On a Horse

CAROLYN STEEDMAN

LABOR WAS AN ANALYTIC CATEGORY IN THE LONG ENGLISH EIGHTEENTH century, but was work equally so? Is there any point in discovering a difference between the two? Lawyers and high-court judges, philosophers, physiologists, and prelates worked hard at the business of defining labor, over many years. Their formulations provided the legal and conceptual underpinnings of a new form of society born of the era of revolutions (political, philosophical, industrial; American, Atlantic, French). Here was a template for social knowledge in an emerging class society. Society was divided into propertied and propertyless; the propertyless were compelled by material need to put their labor at the disposal of the propertied. The labor of the poor was a country's natural resource, like its soil and seas and mines; it fell to the propertied to deploy this resource for the national benefit. British philosophers and physicists analyzed labor as a form of energy, often drawing an analogy between it and another great resource of the nation, its horses. Working men and women and horses were bound together in the deep structure of political thinking about labor and the social order. For eighteenth-century theorists, legislators, and farmers, the horse was the immanent measure of labor power and labor time. A horse was a measure of labor itself. There were perhaps a million horses in England and Wales in the late eighteenth century, about half of them workhorses in farming. The contribution of their dung to cereal-crop yield is attested to by economic and agricultural historians (Wrigley, *Continuity* 35–46; Gerhold; Turner). Horses were one reason the nation was, by and large, able to feed an increased population out of its own natural resources and sources of labor power, unlike other European countries in the period 1660–1820 (Wrigley, *Poverty* 44–67). The importance

CAROLYN STEEDMAN, professor of history at the University of Warwick, is the author of *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge UP, 2009). She has just finished a book on the uses of law in everyday life in the era of Luddism in England (c. 1811–17) using the writings of the stocking maker Joseph Woolley and his neighbor, the local magistrate.

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of the horse to agricultural productivity seems assured, though some contemporary economists, in the face of harvest failures in the 1790s and ongoing crises of dearth, complained of too many horses and of the vast amount of grain and labor spent in foddering and caring for them (Crafts; Brooke 1–34).

The energy output of a human being per unit of caloric intake is close to that of a horse. Though the calorie was not available as a unit of measurement until the 1820s (Cottrell vii–viii; Hargrove), human beings and horses were compared in the eighteenth century by means of first Newtonian mechanics and then modern physiology and chemistry. A "man of ordinary strength," the contemporary unit for calculating work output, was defined in relation to the horse: "the strength of one good horse is equal to that of five men . . . and he will carry from 240lb to 270lb"; "a man can draw but about 70 or 80lb horizontally, for he can but apply half his weight" (Emerson 177; see also Middleton; Anderson; Ferguson). This knowledge was widely available, disseminated through dictionaries and encyclopedias and by the agricultural societies of England.

By the later eighteenth century, labor was conceptualized not only as "the number of industrious poor" but also as a constitutive activity that made persons and psychologies (Dean 18–34, 48–50). Poor men and women were embodied labor. They had to have energy. It was in the interest of all employers that their work should "be done with effect and celerity: and that cannot be, unless the labourer is well fed, and otherwise found with such necessaries of animal life, according to its habitudes, as may keep the body in full force, and the mind gay and cheerful" (Burke 10). Consideration of laboring bodies in mechanics, physiology, and chemistry added a psychology of labor to the input-output equation. Discussion of slave labor in the abolitionist debates of the 1770s and 1780s accessed the same science. Abolitionists dwelled on the slave's misery of mind and sense of hopelessness. William Godwin called this state of mind "depression." He believed that an English domestic servant was as likely to experience it as a Sugar Islands chattel slave. Workers had to be in good spirits. If they were depressed, they would not work well. Framing this thinking was an ancient biblical proposition, understood as the foundation of the poor laws, of all law regulating labor from the medieval period onward, and—some said—of the common law itself: that "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (*Holy Bible*, 2 Thess. 3.10). In what was a common educational experience, every child in the society was meant to repeat at least once that "my duty . . . is to learn and labour and truly to get my own living" (Church; see also Steedman, *Master* 110–30). This was old social theory, as well as ancient religious prescription. The connection between working and eating was firmly established by the Author of Nature as well as by historical precedent, John Micklebourgh wrote in *The Great Duty of Labour and Work* (1751). The rich and the poor obeyed the injunction differently: the rich "must sometimes have recourse to Abstinence, which is a voluntary fasting, or to exercise, which is but voluntary labour, for their health's sake"; but the poor fulfilled their duty "through their necessities" (15).

Did the little children of baronets and dukes lisp the great duty of labor? There were many advice books for eighteenth-century parents and teachers telling how to proceed with the Book of Common Prayer. The foundation of all teaching and learning was the catechism, wrote one Yorkshire clergyman in his diary: "Children should begin as soon as they are able to learn [it] . . . and go on by degrees 'till They can say it perfectly by Heart, & They are to continue to be instructed in it . . . till They do understand it so well as to be fit to receive ye Sacrament of ye Lds Supper at 16 or 17 years of Age" (Murgatroyd 82). He had handbooks for teaching the catechism,

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such as Thomas Adam's *Practical Lectures on the Church Catechism* and Peter Newcome's *A Catechetical Course of Sermons for the Whole Year*, but the guides were silent on what to tell elite children about the duty of labor. Perhaps the account of "labour" as a duty specific to "that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me" was advice enough (Church). Some guides to teaching poor children emphasized social difference by breaking the instruction down into component parts:

> *Q.* What are you to learn and labour for?
> *A.* To get mine own living.
> *Q.* In what Manner are you to get your own Living?
> *A.* Truly.
> *Q.* What are you to do in that state of Life, to which it shall please God to call you?
> *A.* My own Duty.
> (*Short and Famililir Explanation* 21)

Micklebourgh's title—*The Great Duty of Labour and Work*—suggests the limitations of pursuing a linguistic distinction between *work* and *labour*. *Labour* was a collective noun, to describe a man or a woman like "a beast of burden or a mere factor of production." "Labour" was to live "rather for the benefit of others" than for its own enjoyment (Kennedy 61–78). Micklebourgh's thesis was about the duty of laborers and the duty to labor, imposed by God and promulgated by law. Indeed, the law averted some of the problems of universality raised by the catechism, or so one late-eighteenth-century legal commentator told employers: "in strictness every body ought to transact his own affairs [but] by the favour and indulgences of the law . . . he can delegate the power of acting for him to another" (Bird 6). This was the political philosophy of John Locke, reformulated for modern commercial society. In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), Locke wrote about a servant's labor. By "servant" he meant any man or woman, including domestic servants, who had contracted to work for another and to whom the employer had transferred some of his own energies and capacities. In the treatises, the worker was closely aligned to Locke's (figurative) horse, which also enacted the master's labor. "The grass my horse has bit, the turfs my servant has cut . . . become my property," wrote Locke. "The labour that was mine removing them out of the common state they were in, has fixed my property in them" (129; see also Steinfeld 18–21, 85–86, 102, 105). The servant's labor was Locke's labor, for the master had contracted for it. This was how property was made, by any employer, including John Locke. The labor of the servant and the horse substituted for, or enacted, that of the employer-owner and produced his property and profit.

But work? *Work* was of a different order of vocabulary and thinking, though it was often used as a synonym for *labour*. In Micklebourgh's tract, the most frequent use of *work* is in the pairing of nouns *work and labour*, followed by its use as a verb. When *labour* appears on its own, it is usually in a quotation of the biblical texts on which Micklebourgh founded his arguments; his book was, after all, the printed version of a sermon based on 2 Thessalonians 3.10. *Labour*, then, always retained its connections with abstract high theory—political, religious, and social. To determine how (and if) work was an analytic category in the everyday life of the English eighteenth century, I shall consider the everyday use of the word by looking at two examples from the sea of account books, journals, and related writing that flood the county record offices of England: the personal writings of an educated daughter of the provincial, professional bourgeoisie and those of a workingman, a Midlands stocking maker. Their patient, daily detailing of money earned and spent, the reckoning up of their accounts, and their startling reflections on how they lived their lives suggest that theory construction was not solely the province of a society's designated thinkers (political philosophers and

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the like) but was also an activity belonging to the everyday world of labor and work.

Every payment that Frances Hamilton (1742–1802) made for indoor and outdoor labor was recorded in the twenty account books and diaries she kept during the last decades of the eighteenth century. She was a gentleman's daughter. Her father had been a Taunton (Somerset) attorney, her husband a Bath medical man. As a widow she returned home to her family's small estate and farmed its sixty acres until her death. Had she been a man, she would have been called a gentleman farmer. Her daybooks show the permeability of boundaries between types of worker and types of work in late-eighteenth-century England. Her livelihood was sustained by a small number of permanent workers: a husbandry servant on an annual hiring, one or two maids in the house, sometimes a manservant, and a boy or two inside and out—poor children apprenticed to her by the parish of Bishops Lydeard. Her domestic-labor force was supplemented by up to a dozen casual workers. The farm laborers who worked for her throughout the year were not casual in the same way as the washers, scrubbers, sweepers, and needlewomen she bought in and paid by the day or hour. The farm laborers worked more regularly, their tasks allocated by the day or the week. Hamilton recorded payments to them as they were made: every two days or at the week's end. In 1796 John Mere worked on the farm throughout the year, at a shilling a day. She paid him for 114 days' labor (reckoning up all the quarter and half days) and for one job by the piece, for which he charged eight shillings and six pence. Bet Mere—likely John's wife—was paid eight shillings and six pence for work on the wheat crop in June, and then, at the rate of six pence a day, she worked for Hamilton for a further 57½ days that year.

To give orders to these men and women and to pay them, Hamilton had to know a great deal about the work they did. Departing for a month's holiday in January 1788, she left her account book in the hands of the maid who could read and write. It contained several pages of "Directions in my absence," including these:

> Meer to go to Taunton for coal and take the Coal Book & have the last he brought wrote down in the Book. . . . Tho. to drive the wood into the Court & pile it away & Cut up the rest of it. . . . Drive in some coal Ashes upon the rasbery plants & place abroad the dung when the weather admits of it. . . . To remember to put some Coal Ashes on the Raspberry plants in the little garden. . . . To throw out the pigg Stye. . . .

The cold must be kept "out of the Window of the Myrtle House [conservatory] putting a little Straw—but not to hinder the Sun." One of the boys was "to remember in severe weather to put something into the mouth of the Beebut." When rain prevented outdoor work, he was "[t]o wash the bottles," and he could "thoroughly clean the Stable on a wet day—and clean the tacking." The other apprentice's instruction in husbandry work was to be continued by John Mere: "Meer to put the Cattle into the Turnip field & Edward to drive them up & down, & Meer to observe that he drives them properly." Edward could fill spare moments by stone picking—"when the weather admits of it: And to make a heap so that I may see how many he picks up." If it came to lambing, the more advanced apprentice was to be taught what to do: "Meer & Thos to take care of the Ewes observe when they have lamb." These instructions—there were many pages of them—were to maintain a household and farm enterprise during a month's absence of its mistress. She handed over her account book to the workers and left for Wells. The workers' labor was increased by the task of responding to the instructions in writing. It is not clear whether they had been asked to do this, but they wrote an entry every day reporting what had been done—for instance, on 25 January "the yow [was] brought to Lambs." The day before Hamilton returned home, one

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of the boys finally got round to "[c]lean[ing] Coart" ("Farm and General Diary").

Having come home to three months of intense reading on slavery and abolition—books borrowed from the Taunton Book Society—Hamilton lifted her eyes from the page one June day to observe "John Meer from 6 to 8 o'clock attending the Cattle. Then he took the Stones from under the Lime Trees & put them down again a little higher up: this is literally true." There were many run-ins with Mere: he had done "a very bad job for one day and 2 hours" spreading coal ashes; "Meer went and tacked the horses and got into the field at 7 o'clock to work—*a very great shame* not to be at work sooner"; "Meer in the higher orchard. He was very angry that I sent up and did not find him there." Things reached an unprecedented pitch in 1795 when "Jno Mere insolently left my service, because I told him to go up for saw-dust and chips—The Saw dust I wanted to have dry—the chips ought to be brought home" (Allen 265). But she had taken him back by January 1796, setting him to work with her manservant to repair one of the farm hedges.

Hamilton was exasperated with her worker because she knew what he was doing and that he was wasting his—or rather her—time. Like many an eighteenth-century employer, when discussing chores she often used the truncated diary style in which pronouns are abandoned or restricted to the first person plural, so that maid merges with mistress. Amanda Vickery has remarked that we cannot be certain if Elizabeth Shackleton, a gentleman's daughter, ever washed the china with her servant, putting on a pinny and getting her hands wet, even as she wrote, "[W]e washed the china in the closet" (*Gentleman's Daughter* 146–47). When pronouns are missing, it is impossible to figure out who did what work. This convention of writing inadvertently supported the legal fiction that master and man, mistress and maid, were one person. And the presence of a pronoun could efface a worker present. "I carried 7 more loads of Hay from the Clay Pit Close," William Cole recorded in July 1766, though there was clearly "help" present, driving the cart and forking the hay (Stokes 71). In a typical formulation, Frances Hamilton wrote, "[M]ade hedge. I had company," meaning that someone else, one of her workers, made a hedge and she had company to dine ("Farm Diary," DD/FS 5/2).

We cannot tell if Hamilton herself ever manured the raspberry bushes with coal ash, though one entry in her twenty years' worth of writing suggests that she may have done so. On 15 October 1794 she wrote, "In the garden I worked hard" ("Farm Diary," DD/FS 5/2). I believe that she did work in her garden here (and possibly on many other occasions), that she put on a pair of stout shoes, kirtled her skirts, did some early autumn tidying, pruning, and leaf sweeping, and perhaps put in some double hyacinth bulbs as recommended by James Maddock in *The Florist's Directory* (31, 54, 130–31), which she had borrowed from the book society the previous year. She may also have moved the auricula to "their winter habitation" in the myrtle house ("Household and Farm Account Book"). Hamilton mixed her bodily capacities with the earth, bringing forth from it what was hers, by virtue of her labor. In putting down a library book or her pen to take up her spade, Hamilton would have been the perfect encapsulation of the judgment that the high-court judge William Blackstone had recorded in 1781, that property "may with equal Reason be acquired by *mental*, as *bodily* Labour . . . [by] the Exertion of the *animal* Faculties . . . common both to Us and the Brute Creation, in their Nests, Caves &c . . . and the Exertion of the *rational* Powers, by which we are denominated Men" (321–22). Thus was one Lockean moment inscribed: a day spent making property, without the irritating, maddening intermediary of "my Servant" or "my Horse." But in the usual run of things, the workers exercised Hamilton's labor. The products of their labor (wheat, barley,

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apples, vegetables, and flowers) belonged to her, because of "the favour and indulgence of the law" in permitting such arrangements and the transfer of energies, strength, and capacity from one person to another.

What did Hamilton understand of a day spent gardening, compared with all the men and women she paid to labor on the same spot? Her dealings with all her workers express the paradox and impossibility of the labor relation, whatever form it takes, the "unfortunate necessity" that it entailed. If employers could do it themselves, they believe, they would do it better, whether it be spreading manure, milking cows, dusting the parlor, or shelling a crab in the kitchen. It was just that there were insurmountable reasons for not doing it themselves, reasons of gender, class, rank, and station—of that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call them. Being gentlemen, or their daughters, means that it has never crossed their minds that they might. And yet—it is their work, because their capacity to labor is being exercised by the worker, so badly, right now.

Hamilton brought much knowledge to bear on her direction of the labor she employed. She had owned guides to the management of a farming life since girlhood (Hamilton, "Estate and Farm Account Book"; Bradley; Bailey; Hayes). She kept up with recent developments in soil chemistry and agricultural improvement through the publications of the West Country Societies for the Encouragement of Agriculture. Innovations in feeding and maintaining labor filled their pages during these years of poor harvests and food shortages (Wells). She thought of herself as a farmer (though she would scarcely have called herself that), reflecting on her abilities in running an agricultural enterprise: "Killed a pig weighed 12 score 16 pounds," she wrote in March 1796 ("General Account Book"). "To my shame be it spoken I had a Man to kill my pigg and suffered Wm & Edward to assist him—*good management*" ("Account Book," DD/FS 5/8; see also Langford). Hamilton gained four shillings and six pence from the sale of the pork at Taunton market, paying the anonymous man six pence for his labor; her apprentices cost her nothing: a profit by the labor of three others of four shillings. She thought about these relations of labor, property, and persons throughout her recorded life. She was widely read in contemporary politics and political theory. She managed the enterprise of her life at the intersection of experience and book knowledge (Steedman, "On Not Writing"). Although she did not use the word *labour*, she was the bourgeois subject interpellated by the socioreligious theory outlined above. Work was something that she paid other people to do for her and that she occasionally undertook herself. She never appears to have "worked" at her needle, which was the archetypal activity of young women in the eighteenth-century novel and lifestyle guide. And in life. That kind of work was done by older women, too, and could incorporate decorative crepe work, chenille work, bead-, shell-, and featherwork (Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors* 241–50, 20–22). In Bishops Lydeard House it was "Huckleburgh Betty Mantua maker" who worked the needle. Betty was bought in on other occasions to do housework for Hamilton (Hamilton, "Account Book," DD/FS 5/7).

Hamilton kept horses for farming and pleasure and paid taxes on them. During the 1797 invasion scare, the cavalry requisitioned them. A year later there were four horses back at Bishops Lydeard House, two for husbandry and two for the hackney carriage (Hamilton, "Estate and Farm Account Book" and "Farm Diary," DD/FS 5/3). She rode a horse; in 1796 she noted, "[M]endg my watch occasioned by being thrown from my Horse" ("Account Book," DD/FS 5/8). Horses are everywhere in her account books, as she pays the turnpike charge, hires one for a trip to Bath, pays many a hostler for the care of them at inns; as a laborer thatches the horsery (stable); and as John Mere hitches one to the cart to take her library books back to Taunton. She never

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once contemplated the philosophical Lockean horse, but it carried much of the thinking she did, about labor and her laborers, her workers and their work. In the everyday life of Bishops Lydeard House and its farm, Hamilton and her workers also reenacted the legal part of John Locke's scene in the field, over and over, for she and all her workers had contracted with each other. As Locke had put it, a formally free person, of his or her own will and volition, might "make himself a servant to another by selling him, for a certain time, the service he undertakes to do in exchange for wages he is to receive" (156). All of Hamilton's workers had done this. Labor and work—performed, paid for, conceptualized—may turn out to be part of the legal story of eighteenth-century England: the story of contract.

Some 160 miles away, in the year Frances Hamilton died, a Nottinghamshire workingman was keeping accounts and journals that provide another perspective on what work and labor meant at the turn of the nineteenth century. Joseph Woolley, a framework knitter (stocking maker, or stockinger) in the village of Clifton, kept records of a working life. Six volumes of his diaries survive; there may well have been more. The number of stocking shapes he knitted, the price he received for them, his expenditure on seaming, the oil he purchased for the maintenance of his machine, the candles he bought are the consistent thread of his writing, recorded at the end of every working week. The hundred thousand or so words (and numbers) he inscribed also constitute a detailed account of working-class living, loving, getting, and spending at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Woolley recorded his reading and his drinking; he wrote in detail about friendship and (other people's) sexual relations. His diaries are a fine source of information on sexual behavior and attitudes among poorer people in late-eighteenth-century England—and on one workingman's understanding of himself, as a creature of time, place, and society. He was probably about thirty years old in 1801, renting a knitting frame in the workshop of a small master, when the first extant volume of his diaries opens.

Woolley worked a frame. Frame working was the process that produced a worsted or cotton stocking shape on a knitting loom. Woolley sat—for perhaps fourteen hours a day, perhaps four days a week—at a wooden structure that held needles set for the production of different varieties of stocking. The wooden bench at which he sat was built into the frame. The machine was operated by hand and foot; much of the power came from the movement of his feet on the treadles beneath it (Palmer 11–15; Henson 257–425, 24–35). He worked at what would later be called the respectable end of the trade, producing fully fashioned stocking shapes—the curve of calf and ankle knitted in—which he paid a series of local women to seam before delivery to the hosier. Every week he recorded "seaming and frame rent"; later, when he worked his own frame in his father's house, the entries were for "my bord frame rent and Seaming."

Woolley's type of frame was at the heart of the Luddite disturbances and the large-scale machine breaking that took place in Nottinghamshire around 1810–12. Luddites were not mindless enemies of progress, though some "late twentieth-century critics of culture and apologists for technology misappropriate the term" *Luddite* (Binfield 7). In the Midlands counties, Luddites attempted to put an end to the use of certain types of frame. The wide knitting frame was "obnoxious" to them, because it produced lengths of cheap, shoddy stocking material that had to be cut to shape and then sewn ("cut-ups"). The knitting was loose and the resulting stockings had little elasticity.[1] Nottinghamshire framework knitters had also long negotiated with hosiers over the equally obnoxious practice of employing "colts"—that is, knitters who had not completed the seven-year apprenticeship that they believed was required by law.

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In December 1811, public bargaining between Nottinghamshire framework knitters and their employers (much of it conducted in the local press) failed to restore former prices and frame rents. Hundreds of wide frames were destroyed in the following months of crisis, twenty-nine in Clifton and neighboring Ruddington one night in late January 1812. There is no evidence from across the Midlands counties that narrow frames were broken (Thomis; Felkin 234; Binfield 2, 7, 15). Joseph Woolley never worked a wide frame and never produced cut-ups. In 1815, the last year from which his diaries survive, Woolley was still producing fully fashioned work and receiving a reasonable price for it (Woolley). By now he was renting out two frames he had purchased over the years and making money from his kitchen garden and from the home-doctoring business he had gone into in 1813. There is a four-year gap between the journal for 1809 and the one for 1813, so I think it unlikely that we shall ever know if Woolley was a Luddite.

In Woolley's recording of it, work was both something he did and the things produced by his labor. When working for one master, he recorded his earnings weekly with the formula "work come to 2s 4d" (Jan. 1801). In January 1803, when he moved "to work at reeds shop in his Eight and thirty frame," he continued to record his income in this way (Jan. 1803). "Comings in this year for work and other things Comes to £35–4–2½," he wrote in December 1804. In August he had "[s]hifted my frame up home from the Shop at the Lane End I should not have shifted so soon but that rose being with Child I cold not bare to see hir." His dead brother's wife, Rose, was pregnant by a one-eyed, pathetic, and melancholic seducer, Sam Boyer, an ex-soldier and a childhood friend of Woolley's (6 Aug. 1804). Once working his frame at home, Woolley started to record the number of shapes he knitted, their type, and the price received. In the stocking-making business, work was what you produced for someone else and for which you received some kind of wage. In Woolley's idiom, work was also something learned: "in June or may William rue went to nottingham to Learn to work Lace with some person" (July 1803); "this week Gerves reckless Juneor went to Cristephor price to Larn to work in the farm"; and when "thomas morley of barton . . . Came to Cristophor prices to Learn to work in the frame or to be a stocking maker it is said that criss was to Larn him Grates [gratis] because he Sweetharts is daughter ann and it is said he is to marrier hir when he as Larnt So Criss does it to incourage him" (16 Dec. 1803). *Labour* is not in the diaries' vocabulary, though many laborers and much "Labering work" are mentioned.

My intention is not to drive a wedge between the bourgeois employer's theoretical conceptualization of labor and the worker's depthless recording of what his labor produced (stocking shapes and money). We know about Frances Hamilton's access to theory because we have an almost complete list of the books she read and sometimes can even read what she thought about their arguments. Her world worked as political and legal philosophy said it did, her own capacity to labor being embodied in her workers and her horses. As an employer of labor, she took part in the legal arrangement that was said to underpin civil society, when she contracted with a village woman to lift potatoes at six pence a day or paid one shilling for the cleaning out of three necessary houses (privies). Contract mattered to Hamilton in the case of her domestic workers, her outdoor workers, and the local people who arranged to complete particular jobs for her. Domestic servants were hired by the year. If they stayed beyond a year, she contracted with them again when she handed over their annual wage. Domestic service was the second-largest occupational category in eighteenth-century England, after agriculture, and the largest among contract workers. The relationship between employer and domestic worker was so common, its complexities so

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everyday, that jokebooks, stage plays, private letters, and the deliberations of a lord chief justice articulated it (Steedman, *Labours Lost*). Hamilton's thinking about work, in theory and in practice, derived not only from books but also from the daily enactment of the labor contract, itemized in her account books.

Joseph Woolley's arrangement with a hosier to produce stockings was different from Hamilton's contract with her workers for their bodies' energy. A hosier gave stockingers yarn in the expectation of buying the finished stockings for resale. The knitter provided the energy to work the frame; he paid for the machine's maintenance, for the lighting he needed, and a commission to the hosier called "frame rent" even if the machine was his own. Stocking makers complained that the prices offered for finished stockings often changed between receipt of the yarn and delivery of the finished articles. They reported to the government the many strategies used by overstocked hosiers to refuse the articles, including "accidentally" damaging the stockings (Great Britain, *Report from the Committee* 23). Legislation making it easier for employers to enforce work agreements had been enacted throughout the eighteenth century (Hay 81–104; Deakin and Wilkinson 62–63). As late as 1860, framework knitters were complaining that this legislation made "a breach of contract a penal offence on the part of the men, but merely a monetary consideration on the part of the masters." There was little point in a worker's having recourse to a magistrate, for then a man would lose "his work altogether" (Great Britain, *Report from the Select Committee on Masters* 37). Half a century before this, Midlands framework knitters believed they possessed their own regulatory system, which was also a form of law, originating in a 1663 charter of incorporation. Many Luddite demands and the negotiations that followed them were for this form of law to be used (Binfield 20–32; Smith clxxix–clxxxiii) or for Parliament to legislate for a legally enforceable list of prices for varieties of hose (Great Britain, *Report from the Select Committee on Framework Knitters Petition* 16).

The law mattered to Joseph Woolley. He was deeply interested in what went on in the local magistrate's justicing room; the law inflected his language, and it inscribed part of his identity. But the work he did and the economic arrangements of the stocking trade meant that he did not take part in a daily performance of contract the way Frances Hamilton did. "The work" for him was the material things he made, which gave him the means to live. And—of course—he didn't have a horse; "horses I cannot tell anaything about," he once wrote, detailing livestock prices at a local fair (Mar. 1801). Hamilton's and Woolley's experiences of work and labor resulted in exasperation: hers at the antics of her farm laborers, his at the complex and attenuated legal relations of the framework-knitting trade. Woolley wrote, for instance, that on

> feb the 20 [1813] I braught a 40 gage frame of mr Hills and Lewes. . . . [I]t was that that was broak Last Janewarey and recruited again for mee it was recruted by Nutt and hall Nutt was the frame smith and Hall the setter up they were about four or five months a bout it But I never had to doe with such a set of men in my life befor for Lieing and Shaffeling and promising and then deseiving. (20 Feb. 1813)

In distinction to and sometimes overlapping with work, labor can give some access to the experience of living through England's transition to capitalist modernity. Distinguishing work from labor helps us disinter the personal and political idioms in which people lived their lives. But however attentively we disinter the personal idioms of Hamilton and Woolley or read for absences in their lexicons of life and labor, it is difficult to write about them without their seeming to merely enact the society's high theory (political, religious, and legal) or appearing as subjects interpellated by ideas emanating from elsewhere. Yet,

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as we have seen, they lived the theory and sometimes thought about it. And the theory would not have existed without them. It was a material thing, made "by *mental* [and] *bodily* Labour." It existed—it was made—because there were stocking makers and gentlewoman farmers, servants and hedge makers and hosiers; because there were employers and workers, masters and servants; because of the great ordering of the world and all its necessities.

Note

1. Great Britain, *Report from the Committee* 9, 10, 26, 41.

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