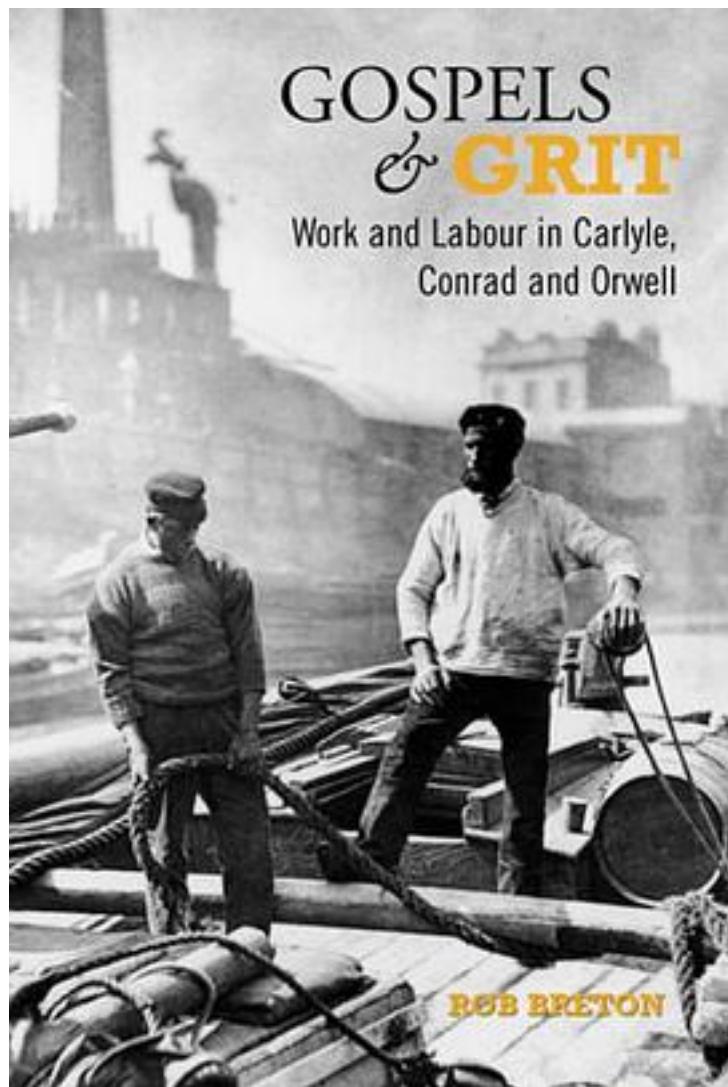


# Gospels and Grit



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Work has had a problematic history in Western thought: disparaged as being contrary to contemplation, seen as a necessary burden, and invested with moral or even sacred value. In the Victorian era, a romantic-utilitarian dichotomy developed, and ideas of work were more radically divided than at any other time. On the one hand, the most popular mythologies propagated work as a value in itself - the 'Gospel of Work' - defining and building character and fostering well-being and a sense of fulfillment. On the other hand, with widespread industrialism, automation, and the division of labour, work was perceived as toil for extrinsic gain. Gospels and Grit examines the literary representations of work and labour in the Victorian works of Thomas Carlyle and the twentieth-century writings of Joseph Conrad and George Orwell, exploring how the three systematically displaced the conflict between the Gospel of Work and a non-idealist, non-theoretical pragmatism. Rob Breton argues that these writers were unwilling or unable to provide a resolution to the conflicting discourses and locates fissures emerging out of the division between work and the economic. This is an important and well-written study that provides a new depth of insight into Victorian ideology and working-class culture.

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