Rabbit in the Garden

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Academic circles at home and abroad pay little attention to Rabbit’s work in Mrs. Smith’s garden in *Rabbit, Run*. Why does Rabbit “has it pretty good” when working in the garden? From the background of economic democratization in Western countries, it can be seen that labor relations in the garden have changed, and Rabbit has taken control of the garden. This article starts with a Chinese translation of *Rabbit, Run* and explores the changes in Rabbit’s working status in the garden due to economic democratization. It also reveals that in the case of gaining control of the garden, Rabbit’s work has been changed in some aspects.

*Keywords: Rabbit, Run, economic democracy, worker management, working mode*

After running away from home, Harry works as a gardener in Mrs. Smith’s garden. He “experiments with new ways of dealing with his social situation” (Mathew, 1998, p. 73). Mrs. Smith’s garden is about eight acres. She is old and lives alone. The Smiths are self-supporting small business owners with their own gardens. Without the hustle and bustle of the city, the garden presents a simple idyllic life. The quiet, easy and simple life has always been a tradition reserved for the smiths, a rural middle class in a stable state of self-sufficiency. In the novel, the garden represents many things, the most obvious is that it is a way of life different from industrial civilization.

As for Harry’s work in Mrs. Smith’s garden, some critics have talked about the return of Harry’s work ethic in the garden (Fromer, 2014, p. 184), or described the daily life in the garden, analyzing Mrs. Smith’s garden as the Garden of Eden (Palm, 1995, p. 24), or examined the garden in relation to religion (Connell, 1996, p. 243). These critics give good explanations to many aspects of garden work. Here is an attempt to further explore: Why does Harry “have it pretty good” after working in the garden? The nature of Harry’s work in the garden is different from his previous job as a MagiPeel peeler salesman in a retail store. These two works represent different modes of production. In three Chinese versions of the novel, “Harry” in “Harry’s rhodies” is interpreted as a nickname for Horace, thus indicating the ownership of the garden by the Smiths. The period of Harry’s life coincided with the large-scale economic democratization movement in the Western countries, “the most important feature of which was the weakening of the rule of capital and the transformation of laborers in form from economic slaves to citizens in the economic field” (Yu, 2013, p. 55). This change was also reflected in Mrs. Smith’s garden, so Harry actually controls the management of Mrs. Smith’s garden. Harry’s work in the garden has a profound socio-political background. He takes control of the management of the garden, and great changes have taken place in the relationship between labor and capital. On this basis, the mode of labor and working time
has also changed, and he has gained a certain degree of freedom in his work. “He finds the first job fraudulent and
the second exhausting. The only truly fulfilling work he performs is as Mrs. Smith’s part-time gardener,” says
Kathleen Lee Lathrop (Lathrop, 1982, p. 42). Horticultural work determines and enriches Harry’s whole way of
life. He finds the long-lost pleasure of labor and realizes his value in labor.

Getting the Management Power

There are four Chinese versions of Updike’s *Rabbit, Run* in China, which are Li Li’s, Wan Zhengfang’s, Liu
Guozhi’s and Xie Qinyang’s. Mrs. Smith’s late husband was called Horace Smith, whose nickname was Harry,
the same as Rabbit’s. Soon after Harry came to work in the garden, Mrs. Smith used “Horace’s Bianchi” to refer
to “Those Bianchi belong to Horace” when she was walking and chatting with Harry. It can be seen that at this
time, she clearly pointed out that the ownership of the garden belonged to the Smiths. Later, when Harry went to
resign, she said, “I won’t be here next year to see Harry’s Rhodes come in again” (Updike, 1990, p. 207). Wan
Zhengfang’s version translates the sentence as “I won’t be able to see Harry’s Rhodos here next year” (Updike,
1998, p. 217). According to Mrs. Smith, it was her late husband Horace who planted the Rhodos, so “Harry” here
is the nickname of Horace. In the footnote of that page in Liu Guozhi’s translation, “Harry” in this sentence is
interpreted as the nickname of Horace (Updike, 2008, p. 241). Xie Qinyang’s version translates the sentence as
“I won’t see the rhodos Harry moved in here next year” (Updike, 2010, pp. 322-323). According to the earlier
part of the novel, it was Horace Smith who “moved” into the rhododendron, so Xie also understands “Harry” here
as the nickname of Horace. The reference of “Harry” in this sentence is treated vaguely in Li Li’s translation.
Although the nickname of Harry’s name is the same as Horace’s, considering the context of the novel and other
factors, it is more appropriate to interpret Harry here as Harry himself, implying that the owner of the garden is
Harry. Mrs. Smith regards Harry as the owner of the garden, with the intention of keeping him working in the
garden, which blurs the employment relationship. At the same time, she also recognizes Harry’s labor in the
garden and his personality that the garden takes on.

In the operation and management of modern western enterprises, “Although the relationship between the
employer and the employee, or between the owner and the non-owner, is very clear, the relationship is covered up
as far as possible in propaganda and education, and even the employee who is not the owner is described as the
owner of the enterprise as far as possible or reflected through institutional arrangements” (Wei & Huang, 1996,
pp. 9-10). In modern society, the ownership of the means of production by the owner of the enterprise has not
changed in law, but the ownership of the enterprise is increasingly separated from the management power. With
the development of the joint-stock system and the expansion of modern enterprises, the ownership of enterprises
has spread, and the scope of direct management of the owners of means of production has become smaller and
smaller, and more and more divorced from production. Due to the progress of science and technology and its
application in production and management, as well as the increasing refinement and specialization of social
division of labor, the improvement of technology and production management play an increasingly important
role in enterprises. This makes the management team with science, technology and management experience
become the actual operation controller of the enterprise. Therefore, a management class with the right to manage
without the ownership of the means of production has emerged. They actually control the daily operation and
future of the enterprise and play an irreplaceable role. Mills says: “The power of property within plant, firm, and
political economy has often become indirect, and works through a host of new agents……. The facts of the split of manager and owner, and the indirect power of the owner, have long been known” (Mills, 1969, pp. 100-101).

After the Second World War, it was widely believed in the West that political democracy had been achieved to a certain extent and that the main goal in the future was to achieve economic democracy (Huang, 1990, p. 340). Since then, the economic democratization movement has been carried out on a large scale in western countries, and many important achievements have been made, such as workers’ participation in management, economic freedom and economic sharing, joint decision-making between labor and capital, and so on. Cui Zhiyuan believes, “The micro-economic democracy aims to promote the implementation of post-Fordism democratic management within enterprises and to improve economic efficiency by relying on the creativity of workers” (Cui, 1997, p. 79). Economic democracy is totally different from the traditional hierarchical system in some aspects. Every employee enjoys the opportunity to participate in management, and has equal rights and importance. The main body of decision-making and management in an enterprise is everyone who implements decisions, including shareholders and ordinary employees. In the hierarchical system, however, decision-making and implementation are undertaken by different people. The power of decision-making and management is in the hands of managers, while workers belong to the objects of management and can only passively implement the decisions made by managers. One of the principles of economic democracy is to give control of the enterprise to the workers in the enterprise. Workers have the right to supervise and manage the activities of the enterprise, but they do not necessarily own the means of production in the enterprise. Workers’ right of management does not come from ownership, but from participation itself. That is to say, although workers are not shareholders, they also have the power to manage and supervise the company. In an enterprise with economic democracy, the actual management of the factory is not the owner of the enterprise. Economic democracy is the objective requirement of modern production and the inevitable trend of productivity development. Its most important feature is that it weakens the rule of capital over enterprises. Instead of absolute control by capital, enterprises allow employees to enjoy democratic rights, give full play to the enthusiasm of employees, and carry out labor-capital cooperation. This kind of practice has become the development direction of modern enterprise system. Its purpose is to ease the contradiction between labor and capital, and then form labor-capital cooperation and improve work efficiency.

In Japan, from the postwar period to the period of rapid economic growth, ideas such as “the enterprise exists exclusively for the well-being of the workers and their families” are undoubtedly the most influential corporate view. Japanese economists believe that Japanese enterprises are nominally “Investor Sovereignty”. In law, enterprises do not belong to employees, but in reality they do. Although the shareholder is the owner of the enterprise stipulated in the Japanese commercial law, in the actual operation of the enterprise, compared with the shareholders who hold shares, employees of enterprises can influence the behaviors of enterprises more, because employees regard themselves as the owners of enterprises.

At the same time, Harry has a talent of vitality that no one else has. He brought the garden to life, and the whole garden came alive under his care. Some critics point out that: “His gift of life talent- which in the course of the novel produces a beautiful garden” (Bailey, 2006, p. 68). At the same time, Harry also perks up and rejuvenates the old widow. Mrs. Smith is well aware of the special abilities of Harry’s (Arnason, 1969, p. 24). Ruth is even jealous that Mrs. Smith is in love with Harry. His position in the garden is irreplaceable. Later, Harry
suggests that Mrs. Smith hire someone else to manage the garden, but she refuses. To a large extent, Mrs. Smith regards Harry as her late husband Horace, which aims to express her yearning, and “Rabbit becomes a type of surrogate for her lost husband” (Taylor, 1969, p. 135). Others argue that because they are so close in age, Mrs. Smith regards Harry as her son who died in the war (Ristoff, 1987, p. 102). So Harry plays a unique role in the garden. Due to the complexity of labor and management in the garden, as well as Mrs. Smith’s aging, the young and energetic Harry actually took control of the garden. Harry becomes a part of the garden and Mrs. Smith’s life. Both the garden and Mrs. Smith are inseparable from him. He becomes what the Japanese economist Hiroyuki Itami calls “the most important and scarce resource”. When demonstrating the economic rationality of “Worker Sovereignty”, Hiroyuki Itami defined the “Essential Contribution” in the enterprise: “Essential Contribution refers to providing the most important and scarce resources for the enterprise” (Itami, 1995, p. 53). According to him, in modern enterprises, workers with unique abilities are more scarce than the capital provided by shareholders. Such people include entrepreneurs, managers and ordinary employees. They enable enterprises to survive in the economic society and form an indispensable “Essential Contribution” to the development of enterprises. In addition, according to George Elton Mayo’s interpersonal relationship theory, people are the most important factor in an organization, whose value is inestimable. Only by making full use of human resources and letting the talents give full play to their initiative and creativity, can an enterprise be in an advantageous position in the market competition. This theory is contrary to Taylor’s view that people are “talking machines”. Based on the above analysis, it can be said that Harry has the right to manage the garden.

In Mrs. Smith’s garden, Harry takes part in all kinds of work, managing the garden as a farmer does in his own estate. When working in the garden, Harry is accompanied by flowers, birds and trees. He can enjoy the fragrance of flowers and plants, and listen to the sweet chirping of birds and insects, so his body and mind are nourished and comforted. Therefore, the management of the garden is equally important to him. Without his work, old Mrs. Smith can not manage her garden at all. On this point, the interest relationship between Harry and Mrs. Smith is closely related, which is the so-called “All prosper and all lose”. They have formed a Community of shared future and established a “economic sharing principle”, which is similar to that of modern enterprises, that is, all workers in the enterprise share the net income of the enterprise according to the principle of democracy. Cui Zhiyuan says, “It is not easy to really motivate every worker. It requires corresponding changes in production relations so that workers can share in the profits beyond their wages” (Cui, 1996, p. 18). In the process of production, the individual goal of workers and the business goal of enterprises are the same. Workers take the initiative to exercise their rights, regard the enterprise as their own home, and carefully safeguard the interests of the enterprise. Therefore, workers can enjoy more rights and interests in the distribution link. This involves the principle of economic sharing in economic democracy. Some Chinese scholars have pointed out that: “The theoretical basis of economic sharing is that capital is only one of many factors of production in enterprises, not the basis for distributing the net surplus of enterprises; Economic democracy is not about abolishing capital… It is to sever the link between the ownership of capital and the right of enterprise control and the decision-making power of production and distribution” (Yu, 2013, pp. 57-58). So it can be said that Harry and Mrs. Smith have common interest in the garden. Later, when Harry quits his job as a gardener to Mrs. Smith, she says, “At least we brought the rhodies in” (Updike, 1990, p. 214). The word “we”, on the one hand, indicates that the relationship
between Harry and Mrs. Smith is equal, and that they have established a new type of labor-management partnership; on the other hand, it also shows the principle of economic sharing between them.

In addition, according to “Stakeholder Theory”, Harry and Mrs. Smith have common interests in the garden. In the 1960s, Stakeholder Theory began to appear in western countries. With the development of the theory, its influence is gradually expanding. In 1984, R. Edward Freeman published Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach, in which the term “stakeholder” was first put forward. According to the Stakeholder Theory, the stakeholders of an enterprise are composed of several parts, including internal employees, creditors, consumers, suppliers, communities and other parts in addition to shareholders. According to this theory, any enterprise can only be developed by the joint efforts of all stakeholders. Companies are not just owned by shareholders. What enterprises want to achieve is not only the interests of shareholders, but also the interests of all stakeholders. According to the Stakeholder Theory, in modern society, the role of the owner of means of production in the development of enterprises is gradually decreasing, while the status of other stakeholders is constantly rising. In the 1980s, the United States and other countries began to use Stakeholder Theory to manage companies. Cui Zhiyuan has said that: “Since 1983, 27 states in the United States have amended their company laws, abolishing the concept that shareholders are the sole owners of enterprises, requiring managers to be responsible not only to shareholders, but also to the majority of ‘stakeholders’, and workers are the main members of ‘stakeholders’” (Cui, 1996, p. 18).

It can be seen from this that Harry is the stakeholder of the garden, and its existence, exuberance and decline are closely related to him. He devotes himself to the daily management of the garden, pays for the growth of flowers and trees in the garden, and he also benefits from it. Therefore, although Mrs. Smith owns the garden, Harry has a stake in it.

To sum up, compared with Harry’s previous work, the production relationship in the garden has changed: Harry has the right to manage the garden, which makes his identity close to the old middle class. Because Harry and Mrs. Smith share the same interests in the garden, he is able to take an active part in the garden work and makes more contributions to the management and long-term development of the garden. This is just like under the condition of economic democracy, employees work hard for the enterprise, which is ultimately for their own interests. Because Harry participates in the labor and management of the garden, all kinds of labor tools are under his control, making him the master of labor and its process. Therefore, Harry works in the garden with a sense and spirit of master, full of initiative, sense of responsibility and intervention, and participates in the labor and management activities of the garden with full enthusiasm. Because when workers no longer feel depressed in labor, and can own and control all kinds of means of production needed for production, their enthusiasm for production is the highest. Harry takes the initiative and makes the garden his home. He takes care of the garden and gives advice as much as he can. Although Harry does not legally own the garden, he owns it psychologically because he knows that his skills, experience and sweat are integrated into every plant and flower in the garden. This, to some extent, improves Harry’s job satisfaction, enhances his work motivation, and enables him to gain a sense of identity and belonging. This is at the high level of Maslow’s needs: the needs of society, the need for respect, and the need for self-realization.
Diversity of Horticultural Work

Harry takes charge of the garden and manages the garden and tools, so he works in the garden as if it were his own business. Only when we have the right of management and control, can we take the master’s position in the process of labor and control the process of labor. Therefore, we can realize the elimination of division of labor and alienation. The development of horticultural work depends on the individual gardener, such as his knowledge, experience and skills, and the gardener can maintain his own integrity in the work, and can complete the planning and design, production management and other works by himself. For this reason, gardening, which does not rely on the highly dense organization of modern factories, or on the modern division of labor in its operation, has freed Harry from the bureaucratic management of the vast number of meaningless, mechanical jobs performed by salesmen in retail stores. As for how people achieve labor liberation, Gorz says: “The point now is to free oneself from work by rejecting its nature, content, necessity and modalities” (Gorz, 1982, p. 67). But in the modern world, in order to reduce the per capita cost of sales, the main development direction of modern companies is to implement standardization and rationalization in technology. The bureaucratic system of the sales company regulates and standardizes the work of each salesman. In this way, salesmen gradually lose their independence (Mills, 1969, pp. 208-211). On the contrary, horticulture alleviates the tension between man and nature, eliminates the monotony and fragmentation of the assembly-line production process that makes workers in a state of alienation, and eliminates the labor alienation of workers in the production process. This provides a model for maintaining the integrity of personality and promoting people’s all-round development.

The gardener’s work mainly includes sowing, fertilizing, watering, seedling raising, pruning and other field management of all kinds of flowers and plants. The specific maintenance work involved includes ploughing and weeding, soil improvement, pruning and finishing, replanting, watering and fertilizing, cold protection and overwintering, disease and pest control, greenhouse flowers in and out of the shed, greenhouse construction, maintenance and disinfection. The tools used are very simple (Ye, 2000, pp. 131-136). In addition, gardeners not only need to be science-oriented and reasonable in their work and management, but also should pay attention to the ornamental value of their products of work, which reflects the organic unity of science and art. At the same time, the cultivation of flowers also reflects a person’s cultural and artistic accomplishment. The gardener’s job may seem simple, but there are many steps, such as digging, planting, burying, watering and nursing, involving both hands and heart. It is mentioned in the novel that Harry is responsible for planting flowers, burning dried stems and withered grass, pruning, carrying, digging, packing flowers and mowing grass in the garden, all of which are done by himself. Because of the change and uncertainty of labor steps in the garden, Harry needs to use his knowledge, experience and judgment, gives full play to his potential, concentrates on gardening work according to his own wishes, and combines physical and mental work to form a complete labor.

The garden in which Harry works has no management, no rules and regulations to bind him, and he himself plays the dual roles of management and labor. Harry is the main body in labor. His experience, knowledge and skills are the decisive factors in labor. Here he completely masters the process of work, and labor became an act of independent arrangement, making it subject to his own will. He can start the work according to his own plan, and in the process of work, he can decide the work schedule and working method optionally according to the needs, and can also change the work steps appropriately according to the actual situation of work, instead of being...
stuck in a certain specified work mode or fixed in a work place. Because if everyone can choose to work according to their own preferences, talents and needs, everyone can freely decide the way, intensity and time of work according to their own needs, then the process of labor will no longer appears boring, passive and forced. On the contrary, it is a process full of joy, so that labor is close to the game. In this case, people’s living state is similar to recreation. At the same time, Harry must be familiar with all the work of the gardener and its various steps. Then, in the 1960s, Job Enlargement was prevalent in the West. Job Enlargement refers to the enlargement of the scope of work or the process done by employees, thus increasing the types of work of employees. That is to say, the types of daily work are more than before, and workers need to be familiar with all those types, which varies from a fixed operation in the past to the present multiple operations. This requires employees to learn and master various skills and other professional knowledge. The purpose of this method is to reduce the monotonous repetition of work and improve the enthusiasm and satisfaction of employees, so as to improve their interest in work and work efficiency. Because only when people keep in touch with different things and experience different things can they keep their attention and be full of creativity. Marx describes such a scene: Nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. Because of the diversity of work in the garden, Harry often has to use various labor tools and change different types of work, such as digging soil, planting flowers, pruning and so on, but not limited to a single work of digging soil, planting flowers or pruning. This eliminates the compulsory and fixed division of labor, and avoids the monotony, boredom and dullness of work, so that the work becomes reasonable and happy. As a result, he becomes a versatile horticultural worker, and his skills in all aspects are developed in a coordinated way, showing the richness and diversity of people. According to Marx, the richness of human nature lies in the freedom in labor. Under free labor, he can choose the labor he likes, and he can change his labor according to his own development needs, instead of fixing himself to one labor or occupation forever.

Harry’s work is not only a means to develop its own richness, but also a way to develop its personality. All kinds of means of production in the garden are under the control of Harry, who plays a leading role in the process of work. He works according to his own inner ideas and wills, manages the garden in his own way, and makes labor his own life performance, because this kind of free individual labor is conducive to the creative play of human beings. There is an internal relationship between Harry and the flowers and trees in the garden. In the communication with flowers, trees and various tools, Harry deeply roots his emotion, aesthetic interest and good wishes into the garden, and infuses his own technology, wisdom and sweat into the work, so that he could integrate himself into the garden and gets along harmoniously with the nature. Harry can see the changes brought about by the whole garden under his management, so that his inner ideas to be shown in the whole work are clarified, and the products of labor are produced step by step under his own efforts. "He loves folding the hoed ridge of crumbs of soil over the seeds. Sealed, they cease to be his…… God Himself folded into the tiny adamant structure, Self destined to a succession of explosions, the great slow gathering out of water and air and silicon” (Updike, 1990, p. 141). He manages the garden in his own way according to his own conformation. Harry has completely masters the labor process here, and labor becomes an autonomously arranged behavior. He plays a
positive role in the work, makes the work full of creativity, and marks his own brand everywhere in the garden. Therefore, Mrs. Smith calls the Rhodos in the garden “Harry’s Rhodes”. This is because people can project their inner characteristics onto a product when they make contact with and transform the natural world. Harry makes his personality objectified in gardening work and achieves the showing of his personal life. For Harry, the work in the garden is the externalization of his essence and the embodiment of his inner idea. He can find the objectification of his personality in every corner of the garden, so he feels the happiness brought by the work. Therefore, every product of labor in the garden has a unique attribute, in which Harry can always find a sense of belonging. His personality has been confirmed in labor, so his personal life has also been confirmed in labor. Harry, on the other hand, has little autonomy in selling peelers in retail stores, where the work of salesmen is regulated and standardized. He is not free to give play to its potential, and he just repeats monotonous and boring commodity display, unable to control the labor process and losing the salesman’s creativity and other personality characteristics.

Harry’s labor is fruitful, and the whole garden comes alive under his care. He can see the change which the garden brought about by his administration, so as to make clear the ideas to be expressed in the whole work. This is similar to the craftsman, whose labor products are produced step by step under his own operation. The products of his labor in the garden are not for distribution and exchange, however, Harry and the products of his labor become a part of Mrs. Smith’s life. Every time he plants a seed, he has a new hope, a new expectation, “The simplicity. Getting rid of something by giving it to itself. God Himself folded into the tiny adamant structure…….” (Updike, 1990, p. 141). All this makes Mrs. Smith relaxed and happy, and Harry confirms this from Mrs. Smith’s gratitude to him. As we all know, walking in the garden can adjust the mood, relax the mind and soothe our soul. Mrs. Smith, an elderly autistic, lives by the garden and walks in it, which adds a lot of joy to her life and reduces her loneliness and mental trauma. Seeing the positive impact of his own labor on others, Harry is also satisfied and full of sense of achievement. When Mrs. Smith enjoys the fruits of his labor, Harry realizes that his labor meets Mrs. Smith’s needs, so his essence is objectified, and he has heartfelt joy. Harry cultivates flowers and trees in the garden, and integrates with flowers, trees, birds and insects. In this process, he also helps Mrs. Smith drive away loneliness, thus he finds the value of existence and the happiness of life.

Integration of Labor and Recreation

Harry gets the management power of the garden, so he can arrange his labor like a craftsman. Labor is the expression of freedom and the joy of his life, and the liberation of labor should be the complete realization of leisure, autonomy and freedom. Some people think that: “Some men of that exuberant time saw work as a spur rather than a drag on man’s development as man. By his own activity, man could accomplish anything; through work, man became creator. Leonardo da Vinci rejoiced in creative labor” (Mills, 1969, p. 217). In this regard, some Chinese critics point out that: “The happiness that Mills says is not what Bell called hedonistic happiness, but an essential meaning given to work from the perspective of humanism” (Jin, 2008, p. 12). The work in the garden contains Harry’s great enthusiasm and intelligence, and there is freedom in it. It is not a kind of ordinary labor, for it not only has the meaning of the struggle for survival, but also has become a kind of recreation to a certain extent, in which Harry finds freedom and pleasure.
Harry works in the garden with flowers, birds and trees as companions, breathing fresh air, full of poetry; When planting flowers and plants, he carefully watches them sprout, grow new branches and flowers, and obtains the satisfaction of labor and aesthetic pleasure. Gardening can regulate people’s spiritual life. The intoxicating fragrance of flowers makes people relaxed and happy. In the process of planting flowers and plants, people can adjust their mood and bring them spiritual peace and comfort. It is poetic to get along with many flowers, birds and streams in the garden day and night. Meanwhile, according to Mills, people can achieve their goals at work, and they feel happy and fulfilled. We can see that the outcome of Harry’s labor appears in the process of work, and the work process and results tend to be consistent. Because Harry gives the labor his own mind and skills, he develops himself in that process; In this pure sense, he lives in his work. There is no gap between work and recreation. The joy of completing work permeates in the whole process of work. In this kind of work, Harry feels a sense of fullness and happiness, and integrated his soul into the work, which is unlike his work in retail shop, where he did not trust and did not like the work itself.

Updike uses words such as “warm”, “love” and “puzzle” to describe Harry’s psychological feelings while working in the garden (Updike, 1990, pp. 141-142). Because when Harry works in the garden, he is full of the fun of creativity. After he gets the joy, he could enjoy it to the full. Therefore, in the future work, Harry focuses more on his own labor, and pour his energy, emotion, skills, knowledge and sweat into the gardening work, so as to develop a love for the work, and gain the satisfaction and sense of achievement, and even get artistic experience. Rodin also believes that the only way to make work the purpose of life is to turn people into artists. An artist, Rodin says, “is one who makes a game of his work, and is happy with what he does” (Gsell, 1978, p. 118).

The relaxed rhythm of horticultural work makes labor have a certain nature of freedom, because the objectification of labor is also the realization of freedom. It is only in the mode of production in which man has not yet controlled the process of labor that freedom is separated from the process of labor. This kind of gardening work changes the hard work, fatigue, monotony and tension brought by the job as a salesman Harry has done before, and put leisure, entertainment and aesthetics into labor at the same time. In this case, the boundary between labor and recreation is no longer so clear. Labor is not painful, but similar to recreation and enjoyment. Creativity, aesthetic feeling and games occupy the main position in labor. Harry working as a gardener in the garden reminds us of Adam working in the garden of Eden (Sreenivasulu, 1993, p. 26). Horticultural work involves not only manual but also mental work, so the connection between Harry and gardens is not only biological, but also psychological. From Updike’s description, we can find that Harry gets a sense of fulfillment and happiness in his work, and promotes the integration of labor and mind. That is unlike on the production line, where people are working but their minds have fled. Because labor should be the creation of something in free way, and be the harmonious unity of body and mind, freedom and necessity.

Harry tries to combine the labor that is originally making a living with recreation and freedom, and abandons the shackles of its garden ownership. Freud says in general terms that for the sake of civilization, Eros must be suppressed. Marcuse disagreed with this view, saying that: “Not only would the struggle for existence not necessarily cancel the possibility of instinctual freedom; but it would even constitute a ‘prop’ for instinctual gratification” (Marcuse, 1974, pp. 213-214). Marcuse points out that freedom can exist in the field of necessity and within the scope of this field (Agger, 1991, p. 380). Rather than eliminating labor, Marcuse argues, the “Play
Impulse” humanises the labor by narrowing the difference between necessary labor and free leisure. He does not mean that labor and recreation are the same, but that labor can become a creative practice, that is, “the free expression of human potential”. Even if the distinction between labor and recreation cannot be completely erased, the boundary line between them will become blurred. The method he gives is to transform labor and integrate it with the recreational impulse. In that case, labor would become a kind of recreation and performance, so that people could get rid of the pain of alienated labor. As we can see, in the pre-technological age, the boundary between work as a livelihood and leisure was blurred, and in many cases they were consistent. For example, fishermen went fishing, hunters went hunting, and made and repaired bows and arrows, which in themselves were both necessary and free labor. Primitive man’s work included an element of play. Marcuse advocates that all the necessary labor that is opposed to free labor should be transformed into free labor. In order to eliminate the oppression and alienation contained in labor, it is necessary to transform labor from hard labor to recreation. Marcuse says that: “In a genuinely humane civilization, the human existence will be play rather than toil, and man will live in display rather than need” (Marcuse, 1974, p. 189). In this sense, Marcuse’s “play”, “display” and Schiller’s “game” are essentially the same meaning, which point to beauty and freedom. “The new sensibility,” he argues, “will combine reason with happiness, that is, labor and recreation as defined by tradition” (Agger, 1991, pp. 380-381). Ben Agger advocates “labor-leisure monism”. He thinks that people can realize their basic needs and value in productive activities through “productive leisure” and “creative labor”. 1 Agger opposes the dualism of freedom and necessity, and opposes the division of human existence into labor and leisure (labor refers to “necessary labor”, while leisure refers to “freedom”). He holds that labor and leisure can be equated (Zeng, 2010, p. 200). He tried to unify these opposing aspects in a general sense. Therefore, the distinction between necessary labor and freedom will become blurred and no longer clear, so that people can experience the happiness brought by free labor and finally achieve the unification of “labor-leisure”. Gorz, another representative of Western Marxism, believes that labor and recreation can be organically integrated, and there is no strict distinction between work and life. He vividly described the labor and life in the pre-industrial society: “In all pre-capitalist societies, these pleasurable activities were embedded into productive work. Work was given its rhythm by festivals and celebrations, with their songs and dances; the tools themselves were beautifully decorated… There was, in short, a genuine “popular art” which integrated work and life to create a way of living that had meaning and value…… that there was no separation between work, culture and life” (Gorz, 1985, pp. 48-49).

In this sense, Harry lives in the work, and the joy of completing work permeates in the whole process of work. His work in the garden is equivalent to a kind of game. “It is games, and only games,” Schiller says, “that make a man complete” (Schiller, 2012, p. 48). And “The perfect realization of human nature is beauty” (Ibid. p. 46). According to Marx, the basic needs of human beings depend on their work, “As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production” (Marx & Engels, 2010, p. 147). In the process of cultivating flowers and trees in the garden, Harry not only

1 Ben Agger believes that Marx opposed the dualism of freedom and necessity in his early works, which is often used to defend the division of human existence into two parts: Labor and leisure. Marx emphasized the possibility of non-alienated production. See Ben Agger. Western Marxism: An Introduction. Trans. Shen Zhi, et al. Beijing: China Renmin UP, 1991, p. 497.
engages in the work, but also finds the meaning of life and finds the joy that work brings him he tasted in the past. In contrast, when Harry sells a peeler in a retail store, he feels monotonous and tedious, because the store has regulated and standardized the salesmen’s work, and he needs to put on suits with no personality. Labor exists as a state opposite to him and becomes a kind of alien object.

Conclusion

In his work, Updike describes in detail how Harry works in garden. In the era of economic democratization, Mrs. Smith’s garden is also affected. Harry takes control of the garden and works as hard as he does in his own property, trying to unify the autonomy, creativity and recreation at work. In this unified state, he engages in non-alienated and creative labor in the garden, realizes his own value in the labor, so he “has it pretty good”. Harry’s work in the garden assumes the appearance of returning to the past and restoring the traditional mode of production, but it contains a universal significance and forward-looking motivation, with the characteristics of post-industrial society. It opposes the alienated labor under the industrial mass production, resists all kinds of rules and regulations and monotonous work, and seeks to establish a new harmonious relationship between man and man, man and nature. On the whole, horticultural work is by no means a mere regress; it is an indictment of the destruction of human freedoms by industrial production.

In a word, under the premise of mastering the management power, Harry in the garden strives to achieve the elimination of division of labor and alienation, the integration of labor and recreation, so as to gain more freedom at work. But in general, “the so-called economic democracy in Western countries is in essence an improvement of capitalism, and its nature of the relations of production has not changed fundamentally” (Yu, 2013, p. 55). The limited adjustment of production relations can not eliminate the alienated labor and fundamental contradiction of capitalism. The complete liberation of labor needs the further development of society.

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