

Past and present Unto this last
the moral-aesthetics/aesthetic-morality
vortex spiraling out a diapostolic
succession of cultural history theories

Schlegel Coleridge Schelling Carlyle Arnold
Ruskin Owen Babeuf Kropotkin Morris
not all of them believing that by fighting
the battle for Culture before they had fought the wars

for bread and health would avert class war
or that workmen's courses in what was said to be
the very best that had been thought and known
— substituting abolition of class

for abolition of class society —
would satisfy them with lower middle status,
but all denouncing the moral turpitude
of nations and individuals who hold that

supply-and-demand trumps all obligations
all relationships and that the sole
connection of man with man is cash-payment
the heart and soul of industrial capitalism;

bringing against the claims of determinism
and self-interest the claims of human
relations as a whole, freedom of imagination,
respect for the organism of the inner life

supremacy of will over causation,
opposing to promises of universal
progress history showing no such thing
but rather the changelessness of the human heart.

What Engels and Marx called *feudal socialism*:
Smith's treatise on moral sentiment
a throwback, Burke's reactionary
The People a pre-industrial nostalgia

society a continuity
of activities an organic participation —
interrelationships interdependence —
constituted not by contract or writ

but ingrained wishes and aspirations
the system of habits and ways of acting and believing
of a people defined by their history together,
comprising the highest orderly life

a social totality which art — its essence —
embodies expresses presents represents
as a critique of alienation or
exemplary display of creative power

or both, a radical aestheticizing
of history the ideal reconciliation
of subject and object necessity and freedom
individual and society

theory and practice a primitive
utopianism claimed by the center and the right,
culture no longer a personal acquisition
the State the primary agent of human perfection.

2

White-hot moral indignation
Old Testament kirkly wrath
perverse ejaculatory arrogant
repetitive style pretentious mysticism

yet protested some friends he really was
the most tenderhearted of men his verbal
ferocity giving a false impression
his savagery but an affectation gone sour

content at times to leaven the radical
unknowableness of absolute value
by locating the universe within
the individual human mind

at others guilt-ridden by such hubris
less afraid that reality is a dead
unmeasurable steam-engine than that it is
fundamentally nothing but himself

his hero the great man of noble powers
heart-aborrence of what is *incoherent*
pusillanimous unveracious
such nobleness purchased by the world's best

heart's-blood a ground not be lost
(Napoleon brought down by hook-nosed bankers
his like not soon to be seen again when races
of pumpkin- and potato-farmers are given

powers they aren't equal to) the English
middle-classes the very embodiment
of vulgar materialism, the common man
under *industrialism* degraded to *beer*

and balderdash the hero (history
of the world the history of great men
of insight and superior vision able
to comprehend the true nature of things

to understand the historical forces of his time
to speak what all men were longing to say)
he who has his will of history
with recourse to physical means as needed

to save far more than appearances,
the genius (few in any age) who takes action
to do what needs to be done to maintain
the integrity of the race a *spiritual*

aristocracy highly cultivated
responsible concerned to define the values
the quality of life society
must aim for — even poets

especially poets in this wormhole
of history given their vocation-
specific gift of seeing particulars
in context may become heroes —

the acknowledgment in every man
of an ineffable substance
the vestiges of organic society
sustained by authority and obedience

a mechanism of sensibility
last seen in a twelfth-century monastery
before craftsmen had yet pictured themselves
as commodities priced by haggle —

history the true epic poem
though the present is an age of sham heroes
sham order sham speech caught up
in the *cash nexus* redeemable only if at all

by heroic individualism restoring
durance and hierarchicals — drawing back
in the face of intractable social circumstances
from a brotherhood of man point of view

(the social division of labour replaced by
an organization of labour in which the workman's
permanent interest in the joint *enterprise*
of which he forms an essential part will be

recognized and the *free market hoax*
replaced by a governmental system that will assure
the just distribution and apportionment
of the wage of work well done)

to an authoritarian tension between
detachment and vision standoffishness
and identity, his cold eye an absence
the disappointed prophet faces in silence —

pious mumbo-jumbo and stage props
judiciously arranged gregorian chant
in beautiful wax-light keeping from view
the hollow night of Orcus the abyss

of black doubt skepticism
with random gleams of revolutionary insight —
man finding his true humanity
only in useful work he enjoys doing

the day coming to all when our yearning for
divine humility the highest valeur
will no longer need to look in deaths-heads
but will find it among the living around us.

3

A sternly loving mother a totally
indulgent father a marriage annulled on grounds
most publicly proved by his wife that six years on
she was still *virgo intacta*

then an impossible love for a mad girl
some thirty years his junior who turned him down
for religious reasons then resentment
that the myth of continuity

the romantic imputation of life
to the object-world can only be a reductive
fallacy pathetic in the Greek sense
an impertinent impious conceit. . . .

The Slade Professor of Art too a man
of deep fitful insights who would forget
profound truths minutes after he wrote them
but had the fortitude to follow his thoughts

to conclusion, insist though not fully understanding
the terms of political economy
that workplace conditions must liberate
in laborers as well as in employers

moral as well as intellectual powers
that art is expression of *man's joy of his labor*
health in the arts inseparable from
moral and ethical health of society

that economics is a zero-sum game
one man's wealth another man's poverty
the great impalpable insatiable fact:
what one person has another cannot

that the basic economic model
for home as for nation must be the family farm
the farmer as genial *paterfamilias*
hands not hired but sons of the father

that where *art and work work and beauty*
once had been harmoniously united,
realizing through group artistry
in architecture and through the *grotesque technique*

of composition by fragments to express the image
the beholder over-leaping gaps left
in the mosaic field works out for himself
the socio-aesthetic nature of the gothic,

now division of labor meant *mutilating*
the man divvying up the laborer
his very sense of self a mincemeat
a *fragmented sensibility*.

4

The lost paternalist golden age retooled
to a workman-worker vernacular
intentional cooperatives in the late
medieval sense of the phrase

given gigantic proportion by Feargus O'Connor
the lion of freedom roaring for restoration
of Old English fare Old English
holidays Old English justice

over a million signatures for the Charter
the House of Commons voted 237
to 48 to not even consider
the summer before the winter they put him in jail

universal manhood suffrage, the secret
ballot, annual parliaments, pay
and abolition of property qualifications
for MPs, and equal electoral districts

*All those who are able to labour have a right to subsistence
out of the land in exchange for their labour said Corbett
and if the holders of the land will not give them subsistence
in exchange for their labour they have a right to the land itself*

the right by charter to peace and dignity
the poor man's right to abundance of everything
a home not a hovel leisure time to enjoy it
the commons forever unenclosed

all those new streets behind Mr Twist's
Mr Grab's Mr Screw's still open fields,
no Gradagrind Grundy and guilt burying love
in *shoddy, from statesman to shoemaker all*

is shoddy, shoddy is king in an age of shoddy
the aim of art no longer beauty but profit
the cities mere masses of *sordidness and squalor*
the past defaced the air and water defiled

the hideousness of factory towns and makeshift
commercial districts fouled with acrid wastes
the *vulgus* of usury and *luxuria*
spoils of the middle class slave trade

the riches of the rich and well-to-do
founded on *terrible useless misery*
a glut of ugly furnishings inside
architectural monstrosities.