty into cupboards, lock them up, and say they had no existence. . . . Mrs. General was not to be told of anything shocking. Accidents,

miseries, and offences, were never to be mentioned before her. Passion was to go to sleep in the presence of Mrs. General, and blood was to change to milk and water. . . . There was varnish in Mrs. General's voice, varnish in Mrs. General's touch, an atmosphere of varnish round Mrs. General's figure. Mrs. General's dreams ought to have been varnished—if she had any—lying asleep in the arms of the good Saint Bernard, with the feathery snow falling on his house-top. (377)

Dickens deliberately uses the word “varnish,” over and over again to show that Mrs. General is painting over something and staining it to be a different color. Varnish is supposed to enhance what is lying underneath it, but it can also stain furniture so that the original color and texture of the wood is nowhere to be seen. Mrs. General is therefore not a genuine person, but someone who is a fake and a fraud. Although Dickens was well known for his exaggeration in creating memorable characters, his portrayal of Mrs. General as a “proper” lady and her training of the Dorrit girls as correct is accurate in depicting the manners of the day. Proper ladies did not work. To think of doing work was somewhat of a sin because that time of mental activity and exercise would have been a strain on their “delicate” sensibilities.

### **Women in Agriculture**

Another example of the restrictions put on women and work and the repressive nature of the discourse can be found in a newspaper article by an anonymous author. The article was entitled, “The Employment of Women and Girls in Farm Work,” published in *The Pall Mall Gazette* in 1870. The author talks in a rather satirical and yet informative

manner. He begins by saying that the restrictions on women and work as it relates to women working in farming are particularly puzzling. He says that women who are unmarried are not allowed to work in the fields, married women with families are not allowed to work in the fields, and no girls are allowed to work in the fields without their mothers. This basically means that only a widow woman would be able to work. He also says that girls under thirteen are not allowed to work, and in some cases girls under eighteen are not allowed to work either.

Beyond the marital, familial, and age restrictions, there were also restrictions on the types of duties that women and girls were allowed to perform on the farm. Women were allowed to help with the harvest and the “hop-picking,” but they were also prohibited from working on Saturdays and during the winter. The author says that the oddest example of these restrictions is one gentleman who didn’t want any women to work for him unless they already had a “daughter of thirteen who had obtained a certificate of education.” The author himself seems to have a more open-minded view of the matter, and he asserts that his opinion is that there is so much work to do, and so few people to do it, that it would not be smart to continue to restrict women from what he calls “harmless employment” on the farms. It is then that he goes into the physical benefits of farm labor, citing Dr. Paley, who worked for twenty-six years as a physician to the Peterborough Hospital, who says that the women who work in the fields are “particularly healthy.” Dr. Francis, physician to the Northampton Infirmary, cannot recall “a single instance of physical injury being caused by it.” The medical office of

Woburn Union says, “It expands the chest, inures to hardness, confers good digestion and sound sleep.” Another doctor states, “A healthier set of women and girls is seldom to be met with.” Dr. Mackintosh, after twenty years’ experience, declares that “girls employed in the fields enjoy more robust health and a greater immunity from the complaints incident to the age of puberty than girls employed in indoor service.”

The author doesn’t seem to shy away from issues glossed over in “polite” society by saying that if women who were not married had babies, they were unable to find employment in service in a house, but they might be able to find employment in the fields. In the author’s typical plain spoken manner, he shares what the people in Cheshire have to say about unmarried women with babies: “It appears, however, that in Cheshire this sort of fault is passed over: ‘the only question ever asked is, Can she make good cheese?’” In a refreshing manner he claims that it is better for a woman to work in the fields than it would be for her to be driven to the workhouse, and it is better for a woman with questionable morals to be a dairy maid than to be ushered into a life of prostitution. He also claims that it is cruel to prevent widow women from being able to support their families by doing whatever work would be available to them.

The anonymous author’s last point is that the clergymen are the ones who have spoken against women working in the fields the longest and with the strongest language. Because the clergy are beacons of and spokespeople for morality in the community, people look to them to dictate behavior on whether or not women should be working in the fields. Denying practical claims, the author says that Rev. B. Tyrwhitt bellows that

farm labour is the certain ruin of the female character; the women become bold; impudent, scandal mongers, hardened against religion, careless of their houses and children, most untidy given to drink, coarseminded, debased, depravers of any virtuous girls who work with them, having no pride in their home or their children, and few home feelings. Their children are ragged, and quite untaught, and a dirty house often drives the husband to the public-house.

The Rev. W. H. Rodley is scarcely less severe; and the Rev. Lord S. G. Osborne, in his own stately diction remarks: “‘Anything which tends to form in women masculine habits is unsuitable; everything which overtaxes female power, and is dangerous to the female constitution, is unhealthy. . .’” Not willing to stop there, the author speculates that the good Reverend also thinks that “the too frequent bearing of children should be restrained by Act of Parliament.” Even though the author has taken the reader on a rather enlightening ride highlighting the various opinions and restrictions on women and farm work, he ends rather innocuously by saying that “many labourers and their wives state ‘that the best wife for a farm-labourer is a woman who is able and willing to do farm-work.’” It seems clear that men desire an equal partner in their work, even though the stereotype is that women should only work in the home.

### **The Plight of the Governess: Separate and not Equal**

While some jobs were not acceptable for women to do at all, the job of a governess was always available to a woman of education and genteel breeding. However, her position in the household and her actual duties were most often

obscure. The life of a governess was not enviable by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, although it would seem that she would hold a position of power in the family as being the molder and shaper of young lives, she was considered a class all on her own by society: too good for the servants, but not good enough for the rest of the family.<sup>8</sup>

Foucault describes this relationship, (the relationship that is separate and supposedly equal, but one that is really not equal), at the level of discourse when he says that women were to have “[a] control over enunciations as well: where and when it was not possible to talk about such things became much more strictly defined; in which circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships. Areas were thus established, if not of utter silence, at least of tact and discretion:” (*The Foucault Reader* 301). Such rules and regulations of speech ultimately rendered women speechless about their own right to work and right to be full members of society, especially in the case of the governesses.

Lady Eastlake, also known as Elizabeth Rigby, has some startling declarations to make about the profession of a governess in her “Review of *Vanity Fair*, *Jane Eyre*, and the 1847 Report of the Governesses’ Benevolent Institution.” For one thing, she defines the job of a governess as someone “who is our equal in birth, manners, and education, but our inferior in worldly wealth” (178). She also has a good point when she asserts, “Workmen may rebel, and tradesmen may combine, not to let you have their labour or their wares under a certain rate; but the governess has no refuge--no escape; she is a needy *lady*, whose services are of far too precious a kind to have any stated market value,

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<sup>8</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft also makes this observation in her *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).

and is therefore left to the mercy, or what they call the *means*, of the family that engages her” (181). Lady Eastlake also says that the acquiring of all the knowledge that is necessary for governesses to have is as much to their detriment as to their benefit. A governess must be “[c]onversant with several languages—skilled in many accomplishments—crammed with every possible fact in history, geography, and the use of the globes—and scarcely the daily bread to put into her mouth!” (182) Perhaps the most devastating and truly illuminating narrative about the life of a governess can be found in this long diatribe by Lady Eastlake:

A governess has no equals, and therefore can have no sympathy. She is a burden and restraint in society, as all must be who are placed ostensibly at the same table and yet are forbidden to help themselves or to be helped to the same viands. She is a bore to almost any gentleman, as a tabooed woman, to whom he is interdicted from granting the usual privileges of the sex, and yet who is perpetually crossing his path. She is a bore to most ladies by the same rule, and a reproach too--for her dull, fagging, bread-and-water life is perpetually putting their pampered listlessness to shame. The servants invariably detest her, for she is a dependant like themselves, and yet, for all that, as much their superior in other respects as the family they both serve. Her pupils may love her, and she may take the deepest interest in them, but they cannot be her friends. She must, to all intents and purposes, live alone, or she transgresses that invisible but rigid line which alone establishes the distance between herself and her employers. (179)

Of course, Lady Eastlake is commenting in some detail on the place of the governess in society because she reviews *Vanity Fair* and *Jane Eyre*, which both featured a governess as the lead character and were quite popular and influential works of literature during the Victorian period. Becky, in *Vanity Fair*, is able to become more than a governess because of her scheming, but Jane in *Jane Eyre* remains a governess throughout most of the novel because of her honor. She does leave her post as a governess to protect her honor, and in the end she is rewarded with marriage to Rochester. The message is clear: nice girls stay in their places as governesses, but girls who are trying to climb above their station are ultimately relegated to a life beyond the bounds of society and have questionable moral character.

In her essay “Woman’s Mission,” (1893), Angela Burdett Coutts argues, “To enable those who would otherwise be destitute to help themselves is more truly generous than to give alms. In the one case those in distress are made self-reliant, independent, and useful members of the community; in the other degradation and demoralization are too often the result” (356). The danger to society for powerless women, or women who could not work for themselves and who didn’t have fathers or brothers to support them was that they could become women of “ill repute” or prostitutes. It was also a common idea during the time period, as Lord Shatesbury said, and as reported by Mary Merryweather, “In the male, the moral effects of the system are very sad; but in the female they are infinitely worse, not alone upon themselves, but upon their families, upon society, and I may add, upon the country itself. It is bad enough if you corrupt the man,



but if you corrupt the woman, you poison the waters of life at the very fountain” (xviii).

Because women were charged with the care and training of children, they were held to a higher moral standard than men, which is an idea also attributed to Mary Wollstonecraft in her “Vindication of the Rights of Women” (1792).

Lady Eastlake concludes, “There is no other class which so cruelly requires its members to be, in birth, mind, and manners, above their station, in order to fit them for their station” (179). The fate of a governess is not an enviable one. She is destined to a life a loneliness and able to eke out only a rather dubious living. The children she serves are generally ungrateful. It would seem that she would be able to exert power over the children as an authority figure, but often the restrictions put on her by her employers and her position in the household render her powerless.

### **The Life of a Society Woman**

Yet another example of a different kind of work for women can be found in “A Woman’s Thoughts About Woman’s Work,” found in *The Caledonian Mercury and Daily Express* in 1859; it is an open letter from Fanny Hooker to someone named Mr. Punch, (probably a pseudonym from the well known magazine and cartoons of the same name). In this letter she is responding to a letter by Bessie Parkes, who was apparently sponsored by Gentlemen from the Social Science Association. Miss Parkes is asserting that there are not very many jobs available for women and that there is not much for them to do on a daily basis. Fanny Hooker disagrees. She starts out by saying, “I’m a woman, and I have always found plenty to do, I’m sure; and looking round me, I think I may say

the same thing of all the women of my acquaintance.” Even though Miss Hooker is probably not aware of it, her argument has all of the classic elements of ethos, pathos, and logos, which are Aristotle’s three appeals. She explains who she is and why she is credible to be talking about women and work, therefore establishing her ethos. Not only is she a woman, but her social class is apparently the same as the type of person that Miss Parkes is referring to in her article. Miss Hooker admits with no shame that her father can’t afford to give her a fortune, and then she muses that marriage is probably the best employment that she will ever receive. She doesn’t seem to be upset by this idea at all, but she also explores other options by sharing what other occupations would be available to her. She admits that she would rather be a wife than a clerk to a lawyer like her brother Charley, or as an assistant to a surgeon, like her cousin Bob, or in a telegraph office, or as a bookkeeper, or a wood engraver, or anything that she can do with her hands.

The next portion of her letter appeals to logic. Miss Hooker concedes that a married woman would certainly have enough to keep her occupied. But then, she also says that even as an unmarried woman there is plenty for her to do. The first thing she says that unmarried women have to do is simply to get dressed in the morning. Perhaps her argument, that women have plenty to do whether they are a wife and a mother or not, is best “heard” in her own words:

First, there’s dressing—that’s two hours a day hard work, merely for putting on one’s things, to say nothing of all the hard work beforehand,—of making up one’s

mind what one will look best in; of buying it—and I'm sure you'll admit that shopping is dreadfully hard work (at least, I know all the gentlemen of my acquaintance complain dreadfully of it, and say it's worse than the treadmill): And then there's the making up,—and I hardly know, I'm sure, whether that's harder work when one does it at home or when one employs a dressmaker,—and the altering, and the trimming, and a hundred things besides. I'm sure, if a woman had nothing to do but dress, she could find plenty of employment all the year round.

After she discusses the rather time-consuming ritual of dressing, she outlines other social duties that were required of women during the Victorian period. Her social engagements include calling in the afternoons, then going to balls and picnics and dancing and driving. She says that a proper lady must “make herself agreeable” during all of those activities, which is often the hardest thing to do in her opinion. This is the portion of her letter where she is appealing to the emotions of her readers by explaining the emotional toll that it takes to “make herself agreeable” to all of the people in her acquaintance all of the time.

In a tone reminiscent of Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice* who told Mr. Bingley's sister, Caroline, that it was a wonder any woman was accomplished after hearing all that was required of an “accomplished” woman, Fanny Hooker also says that a woman is required to be able to be accomplished in music, drawing, to know French and German, to be able to crochet and do “worsted work” (this seems to be a form of

knitting, as “worsted” is a type of yarn), as well as wood-carving, embroidering, illustrating, and keeping up with the local fashions through magazines. Her argument is that she doesn’t see how Bessie Parkes could possibly say that there is not enough work for women to do. Interestingly enough, her explanation for why there are still so many single women is that “[i]ndeed ordinary young women seldom can manage it at all, the young men of the present day are so dreadfully hard to please,” which also echoes a similar argument made by Elizabeth Bennet. Miss Hooker concludes her letter by saying, “No, Mr Punch, don’t you believe Miss Bessie Parkes. Poor women are quite hard-worked enough as it is—at least such is the opinion founded on four seasons’ experience of—Your constant reader Fanny Hooker.” In an act of defiance by Fanny Hooker, she broke the mold of women who were being silenced by offering a differing opinion than the norm to the local newspaper. Perhaps part of her courage could be attributed to the fact that it is clear she is either middle to upper class. For one thing, many women of the working class were not literate, and for another, they certainly had not had enough education in order to be articulate in expressing and maintaining an argument.

In thinking about the nature of argument and the many ways that women are silenced, it is helpful to note that Foucault says that what “one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers— is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them

within over-all strategies” (*The History of Sexuality* 27). He continues by noting there is no either/or in this situation when talking about the silence of what one does not say. Instead, “we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (*The History of Sexuality* 27). Women were often silent together, in a mistaken belief that a woman’s role was simply to be silent and accept the lot in life that she was born into.

### **Woman’s Work in Poetry**

Because women were dissuaded from airing their grievances in the public sphere in the same way that men were allowed to, they often took to poetry to describe their repression. The following is a litany of duties of what a woman’s work is, found in the poem, “Woman’s Work” which was published in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* in 1870.

The poem is eight stanzas, and after every stanza, there is the repeated line: “Woman’s Work” as an explanation of what the author is talking about. The first stanza shares the responsibilities of a mother in caring for her children’s physical, as well as spiritual health. The second stanza also talks about specific duties in raising children and continues to talk about social and educational responsibilities. The third stanza is

particularly emotional and designed to share the loneliness and hardship inherent in woman's work. The author says,

Burying out of sight  
Her own unhealing smarts;  
Letting in the sunshine  
On other clouded hearts;  
Binding up the wounded,  
And healing of the sick;  
Bravely marching onward,  
Through dangers dark and thick—

Woman's Work. (19-26)

The next two stanzas are much the same as it talks of the trials and emotional difficulties present in being a woman and mother. The last two stanzas do not end with the refrain "Woman's Work" because they are detailing how a woman looks when her work is done, which means that her life is ending. The implication in the poem is clear. A woman's work is finished only when she is dead.

Improvement in women's education accompanied these new opportunities for work. The upshot was an increase in the number of women writers. In "The Factory Poetess," the anonymous author discusses Ruth Wills, who was part of the modest surge of working women poets. In his own poetic fashion, the author describes Ruth Wills by saying, "Amid the din of the factories and the noise of the workshops, we sometimes hear

the soft, tremulous notes of those who, like Ruth Wills, strive to lighten, with the aid of song, the dark and gloomy path along which Labour has so frequently to travel” (231).

Ruth Wills began her life of work between the ages of eight and nine, in a warehouse. For eighteen pence per week, she worked from seven in the morning until eight or nine o'clock at night. She was allowed one hour in the week to go to what she calls a “writing-class held at our Sunday-school” (232). That time in her life was happy, until she transferred to another factory where she was promised better wages, but she had to work longer hours. She described her situation as “Work, work, work, /From chime to chime; /And work, work, work, /As prisoners work for crime” (232). However, somehow, even amidst this dreary environment, she discovered fodder for her later creative career even though she says women’s work was “dreary and monotonous sometimes, yet pleasant withal, as it rewarded me with the proud consciousness that I was not only able to eat my daily bread, but to earn it” (233). Thus, for the first time, Ruth Wills was able to regain her power through work.

Other female poets documented the life of work that some women were privileged enough to have. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who is most famous for her socially conscious poem “The Cry of the Children” (1842), does not shy away from the topic of women and work in her epic poem, *Aurora Leigh* (1856). Her main character, in a voice of resignation, says that in order to live she must work, and because she is in the lower classes, she said she worked “with one hand for the booksellers/While working with the other for myself. . .” (175). However, the main character also said that she only had bread

enough to eat for so many days, and the real work that she longed to do was to write verses. There are other hardships in the life of Aurora Leigh in this epic poem, but this is the main portion where her life of work is discussed.

Another famous poetical example of the rhetoric of work in Victorian England was the “Song of the Shirt” (1843) by Thomas Hood, a well respected author of the day. The poem begins by painting the picture of a tired, worn, and weary woman who sits in rags while she sews shirts in order to earn her own living. The examples of the rhetoric of power in language occur in such phrases as “It's Oh! to be a slave/Along with the barbarous Turk, /Where woman has never a soul to save, /If this is Christian work!”(12-15) The author is not satisfied, though, to only paint a picture of a woman who is bound to slavery by the stitching of men’s shirts in her weary poverty, but he also addresses men and says, “Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!/Oh, men, with Mothers and Wives!/It is not linen you’re wearing out,/But human creatures’ lives!”(25-28) This strong call to the emotions was not something that was compelling even to members of the upper classes. He also compares the shirt that the woman is making to a death shroud, which is also another dramatic image. While the term is not often used, the most common shroud discussed in literature belongs to Jesus Christ. It seems that the poem is comparing the shirt that she is making to a garment that is destined to bury a martyr. The woman has been compared to a slave and also as making her own shroud, and next he compares her to a prisoner who makes “seam, and gusset, and band, / Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumbed” (55-54). Each of these images denotes a woman who has no power over her fate. Hood is



also a romantic in his poetry because he writes about the woman who is a prisoner to making shirts and how she longs to simply go back to the country “[w]ith the sky above my head, / And the grass beneath my feet;” (67-68). Hood’s last lines are meant to penetrate the power structure in existence in the disparity of classes when he says, “Would that its tone could reach the Rich! /—She sang this ‘Song of the Shirt!’” (88-89). The rhetoric in this poem brings attention to the working conditions of the woman who labors day and night in order to simply earn enough to eat, while the rich order too many shirts and take advantage of their fellow human beings who must labor for their daily bread. His solution is to return to the former agricultural society, but somehow this argument falls flat because women were in no way able to have power through old social and living conditions. Instead, it would be a step backwards for women. Women who were only allowed to work in farms or in the home did not have the freedom to make their own choices or to control their own destinies. Although factory work was hard, and living in a city was not easy for a single woman, at least she had made that choice and she was not responsible for anyone else but her own well-being.

May Kendall, in her poem “Woman’s Future” describes women who are inhibited by their circumstances and society’s expectations of them. Her poem is all about charging them to be better people and to ascribe to a different purpose in life than simply women who “cherish the fleeting, the mere accidental, /At cost of the True, the Intrinsic, the Free” (352). It is in the last stanza that her message really takes on its persuasive power when she uses other famous figures to inspire women to live lives that are taken up

with more than simply existing, but to be women of power and influence who change the course of society itself. Before, women were content with their meager lot, Kendall argues, and she exhorts them not to be. Instead, her discourse was part of a movement that encouraged women to claim their power and embrace their own influence over their destiny. Her final stanza says:

Oh, rouse to a lifework--do something worth doing!  
Invent a new planet, a flying-machine.  
Mere charms superficial, mere feminine graces,  
That fade or that flourish, no more you may prize;  
But the knowledge of Newton will beam from your faces,  
The soul of a Spencer will shine in your eyes. (352-353)

The poem mentions Newton as a symbol of enlightenment, and Spencer as one of the most well-known and respected English poets. Women, she argues, should be respected for their educations, inventions, their knowledge and their reason, and not simply their pretty faces.

Women who were without work were in effect silent in the rhetoric of work, and they were also silent in many other societal conflicts because they were without power. It seemed that all of these different elements are connected. In effect, work is power (or at least the ability to choose one's own work was power), and giving women the right to work was a way of taking back control from their previous oppressors.

### **Women Authors**

One way that women were able to gain a voice in the discussion was to pick up the pen and advocate for themselves. Doing so provided gainful employment in some circumstances. In her *Autobiography of Mrs M.O.W. Oliphant*, Margaret Oliphant, who wrote from a very young age, explains, “I have written because it gave me pleasure, because it came natural to me, because it was like talking or breathing, besides the big fact that it was necessary for me to work for my children” (386). Unlike many other novelists, Mrs. Oliphant didn’t start to write by necessity, but she continued to do so in order to earn her daily bread for herself and her children. It is not surprising that her view of women and work was that “[i]t is so natural to think that if the workman himself is indifferent about his work, there can't be much in it that is worth thinking about” (386). However, even though she advocates for women to do the best work that they possibly can, she actually belittles her own accomplishments by stating, “how little credit I feel due to me, how accidental most things have been, and how entirely a matter of daily labour, congenial work, sometimes now and then the expression of my own heart, almost always the work most pleasant to me, this has been” (391). It was not unusual for women to rhetorically apologize for what little accomplishments they had achieved. Self-deprecation denigrates the power that they have taken.

### **Women in Factories and Charitable Work**

Perhaps the strongest voices of resistance to how a woman was viewed and what duties in women’s work they should be allowed to do came from the factory workers,

who were also known as the working classes. The working classes and the Industrial Revolution were able to engineer the shift in the conversation about work for women. By providing more jobs for women in the lower and middle classes, they were able to give more power to women than they had previously had. There are two conflicting discourses about the working class and their identity, according to David Vincent in his history of the Victorian era autobiographies of the working classes called *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom* (1981). He says that from one viewpoint, it looks like the factory workers were banding together in order to achieve emancipation, and from another viewpoint, it could look like they were banded together and from that position they “could be tamed and subjugated” (Vincent 37).

In order to better understand this perspective, it would be beneficial to look at statistics found in Mary Merryweather’s autobiography, *Experience of Factory Life: Being a Record of Fourteen Years’ Work at Mr. Courtauld’s Silk Mill at Halstead in Essex*. She taught literacy classes and Bible studies for working girls in factories.

According to her autobiography, there were 6,378 factories in 1861. There were over 775,534 people employed in those factories, and more than half, specifically 465,261, employees were female. More than half of the 54,411 children employed were girls (Merryweather xix). These numbers show that while women were not allowed to work in some spheres, they were definitely encouraged to work in the factories, doing difficult and tedious labor. Sociologist Patrick Joyce in his book *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* confirms these statistics, saying that by

the 1880s and 1890s male workers were being turned out of work in favor of women, so the shift of power in the field of labor occurred during this time (77).

Similar to factory work providing more jobs for women, there were also charity organizations that viewed women as an endangered class that needed to be supported by providing them jobs in order to support themselves. Women were able to fight back against the discourse of repression and the act of silencing with some help from key allies. An 1857 article in the *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, “Work for Unemployed Females,” details a local effort to provide work for women. Apparently, the mayor donated a building for women to use, and a local ladies’ committee gave them various jobs and crafts to make in the building. Perhaps the most persuasive line in the article, though, begins with, “We are sure all who are in a position to support this laudable undertaking will be glad to give every assistance they can to relieve the sufferings of a class who, under the privation which at present prevails, are exposed to great temptations.” The fear was that women who were unable to have honest work would be subjected to a life of begging, or the most horrible of all evils, prostitution.

In order to make the power between genders more equal, once it became accepted for women to work in factories, there had to arise a discourse that could be honest as well as satirical about the plight of a working woman. Marion Bernstein, a working woman who was also a poet, wrote a hysterical commentary of the duties of a working woman in her poem “Wanted: A Husband.” In her poem, she reverses the roles of men and women and assigns to women the power she thinks they deserve. The author wants a husband

“who’s tender and true” (1) as well as one “who will stick to his duty. . .” (2). Perhaps her most unrealistic expectation though is that her husband will come home after a long day of work and “[h]elp his wife set to rights till her work is done too” (4) and will sew his own buttons “and not think he’s oppressed” (8). In a light-hearted manner, she ends the poem by saying that if anyone happens to see this type of man, he is “wanted by many . . . but not quite yet by her!” (344) This poem was published in *Mirren’s Musings* in 1876, and it is clear that significant changes in women and work and being able to support themselves had already occurred by this time; if not, the author would have been far more anxious to secure a husband.

While we have discussed methods by charity organizations and policy makers and individuals to change the plight of women and to make more work available to them, it is also worthwhile to note that The Lyons Imperial Academy of Science was trying to change working conditions for women. In a simple anonymous article, entitled “Work for Women,” the author says that the Lyons Imperial Academy of Science was offering a prize (a gold medal valued at 48 pounds) for the essay that would best answer two questions: how to raise the wages of women to be the same as men when the same labour was performed, and to open up new careers for women in cases where their jobs were being taken away by men. The author is quite understandably upset when he or she says, “Exactly forty-eight pounds are offered for a new system of social economy!” The author’s solution is to allow more women to be nurses and doctors and to take care of their fellow creatures (which does not require women to be stronger than men, which

seems to be the author's main complaint about the disparity between the sexes). In this way, more jobs would be available, more women would be gainfully employed, and more people would be helped.

### **The Right to Work for Women**

The year 1869 was significant in producing discourse that shaped the discussion about women and work and women's rights to work. According to another anonymous author, in an article entitled "Literature Concerning Women's Interests," published in 1869, three important books and numerous short articles in leading newspapers and magazines, by the Rev. Canon Kingsley and others, were published. The important publications include the novel *Society in a Garrison Town*, John Stuart Mill's article on "The Subjection of Women," and a collection of essays entitled "Woman's Work and Woman's Culture." According to the author, the novel was most influential on shedding light on women's issues and a woman's right to work. The silence was being broken by brave voices trying to penetrate years of absence and neglect.

An example typical response to the women's right to work movement is found in an untitled article in *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* (1873). The first line alone would be enough to trigger outrage from modern day advocates of women's rights, with phrases such as "It may be doubted, . . . whether women understand what are now popularly called women's questions so well as men." The author goes on say, it is the "fashion" for women to "write and speak about them a great deal." While their views might be respected, the author goes on to say, because they certainly have feelings that allow them

the right to speak on the subject, they don't have the education or understanding to interpret labor laws, according to the author. He also bewails what he considers to be the "spirit of antagonism" expressed by advocates for women's rights, which apparently "does a great deal to alienate people," from their cause. They are called "female agitators whose eyes are blinded to the consequences of what they do," and "such women, while professing to be very anxious for progress, do in reality retard it very much, since they disgust those who would be their friends and allies by the violence of their language and the extravagance of their views." Not content to stop there, the author gives an example of a letter by a Mrs. Fawcett, who apparently wrote to *The Times* complaining about a recent bill in parliament, which would limit the number of hours that women were allowed to work. Her argument was that if women were restricted in their hours (to only 54 in a week!) then men should be, too. The author refuting this opinion says that Mrs. Fawcett creates fallacy in her arguments by assuming that "the sexes are equal and have equal working powers" in order to prove her point. The article goes on to criticize Mrs. Fawcett for other sins of misinformation or miseducation.

Even though the right of women to work was still in dispute, the main argument against it was that women were unable to work and still care for their husbands and children at the same time. An article entitled "Waiting and Working" details the common prejudices that women were working hard to overcome. The author believed women were, in effect, their own worst enemies. The article begins as follows,



The most uncompromising advocate of woman's rights, especially of her right to work, which no one denies, and the satisfactory accomplishment of which no one but herself prevents, shrinks from putting forth the theory that her self-support should supersede matrimony, or that, if married, her profession for which women are educated is unquestionably an evil in a society like ours, where the redundancy of women is one of the most desperate difficulties of the day; but that marriage should be the chief object of her social life, the destiny most desired and for which she is best fitted, is only natural and right.

The author argues that "it is this very fact of waiting the event which of itself destroys the worth of women's work." With no sympathy for the plight of women, the author goes on to argue that women must have the same treatment as men, which means that they must give themselves over to be apprentices, and for the next forty or so years of their lives get by with basically just a living wage. It is at this point that the author says that women are ungrateful because they "demand masters' wages for apprentice work; they think they ought to compete on equal terms with men, though they have only immaturity and inexperience to oppose to long and steady training." That is not the author's only objection. He also complains that women won't see that men are not hampered by their family duties in their careers, and women cannot possibly be wives and mothers and take care of a household and also pursue careers. The author says, "She must sacrifice one or other line, and delegate either her family or her profession to assistants and subordinates." Another argument against women's right to work is that the author

believes that women neglect the duties that they can do (such as mothering, teaching, cooking, and cleaning) in favor of duties that were formerly more acceptable for men to do. In a particularly harsh manner the author says, “We are afraid the fact is that women want notoriety in their work, and more, they want pay for play.” The rather acidic examples of women who are neglecting their duties in favor of the duties of men continue throughout the article, until the author finishes with a rather familiar comparison between women and children. The article finishes by saying, “It is childish, to say the least of it, to leave one’s own ground untilled out of envious desire to drive one’s neighbor’s plough; but this is what women are doing now when they wish to leave their houses and their children to servants that they may push their husbands, sons, and brothers from their places. . . .” It is no wonder, with articles such as this being published in local newspapers, that women had to fight so long and so hard in order to achieve the right to work in whatever manner they chose to do so.

David Vincent, in his monograph on the autobiographies of working people in the Victorian era, agrees. His conclusions are that “[t]he most significant silence is that of the women . . . . The six women’s autobiographies which have so far come to light contain little information on the authors’ private lives, and indeed the Bury cotton weaver Catherine Horne was one of the very few autobiographers of either sex to have chosen to remain single” (Vincent 40). It is also worthwhile to note, that William Lovett, of the Working Men’s Association, in his autobiography, was apologetic in a footnote about women’s rights. In very tiny print with a star beside it, one of the greatest advocates for

change in the plight of the working classes concedes, “I may here state that the first draft of the Bill, afterwards called the People's Charter, made provision for the suffrage of women, but as several members thought its adoption in the Bill might retard the suffrage of men, it was unfortunately left out” (170). There were too many men in the Chartist movement who believed that sacrificing the rights of women was the only way to ensure more rights for the working man. Angela Burdett Coutts in “Woman’s Mission” agrees that women are often overworked, underworked, or kept silent. Her solution, though, is to look to a continual life of purpose or work to give back women’s power. She explains that “‘idleness . . . is without hope;’ by useful labour the lives of the most wretched can be ennobled and rendered happy. . . . But although in this great work, and this great conflict, women have borne their full share of the heat and burden of the day, their services until quite recently have received but scant recognition” (355). Coutts says that lazy women are not happy, and women can be happy by working; however, they are often not given the credit that they deserve for their work.

Surprisingly, perhaps Dickens’ meek and mild Amy in *Little Dorrit* best summarizes the nature of the controversy: “To have no work to do was strange, but not half so strange as having glided into a corner where she had no one to think for, nothing to plan and contrive, no cares of others to load herself with” (387). While men might say that the “natural” profession for a woman is to be a wife and a mother, women simply want to work, no matter the profession. In her essay “Woman as a Citizen of the State,” Frances Power Cobbe quotes a vocal advocate for women’s rights, who says that they are

“bound to do *all* we can to promote the virtue and happiness of our fellow men and women, and *therefore* we must accept and seize every instrument of power, every vote, every influence which we can obtain to enable us to promote virtue and happiness” (326).

Sir John Browning wrote a poem entitled “Woman’s Work.” Each refrain of the poem called for the work of woman to be peace, which might account for the struggle to regain their power to have taken so long. Instead of being women of peace, they needed to enter into the struggle for power and to recognize that struggle and the method of obtaining and keeping their power could only be accomplished through the discourse of work.

We can look back on these persuasive examples of rhetoric about women and work and be encouraged when Michel Foucault agrees that power took a decided shift in the eighteenth century, where it was exercised “*within* the social body, rather than *from above* it” (*Power/Knowledge* 39). Power is only able to function in society that way because it “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (*Power/Knowledge* 39). The discourse surrounding work led to change in policies by politicians. The discourse of change that has the power to shape future generations arises organically from oppressed people groups or simply people who have let the power they have lie dormant. After the discourse shaped policy, then the role of political power is to “re-inscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and every one [*sic*] of us” (*Power/Knowledge* 90). Change that lasts, according to Foucault, starts with discourse, and then reaches society (or the body

of individuals), and finally public policy. Without first creating a discourse that reaches into the bodies and society of individuals, any sort of public or governmental policy will be ineffectual.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Work as a concept and as an activity is something that will always exist.

However, people can learn to enjoy it as we engage in meaningful, productive work. As Joseph Campbell, a leading folklorist and sociologist has said, “My general formula for my students is ‘Follow your bliss.’ Find where it is, and don’t be afraid to follow it” (120). While many college students go to college in hopes of “finding their bliss,” perhaps too many of them simply enjoy the college experience without fully preparing themselves for the “real world” of their careers after graduation. In a recent article in *Inside Higher Ed*, 35 percent of business leaders said that they would give recent college graduates working in their companies a “C” or lower as a grade for their level of preparation (Grasgreen). The business leaders also stated, though, that they didn’t believe that it was entirely the college graduates’ fault that they were not prepared for the work force. Instead, just over half of business decision makers and 43 percent of corporate recruiters also took some responsibility and said that the business community itself deserves a “C” or lower on how well it is training and preparing graduates for their first jobs (Grasgreen). A simple solution to this problem is to spend more time in training and assimilating college graduates into their new jobs. However, with work study programs on the rise and other colleges who offer scholarships and tuition forgiveness for students who work while they study, it seems that a more practical solution might be to

encourage students to get their “real world” experience in the work force while also obtaining their educations. Opportunities such as internships and community service programs abound, but many college students do not take advantage of these opportunities in favor of a more active social life, or because they cannot afford to take an unpaid internship job simply to gain experience.

As educators, we should be concerned that a recent survey by the Workforce Solutions Group at St. Louis Community College found that more than 60 percent of employers said applicants lack “communication and interpersonal skills” which is an increase of about ten percentage points in two years. Also, many managers said that today’s applicants can’t “think critically and creatively, solve problems or write well” (Pianin). In addition, the National Association of Colleges and Employers surveyed more than 200 employers about their top ten priorities in the new people that they hire. Overwhelmingly, they wanted candidates who could be “team players, problem solvers, and who can plan, organize and prioritize their work” (Pianin). Companies are also disappointed in recent college graduates because they find that more often than not they are “lacking in motivation, interpersonal skills, appearance, punctuality and flexibility” (Pianin). While these findings are disturbing, they are not unusual.

These problems with recent college graduates were not only found in the above survey, but also in a report done by Chegg, an independent contracting company. According to employers, the skills job candidates need most are “written and oral communication skills, adaptability and managing multiple priorities, and making

decisions and problem solving” (Tugend). Jaime S. Fall, a vice president at the HR Policy Association, said the report backs up only what his organization already hears from employers. Mr. Fall said that young employees were ““very good at finding information, but not as good at putting that information into context”” (Tugend). New graduates can also be really good at technology, but not very good at learning to adapt their skills and resolve specific business problems. The overall conclusion of the Chegg report was that “something at the intersection of higher education and workforce preparedness is misaligned” (1). I would suggest that the misalignment lies in giving students information, but not providing them enough opportunities for the application and experience that they need. To make the connection between theory and practice, students must apply their classroom knowledge to authentic situations. Institutions of higher learning are beginning to recognize that it is not enough simply to educate students in the classroom or online; they must provide students with opportunities to apply that education. That is why Texas Woman’s University’s Quality Enhancement Plan adopted to motto of “Learn by Doing.” One of the ways that writing instructors can practice this principle is to educate their students on discourse communities.

### **Discourse**

According to Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland, editors of *The Discourse Reader*, “Discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations—it is language reflecting social order but also shaping social order, and shaping individuals’ interaction with society” (3). Before sending students out into the world to act, it is also



educators' responsibility to teach them how to use and produce language effectively because language shapes society and how they interact with it. In addition, according to Penny Powers, discourse can be both an "instrument and an effect of both power and resistance" (30). Discourse can "transmit . . . and produce . . . power, but [it] can also undermine and expose it" (30). Discourse is not only effective through language, but it can also be powerful in positions of silence, and this dissertation endeavored to study the least represented or "silenced" members of the discussion on work in Victorian England through studying their "micropractices," which according to Powers are the most important level of analysis because it is at this point that we see "the everyday activities of life, the terminal points of the grid or web" (30). Daily occurrences or micro practices in Victorian life surface in the most "everyday" medium of publication, such as the Victorian newspaper, which served as a time capsule for thoughts and actions during that time period. Far from being only a transmitter of what we would consider today to be "news," newspapers also shared the inner workings of a society by printing even the most mundane and often trivial details. An equivalent today would be the Facebook or Twitter feed of individuals who choose to share every minute occurrence of their lives with everyone who would have an interest to read it online.

### **Theorist**

Michel Foucault is the proper theorist to study in relation to discourse communities and work in Victorian England not only because he often discussed that period of time in history in England, but also because his work elaborates on the

rheterical creation of knowledge (Foss and Gill 386). Instead of focusing on over-produced rhetorical not necessarily indicative of meaning, Foucault took a step back and analyzed each period of time without taking for granted any of what he called “basic principles.” Foucault’s “basic principles” are ideas in society that its members have taken for granted as the origin of all things and systems of thought when they are not necessarily iron-clad. Instead, Foucault treats his “first principles” as a hypothesis, just like any other idea that has not been tried and proven through the scientific method. Foucault was not interested in knowledge as ideology or knowledge as theory; instead, according to Tina Besley and Michael A. Peters, “Foucault examined *practices* of knowledge produced through the relations of power. He examined how these practices, then, were used to augment and refine the efficacy and instrumentality of power in its exercise over both individuals and populations, and also in large measure helped to shape the constitution of subjectivity” (133). Practices of knowledge in the Victorian community can be studied now only through the written word, and that is why textual analysis is so important.

David J. Sholle explains this idea further when he says, “Foucault’s notion of discourse requires that we reinterpret ideology, seeing it not as a strictly negative term but as in some sense positive (i.e., productive). In other words, ideology is coexistent with knowledge as practiced; it is the use of ideology which determines its positivity or negativity for social purposes” (22-23). Ideology is the system whereby people either accept or reject a particular discourse community. Althusser’s ideas on ideology led him

to the rhetorical device of interpellation, which invites outsiders to join a particular ideological group, at which point they finally become part of that discourse community.

More importantly, as we studied three groups of minorities in Victorian England, Sara Mills argues, “Foucault’s writings are concerned with how it is that we know something, and the processes whereby something becomes established as a fact. . . . Foucault is interested in the processes of exclusion which lead to the production of certain discourses rather than others” (67). Even though the working man, the child, and the woman were excluded from the discussion of work for hundreds of years, during the Victorian period each of these “silent” groups was able to find its way into the discourse communities surrounding work in order to change people’s perception and the regulations on work for themselves. Most often these forgotten groups were able to secure a spot in the discourse through the upper and middle classes who made it their mission to expose and discuss the forbidden and shocking in order to bring about change. Also, these minority groups were able to enter into the discourse community surrounding work through education, which provided literacy and their access into a society that would have been confusing and almost incomprehensible to anyone unable to read and write effectively.

Foucault is also helpful as a theorist because his work on discourse and power shows us a way to consider how “we know what we know; where information comes from; how it is produced and under what circumstances; whose interests it might serve; how it is possible to think differently; in order to be able to trace the way that information

that we accept as ‘true’ is kept in that privileged position” (Mills 66). It is through Foucault that we can look at the past without a position of pride, thinking that of course we know better now than those poor people who lived in the past. Instead, we can analyze the past under a lens where we admit that the knowledge that we have is “true at present” (Mills 66). Foucault also reminds us that any study, whether it is this dissertation or others, is always a work in progress, and only a small glimpse into the knowledge that we now hold to be true.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, as Teddy Roosevelt once said, “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is a chance to work hard at work worth doing” (Rosenberg). It was Leslie Knope, the main fictional character in the work-based television comedy *Parks and Recreation* who quoted Teddy Roosevelt near the end of the series. She also said, “And I would add that what makes work worth doing is getting to do it with people that you love” (qtd. by Rosenberg). May we all do the work, then, as a community, with endurance and joy.

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