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THREE PROBLEMATICS: ELEMENTS OF A THEORY OF WORKING CLASS CULTURE
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Introduction

We return now to the more general problems posed at the end of the first part of this book. Do we need new ways of thinking about working-class culture and what should these be? We proceed by identifying three main approaches. We suggest that each is, in some way, inadequate. We end by suggesting pointers to a better practice.

The three main approaches are rooted in the larger tendencies which we discussed in 'Culture and the Historians.' Each employs its own key terms. Within orthodox Marxism the key terms have been 'class' and 'class consciousness'. In the work of Williams, Thompson, Hoggart and others, 'culture' replaced 'consciousness' or forced a re-working of its meaning. 'Culture' and 'consciousness' however, remained closely coupled to 'class'. The term 'working-class culture' lies firmly within this problematic. Finally, in 'structuralist' approaches the consciousness/class couplet altogether disappears. As two not-dissimilar terms in Althusser's work we might choose 'ideology' and 'mode of production' or 'ideology' and 'social formation'. But the truth is that there are no real equivalents across these traditions. Each semantic shift represents a major theoretical and political movement.

The notion of 'problematic' and the procedure of 'symptomatic reading' are absolutely indispensable tools of analysis and critique. They inform this essay throughout. 'Problematic' may be defined as 'a definite theoretical structure', a field of concepts, which organises a particular science or individual text by making it possible to ask some kinds of questions and by suppressing others. In 'symptomatic reading' a text is read as much for its 'absences' or 'silences' as for what it more directly 'says'.¹ The problematic(s) of a particular text may be more or less explicit. In works of history the organising ideas and presuppositions may lie very deep. They nonetheless exist.

One aspect of critique, then, is to render explicit what is implicit, and to consider the underlying propositions. For Althusser, concerned with historical materialism as the 'science of the history of social formations', intellectual productions in the human sciences are organised around a conception of the relation of 'thought' and other practices (an epistemology) and a conception of the general nature of societies (a sociology). His repertoire of critical terms - 'humanist', 'historicist', 'empiricist', etc - designate particular faults in either aspect or in both.

The Althusserian 'reading' is inadequate in so far as it stops short at the analysis of 'problematic'. For the appearance of finality in the method is quite illusory. Symptomatic reading provides us with a description of a work, or of its main internal structures. The dismissal, at this stage, of a text as 'historicist', 'empiricist' etc. can only rest upon a very formal idea of 'science', in Althusser's case, of 'Marx's Immense Theoretical Revolution'. To stop at this stage is merely to say, 'This is not a Marxist text according to the way I have defined Marxism'.

It is not possible to accept, just like that, Althusser's own definition of Marx's uniqueness and scientific superiority, or his own taking of sides within Marxism as a tradition. Structuralism has certainly recovered a Marx; one might be pardoned for doubting whether it recovered the Marx. Reading Capital's conception of 'Marxism-as-science' and all else including Marxist heresies as 'ideology' tends to a 'closure', prematurely cutting off that open exploration, which Althusser himself has defined as the key to science. Answers to the question 'What is Marxism' remain far too difficult to be a valid way of closing debates of substance.

Allied to this difficulty is the strongly reductive character of some forms of symptomatic reading. The whole of an account is reduced to its problematic. This is particularly gross when applied to works of great empirical density, to most histories for example. Pre-suppositions once identified, it is necessary to return to the surface of the text and to show the effects of theoretical structures on the detailed treatment of events, the construction of narrative, the portrayal of relations, on the actual texture of the historical account. And there

are arguments to be conducted on this level too: 'within this problematic it is not possible to account for this or that phenomenon which other research reveals'; 'the incoherences of that part of the account is related to the failure fully to theorise these sets of relations'; 'theoretical rigidity has produced this or that a priorism with no corresponding research'. In other words, the adequacy of a particular problematic can only be assessed at the author's preferred level of analysis. In such a critique, the proposition that 'historicism' (or any other -ism) is, in general, flawed is itself on test.

The third main difficulty is the absence of historical critique.² This is allied to the high 'theoreticism' of Reading Capital, its stress on general epistemological or philosophical questions, its 'speculative' or 'rationalist' character. This old and correct criticism of 'structuralism' has been endorsed by Althusser himself in his Essays in Self-Criticism. The corrective is simple; to recognise that every problematic has a history or, as Althusser puts it, 'material, social, political, ideological and philosophical conditions'.³ The adequacy of a theory cannot be judged outside these conditions, by purely internal criteria.

Finally, in some usages, 'problematic' has a tendency to simplify or homogenize texts or theories.⁴ There is a temptation to look for the 'essence' of a text. As essential unities, then, texts or theories may be discarded wholesale. The method adopted here rests on different assumptions. The struggle over definitions depends precisely on the fact that the concepts that constitute a given problematic are not 'all of a piece'. As elements, re-organised, they may constitute the basis for more adequate accounts. Elements taken from different existing problematics may in a new order and constituting a new field, yield us greater explanatory power and political purchase.⁵

In what follows we try to learn from this settling of accounts with our erstwhile Althusserianism. No full history of our three problematics can be attempted; but the historical nature of the ideas we use is fully recognised.

Class and Class-Consciousness in 'Manifesto Marxism'

This view of class had its origins in the collaborative work of the young Marx and Engels. It was an attempt to understand their political experiences in the early communist movement and the novel features of English social life, especially of the English 'proletariat'. The key texts are Marx's Poverty of Philosophy (1847), The German Ideology (1845-46), The Communist Manifesto (1848), (both jointly authored) and Engels' own The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844), especially the last two. The political and intellectual moment represented by Engels' Condition was as important as the departure from philosophical communism represented in the classical work of 'the break', The German Ideology. Engels' encounters with English working class movements and English radical theory, together with his strategic location in Manchester, the 'shock city' of the Industrial Revolution, supplied 'the changing questions which provoked the new theory'.⁶ Many of the themes of The Communist Manifesto are demonstratively present in Engels' Condition; the second text is, in many ways, a working up of Engels' primary insights.

Certain key elements of the classic Marxist view of the proletariat were formed therefore, before the emergence of a modern working class. They also preceded Marx's mature understandings of the capitalist mode of production and the character and constitution of classes within this mode. The Communist Manifesto view of classes remains somewhat 'philosophical', based upon a generalised view of proletarian destinies (the 'negation' of bourgeois society) rather than a full grasp of capitalism's internal dynamics.⁷ The political features of Britain and Europe before 1848 are no less significant. The character of their writing - the feeling of wide-eyed discovery in Engels' Condition ('Of the vehemence of this agitation no-one in Germany has any idea'), the assured sweep of The Communist Manifesto, the intoxicated polemic against Proudhon's idealism - all testify to the expectancy out of which historical materialism was born. Yet theories generated from the intellectual consumption of very specific events do not always serve well as more generalised truths one hundred and forty years later.

The class and class-consciousness problematic rests on a distinction made explicit in The Poverty of Philosophy between two aspects of the proletariat as a class. The proletariat is a class in its relations with ('as against') capital: under capital's domination 'this mass' acquires 'a common situation, common interests'.⁸ At the heart of this definition of class is the figure of 'the worker' or 'the labourer': 'a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital'.⁹ In this first guise the proletariat is understood, passively, as a creation of capital, thrown hither and thither by its movements; only in a second moment does it become active, a collective agency or force 'for itself'. Proletarians acquire the capacity to struggle and to conceive of their place within capitalism and history.

Some such distinction (between economic classes and political forces) is, analytically, indispensable. But these two forms of analysis are also bound, in the original formulation, into a necessary and causative unity: they are stages in one necessary historical process. The grand design of proletarian politics is already present in the economic position of the labourer. The position of proletarians in their relation to capital produces the proletariat as a revolutionary class. Capital produces its own negation, its own 'grave-digger'. In the early texts this doctrine permits of no contingencies. As Stuart Hall has noted, of The Manifesto: 'what is so fatally seductive about this text is its simplifying revolutionary sweep ... above all, its unmodified sense of historical inevitability'.¹⁰

There are, perhaps, two possible readings of how this argument is actually secured in the early texts. Priority could be given to the stress on class struggle. Though antagonisms are founded in the direct relations of capitalist production, outcomes are not. The proletariat as a political force is 'made' in protracted and repeated struggles; major difficulties, especially capital's tendency to place labourers in competition, must be overcome. One might call this the 'activist' reading of the early texts; it points to the priority of politics developed in later Marx-Engels texts and in Lenin's theory and practice.

But this reading cannot be sustained textually. The various forms of class struggle always appear in the guise of 'phases' or 'stages', 'a growing revolt': individual acts of crime, followed by trade union combinations, followed by Chartism as a political party, followed by a communist-led proletarian movement.¹¹ The stages themselves are very little explored, even in The Condition. There is no consideration of the ways in which these working-class practices (forms of class struggle within capitalism) may actually modify its structure or affect bourgeois strategies, including strategies of accumulation. Engels in The Condition, indeed, found trade unionism an index of the English 'social war' and a stage along the road to the abolition of 'competition' but doubted its practical effects in other ways.¹² The whole discussion of 'stages' is organised teleologically, not in terms of particular effects. Attention is drawn forward to the revolutionary future, with little pause for study on the way.

That future, moreover, is given in the character of capitalism itself. The proletariat is the agent of revolution, but its revolt is not merely 'growing', it is also obligatory. E.J. Hobsbawm's summary of the main lines of argument in The Condition is quite faithful to Engel's text but reveals a whole theoretical legacy.

Socially Engels sees the transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution as a gigantic process of concentration and polarization, whose tendency is to create a growing proletariat ... The rise of capitalist industrialism destroys the petty commodity producers, peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie, and the decline of these intermediate strata, depriving the worker of the possibility of becoming a small master, confines him to the ranks of the proletariat which thus becomes 'a definite class in the population, whereas it had only been a transitional stage towards entering into the middle classes'. The workers therefore develop class consciousness ... and a labour movement. Here is another of Engels' major achievements. In Lenin's words 'he was among the first to say that the proletariat is not only a class that suffers; that it is precisely its shameful economic situation which irresistibly drives it forward, and obliges it to struggle for its final emancipation'.

The problems are concentrated in the breath-taking sentence: 'the workers therefore develop class consciousness'! But this 'therefore' is plainly present in the texts themselves. It is present in the oft-repeated argument about the massification and concentration of working-class thought.¹⁴ But the most important generator of class consciousness is the sheer force of economic relations. The proletariat is driven to revolt. If the bourgeoisie simplifies society, it simplifies the proletarian too. It strips him of all incidentals. He is reduced to economic simplicity itself: to naked necessity and need, pure lack, 'bare existence'. He has 'nothing to lose but his chains'. He is stripped of all illusions, including those of nationality. No mean English bourgeois he, but full of 'passions as strong and mighty as those of the foreigner'.¹⁵ Moreover the relations in which he stands, the cause of his suffering, become more and more visible. In the end the modern labourer has no choice but to 'revolt' while capitalism opens itself to him, as a book. It cannot even guarantee the means of his existence:

In order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence... The modern labourer ... instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class... And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave ... because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state ... Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society. 16

The historical content of this passage is clear through the 'philosophical' forms. The feeling that capitalist society provided no lodgement for the worker, that the position of proletarian was simply not habitable, is a dominant tone of early working-class radicalism. It was based certainly on extreme privations but, as Edward Thompson has stressed, also on a widespread sense of loss. This was the experience of the small-producer-becoming-proletarian, not yet, one must insist, the characteristic experience of the proletarian as such. Of course, the modern working-class was to be made and re-made and made again in struggles against capital, but the

content of these later struggles was to be more the taming of capital than its abolition. Based upon observation of a particular phase, 'Manifesto Marxism' extrapolated its features into a law of capitalism as such.

It is possible to add more 'theoretical' criticisms, based, that is, in a knowledge of subsequent events and of contemporary needs. These points are relevantly made since 'Manifesto Marxism' remains a mid-twentieth century presence. This form of Marxism does not grasp specifically cultural or ideological conditions of oppositional working-class politics. Though Marx and Engels continually argued against early European socialisms, they remained incurious about popular cultural legacies. Engels' portrayal of pre-Chartist popular culture, for instance, is self-confessed guess-work with high comic qualities:

They could rarely read and far more rarely write; went regularly to church, never talked politics, never conspired, never thought, delighted in physical exercises, listened with inherited reverence when the Bible was read, and were, in their unquestioning humility, exceedingly well-disposed towards the 'superior' classes. But, intellectually, they were dead... 17

His accounts of Chartist culture are, by contrast, full of excitement and particularity. But it is precisely the less overtly "political" elements of a culture that most need study, since their role in politics is most obscure.

Other criticisms concern the neglect of complexity.¹⁸ Within this problematic internal complexities of the class ('in itself') cannot be grasped. Yet historically the labourer's dependence on capital has taken varied forms. Divisions within the class have been exceedingly complex. 'Simplification' seems always to produce further internal structurations. Similarly, the simple class/party relation gives us little purchase on the complexities of working-class politics and representation. These points will recur later in the argument.

Several commentators have noted important subsequent shifts in Marx's theory of classes. These amount to a profound practical self-criticism of the Manifesto. This was necessary to preserve some organic relation between Marxist theory and the train of events in Britain and Europe after 1848. There were, perhaps, two main moments of revision: the first, identified precisely by Gwyn Williams, was the immediate aftermath of the counter-revolution in the late 1840s. Revision followed the disappointment of the expectations of The Manifesto and the subsequent political isolation of the Communists. The most important text of this moment is The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In this essay, as Hall argues, the faults of The Manifesto are transformed, through attempts to understand the complexity of the relations between economic classes and political parties.¹⁹ Fernbach makes a similar point when he argues that in Class Struggles in France

'Marx began, for the first time, to develop a systematic set of concepts for coming to grips with the phenomena of a politics which is certainly that of class struggle ... but which is nevertheless politics, practised in the field of ideology and coercion that gives it its specific character'.²⁰

The second moment of revision, a longer period but still an attempt intellectually to recoup political defeats, is the moment of Capital and its preparatory works, the rendering of the historical and philosophical generalities of The Manifesto into a much more precise account of the economic position of 'the labourer' under capital. Nicolaus argues that the 'Hegelian choreography' of The Manifesto - the 'negation' of bourgeois society by the proletariat - was replaced by categories that allow us to understand the rise of intermediate classes and the complication (rather than the simplification) of the structure of capitalist society.²¹

These revisions certainly provide the means for a full recasting of the older problematic. Yet they resemble the more familiar tussles with 'old Hegel' himself in that they were never completed. The earlier simplicities were not replaced by the new complexities - rather the two co-exist, often in the same texts. There are, in Hall's phrase, 'echoes' of The Manifesto in Capital. The prospect

of proletarian revolution, no less inevitable, merely delayed till capital's maturity, remains one organising assumption even of The Eighteenth Brumaire.²² Later commentators have sometimes underestimated their own roles in teasing out the implications of later formulations for earlier ones. It is not clear that Marx was always so perceptive. For today, it is more important to recover the 'best' Marx, than to continue to chastise the elements of 'economism', 'teleology' or 'class reductionism' in Marx at his worst. But the historical significance of the absence of a developed Marxist theory of classes has been immense. Since The Manifesto remained the most widely-used agitational text of the communist movement, since Capital itself gave warrant to the earlier problematic, and since Engels' interpretative work tended to disguise rather than highlight the revisions of the 1850s and 1860s, the theoretical resources of working-class movements in the period from the Great Depression to the rise of Fascism were severely weakened.

Lenin and Gramsci

It has become a somewhat routine procedure to identify a whole middle period of Marxist theory ("Second International") with various species of 'economism'. Much less understood are the historical conditions of this 'deviation'. No such history is attempted here, but it is important to say that while the problematic of The Manifesto became irrelevant in Britain after 1850, it acquired relevance again in late nineteenth-century Europe, whenever large masses of peasants, small producers or semi-proletarians were caught up in industrial transformations similar to those of early nineteenth-century Britain, whenever the subordination of labour to capital was conspicuously deepened and in the times of 'syndicalist' excitement that often accompanied these transformations. Deep and rapid economic change seems often to produce a neglect of political and ideological conditions even in theorists whose thought generally is opposed to this tendency. One thinks of the young Gramsci of the 'Red City' of Turin and of the Factory Councils.²³

It is to Lenin however that we should turn for the further development of the Manifesto problematic. Lenin developed that side of 'Manifesto Marxism' that emphasized the importance of political struggles in determining outcomes. At the same time he stressed the historic role of the proletariat 'as the builder of socialist society'. This was, indeed, 'the chief thing in the doctrine of Marx'.²⁴ In effect, then, Lenin grafted a Marxist political theory onto the basics of the Manifesto scheme. His analysis moves constantly between the 'objective' or 'economic' aspect of immediate tactical situations and the 'subjective' features, matters of organisation and consciousness. The economic/political duo is the key structure of his thought. Yet the main themes of Lenin's writing - science and ideology; spontaneity and political consciousness; masses and party - are handled in a way that suppresses the cultural or ideological content or object of politics and obscures questions about popular attitudes and feelings.

This follows, in part, from Lenin's version of the science/ideology divide. Marxism may not be a completed science but it is a science of a very developed order. For most situations it is important to recapitulate the findings of Marx and Engels - Lenin's characteristic polemical mode is precisely to recapitulate thus, confronting 'revisionism' with the findings. Marxism is a 'strikingly integral and harmonious scientific theory' which needs to be applied to new situations, and to be completed, but is not in need of revision.²⁵ This creates the distinction between science and ideology in its most closed form: true knowledge/the bumbling mistakes of revisionism; proletarian knowledge/petty-bourgeois conceptions; consciousness of class/'deceptions' or 'self-deceptions'. The content of ideology, in a sense, matters little; it may swiftly be reduced to its class character:

People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises. 26

In this conception of ideology, not in-appropriate certainly for analysing a state with few ideological resources, the main absence is the force of belief or conviction. The models continuously evoked in Lenin's language are those of delusion or corruption. The contents or logic of opposed positions are lost in the pejorative labels: 'revisionism', 'opportunism', 'petty-bourgeois mentality'. It is not, after all, beliefs that move people, but 'interests'.

Much the same could be said of Lenin's understanding of bourgeois strategies, especially in the West. Out of a largely pre-war and then Russian experience, Lenin understood the state mainly in its repressive moment.²⁷ Where this was not adequate, he used notions of manipulation or top-downward, one-dimensional control, the language of 'bribery and corruption'. As he said of 'labour aristocracy', 'they are bribing them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert'.²⁸

A similar structure is to be found in the spontaneity/politics couplet. The masses learn, to be sure, from their practical activity, and leaders may fall behind as well as lead, but the source of conceptions is a pre-given theory which is developed outside the class and communicate to it.²⁹ There are 'spontaneous' and 'conscious' elements, a distinction which threatens to become that of thinking head and political muscle.³⁰ Even 'propaganda' (hardly a nuanced way of thinking how popular conceptions may be changed) is given a heavily organisational emphasis. Lenin's writing on 'party literature' or the need for 'an all-Russia political newspaper' understands such projects as foci for unities, but is silent about the relations to be sought, ideologically, between such productions and their readers.³¹

The obvious comparison is with Gramsci. While the very notion of 'spontaneity' disguises the fact that the masses already have conceptions of the world beyond mere 'force of habit' Gramsci insisted that 'all men are philosophers', and share in some conception of the world.³² 'Pure spontaneity' does not exist in history since it would amount to 'pure mechanicity'. It exists only in the fact that conscious leadership

is diffused rather than concentrated, or has beliefs that do not transcend 'traditional' conceptions of the world'. It follows that there is a need 'to study and develop the elements of popular psychology, historically and sociologically, actively (i.e. in order to transform them by educating them into a modern mentality)'.³³ Much of The Prison Notebooks are an elaboration of this point. This project Gramsci found to be 'implicit' in Lenin - 'perhaps even explicitly stated'. Yet despite many similarities and later development in Lenin's own position, their emphases do seem dissimilar and lead to different analyses of the relation of party to class. Gramsci was the first major Marxist theorist to take the 'culture of the popular masses' as the direct and privileged object of study and of political practice.

These deficiencies were the reverse side of Lenin's political virtues: his stress on 'concrete' analysis, intervention in immediate political contingencies and impatience, in situations demanding heroic activity, of 'mere words'. These features, aspects of the tightest of theory-practice relations, may distinguish Leninism from its subsequent corruptions in Stalinism where a mechanical notion of Marxism as pre-given 'science' is allied to a rigidly organisational and authoritarian conception of party.³⁴ But Lenin's legacy had a tendency to relieve Marxism from the concrete study of working-class culture, and to narrow the range of what was considered relevant to political practice.

Later Orthodoxies: Two Examples

Two further extensions of this problematic are especially revealing. These are rather dissimilar examples, but share a historical dilemma and a structure of argument: first, the theory of 'labour aristocracy', casually present in the later Engels, developed in Lenin's writing on Imperialism and Reformism, re-introduced into English Marxist historiography by Eric Hobsbawm and currently the subject of much historical debate;³⁵ second, the early work of Georg Lukacs, whose book History and Class Consciousness, is the fullest development of the class/class consciousness position.³⁶

The dilemma is that posed in the contradiction between the theoretical destiny of the proletariat and the actual course of Western working-class politics. Marxist theory has worried around the problem of the revolutionary class manque, not only in the classic debates around 'reformism' or 'labourism' but also in much of the thinking around culture-ideology-consciousness. To speak rather rashly there have been two responses to this situation: to abandon recognisably Marxist analysis or to construct a second level of theory or special explanations, to show why a 'normal' or long-term historical development had somehow been blocked or delayed. These have been commoner responses than attempting to reconstruct the original problematic.

The commonest form of second-order theory has been the recovery of elements absent in the original problematic though often present, in a different, less accented, form in the historical experience which is expressed. These new elements, not theorised as part of the central dynamics of the capitalist mode of production, are then understood as historically contingent factors, features of a particular phase. They are fetters or inhibitions on more organic processes, a belief in the simpler forms of which are thereby preserved. Features central to the constitution of the working-class appear in a displaced or marginalised role.

The 'theory' of labour aristocracy is an excellent example. It has been used to explain the 'liberalisation' of mid-nineteenth-century Britain, labour 'reformism' and the failure of early twentieth-century working-classes to develop a counter-hegemonic strategy. Two kinds of argument are embraced in the same term: the first centres on labour organisation and its partial incorporation within the agencies of the State; the second posits some larger social-structural division within the class itself, commonly between 'skilled' and 'unskilled' sectors.³⁷ Both arguments correspond to observable tendencies in the post-1850 history of the working class, but also limit the effects of such observations on the fundamental inadequacies of an older orthodoxy. Theories of the incorporation, 'corruption' or detachment of 'leadership' have actually hindered a more fundamental

reconceptualisation of the relationship between economic classes and political parties, or a more adequate analysis of the dispositions of the 'rank and file'.³⁸ Similarly, 'the mid-Victorian aristocracy of labour' may not be a very helpful construction. For it was not just a unique historical phenomenon; but rather a particular form of a more general tendency. As Marx discovered in his deeper analyses, the expansion and the movements of capital do not simply unify and massify labour, even in the direct relations of production. Rather, the working class is continuously recomposed around major internal structurations. These internal divisions - within factories, within industries, between occupations, between the sexes and between the employed and the reserve armies - ought to be an object of any primary theory of the working class. We need to start indeed, politically and theoretically, not from the assumption of simplification and unity but from that of complexity and division.³⁹ These divisions are based on hierarchies of labour modified by the effects of gender relations which are reproduced mainly within the family. These forms of division are, however, also the object of ideological and political practices. A whole politics may be wrought on top of them. Socialist strategies are not at all aided by the rooted belief that such divisions must somehow pass away, or be easily transcended in the name of some essential unity.

Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness, essays written or revised in the heat of struggles within the Hungarian Communist Party in 1922, share the general features of labour aristocracy theory. For his early project was an attempt to graft a more developed theory of 'consciousness' onto the classical root. The result is a similar hybrid. Lukacs was a forerunner of the extreme abstractness of 'Western Marxism' and his borrowings were collosally heterogeneous: a classical Marxist root, a recovery of Hegel and the pre-Manifesto Marx, a debt to Weber and Simmel and a reading of part I of Capital.⁴⁰

His starting-point was Marx's distinction between the class 'as against capital' and the class 'for itself'. The first Characteristic move was to render 'class consciousness' a 'sacred' category.⁴¹

Despite its 'profane' origin in Chartism and Owenism, it now acquired a wholly theoretical status. It became 'the thoughts and feelings men would have in a particular situation if they were able to assess both it and the interests arising from it', or 'rational reactions "imputed" to a particular typical position in the process of production'.⁴² How then to explain the distance between such a consciousness and the contents of proletarian heads, this side of revolution?

'False consciousness' has fundamental forms, differently inhabited by the two main classes. (Lukacs accentuated the schematism of The Manifesto by denying to other classes an effective historical role).⁴³ These forms had been described by Marx in Capital as the mechanism of 'fetishism'. Relations between people acquire, under capitalism, a 'phantom objectivity', appearing as things. By a series of daring homologies, the features of a fetishized consciousness were discerned throughout capitalist society: in its bureaucracy, its sexual relations, its economic ideologies, its jurisprudence and, especially, its philosophy and epistemology.⁴⁴

The bourgeoisie inhabits this world with a necessarily partial vision, having knowledge of practical management but not of the totality of processes nor of those elements that point to future transformations, the tendency to recurrent crises for instance. Faced with the instability of its domination, its objective interests force it to deceive itself. The proletariat has no such interest, but in its immediate perspective, it has its own 'bourgeois' (i.e. 'false') consciousness within which it is held by 'opportunistic politics'. But a knowledge of the totality is both possible and necessary - 'a matter of life and death'. Crises force the proletariat to self-realisation. In this moment the duality of class 'as against capital' and class 'for itself', transformed in Lukacs' thought into the Hegelian dialectic of subject and object, is resolved. The proletariat becomes the identical subject-object of history.⁴⁵

So questions inadequately treated in earlier accounts return to the tradition with a vengeance. Lukacs remains important for his concentration on 'consciousness', for his criticisms of an

unreflexive epistemology, and for the attempt to theorise the relation between capital's economic forms and the general features of bourgeois thought. But he is also a classical instance of two recurrent tendencies commoner in sociological traditions: the tendency to see class cultures as straight-forwardly and wholly conditioned by social position (for this is the argument, ultimately, about class consciousness); and the tendency to ascribe to whole societies one 'central' or 'essential' modality of thought which enters the consciousness of all classes (for this is the argument about 'false consciousness'). The major fatality, as always in the class/class consciousness problematic, is any concrete, complex account of lived cultures, how they are formed and how they may be transformed.

Origins of the Culture Problematic

The complicated origins of 'culture' belong to the same history as early Marxist theory. The culture paradigm was formed in the Industrial Revolution, was redefined in the 1880s and 1890s and was recovered as a 'tradition' in the 1950s. Some elements were then worked into a theory of cultural-ideological processes.

Yet the social origin of these two traditions differs very much. Early Marxism was a rendering into theory of the experience of the small-producer-becoming-proletarian. The problematic of culture expressed the dilemmas of some English intellectuals sufficiently removed from industrial capital, in situation or sympathies, to distance themselves from its morality and purposes. Except for three main moments - the 1790s (fleetingly), the 1880s and 1890s and, the 1950s and 1960s - these intellectuals were distanced from popular movements and almost uniformly dismissive of popular moralities. Their 'autonomy' can be seen in the very structure of their thought: 'the emergence of culture as an abstraction and as an absolute', as a separate set of moral and intellectual activities, and as 'a court of human appeal', even as 'a mitigating and rallying alternative'.⁴⁶ Williams' description of this 'structure of feeling' seems also to spell out the increasingly differentiated functions of intellectual labour (whether of poet, novelist, artist, critic or academic) and the desire to find in specialised pursuits some canon of judgement

and behaviour relevant to the whole society. Since this tradition was an overwhelmingly 'literary' one, the debate was evaluative rather than analytic. It concerned appropriate social moralities or what Edward Thompson has called 'the education of desire'.⁴⁷

This long line of 'literary-sociology' has been much discussed. We will mainly concentrate on the post-war advocates of 'culture', and especially upon Raymond Williams and Edward Thompson. Yet these writers seem to have found themselves in some account of predecessors: Williams in a long detour in search of 'a general theory of culture', Thompson in his twenty-year espousal of the ideas of William Morris.⁴⁸ Why did they choose to write about their deepest political convictions through the presentation of significant persons, mostly long dead?

Williams' Culture and Society constructs a 'tradition' around the history of a word - 'culture' - and a succession of writers who contributed to its sum of meanings. Perhaps the most obvious conclusion of a return to the book is the great variety of this 'tradition'. Yet Williams' sharpest critics have constructed a still more homogenous entity - 'the literary intelligentsia' - and attacked his 'social tradition' as one of 'almost uniform political reaction'.⁴⁹ There has even been a tendency to take the 'Culture and Society' intellectuals as typical of English intellectuals as a whole, thereby excluding a whole middle-class radical and liberal tradition from the historical record.⁵⁰ Edward Thompson's critique is much more perceptive: there was not one Culture and Society tradition, but several.⁵¹

A more discriminating history would have to make some distinctions. Though all these writers were distanced from the ruling interests and ideas of their time, their evaluations were more or less interesting or useful to different social classes or groups. Often they were taken up (and thereby changed) by particular parties or movements. On such a basis three main strands might be distinguished among those discussed in Culture & Society. The first strand is a Conservative tradition, the ideological alter ego of Liberalism: Burke, Southey, Disraeli,

Newman, Mallock and Eliot are central here. One distinctive feature is a deep distrust of democracy. If capitalism is opposed, it is because it is a 'leveller'. The social bases of this conservative organicism were the Anglican Church, the Conservative Party and the social order and institutions of an agrarian capitalism. 'Culture' was understood as the repository of traditional social values, whose most important practical function was to distinguish between leaders and led and to defend attendant privileges. Since 1945 it has become difficult, except as an eccentricity, to avow fully hierarchical philosophies; under the pressure of the ideological assumption of 'equality' the Conservative Party has changed its repertoire to a more liberal variant.

Edward Thompson has written the history of the second strand - a Radical Romanticism.⁵² The succession runs from the early Romantics (especially Blake, Keats and Shelley) through Carlyle and Ruskin, to William Morris, in whom Romanticism and Marxism are conjoined. There are two points of junction with popular movements: between plebian radicalism and the utopian intellectuals of the 1790s and with Morris' crossing of 'the river of fire', to take the standpoint of the working class in the 1880s.⁵³ Later projections of the tradition are not altogether clear: it should include, perhaps, 'Marxisante independents' like G.D.H.Cole and 'ethical socialists' like Tawney or Orwell. It should include perhaps the radical populism of the 1930s and 1940s, without the 'Stalinist pieties'. But the most important test of the organicity of Morris and of the earlier tradition is their reception into working-class traditions of independent socialist education and the continuance of utopian and ethical elements in the British labour movement.⁵⁴

Thirdly, we might distinguish writers whose very lack of an organic connection is their defining feature. They explore the dilemmas of people like themselves, express the viewpoint, for

instance, of those Oxbridge-civil-service-literary circles in which Mathew Arnold moved. This thought remains, in Gramsci's word, 'intellectualistic'. One might include here Arnold, the various artistic Bohemias (e.g. the Pre-Raphaelites) and Leavis and the Leavisites, whose dilemmas are very much those of the academic layer in a modern education system. Elements of the thought of such traditional intellectuals may, of course, influence more organic thinkers, as Arnoldian formulations influenced Tawney's thought on education for instance.

It would require a proper history of these traditions to show the force of these categories and to refine them. But it should be clear that wholesale acceptance or rejection of the 'culture' tradition is perilous. It will hardly do to dismiss the whole sequence as one of unmitigated reaction, or to see the idea of culture as 'contaminated' at root. At the very least one must ask whose idea of culture? In the end, though, such questions cannot be answered by historical pedigrees, only by modern relevances.

Yet why should it have been so important for certain intellectuals of the left to discover themselves in 'traditions' at all? Some answers have already been given in contextualising the sociologies. The 1950s were a period of crisis for those who based their politics on a criticism of capitalism and a faith in the mass of the people. The conditions of this decade were particularly testing for the characteristic politics of the English left: strong in popular sympathies and moral sensitivities, weak in the concrete analysis of capitalism and its twentieth-century adaptations. The 'radical populism' of the 1930s and 1940s depended on the crisis-ridden state of the inter-war economy, the immediacies of the fight against Fascism, and opposition to the most overt forms of social inequality and class rule. When these conditions seemed to evaporate, underlying weaknesses were clearly displayed. A generally 'leftist' climate among intellectuals was rapidly dispersed, leaving only a harder contingent. But they could offer, from inherited theoretical resources, no adequate explanation of capitalism's success to place beside the gospels of growth and affluence. So confident were right-wing intellectuals in

this period that they even began a re-appraisal of the less 'acceptable' moments in the history of British capitalism, rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution as a moment of 'growth'.⁵⁵ A reviving leftism invested the weaker points of this analysis - overwhelmingly, the analysis of culture. One consequence was the reproduction of a persistent dichotomy within English ideologies: between a liberal, utilitarian and 'economist' pole, where the progressive side of capitalism was well but one-sidedly understood; and a romantic, literary and 'qualitative' pole with popular political sympathies but a romantic and equally one-sided view of capitalism's evils.

This pressure was accompanied by major internal stresses. This effected intellectuals in the Labour Party through the party's loss of confidence and the bitter debates about 'revisionism'. Intellectuals to the left of this, in the Communist Party or with a firmer alignment to Marxism, were even more beset, their party paralysed, then split, by the half-revelations of the 20th Congress and the Soviet invasion of Hungary.⁵⁶ To judge from the force of the explosion to which they gave rise, the pressures must have been intense. The moment of culture can be understood as an attempt to vindicate critical social thought (from Marxism to Left Leavisism) in an exceptionally hostile climate and in circumstances where even 'the people' seemed content. Every single national resource was important in such an effort. What could English culture offer to stem the tide of 'Progress'? Answer: The Tradition; Answer: William Morris. Answer: The English Working Class in a more heroic phase.

Culture, Experience and Theory

The culture paradigm is distinguished by an over-riding concern with describing the actual forms of popular practices and beliefs. The manner of this commitment, the sharpness of an accompanying politics, even the key terms of definition, differ very much. The term 'culture' for instance remains central in Williams' cultural theory whether thought of as 'a whole way of life' or in its latest more difficult formulation as 'a constitutive social process, creating specific and different ways of life'.⁵⁷ Thompson's

concern with culture, values, ideas, and moral evaluations is no less marked; and he defines this as the crucial absence in Marxism.⁵⁸ But his solution was less a long meditation on 'culture' and more, in his early work, a re-working of familiar Marxist categories, especially of 'class consciousness'. The engagement with culture or lived experience is secured by insisting that class consciousness is the way in which experiences are 'handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms'. It has a definite history: it is neither an abstraction nor a hopeful projection. It is a category to be made 'profane' again. Any idealist or normative version - of class consciousness 'not as it is, but as it ought to be' - is rejected.⁵⁹

'Experience' defines both the object and the method of inquiry. It is a method in which the author himself, his experience, is very intrusive: there is much self-revelation in Hoggart's portrayal of his childhood, in Williams' pursuit of 'the implications of personal experience to the point where they have organically emerged as methods, concepts, strategies',⁶⁰ and in Thompson's style of polemical address. The method rejects sociologies in which lived relations are marginalised or over-borne by theory. Part of the criticism of elite cultural theory and of the restriction of creativity to the artist is that it provided a flattened stereotypical view of the life of the 'masses': 'there are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses'.⁶¹ Thompson attacks a whole range of otherwise very dissimilar positions on the same grounds: economistic Marxism, 'ideological' economic history, a 'Platonist' Leninism, structural-functionalism, the construction of abstract typologies in anthropology or sociology and, latterly, a Marxist structuralism.⁶² These all have the same moral and epistemological features: 'violent abstraction', the 'imposition' of a a priori schema on a living history, the forcing of historical materials into the mould of the theorist's own pre-occupations, speculative or dogmatic. Advocated instead is an explicitly anti-rationalist epistemology in which theory is restricted to critique and hypothesis, and the key moment is likened to listening:

If you want a generalization I would have to say that the historian has got to be listening all the time. He should not set up a book or a research project with a totally clear sense of exactly what he is going to be able to do. The material itself has got to speak through him. And I think this happens. 63

Williams argues a very similar position, defining, with great accuracy, common tendencies in both older (base and superstructure) and modern (structuralist) Marxisms:

The analytical categories, as so often in idealist thought, have, almost unnoticed, become substantive descriptions, which then take habitual priority over the whole social process to which, as analytic categories, they are attempting to speak. 64

There are immense strengths in this position. Culturalism conducts a profound critique of theory-as-dogma, of a rationalism or a conceptual a priori, in the first place in the name of 'experience', in the second in the name of 'materialism'. This response was first formed against economistic Marxism; but it has an equal force against many forms of the explosion of 'Theory' in the 1970s. If, like Marx, one regards various forms of idealism as the occupational vice of 'the philosopher' (for which read intellectual or academic), the culturalist argument remains immensely important.

But it also has considerable weaknesses. The stress on the privilege of 'experience' leads to an under-developed theoretical enterprise and a tendency to avoid abstract or generalising discourse in itself. There are several aspects of this: the tendency of rejecting analytical distinctions as a matter of principle, the tendency to disguised or un-selfconscious theoretical borrowings, and the failure fully to theorise the results of concrete studies. We might take some examples of each of these. Thompson's Making of the English Working Class, for example, an historical masterpiece, remains a work whose findings are seriously under-exploited by the author himself. It is full of profound insights about the relations between the lived, cultural level and transformative ideological practices whether those of methodist preachers or of

radical journalists. For such insights to become fully available they would have to be stated more abstractly, or generally. They would have to be abstracted from the particular patterns of 'lived' historical complexity in which they occurred. Their relation to a more general debate about, say, culture and ideology would have to be explored, and a specifically theoretical contribution developed from them. Such abstractions do not have to be thought of as completely general or trans-historical in scope - the historian's night-mare of Theory. A proper use of concepts involves arguments about their historical scope of reference. Still, if such abstractions are not made, findings remain locked up in accounts of specific historical contingencies: they cannot be consumed theoretically, cannot generate parallel questions for other instances, cannot contribute to the development of conceptual tools. In one sense, The Making is a very theoretical book: it is organised, very consciously, around a particular problematic and conducts an extended historical critique of other positions. This case, these big bold truths, are mightily made for page after page. Yet, as many readers find, there are great richnesses in the book (and in the history it describes) which are difficult to grasp for want of a more explicit theoretical labour. A work of this stature ought to produce theory.

The concluding sections of Whigs and Hunters, Thompson's latest major text, illustrate a rather different problem. Here Thompson does generalise from his findings on the subject of class and the law. He conducts an argument against notions of the law as the simple expression of the interests of a dominant class, stressing those features of law as a practice which may limit its use as a class instrument. Yet this very convincing argument is presented as a polemic against 'modern structural Marxists' who, in fact, adopt a very similar view of the juridical as that pressed by Thompson! ⁶⁵

This is simply a case of inattention to the arguments of theoretical works, an inattention that would hardly be tolerated for the usual order of historical 'sources'. Williams' Marxism

and Literature, by comparison, represents a very advanced position within the culturalist problematic since it is explicitly a long and challenging theoretical statement based upon more concrete work. In general, however, culturalist premises tend to interrupt the full movements from the concrete to the abstract (and back again) that distinguished Marx's method and which would make possible a continuous revision and development of a theoretical legacy from the products of new research.

The question about analytic distinctions is best illustrated through particular questions: how does culturalism understand the relation of culture to not-culture and, in particular, how is this distinction handled in relation to class? These questions are central to our object, 'working-class culture'.

Classical Marxism handled these problems through the base-superstructure metaphor and the class-class consciousness distinction. Both Williams and Thompson have consistently, in all their work, argued against the base-superstructure formulation. Williams has traced a kind of pathology of the notion from Marx's ambiguous statements to later rigidities, has stressed the tendency to empty the 'superstructure' of any really material force and to compartmentalise areas of social life rather than examine their 'constitutive processes'.⁶⁶ Thompson has argued, similarly, that the initial separation out of 'the economic', on which the metaphor is based, was a product of the traditions which Marx contested and that real historical problems are not thinkable in this way:

There is no way in which I find it possible to describe Puritan or Methodist work discipline as an element of the 'superstructure' and then put work itself in a 'basis' somewhere else. ⁶⁷

Both Thompson and Williams attempt to find better ways of thinking about these things. Their solutions differ, however, and have to be treated separately.

Williams and 'Culturalism'

Williams has, characteristically, refused to make rigorous or systematic distinctions between cultural and other processes. The following formulations, one from the early works and one from the late, are quite typical:

The truth about a society, it would seem, is to be found in the actual relations, always exceptionally complicated, between the system of decision, the system of communication and learning, the system of maintenance and the system of generation and nurture. It is not a question of looking for some absolute formula, by which the structure of these relations can be invariably determined. The formula that matters is that which, first makes the essential connections between what are never really separable systems, and second, shows the historical variability of each of these systems, and therefore the real organisations within which they operate and are lived. 68

Orthodox analysts began to think of 'the base' and 'the superstructure' as if they were separable concrete entities. In doing so they lost sight of the very processes - not abstract relations but constitutive processes - which it should have been the special function of historical materialism to emphasize It is not 'the base' and 'the superstructure' that need to be studied, but the specific and indissoluble real processes 69

The procedure of both these passages is to identify certain distinctions to insist that there can be no adequate general formulation of relations between different spheres, and, finally, to insist on the importance of totalities or 'constitutive social processes' that lie behind the distinctions anyway. In practice this procedure amounts to the collapse of distinctions, since the weight of the argument is always about their essential artificiality. 'Experience', it seems, can always grasp a process that is beyond or beneath analytical distinctions and which they may (perhaps must?) obscure. Collapses of this kind can be seen all the way through Marxism and Literature. The distinction between economic production and other practices disappears in the expansion of production as an undifferentiated concept akin to 'creativity'. The term 'material' is applied to all aspects of a social and political order in a parallel expansion. 70

There are several difficulties in this solution. First, there is the difficulty of arriving at any precise view at all of the characteristics of culture. Such questions are referred back, all the time, to total social process, 'real men' and classes in specific situations. Yet at no moment in the whole Williams oeuvre does a clear definition or boundary of culture emerge. Thus 'way of life', as Edward Thompson suggested in 1961, tends to become everyone's shopping list of elements of thought, action, organisation, work or leisure.⁷¹ 'Cultural Studies' tends to inherit and to develop the extreme descriptive heterogeneity of this object. It follows that it is not possible to speak coherently about the relation between culture and other (kinds of?) practices, except continually to insist that all is part of one totality. A persistent fuzziness must result. But more serious consequences may follow, for a second set of problems concern what relations actually are, in practice, dominant in Williams' accounts of the world: how the failure to specify is actually supplied more pragmatically. As literary critic and cultural theorist, Williams does stress certain kinds of practices, all of them broadly cultural and, within that, mainly literary. Other practices tend to be marginalised or defined away. There is no check on this from theoretical controls. Thus the early works are particularly inattentive to political processes, a tendency which Williams himself has acknowledged.⁷² The tensionless 'expansion' of culture replaces struggle over values and definitions. Though some of this is repaired in later work, there is a persistent neglect of the particular character and force of economic relations and therefore of economic definitions in relation to class. This 'culturalism' is described by Anthony Barnett, the most careful of Williams' critics, as a kind of inversion of economism, a reduction 'upwards'.⁷³ This is the characteristic tendency of 1950s and 1960s texts in both history and 'literary-sociology'. It is very characteristic of Hoggart's Uses of Literary, for example, from which both economic production and politics are literally absent. Even Thompson's work is not altogether exempt from it.

The nature of Williams' culturalism can best be seen in his treatment of class. As others have noted; the category 'class' is

hardly present as an active shaping idea in Williams' early work: it tends to emerge in conclusions, especially in the famous passages at the end of Culture and Society. But here we encounter a further set of problems. Since culture is an expansive or inclusive term (potentially including everything), the only way to give a coherent account of a particular lived culture is to reduce it to its organising principles. It is not the elements of a culture that are important, but the principles or values which, overall it expresses. If no categories (distinctions) of a systematic kind exist with which we can grasp complexities, there is no option but to simplify. One way to simplify is to seek 'essences' or 'principles' and this is very much how, in a classic form of idealist reduction, Williams approaches class cultures. We are offered a simple typology of cultures: bourgeois culture is individualistic but is modified by the idea of service; working-class culture by contrast, revolves around collectivity and solidarity. It then becomes possible to examine the strengths and weaknesses of such principles in a Mathew Arnold-like search for the elements of a 'common culture'. The procedure produces results that are very close to other idealist accounts of class elements in English culture, including those of several historians.⁷⁴ But it also produces stereotypes as misleading as 'mass culture' or 'false consciousness'. Is solidarity a general feature of working-class culture? Does it apply to all the social sites and internal relations of a culture: to relations between men and women and men and children for instance? How powerful have solidarities been outside the culture of the work place? Such compressed descriptions-cum-judgements can hardly hope to capture the complexity of a lived culture, let alone the forces, material and ideological, which form it.

Thompson and Socialist-Humanist History

Thompson's position often resembles Williams', with a similar tendency to refuse certain distinctions. Relations of production are not only economic but also 'human' relationships. Production involves culture. Every mode of production carries with it corresponding modes of culture. 'Economics' and 'culture' are

'two sides of the same coin', or are in a dialectic of interaction. Certain values are 'consonant' with certain modes of production and therefore an inextricable part of them. Relations of production are simultaneously expressed in all areas of social life.⁷⁵ More commonly, Thompson has worked with a minimum distinction, taken from Marx, between 'social consciousness' and 'social being'. Social being is understood as the mode of production of material life and 'the human relationships' to which it gives rise. These 'human relationships' include 'exploitation' but also relations of domination and of 'acquisitiveness', knowledge of which we owe not only to Marx but also to Weber, Tawney and Veblen. Thompson has employed this distinction very much as the young Marx did, to attack positions which are seen as idealist. Thompson insists against the early Williams (as Marx did against Hegel or Proudhon) that social being determines social consciousness. This often co-exists with an insistence on 'dialectical interrelationship' of being and consciousness, a formulation which appears inconsistent with the notion of determination. Partly, no doubt, because of these inconsistencies, Thompson's latest position seems to be different again: it is not possible, even for capitalist societies, to maintain the social being/social consciousness distinction as a general guide or control. In studying the folklore or common sense of particular groups within the subordinated classes 'we cannot conceive of social being apart from social consciousness or norms' and it is therefore 'meaningless' to ascribe priority of one over the other.⁷⁶

These shifts indicate difficulties in a position that gives overwhelmingly priority to the portrayal of 'experience'. Faithfulness to experience, an impulse with moral and literary roots comes into conflict, at a certain point, with what we can only call 'scientific' intentions, using the term in its broader continental uses rather than its narrower English ones. Systematic knowledge and the search for more adequate explanations of social processes require developed analytical procedures. Within Marxism as a 'science', abstraction plays a part occupied in other systems

by ideal types, model building or the testing of hypotheses. Abstraction precisely depends upon a necessary simplification of 'real history', a presentation of elements in it in a quite formal way. Most of Capital as a work is 'abstract' in this sense: theory is derived from the study of the concrete and is used to illuminate particular instances, but in its form and presentation, most of Capital does not at all resemble 'real history'. Abstraction is both a condition for thinking clearly about the world and for learning from concrete instances in such a way as to be able to transfer insights or consider them in relation to another case. If we refuse analytical distinctions of the most elementary kind (e.g. culture/not culture) we will not be able to examine that real history whose integrity we aim to preserve. Distinctions like base/superstructure or economic/political/ideological practices, properly used, are no more than the means with which to grasp 'total social process'. To reject these tools and supply no others is to return us, scientifically, to a radical historical relativism and the denial of any generalising or accumulative intellectual procedures.

Attempts at a proper theoretical enterprise must always, within this problematic be 'guilty' or inhibited, so we ought to turn to Thompson's portrayals of the relation of culture and class in his actual histories. How can we describe the characteristic object of Thompson's history?

All the histories from The Making of the English Working Class to Whigs and Hunters have shared a common theme: the conflict between two cultural modes.⁷⁷ The first mode is rooted in the characteristic relations and values of a society of small producers, artisans and semi-proletarians which existed within cultural and political horizons set by agrarian capital - the first English form of a bourgeois ruling class - and policed, centrally, by law. The second mode includes the cultural world of industrial work discipline, of protestant or puritan notations of time, of the psychic disciplines of methodism, of political economy, utilitarianism and the 'Gradgrind school' and of the cultural aggressions associated with the requirements of commercial and especially industrial

capital. The conflict of these modes involves a long co-existence that corresponds to Maurice Dobbs' long transition in relations of economic production. It is, indeed, the political-cultural expression or aspect of these very same changes: the long transition in culture and politics and in forms of struggle between classes. Thompson's earlier work, especially The Making looks at the later points of the transition: the English working class is formed, politically and culturally, out of the collapse of the older moral framework ('paternalism' and 'the moral economy') and through popular opposition to the imposition of the new. If, as was argued earlier, The Making recounts the end of a story rather than the beginning of a new one, we can understand why Thompson's trajectory is back into the eighteenth century rather than forward once again to the nineteenth or later. He has developed, once more, the territory opened up by the initial explorations of Dobb and Torr, planning an historical rendez-vous, perhaps, with the work of Christopher Hill. This later work has concentrated on the forms of gentry hegemony and of popular self-assertion, but has never lost sight of the transition in cultural-economic modes. Whigs and Hunters, for instance, deals not only with the importance of juridical relations in the eighteenth century, but also with the enforcement of capitalist property rights, over the customary use rights of the foresters.

Before we look more closely at the treatment of class, it is important to note one general weakness of these histories. They rest on a reduction not dissimilar to Williams' 'culturalism'. It is not that economic relations and changes in ways of producing are absent from these histories: their presence is assumed all the time. But the changes in economic relations are understood through their experiential or political effects, not, for the most part, in themselves. Thus, in The Making the transformative character of the Industrial Revolution is grasped largely through the experiences of artisans, weavers and others: the character of this shift in economic social relations is never fully described and is only passively present in the story. The characteristic move is to assume the force of economic changes, to insist upon the force of

cultural and political processes too, but only to describe the latter in any detailed or active way.⁷⁸

It is very easy to see how this tendency occurred. The problem with existing historiographies, especially of older Marxisms and its assailants in the shape of the economic historians was the absence of any proper consideration of 'values'. The Making conducts a powerful critique of both these traditions, rehearsing much of Romanticism's objection to utilitarianism and political economy. The working class is not just made by industrial revolution ('steam power plus the factory equals the working class') but also through political counter-revolution, and a re-working, in the light of new experiences, of inherited cultural traditions. It made much sense, then, to occupy the ground of experience from which to criticise the orthodoxies. All of Thompson's own 'traditions' - Romanticism, the concern with moralities, the literary mode, the historiography of the Hammonds and of Tawney and the Morris-inspired reading of Marx - pushed hard in the same direction. But it is now possible to see that the stress on culture involved vacating the ground of economic relations, leaving the heart of opposing positions untouched and threatening an impoverishment of analysis.

Class, class struggle and class-as-relationship are central categories of Thompson's history. Historical outcomes are the product of class struggles. Even the apparently assured control of the eighteenth-century gentry is secured and 'lived' through conflicts: the challenge of crime or riot; the response of magistracy or law. The Making commences with a major re-definition of class which then forms the central argument of the book. This is the emphasis that marks Thompson's history as 'Marxist' and distinguishes it from, say, the early Williams or the passivity of Hoggart's account.

Yet, as we have suggested, 'class consciousness' is re-worked in the light of 'culture'. Retained from the older problematic are all the activist elements: classes as agents, present at their own making, forged in struggles: the stresses of Marx's 'class for

itself'. Suppressed or rendered peripheral are the more 'objective' or passive elements in the classic concept: 'class as against capital' in the earlier formulations, developed, in Capital, into a profound analysis of the labourer's subordination within capitalist economic relations. Economic class relations are not entirely absent from The Making. Some of their force is carried in an extended and much looser notion of 'relationship': classes are groups of people in historical forms of human relationship. A more developed notion of relations of production sometimes seems about to emerge. But, generally, it is the quality of human relationships rather than the structuring of these through relations that is the key concern. One symptom of this is the massive over-loading of the term 'experience'. It is made to carry the full weight of objective determinations but also expresses the relay or relation between 'economics' and 'culture'. Two quotations with rather different emphases illustrate this:

The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. 79

In Part Two I move from subjective to objective influences - the experiences of groups of workers during the Industrial 80 Revolution which seem to me to be of especial significance.

In the first case 'experience' is seen as a relation between productive relations and culture; in the second 'experience' is identified with 'objective influences'. In either case, since 'objective influences' are little described, 'experience' is made to carry all their weight. It indicates, at once, the way in which individuals or groups are subject to external or uncontrollable pressures and the most located or immediate of their understandings. In it are contained, in the most compressed form, the unwillingness to distinguish culture and not-culture and many of the difficulties that arise.

Against this it is important to argue for certain minimum distinctions. In the analysis of the major classes of capitalist

social formations the distinction 'class as against capital'/'class for itself' should be retained. The latter term reminds us that people stand in relations that are independent of their wills and of which they are more or less conscious. These relations do stamp a social character on people, but should not be reduced to relationships between people (of a nicer or nastier kind). The proletarian is not faced, merely, by greedy or exploitative middlemen or millowners, nor, just, by the 'inhuman' doctrines of political economy. Rather, by virtue of occupancy of a particular economic class position, the proletarian is forced to expend life energies under the control and command of capital, in order to acquire the means of subsistence, in order to live. Underneath the cultural handling of this relation (in its particular historical forms) the figure of the 'naked' labourer still moves, according to the fundamental disciplines of the capital relation. It matters, certainly, whether labourers work willingly, or with murder or even socialism in their hearts: but go to work they must or they and their children must starve or sink into still deeper forms of dependency. Since the early nineteenth century, the force of this economic relation has certainly been modified through the active political interventions of the class of labourers themselves. But it is still present and the arrangements which mitigate its severity may always be removed or rendered more oppressive or conditional. This is why it remains possible, in 1979 to speak meaningfully of a working class in Britain, irrespective of the strength or weakness of labour organisation. At one (indispensable) moment of analysis, the class is composed of those who partake in a proletarian relation to capital, are a class 'as against' it. The complexities of this form of class analysis, and the need for research as well as categories, should not lead us to abandon it.

This is of the utmost importance for the general problem raised in this book. Any analysis of 'working class culture' must be able to grasp the relation between economic classes and the forms in which they do (or do not) become active in conscious

politics. If the two aspects of class analysis are conflated, this is not possible. If class is understood only as a cultural and political formation, a whole theoretical legacy is impoverished and materialist accounts are indistinguishable from a form of idealism. It may indeed be that the relation between what culturalism calls 'experience' and the marshalling of political forces, or, more correctly, between economic classes and political organisations is never or rarely as simple as 'transitive' or 'expressive' models imply. Economic classes rarely appear as political forces. Most of Thompson's work, for instance, has concerned periods in which the political representation of popular interests has, apparently, been secured with a relative faithfulness. In the period 1790 to 1840, the class character of political and cultural forms is relatively easy to see. Either that, or, as in the work on the eighteenth century, the absence of economic class categories has permitted the presentation of political forces as classes. Thompson's 'patricians' and 'plebians' is a case in point. But whatever happened to small producers, semi-peasants and semi-proletarians? And why must eighteenth-century class borrow the garbs of Antiquity? As soon as we enter a period when formal political arrangements for the 'representation' of working people become more complex and acquire firm institutional continuities, these problems become inescapable. Do the British Labour Party or even British trade unions simply or expressively 'represent' working people? At the very least they define or structure what passes for politics as such, so preventing the representation of some elements and promoting others. These questions cannot even be properly posed within the culturalist problematic.

There is one final set of temptations that lie along the route of 'culture'. The one-sided stress on class as a cultural and political formation commits analysis to discover such forms in every place or period. Such searches will never be altogether in vain since the class organisation of society will always find expression of some kind. But the temptation is to present such findings as always analogous to a developed and politically

conscious opposition. The 'class' is 'struggling' after all. Such a search slips easily into a romantic abasement before every manifestation of 'resistance', however exotic, peripheral, displaced or contained. Edward Thompson retains, perhaps, too conventional a view of what counts as class organisation to fall into this trap: a stress on party, unions and socialist intellectual traditions may, indeed, disguise the elements of 'primitive rebellion' in a modern working class. Yet some tendencies in modern sociology, focussing especially on the symbolic oppositions of groups of young working-class men do parallel Thompson's own stress on crowd actions, rituals of protest and moments of exceptional popular excitement and communal mobilisation. The point is that we can only reach a proper assessment of the character of such moments - then and now - by placing them within a wider analysis of economic and social structures. This requires conceptual tools for a properly historicised analysis of capitalism's continued economic transformations and of the position of groups of men and women in relation to it and each other.

'Structuralism' and 'Humanism'

It is neither possible nor necessary to discuss structuralist emphases as fully as the previous problematics. This is partly for pragmatic reasons: the range of structuralist writing on matters that might be judged relevant is immense. An adequate account would have to include work as different as the two quite distinct moments in Althusser's project (the 'theoretician' phase as well as subsequent self-criticisms), elements in French structuralist anthropology, those (diverse) tendencies summed up in the terms 'semiology' (the science of signs or of signification), the historical analysis of discursive practices in the work of Michel Foucault, and, perhaps, on a outer 'structuralist' limit, French historical traditions, especially the treatment of popular 'mentalite' by the Annales historians. The solution adopted here is to concentrate on Althusser's central and symptomatic contribution. In general, however, structuralist contributions are more important for their critical edge than for what they produce as alternative accounts. They have already

informed our critique of other positions. In any very direct sense, 'structuralism' has little to contribute to an account of 'working-class culture'. This is not an object recognisable within this problematic. Structuralist theories push into the background the association between culture (or particular ideologies) and class and focus instead on the relation between ideology, as a general feature of historical societies, and mode of production as their determining base. In general, this tendency opposes what is termed a 'class-reductionist' view of culture-ideology. The main purposes of this section are, then, to recapitulate, briefly, some of the elements we take from a structuralist critique of other positions, and to identify the points where structuralism actually falls behind earlier achievements.

Althusser's project was formed under general conditions similar to those that faced the English New Left, but in a society that offered very different intellectual and political materials.⁸¹ It, too, was a response to the crisis of the social-democratic and communist left in Western Europe in the 1950s and early 1960s. The writing of For Marx and Reading Capital was exactly contemporaneous with the 'culturalist break'. The search for solutions was also conducted within a national tradition in which Marxism was a weak presence, weaker, perhaps, than in England. The elements that were drawn on in the construction of structuralist theory were, likewise, diverse. The chief antagonists were, once more, the Cold War critics: the task to vindicate Marxism, this time as a 'science', against contemporary calumnators and past corruptions. The chief targets within the traditions were, again, 'economism' and 'Stalinism'. Similar situations beget similar solutions. Both the English New Left and the Althusserians took non-economic questions as their central concerns, supplying 'absences' in an existing Marxism: the stress on 'culture' was paralleled by the absorption in questions of 'science' and 'ideology', initially with a strongly epistemological emphasis, latterly with a more general concern with the formation of subjectivities. Similar solutions also begat similar problems: notably in the whole area of the relation between ideology and non-ideological relations.

In polemics between the two traditions these similarities are often forgotten. The differences, however, are also very marked. We might best grasp them by noting one founding divergence: while the English New Left took dominant post-1956 developments in Marxist theory as a source of inspiration, Althusserianism was formed in resolute hostility to them. In the early 1960s, when writing his critique of Williams, Edward Thompson was mulling over 'alienation' and 'the subject-object antitheses', reading early Marx, especially the 1844 Manuscripts, searching Capital for its most 'humanist' moments and eagerly awaiting the publication of works by George Lichthem and C. Wright Mills.⁸² The new history was helped on its way by the discovery of a Marx whose problematic pre-dated that of The Manifesto and the encounter with the English working class. Althusser's Marxism was formed against these very tendencies. Perhaps this reflected the greater pull of the communist political presence in France compared with the situation of the English 'rebels' and the American Marxists; but it also grew from the desire to establish Marxism as a science, Althusser's most powerful lesson from the emasculation of the intellectuals in the struggles of the day. So Althusser and his colleagues, hostile to 'humanism' and the Hegelian 'taint', returned to Marx in his most 'scientific' mood, in the 'mature' works, especially Capital. They constructed from Marx's greatest work a thorough-going critique of the Marxisms of the moment. So it happened that the Althusserian critique was formed in a double movement: opposition to economism and Stalinism but also to the commoner forms of the 'liberation' of the intellectuals. Indeed, a common intellectual anatomy was discerned in these two opponents: economism and humanism were both understood as forms of essentialism; Stalinism was understood as a combination of economism and humanism.⁸³

Many of the strengths of the position derive from this double movement. We might quote two passages that sum up, respectively, the critiques of humanism and economism, and illustrate some basic emphases. Both are taken from Essays in Self Criticism

a summation of the position without, it may be thought, many of its earlier difficulties.

1. Against humanism:

Marx shows that what in the first instance determines a social formation... is not any chimerical human essence, or human nature, nor man, nor even 'men', but a relation the production relation, which is inseparable from the Base, the infrastructure. And, in opposition to all humanist idealism, Marx shows that this relation is not a relation between men, a relation between persons, nor an intersubjective or psychological or anthropological relation, but a double relation: a relation between groups of men concerning the relation between groups of men and things, the means of production... Naturally human individuals are parties to this relation, therefore active, but first of all in so far as they are held within it... If you do not submit the individual concrete determinations of proletarians and capitalists, their 'liberty' or their personality to a theoretical 'reduction' (i.e. an abstraction RJ), then you will understand nothing of the terrible practical 'reduction' to which the capitalist production relation submits individuals, which treats them only as bearers of economic functions and nothing else.

2. Against economism:

The capitalist social formation, indeed, cannot be reduced to the capitalist production relation alone, therefore to its infrastructure. Class exploitation cannot continue... without the aid of the superstructure, without the legal-political and ideological relations, which in the last instance are determined by the production relation... These relations too treat concrete human individuals as 'bearers' of relations, as 'supports' of functions, to which men are only parties because they are held within them... But all these relations determine and brand men in their flesh and blood just as the production relation does.

Many of the emphases which have informed our critique so far are stated more generally in these passages: the stress on 'relations' and the abstractions of certain kinds of relations from the social formation as a whole producing the Althusserian 'instances' - economic, political-juridical, ideological. Each of these kinds of relation are held to have their own effects on historical outcomes, though the economic, the capitalist 'production relation' retains an

over-arching determination on the forms of struggles between classes. Though the base-superstructure metaphor is retained, the irreducibility, 'effectivity', even 'materiality' of ideology is repeatedly emphasized: No mere superstructure.⁸⁶ Ideology is so far from being dispensable that it is the medium in which people, in all societies, live their conditions of existence, experience their world. If certain conditions of this kind are not met, on this 'level', societies, including capitalist societies, will cease to reproduce themselves.⁸⁷ It follows (it should follow - unfortunately it does not always in Althusser's texts) that ideology is an important and necessary site of political struggles, that there is, indeed, a class struggle in ideology.

There is much to say about weaknesses in this way of thinking, but it is important first to stress the advances. As a 'theoretical' intervention, as a criticism of other tendencies at a high level of generality, these 'protocols' retain an enormous force. Paradoxically, in view of the degree of abstraction and the fundamental epistemological difficulties, they represent an advance for concrete historical analysis, chiefly by removing earlier obstructions. It becomes possible to think about a materialist history which is not organised around some unfolding 'essence', whether this is the progress of productive forces, the deepening of alienation or even a simplified view of the class struggle as a predetermined battle between two composite historical agents, to the force of which every institution or element of culture must equally and synchronically bend. In other words 'social formations' (historical societies) can be thought with a complexity that approximates to the complications of the historian's sources and of the practices they reveal. It is this step, from essential to complex unity, that contributes most to historical practice.

More pragmatically, the Althusserian 'protocols' (we had better say 'reminders') warn against tendencies we should strive to avoid. They lead us to ask, clearly, whether we are slipping back into a neglect of the cultural-ideological, or are so obsessed with literature, artistic production or human creativity in general

that we forget the material conditions from which such creativity is never free. They help us to avoid the conflation of the culture problematic and the reductionism of 'consciousness'.

No Supercession: Problems with 'Structuralism'

The relation between structuralism and earlier problematics is not, however, one of supercession. The sharpest way to demonstrate this is to focus on features that debar it as a basis of alternative accounts. There are three important aspects here: the inhibitions to concrete analysis created by structuralism's major absence - a developed epistemology of historical research; a tendency to functionalist portrayals of the operation of ideological social relations; an alternative tendency to produce accounts of ideology, 'discourse' or 'representation' in which what began as a rational abstraction becomes a complete autonomy. We might call this tendency 'the autonomisation of instances'.

Out of a particular French philosophical tradition, Althusser and his co-workers derived a view of Marx's contribution to knowledge. This 'philosophical' reading was not limited to the discussion of intellectual procedures - indeed, the characteristically philosophical contribution was pursued rather incompletely. Reading Capital pronounced too on the character and substance of historical materialism. It presented a philosophy with decidedly un-philosophical ambitions - no mere help-meet to 'science' but a fully-fledged theoretical sociology in philosophical disguise, inheritor not of Literature nor yet of History but of Philosophy as the Great Tradition!

This philosopher's reading was, in fact, very selective.⁸⁸ It effected a radical simplification of Marx's results and a truncation of his procedures. Simplification is best seen in Balibar's part III of Reading Capital. Here Marx's extended three-volume definition of the capitalist mode of production is reduced to some formularies about the invariant elements of modes of production in general, their variant modes of combination, and an account of 'transition' (best compared with the richness of Maurice Dobbs') in terms of the formal principle of non-correspondence.⁸⁹ There is

no serious consideration here of Marx's 'laws' of accumulation, the existence of counter-vailing tendencies, the possibilities of capitalist 'solutions' to crises and to the declining rate of profit, and the forms of the reproductive circuits - all of which constitute the substance of the description of the capitalist mode. This inattention to the detail of Marx's economic analysis parallels the culturalist absence and has, as we shall see, not dissimilar results.

Marx's procedures are similarly treated, Marxist science, the opening of 'the continent of history' is held to have occurred through a practice which had as its object previous problematics, especially that of political economy. It follows that development within Marxism may occur through critical commentary upon Marx's own categories: the raising of these to full theoretical status, the supplying of silences, the making explicit or uniform implicit new problematics. The value of this theoretical labour has already been acknowledged, along with the need to take Marx's own texts and the work of other historians as its object. But this theoretical enterprise by no means exhausts the whole circuit of knowledge. It by no means describes the whole of Marx's best practice. It says nothing of research, of the stages in inquiry which Marx described as 'appropriating the material in detail' and analysing its forms of development and their inner connection.⁹⁰ It deals in part with the character of abstractions, but hypostasizes 'the concept' as finished knowledge. In particular Marx's own concern with the rush and muddle of observable phenomena is lost in the objections to 'empiricism':

I should under no circumstances have published the second volume before the present English industrial crisis had reached its climax. The phenomena are at this time singular, in many respects different from what they were in the past.... It is therefore necessary to watch the present course of things until their maturity before you can 'consume' them 'productively', I mean 'theoretically'.⁹¹

Althusser is right to argue for a non-empiricist mode of working and his texts pose important questions. Yet Reading Capital is singularly devoid of solutions. The problems, at the end of

part I, are simply left in suspension.⁹²

Yet this absence - the connection between the investigation of specific situations (the 'English crisis' of 1879) and the development of more general categories (the theoretical consumption) - is the really damaging feature of the Althusserian epistemology. Around this lack, a whole history of post-Althusserian epistemological agonies could be written.⁹³ In the absence of a model of research, a 'vulgar Althusserianism' becomes a mirror image of the empiricism of the historians. Althusserianism renders 'the appropriation of the real in thought' peculiarly difficult by stressing only one side of Marx's epistemology - the 'rationalist' side, the emphasis on the distinctiveness of thought. Culturalist epistemologies stress only the other side - the 'materialist premise' which insists that these categories always express social relations. It 'forgets' that thought does indeed have its own rules, that it proceeds by abstraction. Each represents aspects of Marx's best practice whose organic relation in Capital and elsewhere, we are only beginning to understand. At its worst, then, Althusserianism of the theoreticist period does become an 'idealism', the characteristic ideology of the intellectuals. It is easy to see its origin in the protest against the over-politicisation of knowledge in an earlier communist politics.⁹⁴

One consequence of the particular form of abstractness which is a feature of Althusserian philosophy is the failure to realise a theoretical promise in the production of specific histories. For this requires categories - fresh abstractions - at a lower level of generality than those of the abstract social formation. We cannot hope to grasp actual societies only in terms of the dominant mode of production and its ideological and political conditions. We encounter immediately the problem of 'survivals', of un-thought relations that can only be grasped by historical research.⁹⁵ And if we attempt to bridge this gulf by simple extensions of Althusser's insights, we risk further failings: especially the use of simplified functionalist models and a neglect of the specificities of economic relations. It is to these failings we may now turn.

Althusser's essay on Ideological State Apparatuses is the classic site of these difficulties. The essay is a series of 'notes' on the part played by ideology and the state in the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. Potentially, this essay is of great value not least to our object 'working class culture'. We might expect it to deliver an account of the forms of class struggle in ideology: the way in which capital and the agencies of the capitalist state seek to secure the reproduction of a working class in a form appropriate to the requirements of accumulation and the wave in which, on the basis of their own economic condition of existence, proletarians struggle against this process. We might expect Althusser to have built upon Marx's own account of reproduction, adding a characteristic emphasis on cultural-ideological forms.⁹⁶ For in historical reality the working class is never simply reproduced as a 'naked' proletariat, pure bearers of the capital relations. Labour is always reproduced with historically specific habits and 'needs' and within a social and cultural world whose character is never exhausted by the functional requirements of capital.

This essay has been exhaustively criticised and none of the points made here are new.⁹⁷ We can therefore, be very brief, recapitulating criticisms germane to our purpose. The essay represents 'reproduction' which, in Marx is a necessary contradictory and antagonistic process, as the functional necessity of a system. Rather than being a process in which the state intervenes in the primary contradictions of economic relations, reproduction is a function performed by ideology for capital through the state. The whole sphere of the ideological - the very processes by which consciousness and subjectivities are formed - is subsumed within this function. Ideology-in-general - the natural culture-bound state of man - is conflated with ideology in another of its meanings, the specific conditions of a cultural kind that prepare labourers and others for the places in the hierarchical division of labour. What is correctly understood as a condition or a contingency becomes, in the course of the argument, a continuously achieved outcome. Dominant ideology, organised especially through apparatuses like schools, works with all the certainty usually ascribed

to natural or biological processes. We are returned to a very familiar model of one-dimensional control in which all sense of struggle or contradiction is lost. Althusser's account resembles nothing more than those (unrealised), bourgeois visions of the perfect worker which re-occur across the capitalist epoch, whether images of the sober and prudent aristocrat of labour or those soon-to-be employed young men and women, complete with aptitudes, 'employability' and 'social and life skills' who are the object of the Manpower Services Commission. And all this is achieved, apparently, by and through ideology: no hint of the force of economic relations themselves which in Marx's own account (and an unemployed future) provide the main disciplines. In general, the over-riding concern with outcomes - reproduction - suppresses the fact that these conditions have continually to be won - or lost - in particular conflicts and struggles. Some of these dimensions are supplied by Althusser in a later postscript, but this self-criticism is of a very radical kind, which actually demands a recasting of the argument. The sense in which this falls behind existing accounts might be seen in a comparison with Edward Thompson's 'Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', a history of the construction of some of the conditions which the ISA essay takes for granted - and eternalises.⁹⁸

Conclusions: Elements of a Theory of Working Class Culture

We end by presenting three main arguments. These are offered, not as a finished theory of working-class culture but as indications of how to work towards more adequate accounts. Any fully developed theory, a reconstruction of Marx's original problematic for instance, could not rest on theoretical clarification alone, only on research and fresh abstractions.⁹⁹

First we want to argue a case about the nature and rationality of culture-ideology as an abstraction. This involves a distancing from several positions discussed in this essay (and several more not discussed): from the refusal to abstract at all (Williams); from the tendency to regard culture-ideology or the ideological 'instance'

as a concrete set of institutions or apparatuses (some readings of the ISA essay); and from all partial or trivialising conceptions of culture (e.g. its identification with 'leisure pursuits'.)

Second, we suggest that there is a need to differentiate moments or aspects of cultural-ideological processes. The complexity of this instance cannot be grasped through one term of analysis only, whether culture or ideology. One symptom of this is the way each term becomes overburdened with meanings, as if massive terrain could be encompassed by a tiny word. One useful move here is to differentiate the two major terms in use - culture and ideology - and to attempt to define what is specific to each and how cultural-ideological processes might be seen as a unity.

Third, we shall return to the issue of working class culture primarily as an example of how the relation culture to class may be re-thought in the light of earlier discussions.

It is clear from the earlier discussion that the character of the cultural-ideological as such remains persistently difficult to grasp. Culture expands infinitely, a slide indexed by 'whole way of life' or 'constitutive social process'. But there are also problems with 'ideology', whose meanings accumulate through successive usages: ideology as false or inadequate knowledge and as opposed to 'science'; ideology as an instance - a set of practices which occur in all social formations; ideology as a site of conditions which must be met if capitalism as a system is to continue; ideology as a trans-historical ever-present concomitant of human existence, the medium in which men and women live their conditions of existence - 'the representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'. Althusser's insistence that 'ideology has a material existence' parallels the slide of 'whole way of life'.¹⁰⁰ In the ISA essay ideology as an instance in the social formation seems to be identified with particular institutions or sites, with ideological state apparatuses, especially the family and the school. These different uses are, at the least, very confusing.

One solution is to distinguish very much more sharply between the notion of 'level' or 'instance' and the notion of 'apparatus', 'institution', 'site' or 'sphere' of social relations. The two ideas are different forms of abstraction: the abstraction of instances focuses on practices of a similar kind that occur throughout the whole society and in different concrete locations; the notion of 'site' or 'apparatus' tries to grasp what is specific to a particular sphere or set of institutions - schools, family, the factory. To conflate these two forms of analysis and especially to understand 'instance' in terms of a set of concrete institutions is a serious vulgarisation. It is vulnerable to Williams' strictures on the idealist tendency to make analytic distinctions into things.¹⁰¹

We understand the notion of 'ideology' to be an abstraction of the first rather than of the second kind. It does not denote specific institutional sites but practices or moments in social processes that have a distinctive character. It involves particular kinds of relations and movements. Social formations or processes may be looked at from this aspect, with this most closely in focus.

What then is specific to the ideological-cultural aspect? It is important to insist, in a thoroughly 'orthodox' way, on the specifically mental (as opposed to 'material') character of these relations - their equivalence to Marx's general category of 'consciousness' (not the consciousness of class but consciousness-in-general as used by Marx in *The German Ideology*). Consciousness, in this sense, is a necessary but 'simple' abstraction, a feature of human beings as such, evident in all history. Just as men and women have always won a living from nature and sustained their material existence, so also they 'possess consciousness'.¹⁰² This, indeed, is a specific feature of human labour, 'an exclusively human characteristic'. It distinguishes architect and bee.

At the end of every labour process, a result emerges that had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only affects a change of forms in the materials of nature; he also realises his own purpose in these materials. 103

The characteristic feature of the ideological-cultural instance, then, is the production of forms of consciousness - ideas, feelings, desires, moral preferences, forms of subjectivity. This is fully recognised in Thompson's stress on 'values' and in the Althusserian usage 'imaginary'. It is not so much a question that schools or families are ideology, more than they are sites where ideologies are produced in the form of subjectivities.

All this is to say, of course, that there is no separate institutional area of social life in which forms of consciousness arise: mentalities and subjectivities are formed and expressed in every sphere of existence. Subjectivities are very powerfully formed, as Paul Willis argues, in processes of economic production. Economic practices - production and consumption - have a cultural aspect, rest on cultural conditions. Concrete political processes similarly always involve an ideological moment. As Foucault puts it, writing of punishment:

We should admit rather that power produces knowledge ...; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. 104

Beliefs and preferences are formed and expressed in practices which are not commonly understood as involving signification or representation. Perhaps they operate more powerfully there than in practices evidently organised for the production of consciousness: schools, media, art. Yet even these cases show the dangers of collapsing institutions and instances, for a proper concrete analysis of schools or media would involve examination of economic and political conditions as well as ideological effects. The notion of 'instance' in other words is

theoretical in the strongest possible sense: it is a means for analysing concrete situations not a description of a chunk of concrete experience itself. Just as Marx abstracted from a living historical whole those relations most directly implicated in the production of material life (i.e. economic social relations) and left aside concrete human persons in favour of 'personifications of economic categories', 105 so a similar abstraction can be made of those relations most implicated in the production of specific forms of consciousness. Relations having been understood in this way, we may then return to actual history 'but this time not as a chaotic notion of an integral whole, but as a rich aggregate of many determinations and relations'. 106

The distance between this conception of culture - ideology and trivialising ones will by now be clear. Such a conception has nothing in common with 'culture' as a residuum when other practices - work and politics - have been subtracted, that is with culture-as-leisure. Nor is it in any way similar to 'culture' as limited to certain specialised activities - writing, reading, consuming films or playing football.

There is an under-developed tendency in both structuralist and culturalist accounts to make some distinctions between levels or moments in the cultural-ideological.¹⁰⁷ Althusser has distinguished between 'theoretical' and 'non-theoretical' ideologies, or 'theoretical' and 'practical' ideologies.¹⁰⁸ More interestingly, there is the distinction, implicit in the description of ideology-in-general, between a lived relation to real relations (what culturalism would call 'experience') and the representation of that lived relation. This distinction implies the need to understand both the 'lived relation' itself and the representation of it in ideology. There are not dissimilar distinctions in the culturalist tradition. In Thompson's history, for example, several terms other than culture and consciousness are in play, especially 'values' or 'value systems' and 'ideology'. Value system seems to describe cultural or ideological elements in their most organic relation to a mode of production; ideology, by contrast, has classic German Ideology

connotations of ideas and idealism.¹⁰⁹ In practice, however, these distinctions are not rigorously used and there is a tendency in the histories for theoretical problems to be solved by a mixture of moral evaluation and political choice: utilitarianism, methodism, political economy, Evangelicalism (each of which may be 'lived' by middle-class people) are 'ideology'; working class radicalism is 'culture' or 'consciousness'.¹¹⁰

The most developed distinctions of these kinds are, however, to be found in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks. Gramsci employs three key terms of analysis where culturalism and structuralism mainly employ one. 'Common sense' refers to the 'lived' culture of a particular class or social group understood as a complex, located whole. It is the 'philosopher' in every one, carried in language 'good sense' or 'folklore'. It has many of the connotations of 'culture' in the English usage.¹¹¹ 'Philosophy' (occasionally ideology) on the other hand, refers to some organised set of conceptions produced by intellectuals (those with the function of philosophers) and having a more or less 'organic' relation to social classes and 'the necessities of production'. Ideologies, if 'organic', are understood as essentially active and transformative, transformative, especially, of 'common sense'.¹¹² 'Hegemony', Gramsci's third major term, indicates the state of play, as it were, between the whole complex of class-based 'educative' agencies and ideologies on the one hand, and the common sense or lived culture of the masses on the other. It concerns the extent and the modes by which 'common sense' is made to conform to 'the necessities of production' and to the construction of 'consent' and a political order. Gramsci builds on Marx's realisation of the importance of the cultural conditions of capitalist production - all the moral and subjective aspects of labour power for example¹¹³ - by examining the processes in which such conditions are organised and fought over politically. 'Hegemony' is, in effect, Althusser's 'reproduction', but a reproduction without the functionalism. It incorporates, indeed, a view of the relation between structure and superstructure that is distinctive and, perhaps, unique. The normal state of this relation is far from

a meeting of functional requirements: it is a state of massive disjunctions and unevenness. Gramsci describes, in other words, the normality of 'survivals', concrete features of a society that cannot be grasped as the dominant mode of production and its conditions of existence.¹¹⁴ Hegemony describes the processes by which some greater conformity is sought. 'Reproduction' is, then, a hard and constantly-resisted labour on very obstinate materials indeed.

These ideas are in a 'practical state' in Gramsci's writing. It was indeed the connection with concrete analysis that produced the theorisations in the first place. They are peculiarly pertinent for today. In what follows we indicate some key moments in the study of culture/ideology drawing heavily on Gramsci's categories.

1. The Importance of 'Culture'

It is important to retain 'culture' as a category of analysis. By culture is understood the 'common sense' or 'way of life' of a particular class, group or social category, the complex of ideologies that are actually adopted as moral preferences or principles of life. To insist on this usage, is to insist on the complex recreation of ideological effects as a moment of the analysis of consciousness. The effects of a particular ideological work or aspect of hegemony can only be understood in relation to attitudes and beliefs that are already 'lived'. Ideologies never address ('interpellate') a 'naked' subject.¹¹⁵ Concrete social individuals are always-already constructed as culturally class-ed and sex-ed agents, already have a complexly formed subjectivity. Outside some structuralist texts, the 'lonely hour' of the unitary, primary, primordial and cultureless interpellation 'never comes'. Ideologies always work upon a ground: that ground is culture. To insist on this is also to insist on 'history' and to enter a protest against large parts of the Marxist tradition for its neglect of the ground of its own political practice too.

The retention of elements of a cultural analysis is also

important for checking tendencies to functionalism. It is genuinely difficult to disengage the notion of ideology from a mode-of-production analysis in which all ideologies are seen as functionally related to the conditions of production. There are ideological conditions for a given mode; but these by no means exhaust the whole sphere of the cultural-ideological in any concrete society. There are cultural elements to which capitalism is relatively indifferent and many which it has great difficulty in changing and which remain massively and residually present. Similarly it is not easy to think the forms of cultural resistance to capitalism and to its particular re-structuring of patriarchy, within this frame of reference. Cultural analysis, especially in the form adopted by Edward Thompson may attach cultural struggles too closely to class, but guarantees thereby that struggles within culture will not be ignored.

The second major check to functionalism is the culturalist insistence, derived from the heart of the culture tradition, on the production of self or self-making. We have already noted the dangers of a theoretical humanism that ignores the conditions under which 'choices' are made, moral preferences formed. But to neglect the moment of self-creation, of the affirmation of belief or of the giving of consent would, once more, return us to 'pure mechanicity'. It is clear that one specific feature of processes within consciousness is exactly this 'cultural' moment. It is what distinguishes the force of ideological social relations from relations of political coercion or economic necessity. Outcomes in ideology or consciousness are not determined in the same kind of way as in economic or political relations.

2. The Heterogeneity of Cultures

It is an error, certainly in modern capitalist conditions, to view working class culture as 'all of a piece'. The degree of homogeneity (and of distinctiveness) is undoubtedly historically variable. It is probable that working-class culture from the 1880s to the 1930s was more homogeneous and distinct than in any period before or after. Yet, all notions of cultures as coherent value systems tend

to mislead; Gramsci's stress on the radical heterogeneity of (even) peasant culture is a better general guide.¹¹⁶ We have already noted many of the forms of internal difference: those organised around geographical unevenness and the social and sexual divisions of labour, and the divisions into sites or spheres of existence, products of ideological work, economic development, and legally-enforced institutional separations. We have noted too specific forms of hierarchisation (e.g. 'aristocracy of labour'; the de-politicisation of the role of women) that are secured on top of these-divisions. If there are features in the position of the 'labourer' that are common to a whole working class, there are a myriad features that are not. These may always become objects of political practices seeking greater division or a unity. It follows that there can be no simple or 'expressive' relation between economic classes and cultural forms, and that we should start any such analysis by looking for contradictions, taboos, displacements in a culture as well as unities. This is one way of breaking from the bad 'romantic' side of 'cultural studies'. Another very important way is to recognise the gender-specific elements in any class culture and the ways in which the subordination of girls and women is reproduced, in part, within the culture itself.

3. The Place of the Analysis of Ideologies

More generally, the heterogeneity of a lived culture is an index of the effects of hegemony. One classic form of heterogeneity is that described by Gramsci thus:

The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness); one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. 117

Gramsci goes on to argue that such 'verbal' conceptions have their consequences, especially in inducing passivity by contradicting a more 'lived' impulse. The political problem, for Gramsci, is to develop critical forms of theoretical consciousness that actually engage with practical activity, develop it and give it a sense of its own historicity, and its ability to change the world.

Cultural contradictions of this kind are the product in part of ideological work. Against the humanist view of 'self-making' it is important to stress that what is affirmed or assented to has its own particular origin and history. The model of culture as a working up of 'experience' lacks one vital element - the instruments of labour themselves, in this case the conceptions, categories and preferences already present. As we have seen 'experience' as a term conflates the raw materials (the way, especially, in which capitalist economic relations impinge on human beings) with the mental means of their representation (the existing cultural repertoire). It is by supplying conceptions where none exist (or merely aiding in the reproduction of old) that ideology operates on culture to hold it below the level of 'critical', 'historical' or 'hegemonic' understanding.

There is an important role, then, for the analysis of ideologies in a developed cultural studies. These may take altogether more abstracted forms than the study of a class culture. In the case of culture the most 'lived' conceptions are closely tied into practical activity; it is necessary to describe the physicality of labour in order to grasp its cultural significance. It is possible on the other hand to examine ideologies in terms of 'fields' and 'discourses' which, in their own internal structures, position or address (ideal) 'subjects'. This, perhaps, is the predominant form of ideology - analysis within the structuralist tradition, resembling, more than anything, a literary model of investigation that treats ideologies as a 'text'.¹¹⁸ This form of analysis has an important part to play in discerning the logics and internally-generated pressures of particular ideologies or ideological fields; but we will still need to know the effects of such discourses on actual already-

acculturated subjects. Ideology-analysis of this kind, in other words, does not replace, though it should certainly supplement, a more 'historical' analysis of lived cultures. Without this the origins and effects of ideologies, in the common sense of classes and the labour of intellectuals, will remain obscure.

4. Culture and Class

We have noted the structuralist tendency to detach the analysis of ideologies from classes and class struggle, and the value of this as a critique of expressive and economistic formulations. The relation between the economic conditions of existence of a particular class and its culture is a problematic one. Yet it is absurd to believe that there is no relation between ideological and political forms and economic classes.

There are two main ways of understanding this connection for working class culture. The first concerns the material conditions of the class itself and the sense that is made of these. The second concerns the particular relation to capital and capital's need continuously to transform the cultural conditions of labour.

Particular economic relations have a particular salience for particular classes. The economic form of the wage is, for example, a salient relation for the proletarian, just as the rate of profit has a special importance for the capitalist. Such relations become a focus for more symbolic processes; they are the raw material of culture. The sense that is made of, say, dependence on capital, the probability of unemployment, or relative poverty depends, of course, on the conceptions that are available or may be worked up from existing class practices. There is nothing in these relations themselves that produces a particular form of understanding of them, no automatic relay between class and class consciousness. Yet to have any purchase on the culture of a class, new ideologies must address salient relations of this kind. It is only in that way that ideologies, including socialism, can become principles of life. The conditions of existence of classes profoundly shape class cultures, less by specifying 'interests' more by supplying a

kind of agenda with which the culture must deal. It is a matter of historical record that working class culture has been built around the task of making fundamentally punishing conditions more inhabitable.

We must end, however, by looking at this process from the viewpoint of capital. Though this is stressed, by Althusser, to functionalist excess, capital does have certain requirements in relation to the reproduction of labour power.¹¹⁹ Though working-class culture cannot be seen as having a simple functional relation to capital's needs, capital certainly has a stake in the forms of working class culture. Minimally, it is a stake in labour's availability, willingness to labour under conditions rational for the production of surplus, and a suitable level of skill and aptitude. More particular conditions require historical specification, but from this viewpoint 'working class culture' is the form in which labour is reproduced. In this respect capitalism is far from being a self-policing system; far from labour continually being reproduced in appropriate forms, these processes require continual management. Moreover, capital's requirements are frequently themselves undergoing transformation. This process of 'reproduction', then, is always a contested transformation. Working class culture is formed in the struggle between capital's demand for particular forms of labour power and the search for a secure location within this relation of dependency. The outcome of such necessary struggles depends upon what ideological and political forces are in play, and, ultimately, upon the existence of socialist organisation with an integral relation to proletarian conditions and working-class cultural forms.

Notes

- * This essay is based in part on a paper given at the British Sociological Conference on Culture (1978) but has benefitted since from criticism from Edward Thompson, Keith MacLelland, Philip Corrigan and Stuart Hall and from discussions in the CCCS History Group. I have also been greatly helped by discussions with John Clarke, author of the companion piece which ends this volume.
1. Althusser & Balibar, Reading Capital, esp. pp. 13-30
 2. I am especially grateful to Keith MacLelland for arguing this point with great force.
 3. Essays in Self Criticism, p.124.
 4. See, for example, Rosalind Coward, 'Class, Culture and the Social Formation' and the response from Ian Chambers et al., Screen (Spring 1977 & Winter 1977-8).
 5. For a more rigorous exposition of a similar view see Ernesto Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, New Left Books, 1977, esp. pp. 1-13.
 6. Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Engels and the Genesis of Marxism', NLR, 106, p.103.
 7. Martin Nicolaus, 'Hegelian Choreography and the Capitalist Dialectic: Proletariat and Middle-class in Marx' in Studies on the Left, VII (1976), pp.22-49.
 8. Poverty of Philosophy in Marx & Engels, Collected Works, Lawrence and Wishart, 1976, vol. 6, p.211
 9. Manifesto of the Communist Party, loc. cit. p.490
 10. Stuart Hall, 'The "Political" and the "Economic" in Marx's Theory of Classes' in Alan Hunt (ed.), Class and Class Structure, Lawrence and Wishart, 1977, p.20.
 11. Similar sequences are portrayed in Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, Panther edn., 1969, pp.240 ff., in The Manifesto and in The Poverty of Philosophy.
 12. Engels, Condition, pp.243-54
 13. ibid., editor's introduction, p.10
 14. e.g. ibid., p.152.
 15. ibid., p.239
 16. Manifesto of the Communist Party, Collected Works, vol.6, pp. 495-6

17. Engels, Condition, p.39
18. For an elaboration of these points see Hall, op. cit. (note 10 above).
19. ibid., pp.39-50. See also Gwynn Williams, 'France 1848-1851', Open University (A 321 Units 5-8) 1976.
20. Marx, Surveys from Exile, Penguin, 1973, editor's introduction, p.9.
21. Nicolaus, op. cit. (note 7 above).
22. Most strikingly in the 'old mole' passage - Surveys from Exile, pp. 236-37. I am grateful to Greg McLennan for discussions about these elements in The Eighteenth Brumaire and other conjunctural texts.
23. For an interesting discussion of Gramsci's early economism see Bob Lumley, 'Gramsci's Writing on the State and Hegemony, 1916-35 - a Critical Analysis', CCCS Stencilled Paper, No.51 (1978). For a fuller contextualisation see G. Williams, Proletarian Order, Pluto Press, 1975.
24. 'The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx', Selected Works, Lawrence & Wishart, 1971, p.17.
25. 'The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism', Selected Works, p.21. For characteristic attacks on revisionism see 'The State and Revolution', loc. cit. pp.264-351
26. 'The Three Sources', Selected Works, p.24
27. See for example the stress on 'special bodies of armed men', 'the rapacious state power', the state as 'a special organisation of force' etc. in 'State and Revolution' and other Lenin texts. There is nothing surprising in this emphasis given the historical circumstances of 1911 to 1919! For interesting comparisons with Gramsci see Perry Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', NLR, 100, esp. pp.49-55.
28. 'Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism', Selected Works p.175.
29. This is a basic argument of What is to be Done; see also "A Talk with the Defenders of Economism", Selected Works, pp. 44-49.
30. ibid., p.47.
31. 'Party Organisation and Party Literature', Selected Works, pp.148-53.
32. Prison Notebooks, p.323

33. ibid., pp.196-7
34. See for example, Stalin's essay on 'The Foundations of Leninism'.
35. For a summary and critique of the debate see H.F. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist Theory of the Labour Aristocracy', Social History, vol3. No.1 (Jan.1978)
36. Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, Merlin Press, 1971
37. Examples of the first form of argument include John Foster, 'Imperialism and the Labour Aristocracy' in J.Skelley (ed) The General Strike, Lawrence and Wishart, 1976; examples of the second include John Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, Methuen, 1977, esp. Ch.7, and R.Q.Gray, The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh, Oxford University Press, 1976.
38. See the interesting criticism of common sense views of the corruption of leadership or bureaucracies in Tony Lane, The Union Makes Us Strong, Arrow, 1976.
39. Some of these points are made in relation to Capital in Hall, op. cit. (note 10 above).
40. For the character of Lukacs' early thought see Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Marxism of the Early Lukacs', NLR, 70, (Nov-Dec.1971).
41. Paradoxically Marx's distinction between 'sacred' (i.e. idealist) and 'profane' (i.e. materialist) categories and histories is made in the course of his dispute with Proudhon, the source too of Lukacs' founding definitions of class. See esp. Marx to P.V. Annenkov, 28 Dec. 1846, in Marx & Engels, Selected Letters, Progress Publishers, 1975, esp. p.31
42. History and Class Consciousness, p.51
43. 'We cannot really speak of class consciousness in the case of these classes (petty bourgeoisie and peasantry) ... for a full consciousness of their situation would reveal to them the hopelessness of their particularist strivings in the face of the inevitable course of events' ibid., p.61
44. Most of the essay 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' is concerned to establish these homologies.
45. ibid., esp. pp.197-8
46. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780 - 1950, Penguin, 1961, p.17

47. E.P. Thompson, William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary, Merlin Press, 1977 edn., p.791.
48. ibid., p.810
49. See esp. Perry Anderson 'Components of the National Culture' in Cockburn and Blackburn (ed.), Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action, Penguin, 1968, pp. 214-84 and Terry Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams', NLR 95, (Jan-Feb. 1976) esp. p.9.
50. For a development of this point see Richard Johnson, 'Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson and English Social Development', Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 9, esp. pp.25-26
51. E.P. Thompson, 'Review of the Long Revolution', NLR, (May-June & July-August 1961).
52. ibid., but see also Thompson, Morris, Chs. I & II and Part IV.
53. For the second see ibid., Ch. VII; for the first see The Making esp. pp.50-52, 162 & 415.
54. For these indications see, mainly, E.P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English' Socialist Register, 1965
55. The classic polemical text of this tendency was the volume edited by F.A. Hayek, as Capitalism and the Historians (1954) But see also the works of T.S. Ashton, W.W. Rostow and R.M. Hartwell. Latterly this enterprise has been extended to other periods, notably the 1930s.
56. For accounts of this period see the essays in Socialist Register, 1976; Thompson, 'Review of the Long Revolution' and Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, pp.1-4
57. Williams, The Long Revolution, esp. Ch.2; Marxism & Literature, Ch.1; Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, Fontana, 1976, pp.76-82
58. e.g. 'Interview with Edward Thompson', Radical History Review, vol. 3, No.4, p.23.
59. The fullest statement, from which these quotations are drawn is the preface to The Making.
60. Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics', p.9.
61. Williams, Culture & Society, p.289.
62. Making, esp. pp.195, 120, 10-11; 'Interview with Edward Thompson' pp.4-5; 'Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context', Midland History vol. 1, No.3 (Spring (1972) pp.41-55; 'Measuring Class Consciousness',

Times Higher Education Supplement, 8.3.1974 (Review of John Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution).

63. 'Interview with Edward Thompson', p.15
64. Marxism and Literature, pp.80-81.
65. Whigs and Hunters, pp.258-69
66. Marxism and Literature, Ch. on 'Base and Superstructure'.
67. 'Folklore, Anthropology and Social History', The Indian Historical Review, vol.III, No.2 (Jan.1978) p.262.
I am grateful to Edward Thompson for drawing my attention to this article.
68. The Long Revolution, p.136
69. Marxism and Literature, pp.81-82
70. ibid., Ch. on 'Productive Forces'.
71. 'Review of the Long Revolution'.
72. 'There is no alternative, from any socialist position, to recognition and emphasis of the massive historical and immediate experience of class domination and subordination, in all their different forms'. This option is stressed against 'the alternative language of co-operative shaping'. Marxism and Literature, p.112
73. Anthony Barnett, 'Raymond Williams and Marxism: A Rejoinder to Terry Eagleton', NLR, 99 (Sept-Oct 1976) p.56. Barnett's criticism of Williams closely parallels my own comments on Thompson in Johnson, McLennan & Schwarz, 'Economy, Culture and Concept'. Actually they apply most accurately to Williams. I now favour the more careful formulations about Thompson that follow below.
74. Culture and Society, pp.307-24 and c.f. the treatment of class 'ideals' in H.Perkin, Origins of Modern British Society.
75. For these formulations see 'Interview with Edward Thompson'; 'Review of the Long Revolution'; 'Folklore, Anthropology and Social History'.
76. ibid., p.265. This particular article contains many of the most interesting formulations on these questions, suggesting considerable movements in Thompson's position which are paralleled by the practice of Whigs and Hunters.

77. The following typifications are based on a reading of all of Thompson's published historical work - it is difficult to cite particular sources.
78. This point is argued at greater length for particular chapters in The Making in Johnson, McLennan and Schwarz, 'Economy, Culture and Concept'.
79. The Making, p.10
80. ibid., p.12
81. For Althusser's own account of the context of his project see 'To My English Readers' and 'Introduction: Today' in For Marx, Penguin, 1969.
82. All this can be seen in 'Review of the Long Revolution' (1961).
83. Essays in Self-Criticism, editor's introduction, esp.p.32.
84. ibid., pp.201-2.
85. ibid., pp.203-4.
86. For these formulations see esp. 'Contradiction and Over-Determination' in For Marx.
87. See esp. 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, New Left Books, 1971.
88. For the general character of the 'reading' see Althusser & Balibar, Reading Capital, pp.1-30.
89. See esp. the reductions involved in the very formal account of 'Elements of the Structure', esp. p.225.
90. Postface to the Second Edition of Capital, Capital, vol.I (Penguin edn.), p.102
91. Marx to Danielson, 10 April 1879; Selected Letters, p.296..
92. Reading Capital, p.69.
93. One post-Althusserian path can be traced through B.Hindess & P.Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975 and the same author's auto-critique - Mode of Production and Social Formation, Macmillan, 1977.
94. It is not possible to pursue these issues of method further here since this would take us even further away from 'working-class culture'. The comments here and in the section on 'culturalism' will, however, be developed in later CCCS publications.

95. This point is developed more fully in 'Histories of Culture: Theories of Ideology' in the BSA 1978 Conference volume.
96. The most important discussions of 'reproduction' in Capital include vol I, Ch. 23 'Simple Reproduction' and Appendix to vol I (Penguin), esp. pp.1060-65. For a brief reading of these and other aspects of Marx's treatment of reproduction see Johnson, McLennan and Schwarz, 'Economy, Culture and Concept' pp.40-41.
97. Criticisms of the essay include: P.Q. Hirst, 'Althusser and the Theory of Ideology', Economy and Society, vol. V, No.4; M. Erben & D. Gleeson, 'Education as Reproduction' in Young & Whitty (eds.), Society, State and Schooling, Falmer Press, 1977: Ideology and Consciousness, No.1 (1977)
98. E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', Past & Present, 38, (1967)
99. The main theoretical resource in what follows is Gramsci's Prison Notebooks and a return to those parts of Capital where Marx deals with the cultural conditions of production and with the problem of the relation between the 'phenomenal forms' of capitalist relations and the character of bourgeois ideologies. But there has already been, in this essay, quite enough of the exposition of positions, so the form of what follows is prescriptive or argumentative rather than expository. For the sources of many of these arguments see, however, the notes that follow.
100. Both quotations above are from the ISA essay.
101. Marxism and Literature, pp.80-81.
102. Marx & Engels, The German Ideology Part One (ed. C.J. Arthur), Lawrence & Wishart, 1970, p.50
103. Capital, vol. I, Penguin Edn., pp. 283-84.
104. Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Allen Lane, 1977, p.27
105. Capital, col. I, Penguin Edn., p.92. For an extremely telling elaboration of this point see Victor Molina, 'Notes on Marx and the Problem of Individuality', in CCCS, On Ideology, Hutchinson, 1977.
106. David McLellan, Marx's Grundrisse, Palidin, 1971, p.45 (from 'the 1857 Introduction').
107. This is in addition to any (useful) tendency to distinguish 'regions' or 'sub-ensembles' of ideologies, a contribution especially of Nicos Poulantzas.

108. e.g. Essays in Self Criticism, p.37, note 3.
109. See, especially, 'Review of the Long Revolution' and 'Folklore, Anthropology, and Social History'.
110. 'Folklore, Anthropology and Social History' marks an advance on this, but I think that in most of Thompson's work this is the characteristic solution.
111. See esp. Prison Notebooks, pp.323-43, 418-424.
112. See esp. ibid. pp.330-335, 375-77, 390-93, 404-5, 407-8 and the essay on 'The Intellectuals'. It is important to remember that Gramsci understood Marxism, 'the philosophy of praxis', also as a transformative ideology.
113. e.g. Capital, Vol. I, Penguin Edn., esp. pp. 275, 719-23, 615-17 & 620-21. The meat of Gramsci's view of hegemony is to be found in the notes on 'The Modern Prince' and 'State and Civil Society'.
114. This is especially plain in the notes on 'Americanism and Fordism'.
115. 'Interpellate' is taken from the ISA essay. For an interesting and historically-usable development see Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory.
116. Prison Notebooks, esp. pp.826, 333 & 419.
117. ibid., p.333
118. The classic case is the analysis of film in Screen, but there are elements of the 'reading of ideologies as a text' in Foucault's approach to discursive practices and in Laclau's treatment of specific ideologies. There is a problem in these approaches of remaining locked into the ideological forms themselves and inferring effects.
119. A fuller account should also consider capital's requirements in relation to consumption and the reproduction of the relations within which generational reproduction takes place. But for particular examples of these see the essay that follows.

This Stencilled Paper is one chapter from a CCCS/Hutchinson volume due to appear in July 1979: Richard Johnson, John Clarke and Chas Critcher (eds.), Working Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory. A list of contents of the book as a whole, and parts of the Preface to the book are included at the beginning of this paper to help readers to see how the arguments of this, the penultimate chapter, fits within the framework of the book as a whole.

I am grateful to Claire L'Enfant of Hutchinsons for permission to publish the chapter in this form.

Both the book and this chapter were written before the publication of E.P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory & Other Essays (Merlin Press, 1978) which deals with many of the issues here discussed. I am grateful to Edward Thompson, however, for his comments on earlier versions of parts of the argument, though I know major disagreements continue.

Richard Johnson
CCCS 1979

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Extracts from Preface

This book has an unusual form. It has many authors but aims at a somewhat greater unity than is usual in collections of this kind. It is best to begin by explaining how this comes about.

The book was first planned, in collaboration with the Hutchinson Publishing Group, as a collection of essays on working class culture by members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. It was to consist of work already produced or currently in progress, with, perhaps, an initial 'overview' of the field. In planning the volume, however, two facts became obvious. First, the Centre had produced relatively little work that directly followed up one of its founding texts - Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy; second, 'working class culture' had itself become much more difficult to define both because of social changes since 1957 and because of intense theoretical debate around the terms 'culture', 'consciousness' and 'ideology'. There were relevant studies however, some historical in manner, some the product of a qualitative, observational sociology. Moreover, the importance of the project remained, not least because for the period of the modern working class (in Britain from, say, 1850 or 1880) neither historical nor sociological work was very developed. One consequence, then, is that most of the pieces published here have been specially written for the collection. This is wholly the case with the critical or 'theoretical' essays in parts I and 3. Most of the case studies in part 2 existed in an earlier form, but all have been extensively re-written. All but one of the authors have worked at this Centre; and the work of Michael Blanch, the exception, was already known to the editors. It was possible, then, to plan a volume that was more than just a collection of essays, more than a set of individual contributions.

The resulting unity, however, remains much looser than in a single-authored, consecutively-written text. For reasons that are explored in the book, it would be difficult at this point in time to produce an adequate or definitive account of post-war working class culture, let alone a history of a longer duration. We emphasize, then, the 'studies' of our title. These are a set of related explorations of a common field - some predominantly critical and theoretical, some more substantive. In particular

we have not attempted to start from a common theoretical framework to be consistently elaborated in each essay. We start, rather, from problems and seek to work through them in different ways and on different materials. Thus the more theoretical essays are largely critical and clarificatory, not, until later in the book, prescriptive.

The first part of the book reviews some of the existing literature. It focusses on two main traditions of writing about the working class: a tradition of empirical sociology and a tradition of history. We have sought to understand these traditions in their own historical time, as an expression, importantly, of the dilemmas of certain groups of intellectuals faced with differing political possibilities and expectations. The first essay examines a cluster of works that belong to the same 'moment', the post-war debate about 'affluence' and its immediate aftermath. It ends, deliberately short of some newer sociologies, with the revival of Marxist analyses and the publication, in 1965, of Towards Socialism. The second essay looks at a different but related tradition of the historiography of the working class and of popular histories more generally. It deals with the origins of labour and social history from the 1880's onwards and with the new histories, distinctively cultural in emphasis, of the late 1950s and early 1960s. It ends with some attempt to define the dilemmas of history-writing in the 1970s, noting the relative weakness of studies of working class culture for the post-1850 period, and the complexity of contemporary theoretical debate. Certain ways of working through these difficulties are suggested, to be returned to later in the book.

Part II consists of a set of case studies. Though they do not share a common theoretical position, they represent attempts to work through difficulties in the process of research. In selecting or commissioning these pieces, we had two main considerations in mind. First we wanted to span the whole period of the existence of a working class in any identifiable sense, partly to correct the

a-historical character of many sociological accounts. This long working-class history is a unique feature of the British experience. We have, however, placed the emphasis on more recent times: two of the studies deal with the period before World War I, two with the period between the Wars, and two with post World War II developments. Similarly, we have tried to cover the most important spheres of working class life. Thus Richard Johnson's essay deals centrally with politics, political ideologies and education, Michael Blanch's and Pam Taylor's with aspects of 'youth', Paul Wild's and Chas Critcher's with recreational forms and their relation to capitalist business, Pam Taylor's and Paul Willis' with waged work and with domestic labour. It has not been possible to be comprehensive—we would have liked to have said more, for instance, about forms of the family and the cultural forms of sexuality, though Pam Taylor's and Paul Willis' essays more than touch on these questions. We would also have liked to include a major study of trade unionism as a cultural and political form in some attempt to re-think the central topics of a labour history. In general, however, we have deliberately sought a broad scope and wide coverage rather than the more usual concentration on a particular theme or period.

In part III we return to some of the dilemmas sketched in Part I. The first essay of this part considers three main ways in which working class culture may be conceptualised: through the problematics of 'consciousness', 'culture' and 'ideology'. Arguing that each of these paradigms bear the stamp of the moment of their formation, we examine the strengths and weaknesses of each. We point to some elements of a more developed way of thinking about working class culture, appropriate to present conditions. In the concluding essay of the book, we provide some pointers, based upon a theoretical reading of aspects of current research, towards a history of the post-war working class.

We expect the book to be used in different ways by different kinds of readers. But we have sought, in general, to break with or to re-form a number of separations of this kind: between 'past' and 'present', between 'history' and 'sociology', between the empirical and theoretical, between the study of cultural and the not-cultural-at-all. In particular, we have sought to make theoretical discussion more aware of its own history and make historical (or 'concrete') studies more aware of theoretical debts and dependencies. Hence our sub-title - 'history' and 'theory'.