

THE WORKING-CLASS NOVELS IN BRITISH LITERATURE

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**Annotatsiya:** Britaniya fantastikasi ishchilar sinfi XXI asrdagi romanlarda zamonaviy mehnatkashlar hayotini qanday o'rganganiga qaratilgan. Ushbu maqolada Devid Peys, Gordon Bern, Entoni Kartrayt, Ross Raisin, Jenni Fagan va Sun Jeev Saxotaning asarlarida industrializatsiyadan chuqur beqarorlikni boshdan kechirgan shaxslar va jamoalarni stigmatizatsiya qilishgacha bo'lgan o'tishni qanday yo'llaganliklarini ko'rsatishi haqida so'z yuritiladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** ishchilar sinfi, zamonaviy bir-necha madaniyatlilik, ijtimoiy nafrat.

**Abstract:** Working-class British fiction focuses on how contemporary working-class life is explored in twenty-first-century novels. This article discusses how the works of David Pace, Gordon Burn, Anthony Cartwright, Ross Raisin, Jenny Fagan, and Sun Jeev Sahota navigate the transition from industrialization to the stigmatization of individuals and communities that experienced profound instability.

**Key words:** working-class, contemporary multiculturalism, social abjection.

O'Brien argues that these novels offer ways of understanding fundamental aspects of contemporary capitalism for the working class in modern Britain, including, class struggle, inequality, trauma, social abjection, racism, and stigmatization, exclusively looking at British working-class literature of the twenty-first century.

As chronic unemployment grows and many who once seemed solidly middle-class are losing their economic footholds, the working class is getting larger and more frustrated. Both size and perspective make the working class more important than ever before.

So perhaps more than ever, Americans across the class spectrum have good reason to understand working-class culture and experience. As recent columns about film and television stories about working-class people make clear, popular culture too often relies on familiar narratives that blame poor and working-class people for the hardships in their lives. If we want to understand working-class culture, we need better stories – stories that reflect the complex realities of working-class life.

Working-class literature tells those stories. From poems about being a waitress to novels about the long-term social effects of deindustrialization to memoirs about growing up in working-class families, literary texts provide some of the most affecting and inspiring views of working-class life. Without erasing the struggles of economic hardship, family dysfunction, or limited options, working-class literature reminds us of the strengths of working-class culture: humor, integrity, hard work, and strong interpersonal connections, among others things.

Scholars of working-class literature are uncovering new and forgotten books and exploring the common qualities that define working-class literature as a genre. While our colleagues who study women's literature and ethnic literature have been analyzing the literature of cultural groups for decades, working-class literary studies is just getting started. While a few studies of 1930s proletarian novels appeared in the 1960s, the study of working-class literature really begins with Paul Lauter's 1982 article on working-class women's writing. As with these other categories, working-class literary studies gained momentum through anthologies, most notably the several books edited by Janet Zandy in the 1990s, including *Calling Home* and *Liberating Memory*. The first comprehensive anthology of American working-class literature appeared just a few years ago (also by Zandy, with co-editor Nick Coles). Their work is defining the boundaries of the field.

At the same time, those boundaries are being expanded because of concerns about essentialism and the complexity of cultural identity. Many of those involved in working-class studies have also worked in women's studies, ethnic studies, and LGBT studies, so we know very well the problems of claiming that only people who have a specific kind of experience have the authority to write about or critique literature about that experience. We saw how the shift from women's literature to feminist literary criticism created new ways of studying literary representations of gender and sexuality. Having seen the productive directions fostered by that shift, working-class literary scholars resist establishing narrow definitions. Instead, we want working-class literary studies to provide similar critical openings. Working class literature: reading guide POUM members reading during the Spanish Civil War.

Submitted by libcom on April 15, 2013 Copied to clipboard American Alfred Bester  
*The Stars My Destination* - In a world where transportation is possible with a thought, prisoners break free, economies crash and the slums emptied. Gully Foyle is marooned in space with a material that could destroy the universe. He has to give it away, but to who?

Charles Bukowski

*Post Office* - The job as a postal worker is a thankless one as Bukowski tries to keep his sanity delivering mail around Los Angeles.  
*Factotum* - Bukowski recounts the conditions in 1944 having faced rejection from the draft, yo-yoing in and out of employment.  
*Ham on Rye* - Semi-autobiographical 'coming-of-age' novel, telling the story of a young man growing up in Los Angeles during the Great Depression.

Harlan Ellison

"Repent, Harlequin!" said the Ticktockman - Famous short story where time is regulated and being late is a crime. Despite the Ticktockman, the timekeeper who collects time as a punishment, and being sent to Coventry, the Harlequin revolts to create tardiness.

William Gibson and Bruce Sterling

*The Difference Engine* - Seminal novel set in an ahistorical Victorian England, where Lord Byron leads the technocratic government funded by trade unions, the Luddites and their Swing Riots threaten London and the first commune is declared in New York.

Ben Hamper

Rivethhead - Down and out memoirs of an assembly line worker for GM Motors over the 1980s. In amongst co-workers going postal in the local bar, drinking on the job and witnessing mental breakdowns, Hamper wrote the book during his shifts on the shop floor.

Joseph Heller

Catch 22 - Former World War II bomber Joseph Heller's 1961 satirical masterpiece is a savage indictment of military madness and stupidity, and the desire of the ordinary man to survive it. It is a tale of the dangerously sane Captain Yossarian, who spends his time in Italy plotting to survive. It does, however, contain casual sexism throughout.

Ernest Hemingway

A Farewell to Arms - Anti-militarist novel set against the backdrop of the Italian campaign during World War One, based largely on Hemingway's experiences in the war. For Whom the Bell Tolls - Novel about a young American dynamiter in the International Brigades attached to a republican guerrilla unit during the Spanish Civil War. A great novel, though Hemingway regurgitates many of the Stalinist myths about the Civil War.

Ursula Le Guin

The dispossessed - Sci-fi classic telling the story of life on a planet run along anarchist principles. The Four Ways to Forgiveness - Novel about two planets called Yeowe and Werel and the struggle for freedom between the "owners" and "assets".

Jack London

The Iron Heel - Dystopian sci-fi novel. The character agitates and struggles for a socialist revolution against an oligarchy. Envisages fascism, despite being written many years prior to its advent. The Mexican - short story about a Mexican revolutionary who uses his skills as a boxer to buy guns for the growing rebellion. It ends with a prize fight in the United States, with the hero up against the boxing establishment and the racism of white Americans.

Lorrie Moore

Anagrams - Benna leads different lives, English teacher, nightclub singer, aerobics instructor. She's a mother and she's never had children. The stories and settings shift around but all are a darkly comic look at being a 30 something woman in America.

Proletarian literature refers here to the literature created by left-wing writers mainly for the class-conscious proletariat. Though the Encyclopaedia Britannica states that because it "is essentially an intended device of revolution", it is therefore often published by the Communist Party or left wing sympathizers, the proletarian novel has also been categorized without any emphasis on revolution, as a novel "about the working classes and working-class life; perhaps with the intention of making propaganda". This different emphasis may reflect a difference between Russian, American and other traditions of working-class writing, with that of Britain. The British tradition was not especially inspired by the Communist Party, but had its roots in the Chartist movement, and socialism, amongst others. Furthermore, writing about the British working-class writers, H Gustav Klaus, in *The Socialist Novel: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition* (1982) suggested that "the once

current [term] 'proletarian' is, internationally, on the retreat, while the competing concepts of 'working-class' and 'socialist' continue to command about equal adherence".

The word proletarian is also used to describe works about the working class by working-class authors, to distinguish them from works by middle-class authors such as Charles Dickens (*Hard Times*), John Steinbeck (*The Grapes of Wrath*), and Henry Green (*Living*). Similarly though some of poet William Blake's (1757–1827) works are early examples of working-class literature, including the two "The Chimney Sweeper" poems, published in *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 and *Songs of Experience* in 1794, which deal with the subject of child labour. Blake, whose father was a tradesman, was not a proletarian writer.

Proletarian literature (from the Latin *proletarius*, belonging to the lowest class of Roman citizens) is literary writing by or about working-class people with anti capitalist or pro socialist themes. Proletarian literature emerged internationally on the Socialist and Communist Left after the Russian Revolution, greatly abetted by the Bolshevik commitment to "proletkult," an acronym for "proletarian cultural-educational organizations" (pro etarskie kul'turno-prosvetitel'nye organizatsii). In the United States, a proletarian literary movement—spurred by immigration by European radicals, working-class resistance to World War I, the African American migration, suffragette-era feminism, the formation of the US Communist Party, and the economic collapse of the Depression—evolved after 1917. The Soviet Comintern (Communist International) supported the development of US Proletarian. Writing by helping to establish International Publishers in New York City as a distributor of books on proletarian culture. Literary journals like *Literature of the World Revolution*, established by the International Union of Revolutionary Writers, the US Communist Party's *New Masses*, and the anti-Stalinist *Partisan Review* (all cited under *Magazines and Journals*) shaped cultural debates about the compatibility of proletarian literature to high modernism, the relationship of proletarian to "revolutionary" literature, and the capacity of culture to serve as what Soviet pro letkult called "agitprop" against capitalist exploitation. US proletarian literature also gave considerable attention to the potential for an indigenous American pro libertarianism: Mike Gold's 1921 essay "Towards Proletarian Art" is a touchstone here, as well as the "negro question"—the relationship of African American self-determination and racism to capitalism, and the "woman question"—how are women oppressed by capitalism, particularly in the arenas of domestic and wage labor.

Proletarian literature as a movement waned when the Comintern removed its official support after 1934. Formally, proletarian literature induced innovation that is a subset of modernist experiment. The proletarian novel added to the bildungsroman pattern coming to class consciousness. Proletarian poets included observation of economic hardship to push lyric subjectivity toward expression of collective alienation and mass action. In drama, proletarian theater redrew the boundary between stage and audience to index the responsibility of art to society. This article defines proletarian literature and the proletarian movement by assembling representative primary and secondary texts primarily from two historical moments. The first is the original proletarian movement after 1917. The second is

from scholarship in the post-1989 period inspired by the end of the Cold War to reconsider proletarian literature in relationship to Communism and anti-Communism in US history, canon reformation, and contemporary multiculturalism.

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