

PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY EVALUATION IN ENGLISH MARXIST CRITICISM:

CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL, RAYMOND WILLIAMS AND TERRY EAGLETON

by

KALYAN DAS GUPTA

B.A. (Hons.), Calcutta University, 1975  
M.A., The University of Saskatchewan, 1978

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of English)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

MAY 1985

© Kalyan Das Gupta, 1985

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia  
1956 Main Mall  
Vancouver, Canada  
V6T 1Y3

Date 26 April 1985

## Abstract

### Principles of Literary Evaluation in English Marxist Criticism:

Christopher Caudwell, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton

Supervisor: Dr. Graham Good

This dissertation politically analyses the principles of literary evaluation (here called "axiology") argued and applied by the English critics Christopher Caudwell, Raymond Williams, and Terry Eagleton. The paradoxical fact that all three claim to be working within a Marxist framework while producing mutually divergent rationales for literary evaluation prompts a detailed examination of Marx and Engels. Moreover, since Caudwell and Eagleton acknowledge Leninism to be Marxism, and, further, since Eagleton and I both in our own ways argue that Trotskyism--as opposed to Stalinism--is the continuator of Leninism, the evaluative methods of Lenin and Trotsky also become relevant.

Examined in light of that revolutionary tradition, however, and in view of the (English) critics' high political self-consciousness, the latter's principles of "literary" evaluation reveal definitive political differences between each other and with Marxism itself, centrally over the question of organised action. Thus, each of the chapters on the English critics begins with an examination of the chosen critic's purely political profile and its relationship to his general theory of literature. Next, I show how the contradictions of his "axiology" express those of his politics. Finally, with Hardy as a focus, I show the influence of each critic's political logic on his particular "literary" assessment of individual authors and texts.

The heterogeneity of these critics' evaluations of Hardy, the close correspondence of each critic's general evaluative principles to his political beliefs, and the non-Marxist nature of those beliefs themselves all concretely suggest that none of the three English critics is strictly a Marxist. I do not know whether a genuinely Marxist axiology is inevitable; however, I do admit such a phenomenon as a logical possibility. In any case, I argue, this possibility will never be realised unless aspiring Marxist axiologists seek to match their usually extensive knowledge of literature with an active interest in making international proletarian revolution happen. And, since it can only happen if it is organised, the "Marxist" axiologist without such an orientation will be merely an axiologist without Marxism.

# Contents

Abstract of Dissertation . . . . .	ii
Table of Contents . . . . .	iii
List of Abbreviations . . . . .	iv
Acknowledgments . . . . .	x
Introduction . . . . .	1
Nature, Purpose, and Methodology of the Project . . . . .	1
A Brief Survey of Literary Axiology from the Past to the Present . . . . .	10
Marx and Engels: Base-Superstructure, Class, and Partisanship . . . . .	36
Lenin and the Party Question . . . . .	81
Trotsky and the Defence of the First Workers' State . . . . .	91
Notes . . . . .	114
Christopher Caudwell . . . . .	131
Caudwell's Politics and His General Theory of Literature . . . . .	131
Caudwell's Principles of Literary Evaluation . . . . .	153
Caudwell's Evaluation of Hardy . . . . .	179
Notes . . . . .	194
Raymond Williams . . . . .	203
Williams' Politics and His General Theory of Literature . . . . .	203
Williams' Principles of Literary Evaluation . . . . .	225
Williams' Evaluation of Hardy . . . . .	274
Notes . . . . .	299
Terry Eagleton . . . . .	310
Eagleton's Politics and His General Theory of Literature . . . . .	310
Eagleton's Principles of Literary Evaluation . . . . .	331
Eagleton's Evaluation of Hardy . . . . .	355
Notes . . . . .	366
Conclusion . . . . .	371
Notes . . . . .	380
Bibliography . . . . .	381
Appendixes . . . . .	401
Appendix A . . . . .	401
Appendix B . . . . .	403
Appendix C . . . . .	406



## List of Abbreviations and Short Titles

Note: Some frequently-used titles have been abbreviated in two different ways. Within a sentence, they have been written as a short title; outside a sentence, or when used parenthetically at any point, they have been written in the form of a letter-abbreviation.

<u>Anatomy</u>	<u>Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays</u> , by Northrop Frye.
"Archetypes"	"The Archetypes of Literature," by Northrop Frye.
Bate	Walter Jackson Bate, ed., <u>Criticism: The Major Texts</u> .
"Beauty"	"Beauty: A Study in Bourgeois Aesthetics," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>FS</u> .
<u>BJA</u>	<u>British Journal of Aesthetics</u> .
"Breath of Discontent"	"The Breath of Discontent: A Study in Bourgeois Religion," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>FS</u> .
<u>CA</u>	<u>Class and Art: Problems of Culture under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat</u> , by Leon Trotsky.
<u>Capital</u>	<u>Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production</u> , Vol. I, by Karl Marx. Same abbreviation used for the book as a separate publication and for excerpts from the book in <u>Marx/Engels</u> .
<u>CC</u>	<u>The Country and the City</u> , by Raymond Williams.
"Céline"	"Céline and Poincaré: Novelist and Politician," by Leon Trotsky.
<u>CI</u>	<u>Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory</u> , by Terry Eagleton.
<u>Class and Art</u>	Same as <u>CA</u> .

"Consciousness"	"Consciousness: A Study in Bourgeois Psychology," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>FS</u> .
CPGB	The Communist Party of Great Britain.
<u>Criticism and Ideology</u>	Same as <u>CI</u> .
<u>CS</u>	<u>Culture and Society: 1780-1950</u> , by Raymond Williams.
"Culture"	"Culture and the Soviet Bureaucracy," by Leon Trotsky.
<u>Culture and Society</u>	Same as <u>CS</u> .
Demetz	Peter Demetz, <u>Marx, Engels, and the Poets: Origins of Marxist Literary Criticism</u> .
"D.H. Lawrence"	"D.H. Lawrence: A Study of the Bourgeois Artist," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>S</u> .
<u>DIB</u>	<u>Drama from Ibsen to Brecht</u> , by Raymond Williams.
Doyle	Brian Doyle, "The Necessity of Illusion: The Writings of Christopher Caudwell."
Draper	Michael Draper, "Christopher Caudwell's Illusions."
<u>EN</u>	<u>The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence</u> , by Raymond Williams.
Fischer	Michael Fischer, "The Literary Importance of E.P. Thompson's Marxism."
Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch	D.W. Fokkema and Elrud Kunne-Ibsch, <u>Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century: Structuralism, Marxism, Aesthetics of Reception, Semiotics</u> .
<u>FS</u>	<u>Further Studies in a Dying Culture</u> , by Christopher Caudwell.
<u>The Function of Criticism</u>	<u>The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism</u> , by Terry Eagleton.
Furbank	P.N. Furbank, ed., <u>Jude the Obscure</u> , by Thomas Hardy. Introd. Terry Eagleton.

Hess	Hans Hess, "Is There a Theory of Art in Marx?"
Hyman	Stanley Edgar Hyman, "Christopher Caudwell and Marxist Criticism."
<u>Illusion and Reality</u>	<u>Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry</u> , by Christopher Caudwell.
Introduction	Introduction to <u>Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy</u> , by Karl Marx.
<u>IR</u>	<u>Illusion and Reality</u>
<u>JAAC</u>	<u>Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.</u>
<u>Lenin</u>	<u>Lenin on Literature and Art.</u>
<u>"Les Javanais"</u>	"A Masterly First Novel: Jean Malaquais's <u>Les Javanais</u> ," by Leon Trotsky.
Lifshitz	Mikhail Lifshitz, <u>The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx.</u>
<u>Literary Theory</u>	<u>Literary Theory: An Introduction</u> , by Terry Eagleton.
<u>Long R</u>	<u>The Long Revolution</u> , by Raymond Williams.
<u>LR</u>	<u>Literature and Revolution</u> , by Leon Trotsky.
<u>LT</u>	<u>Literary Theory.</u>
<u>Manifesto</u>	<u>The Manifesto of the Communist Party</u> , by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.
Margolies	David N. Margolies, <u>The Function of Literature: A Study of Christopher Caudwell's Aesthetics.</u>
<u>Marx/Engels</u>	<u>Marx/Engels on Literature and Art.</u>
"Mayakovsky"	"The Suicide of Vladimir Mayakovsky," by Leon Trotsky.
"Men and Nature"	"Men and Nature: A Study in Bourgeois History," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>FS</u> .

"Mirror"	"Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution," by V.I. Lenin.
<u>ML</u>	<u>Marxism and Literature</u> , by Raymond Williams.
<u>MLC</u>	<u>Marxism and Literary Criticism</u> , by Terry Eagleton.
Morawski	Stefan Morawski, Introd. to <u>Marx and Engels on Literature and Art: A Selection of Writings</u> , ed. Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski.
<u>MT</u>	<u>Modern Tragedy</u> , by Raymond Williams.
<u>NLH</u>	<u>New Literary History</u> .
"Pacifism and Violence"	"Pacifism and Violence: A Study in Bourgeois Ethics," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>S</u> .
"Party Literature"	"Party Organisation and Party Literature," by V.I. Lenin.
<u>PL</u>	<u>Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review</u> , by Raymond Williams.
"Poet and Rebel"	"Tolstoy: Poet and Rebel," by Leon Trotsky.
<u>Political Unconscious</u>	<u>The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act</u> , by Fredric Jameson.
<u>Poverty of Theory</u>	<u>The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays</u> , by E.P. Thompson.
Prawer	S.S. Prawer, <u>Karl Marx and World Literature</u> .
Preface	Preface to <u>A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy</u> , by Karl Marx.
<u>The Prophet Unarmed</u>	<u>The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky: 1921-29</u> , by Isaac Deutscher.
"Reality"	"Reality: A Study in Bourgeois Philosophy," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>FS</u> .

<u>Romance and Realism</u>	<u>Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature</u> , by Christopher Caudwell.
<u>RR</u>	<u>Romance and Realism.</u>
RSDLP	Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.
<u>S</u>	<u>Studies in a Dying Culture</u> , by Christopher Caudwell.
Schiff	"Marxist Literary Criticism," by Terry Eagleton. In Hilda Schiff, ed., <u>Contemporary Approaches to English Studies.</u>
"Shaw"	"George Bernard Shaw: A Study of the Bourgeois Superman," by Christopher Caudwell. In <u>S.</u>
Slaughter	Cliff Slaughter, <u>Marxism, Ideology and Literature.</u>
Solomon	Maynard Solomon, ed., <u>Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary.</u>
<u>SSFR</u>	<u>Reply to the Guardian: The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited.</u> Spartacus Youth League pamphlet.
<u>State and Revolution</u>	<u>The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution</u> , by V.I. Lenin
"The Strangled Revolution"	"The Strangled Revolution: André Malraux's <u>The Conquerors</u> ," by Leon Trotsky.
<u>The Stubborn Structure</u>	<u>The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society</u> , by Northrop Frye.
"Tolstoy"	"L.N. Tolstoy," by V.I. Lenin.
"Tolstoy and Labour"	"L.N. Tolstoy and the Modern Labour Movement," by V.I. Lenin.
<u>Trotsky</u>	<u>Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art.</u>
Tucker	Robert C. Tucker, ed., <u>The Marx-Engels Reader.</u> 2nd ed., 1978.

Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism, by Terry Eagleton.

WB

Walter Benjamin.

Wellek

René Wellek, "Marx and Engels."

"Wells"

"H.G. Wells: A Study in Utopianism," by Christopher Caudwell. In S.

WR

Women and Revolution.

## Acknowledgments

Dr. Graham Good, my supervisor, and Dr. Herbert Rosengarten, a professor not always directly involved in my particular project, provided many-sided support throughout my programme. Dr. John Doheny and Dr. Fred Stockholder commented usefully on the various drafts. Two friends, Cheryl and Peter, early offered some invaluable advice and joined several other friends in providing crucial material and moral support. And my secretary-friends in the department, especially Ingrid Kuklinski and Rosemary Leach, helped me through many rough times. Finally, I would like to thank my mother for everything by dedicating this dissertation to her, Urmila Das Gupta.

## Introduction

### Nature, Purpose, and Methodology of the Project

This dissertation is intended as a contribution to the Marxist debate on how to judge literature. It attempts to analyse and systematise, from a Marxist viewpoint, the literary-evaluative principles theorised by certain self-described Marxists in England. The examination here focuses on a number of contradictory political tendencies and conclusions in their work. These are viewed in light of decisive historical lessons, drawn from the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. My purpose is to show--I believe for the first time in synthetic form--the political implications of these contradictions for a Marxist theory of literary value. (For economy, I have extensively used the term "axiology" to refer to the theory of literary and other values.)

My dominant presentational strategy is negative and theoretical: I offer what is mainly a critique of the methods of (chiefly) Christopher Caudwell, Raymond Williams, and Terry Eagleton. In part, this is a limited attempt to redress, from a Marxist perspective, a long-standing general academic imbalance. This imbalance was noted even quite recently by, for instance, a prominent non-Marxist critic: "Very little has been done to study the actual process by which great critics have arrived at their valuations of specific works of art."<sup>1</sup> The overall tenor of this work is polemical, not expository. I make no attempt to trace in detail the development of the various Marxist literary and critical theories across the world through history, but merely use specific concepts from them.<sup>2</sup>



My focus on (ostensible) Marxists and on (their) theory is important to understand. I aim to verify the claimed Marxism of Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton, primarily as expressed in the theoretical formulations within the specifically axiological parts of their work. These theoretical formulations are found in two forms: (1) as attitudinal qualifiers implicitly colouring judgments on particular works or authors and (2) as generalisations about literary value explicitly presented as position statements. I examine the internal consistency of these formulations, the overall relationship of each critic's formulations to the experience and logic of revolutionary Marxism from Marx to Trotsky, and the relationship of each critic's axiological formulations to his own political views and logic.

That last enterprise offers one way of verifying the claimed Marxism of these critics, both politically and axiologically. Though this is not a task of decisive importance to the broader task of social, economic, and political revolution, it is a relevant one: the class struggle does not leave the realm of ideology unaffected, nor does the explicitly political motive of so-called Marxist criticism make it possible for the broader struggle to remain insulated from that ideological realm. Many critics themselves make a political issue out of Marxist "literary" theory and largely articulate their own evaluative principles in terms of it. Williams and Eagleton are two examples of such critics. When Marxist method thus becomes a political issue in such a polemical activity as literary criticism, political clarification acquires a relevance substantially greater than what most "literary" criticism is routinely accustomed to. My motivating premise here has been that, in such explicitly political debates, be they conducted within the "cultural" realm or elsewhere, the Marxist method has the right to be defended against distortions--above all against those perpetrated by self-professed Marxists--before being judged. My immediate objective in this political clarification is therefore to verify the consistency of particular critics who claim, in one way or another, to be working within the framework of Marxism; in the course of this examination, however, and through it, I also hope to re-confirm the relevance of Marxism to the social struggle for proletarian revolution in general, and to "literary" evaluation in particular.

One critic who attacks Marxism on the basis of distorted interpretations and avowedly un-Marxist representatives is F.R. Leavis.

After having sarcastically pleaded "guilty to the familiar charge--I have not minutely studied the Bible," Leavis proceeds to dismember the liberal Edmund Wilson as a "good index" of a Marxist critic. He then continues the quixotic massacre, of everyone from A.L. Morton and Granville Hicks (both apologists for Stalinism, a politics inimical to Marxism) to Prince Mirsky: "We have no illusions. There is a choice; we must speak or die: Stalin or the King by Divine Right?"<sup>3</sup> "What are these 'classes,'" he rhetorically asks, challenging a basic analytical tool used by Marxism. And he answers: "Class of the kind that can justify talk about 'class culture' has long been extinct."<sup>4</sup> Yet, as one veteran specialist on precisely such questions--E.P. Thompson--has correctly remarked, "As the world changes, we must learn to change our language and our terms. But we should never change these without reason."<sup>5</sup> I have argued that Marxists have no reason to reject Marx and Engels' use of the category of and specific observations about "class."

In defining my task, I have merely sought to extend to a specific theoretical area (axiology) a particular analytical method geared to specific political interests (Marxism). However, within literary theory, a general connection between "literature" and "politics" has long been recognised. "For to insist that literary criticism is, or should be, a specific discipline of intelligence," says one critic, "is not to suggest that a certain interest in literature can confine itself to the kind of intensive local analysis associated with 'practical criticism'--to the scrutiny of the 'words on the page' in their minute relations, their effects of imagery, and so on: a real literary interest is an interest in man, society, and civilisation, and its boundaries cannot be drawn; the adjective is not a circumscribing one."

Elsewhere the same critic observes, "The more seriously one is concerned for literary criticism, the less possible does one find it to be concerned for that alone . . .; special duties are not ultimately served by neglect of the more general." If the reader is shocked to learn that this firm advocate of "social" criticism is the same person as our recent derider of class analyses, I can only point out that the apparent contradiction is not mine but that of F.R. Leavis and the particular class--the petit bourgeoisie--he speaks for.<sup>6</sup> And, in part, that is precisely the contradiction that, as I hope to show, all three principal objects of this study exhibit as well.

At about the same time that Leavis was pinning the liberal Wilson with the latter's own logic, announcing, "There is, then, a point of view above classes,"<sup>7</sup> the Prague semiotician Jan Mukařovský was stating, "above all the critic is always either the spokesman or conversely the antagonist or even a dissident from some social formation (class, environment, etc.)."<sup>8</sup> I believe that the implications of that observation have been scrutinised most thoroughly by Terry Eagleton. From his first major theoretical work, Criticism and Ideology, to his latest, The Function of Criticism, Eagleton has consistently and persuasively argued that "[c]riticism is not an innocent discipline, and never has been"<sup>9</sup>: "[t]he difference between a 'political' and 'non-political' criticism is just the difference between the prime minister and the monarch: the latter furthers certain political ends by pretending not to, while the former makes no bones about it. . . . It is a distinction between different forms of politics. . . ." Consequently, he points out, "[t]here is no way of settling the question of which politics is preferable in literary critical terms. You simply

have to argue about politics."<sup>10</sup> Specifically, this means that "[t]he problem of a 'Marxist aesthetics' is above all the problem of a Marxist politics."<sup>11</sup>

Mark Roberts, in The Fundamentals of Literary Criticism (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974, p. 69), has "extended" the above argument's validity from interpretation to evaluation. I place "extended" in quotes, however, not only because Roberts' book pre-dates Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology but also because his conception of evaluative relativism remains abstractly philosophical: it largely ignores the existence--not to mention importance--of actual social and political interests. Nevertheless, he phrases one logical implication of Eagleton's argument simply and well: "If my view of the world, its nature and constitution, is radically different from yours, shall I not place a different value from you upon works of literature that deal particularly with those matters upon which our views most noticeably differ?"

This dissertation is an attempt to invest this relativism with the specific political dynamic of Marxism, always--implicitly or explicitly--in effective combat with liberal humanism. For, as Fredric Jameson has observed, "the bankruptcy of the liberal tradition is as plain on the philosophical level as it is on the political: which does not mean that it has lost its prestige or ideological potency. On the contrary: the anti-speculative bias of that tradition, its emphasis on the individual fact or item at the expense of the network of relationships in which that item may be embedded, continue to encourage submission to what is by preventing its followers from making connections, and in particular from drawing the otherwise unavoidable conclusions on the political level."<sup>12</sup>

In setting myself this fairly delimited task, I have obviously rejected, for various reasons, numerous other, related tasks. Of these, perhaps the two most likely to engender dissatisfaction are my refusal here to substantially "apply" my own theory to actual "literary" texts and my principled refusal to negate the logic of my own argument by attempting to posit a more detailed "alternative" axiological model than I deem historically possible at the moment. The refusal to posit a detailed alternative is argued out and defended in the body of my dissertation, especially in the Introduction. The refusal to be a "practical critic" here is motivated partly by space considerations, but also partly by ideological and historical ones, outlined below.

I believe that, in general, "pure" theory, within conjuncturally determinate bounds of reason and potential verifiability, can prove rewarding. It can allow one to step back from the frequently hypnotic power of individual words, passages, or texts, to ponder broad structural, ideological, and historical relationships and significances. And it can enable even the "practical critic" to then resume his or her specialty with a qualitatively enriched, more comparative approach. Besides, while I grant the complete legitimacy and importance of empirical projects, I also note that the heyday of "practical criticism"--in the mode of I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis, and the American New Critics--seems at least for the nonce to be over and to be giving way to generally more theoretical enterprises, even among non-Marxists. Witness, for instance, the rise to eminence of structuralism, phenomenology, semiotics, and deconstruction. Moreover, the work of Terry Eagleton in particular shows that, these days, even so specialised a field as Marxist literary axiology has reached

sophisticated self-consciousness. The very emergence of that field thereby itself provides grounds for being discussed theoretically--that is, for being discussed at its own level and in its own terms. Finally, with Eagleton, I am convinced that at this point in time, the expected aim of Marxist criticism "to subvert the very ideological apparatuses of class-society . . . will not be greatly furthered by yet another Marxist interpretation of George Eliot";<sup>13</sup> hence my self-restriction here to theory.

Within this self-restriction, moreover, projects other than my particular one are and were possible but remained unincorporated. These, too, should be adumbrated here, for their deliberate exclusion defines the limits of my actual exercise's goals. As explained above, my aim is to examine the principles of literary evaluation in Marxist critical theory. This means, among other things, that mine is not a "general" theory of any general literary or critical theory or practice as a whole, Marxist or otherwise. It does depend for its self-definition and elaboration, however, on general theories (Marxist and non-Marxist) of literature, criticism, and literary value. Mine is also not a (Marxist) theory of politically heterogeneous evaluations of actual literary texts: I have not set out to judge the empirical validity of the particular judgments on particular authors or texts made, for instance, by Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton. Though such a concern is valid and even crucial, I have instead concentrated on the political logic of these critics' value theories and judgments, finding that politically more revealing (and formally more manageable) than a primarily factual verification. Of course, certain factual formulations are, in their bias or their error, politically revealing too; but I have

allowed such empirical mechanisms to retain a subordinate role in my endeavour, which, in its conscious emphasis remains a theoretical and political one.

Finally, I have throughout stressed certain connections between axiological criteria and political values and have recommended a conscious alignment, at an historically unprecedented level, of active Marxist politics and professional Marxist literary evaluation. The basis for my claim to originality, if any, thus lies in my insistence on linking two simple but academically all-too-often oversimplified and ignored distinctions. The first distinction is the political difference between purely discursive protestations of leftist sympathy passing for "commitment," on the one hand, and actively organised revolutionary class-struggle (and the committed orientation stemming from it), on the other. The second distinction is the functional difference between "literary" writing (directly concerned with "life") and "critical/evaluative" writing (directly concerned with "literature"). Granting the relativity of the latter, post-Romantic conventional distinction (between "literature" and "criticism"), I nevertheless believe that its terms capture, however inadequately, a real distinction within modern discursive practice. Consequently, I have argued that any counter-productive limitations that an active, organised partisanship may conceivably be felt to impose on "literary" activity do not logically betoken an identical effect on "critical" analysis and evaluation. Most "literature" (novels, plays, poems, some kinds of essays) advances no explicit claim to be political: the social attitudes endorsed in it are correspondingly unsystematised, relatively devoid of any unified programme for social change. But quite the

opposite conditions and tendencies obtain, I would argue, for any considered "criticism" of that "literature." And this is doubly true of theories whose subject is "criticism" itself and which, moreover, overtly profess allegiance to a definite political framework of interests and methods. Such "metacriticism" cannot evade the imputation of self-consciousness, and any individual "metacritic" has the right to interrogate it accordingly.

For axiologists claiming to be Marxist, therefore, their actual attitude towards and active role (if any) in the organised struggle for workers' revolution acquires a decisive centrality. Their authenticity as Marxist specialists is put to the ultimate test over what they say and do about that key political question: over what they politically avow and whether they practice what they profess. Incidentally, self-described Marxist critics themselves invite such testing by explicitly and justifiably broaching the relevance of their political views to the operations of their critical analyses, evaluations, and theories. My main concern here, however, is not with the formal credibility of the "Marxist" axiologists' official self-image. In the first place, my concern is with the internal, substantive genuineness--the political credentials of the assumptions, methods, and conclusions--of the axiology itself. But my point also is that objectively, formal participation in organised struggle is naturally constitutive of and indispensable to any genuinely Marxist credentials. It is difficult enough to remain, in one's theories, unvaryingly true to one's real experiences and impulses. But the task of theorising becomes practically impossible if one has to "guess" what these experiences and impulses might be, from a position exterior and hostile to them. One



cannot even interpret--much less evaluate or decisively shape--literary phenomena in the declared interests of a collective political goal, if one spurns the organised struggle central to its achievement.

If, therefore, particular axiologists wish to insist that they are Marxists, they must clearly seek and demonstrate political consistency, in chiefly two respects: (1) in respect of their ability to analyse and evaluate reality in light of historical lessons, through the framework of interests articulated by Marx and Engels, and (2) in respect of their willingness to act concertedly to change reality in accordance with those interests, analyses, and evaluations. And such consistency, I have argued, is inconceivable today without the shaping and irreplaceable experience of working in an organisation that functions as the collective memory and practical leader of the revolutionary working class. This emphasis on an organised Marxist orientation is what I believe constitutes my specific contribution to the current debate within Marxist literary axiology.

#### A Brief Survey of Literary Axiology from the Past to the Present

At least since the advent of Aristotle's Poetics (fourth century B.C.), Western literary and critical theory has always treated, explicitly or implicitly, the issue of literary value and evaluation as an organic part of its general aesthetic discussion.<sup>14</sup> However, over the centuries, the treatment has changed in its form, definition, and emphasis, in general acquiring increasing self-consciousness as well as social and political consciousness. To simplify history only a little, one might fairly suggest that political literary axiology in its present

self-conscious form does not really emerge in conventional critical theory till Matthew Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864) and Culture and Anarchy (1869).

Both Aristotle's Poetics and Horace's Art of Poetry (first century B.C.) deal primarily with the internal structure and ingredients of a work of art. The authors do not equally address the problems of literary evaluation, though they do propose individual components of particular genres as bearers of literary value. Thus, Aristotle proposes the concept of a cathartic effect as one index of the genuineness of tragedy. Horace's emphasis on simplicity and unity suggests other indices, incidentally also found in Aristotle. But Horace's work addresses a technical problem in the writing (or "production") of poetry more than it proposes a set of criteria for judging it. Longinus' treatise On the Sublime (first century A.D.) deals more extensively than Aristotle's or Horace's with the emotional components of rhetoric and hence, by association and implication, with the emotional dynamics of literary response. However, his emphasis falls on questions of style and morality, two very limited though important components of evaluation; and his pedagogical aim resembles Horace's. Moreover, his definitions of the sublime are clearly too dependent on the idealist notion of "the soul" to be directly appropriable by dialectical and historical materialism (Marxism).

If we pass over what are mostly restatements of these "classical" problematics by the Renaissance critics (such as Philip Sidney and Pierre Corneille) and variations of them by the Neoclassicists (such as John Dryden, Alexander Pope, David Hume, and Joshua Reynolds), we arrive at the Romantics and, with them, at the beginnings of axiological

problematics as they predominantly define themselves in our era. This is to say simply that many of the individual axiological issues and criteria raised by Western criticism in previous centuries become, in the Romantic period, explicitly politicised within a framework that continues to define Western society and thought to this day.

The shift in axiological self-consciousness and analytical approach can be observed in some of the formulations as well as the title of an essay such as William Hazlitt's "Why the Arts Are Not Progressive" (1814): contrast, for instance, Joseph Addison's "The Pleasures of the Imagination" from a century earlier (Bate, pp. 184-87). By the time of S.T. Coleridge, we notice that the self-consciousness of "criticism" signalled in Pope's An Essay on Criticism (1711) is beginning to consolidate itself. One of Coleridge's early essays is entitled "On the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts" (1814). In it he asserts the notion, common even today, that "[t]he Good . . . is always discursive" and "[t]he Beautiful . . . is always intuitive" (Bate, p. 375). Clearly, increasing self-consciousness does not automatically entail a materialist philosophy. Thus, on the one hand, the self-consciousness of a Hazlitt produces the materialist distinction between the "earliest stages of the arts, when the first mechanical difficulties had been got over, and the language as it were acquired" and the later stages when "they rose by clusters and in constellations, never to rise again" (Bate, p. 293). On the other hand, the self-consciousness of a Coleridge produces a more subjective, purely idealist counterpart of Hazlitt's distinction, remaining preoccupied with disinterested intellectual contemplation and intuition (Bate, p. 373). Yet both these tendencies--an interest in the actual behaviour

of art and criticism and an urge to deny the usefulness of that material interest and experience at least to some--combine, though only selectively, in the critical theory of Matthew Arnold.

Arnold is an early and not entirely misplaced testimony to the fact that, just as critical self-consciousness does not guarantee materialism, so "political" self-consciousness does not guarantee Marxism. The particular politics informing Arnold's literary axiology is liberal humanism, a politics that to one degree or another has defined most Western non-Marxist schools of criticism and critical theory since his time.<sup>15</sup> One important difference between Arnold and his ideological peers, however, is the fact that he is, as Eagleton puts it, "refreshingly unhyprocritical" (LT, p. 24). In Arnold's critical ruminations, one may observe in their virtually unconcealed form all the political assumptions, interests, and values that mould a liberal humanist's pronouncements on "literary" value. It is this virtual transparency of motive that, as we shall see, worries that other prominent, latter-day liberal humanist critic, Northrop Frye.

Liberal humanism is a political characteristic of much post-nineteenth century criticism; methodologically, however, it is neither homogeneous nor all-inclusive. One critical methodology it partly straddles and partly excludes is that commonly and loosely known as "sociological" criticism. Among the early "sociological" critics may be found names such as Mme. de Staël (1766-1817), Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-69), and Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine (1828-93). The characterisation of these critics' works as "sociological" is a loose one because here again we find each individual critic emphasising different sets of social factors, in keeping with his or her general

outlook and interest in the world. However, one point at which, even if only in a rough sense, the passive "sociological" method intersects an active historical, dialectical, and materialist engagement with the world is the mature works of Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95). The earliest source of my political argument is traceable to the mature thought and practice of these two nineteenth-century revolutionaries. It is their works that are wittingly or unwittingly invoked by the multiplicity of modern critical theorists claiming to be Marxist. And, as such, they will be (selectively) examined in some detail later.

As I suggested earlier, political literary axiology in its present form is a relatively recent phenomenon, virtually non-existent before Matthew Arnold. Moreover, a certain spread still exists--narrower among the Marxists, wider among non-Marxist literary theorists--with regard to attitudes towards the possibility, usefulness, and correct mechanics of literary evaluation and value theory. In this Introduction, I have concentrated in general on those modern critics who view axiology as both possible and useful; and, in particular, I have focused on those who address Marxist theory as well.

An entire range of chiefly non-Marxist critics argues, with varying mutual consistency, that all systematic evaluation is ultimately pointless and that theorists should simply accept, without analysis or criticism, the plurality of spontaneous evaluative responses induced in them when they read literature. This body of critics ranges politically from conservatives such as Harold Osborne, through liberals such as Northrop Frye, effective social democrats such as Raymond Williams, and ostensible Marxists such as Tony Bennett, to anarchists such as Roger

B. Rollin.<sup>16</sup> While their reasons for advocating abstention from systematisation in evaluation vary, the majority of these critics seem to share a paradoxical conception of literature and criticism as at once decisive and peripheral to society's existence.<sup>17</sup> Their dismissal of "extrinsic" judgment goes hand in hand with an exclusive concentration on the "literary" as the vortex of cultural life. This effective underestimation of material social factors reveals their distance from the Marxist conception of the limited self-generating power and social potency of literature and criticism.

Perhaps the best-known non-Marxist spokesman for judgmental agnosticism today is Northrop Frye, and his chapter "On Value-Judgment," in The Stubborn Structure (pp. 66-73), is a concise statement of his position.<sup>18</sup> Strictly, Frye's views on evaluation are inseparable from his general theory of literature, which is in turn an organic part of his idealist philosophy and his aggressively anti-Marxist, liberal-humanist political stance.<sup>19</sup> Frye's general outlook, however, does produce certain flat self-contradictions in his statements on literary value itself which are relatively discrete and hence capable of separate analysis.

In its most explicit form, Frye's treatment of the merits or demerits of evaluation is facile, both in methodology and in formulation. Thus, in The Stubborn Structure, he equates all value-judgements with so-called "stock responses," uncereemoniously dismissing both (p. 72). Apart from the questionable logic of dismissing any response merely because it is "stock," regardless of whether or not it thereby recognises a certain relatively stable truth about reality, Frye's method leads to a series of similarly dubious

equations of value-judgment with "the rejection of knowledge" (p. 72) and "anti-intellectualism" (p. 73). Frye's dismissiveness is vividly captured in his statement that "[t]he only value-judgment which is consistently and invariably useful to the scholarly critic is the judgment that his own writings, like the morals of a whore, are no better than they should be" (p. 69). Frye later explicitly acknowledges the phenomenological premise of this statement when he claims that "a writer's value-sense can never be logically a part of a critical discussion: it can only be psychologically and rhetorically related to that discussion. The value-sense is, as the phenomenological people say, pre-predicative" (p. 70). This position in turn merely expresses axiologically Frye's functionalist conception of ideal, disinterested criticism in general: "One of the tasks of criticism is that of the recovery of function, not of course the restoration of an original function, which is out of the question, but the recreation of function in a new context."<sup>20</sup>

Frye rejects Arnold's particular absolutist method of evaluation, one which judges literary works by measuring them against arbitrary "touchstones." But he does so not because of Arnold's aristocratic, explicitly anti-working-class touchstones, which he merely notes, but because of Arnold's introduction, into his judgment, of any extra-"literary," "social" and class considerations whatsoever: "Arnold's 'high seriousness' evidently is closely connected with the view that epic and tragedy, because they deal with ruling-class figures and require the high style of decorum, are the aristocrats of literary forms. . . . We begin to suspect that the literary value-judgments are projections of social ones. . . . [A]nd criticism, if it is not to

reject half the facts of literary experience, obviously has to look at art from the standpoint of an ideally classless society" (Anatomy, pp. 21-22). The rejection of Arnold's particular (upper-class) criteria therefore leads Frye to adopt the "standpoint" not of what Marxists regard as an historically more progressive class--the working class--but of a "classless society" admitted to be entirely ungrounded in present reality. This purely imaginary transcendence of existing class-society can only be characterised by Marxists as an evasion of reality. It offers no concrete method of engaging with the existing, class-induced qualities of literature today. And it is certainly not the same as the Marxists' own orientation towards a classless society through the social resolution--not evasion--of class conflict. Marxists would argue that Frye's "standpoint" of a "classless society" bespeaks not a programmatic orientation towards achieving such a society, through changing class-reality, but a mental escape from it. Indeed, they might further argue that the charge of "reject[ing]" the "facts" of "experience" assumes dubious connotations when it issues from him: Marxists, too, "reject" many "facts" of their experience, in the sense of striving to better people's existing conditions of living; but Frye here is clearly attributing to all principled evaluation a willful blindness towards reality that is perhaps more properly applicable to his own method. This is the only characterisation I can make of his even-handed and contemptuous rejection of all class-perspectives as "perverted culture" and of all revolutionary action as anti-cultural, precisely in the declared interests of an abstract, Arnoldian liberalism:

The social energy which maintains the class structure produces perverted culture in its three chief forms: mere upper-class



culture, or ostentation, mere middle-class culture, or vulgarity, and mere lower-class culture, or squalor. . . . Revolutionary action, of whatever kind, leads to the dictatorship of one class, and the record of history seems clear that there is no quicker way of destroying the benefits of culture. . . . It seems better to try to get clear of all such conflicts, attaching ourselves to Arnold's other axiom that 'culture seeks to do away with classes.' The ethical purpose of a liberal education is to liberate, which can only mean to make one capable of conceiving society as free, classless, and urbane. No such society exists, which is one reason why a liberal education must be deeply concerned with works of imagination. (Anatomy, p. 347)

Frye obviously believes that this exclusive focus on works of "imagination" inhabiting an utterly non-existent realm does not constitute a blatant rejection of "half the facts of literary experience." This is the familiar, one-sided view and universalist rhetoric of bourgeois, liberal humanism, a combination historically counterposed to the open partisanship of Marxism.

Of course, Frye's enjoinders to critical theorists to abstain from partisan evaluation and to reject more than half the facts of class-experience contradict his own practice. Not only does he repeatedly valorise or downgrade particular authors and specific values; the firm absolutism of his personal choices and their arbitrary rationalisations exactly reify in practice the logic of his utopian, idealist theory. Thus, on the one hand, Frye argues in Anatomy that "[t]here are no definite positions to be taken in chemistry or philology and if there are any to be taken in criticism, criticism is not a field of genuine learning" (p. 19). He finds "comparisons of greatness" "odious," recommending that they be "left to take care of themselves" (p.27): "criticism has no business to react against things, but should show a steady advance toward indiscriminating catholicity" (p. 25). He

declares "[t]he goal of ethical criticism" to be "transvaluation, the ability to look at contemporary social values with the detachment of one who is able to compare them in some degree with the infinite vision of possibilities presented by culture" (p. 348).

On the other hand, proceeding from his abstract and questionable concept of a "pure" literature--which, "like pure mathematics, contains its own meaning" (p. 351) and whose "central myth . . . in its narrative aspect . . . [is] . . . the quest-myth" ("The Archetypes of Literature," in Bate, p. 607)--Frye freely counterposes "mediocre works of art" to "the profound masterpiece" ("Archetypes," Bate, p. 604). He contrasts "popular literature which appeals to the inertia of the untrained mind" to "a sophisticated attempt to disrupt the connection between the poet and his environment," such as in Joyce ("Archetypes," Bate, p. 607). And he counterposes "redeemable" to "irredeemable art" (Anatomy, p. 25). He openly states that "[t]he real concern of the evaluating critic is with positive value, with the goodness, or perhaps the genuineness of the poem . . ." (Anatomy, p. 27), and confidently asserts that "[t]he critic will find soon, and constantly," that Milton simply "is a more rewarding and suggestive poet to work with than [Sir Richard] Blackmore" (Anatomy, p. 25). In a similarly absolutist vein, Frye also asserts that "the poet makes changes not because he likes them better but because they are better" ("Archetypes," Bate, p. 603).<sup>21</sup>

Frye is thus caught in the contradiction between his appeals for "undiscriminating catholicity" and his actual practice of selecting particular authors and evaluative criteria on a class-specific--that is, on a consistently bourgeois-elitist--basis. Yet, Frye himself occasionally shows an awareness of his practical absolutism, for

instance acknowledging that his Anatomy "takes certain literary values for granted, as fully established by critical experience" (Anatomy, p. 20). And indeed, at one point, perceiving the frequently unfeasible outcome of his functionalist logic in practice, yet unable to spell out the methodological alternative to that dead-end, Frye literally leaves his contradiction hanging, between a negation and an uncertainty: "To bring my own view that criticism as knowledge should constantly progress and reject nothing into direct experience would mean that the latter should progress toward a general stupor of satisfaction with everything written, which is not quite what I have in mind" (Anatomy, p. 28). Not surprisingly, we never find out what alternative he does quite have in mind.

Yet the example of Frye is, for Marxists, more productive than that of most of his co-thinkers; for, unlike them, he spells out the self-defeating circularity of his own non-Marxist logic. Marxists would neither profess or advocate "undiscriminating catholicity" nor wish to ignore bourgeois society's real, definitive class-polarities in practice. Consequently, even though this would and does ultimately entail difficult practical decisions about revolutionary commitment to class-struggle, Marxists would at least aspire to that crucial seriousness of conviction and consistency of logic that seems to be lacking from Frye's flippant dismissal of all "revolutionary actions." Yet, even in self-contradiction, Frye is superior to most of his co-thinkers. For he recognises and acknowledges--however imprecisely, clinically, and minimisingly--precisely that unity of idea and action that forms the backbone of Marxism (which he dismissively lumps together with Nietzscheanism and certain "rationalisations of oligarchic

values"). Thus, there can be few more telling recommendations to abandon Frye himself than his own involuntary tribute to that same object of his contempt--Marxism:

If we cut through history at any point, including our own, and study a cross-section of it, we get a class structure. Culture may be employed by a social or intellectual class to increase its prestige; and in general, moral censors, selectors of great traditions, apologists of religious or political causes, aesthetes, radicals, codifiers of great books, and the like, are expressions of such class tensions. We soon realise, in studying their pronouncements, that the only really consistent moral criticism of this type would be the kind which is harnessed to an all-round philosophy of society, such as we find not only in Marxism but in Nietzsche and in some of the rationalisations of oligarchic values in nineteenth-century Britain and twentieth-century America. In all these culture is treated as a human productive power which in the past has been, like other productive powers, exploited by other ruling classes and is now to be revalued in terms of a better society. But as this ideal society exists only in the future, the present valuation of culture is in terms of its interim revolutionary effectiveness.

This revolutionary way of looking at culture is also as old as Plato. . . . (Anatomy, p. 346)

In contrast to the non-Marxist faction discouraging value theory, typified by Frye, we find a substantial non-Marxist grouping and a smaller pool of self-declared Marxists who favour such theorising. The non-Marxist axiologists are extremely heterogeneous; they range from narrow particularists, discussing the possibility of various single criteria of value, to mere describers of the abstract dynamics of evaluation. Some of them, however, even share much of their empirical observations and logic with the Marxists. Nevertheless, none of them manages to generalise these observations to the point of questioning their own overall, usually rationalist theoretical framework. Even the most sophisticated of these theorists thus remains on a course parallel to or--at best--converging on Marxism.<sup>22</sup>

By far the most thorough, wide-ranging, and cogent statement from this group of non-Marxist axiologists is Barbara Herrnstein Smith's anti-Frye polemic, "Fixed Marks and Variable Constancies: A Parable of Literary Value," in Poetics Today, 1, Nos. 1-2 (Autumn 1979), 7-22. In so far as class-riven society could ever yield a general, trans-class algebra of evaluation, Smith's work offers us a glimpse of it. Indeed, Marxists could well harness, with advantage, Smith's formulations to their own method: they need merely subordinate them to a Marxist overview, crucially by inserting the class-differential as a modification.

Smith provides a useful general history, sociology, and psychology of evaluative dynamics in its various forms--implicit and explicit, personal and institutional. She vividly sketches the various situational factors contributing to a text's perceived value, the real principles as well as the external range and internal patterning of all evaluation, and the numerous variables shaping the specific forms of all the (relative) "constancies" of value. While she commences with an account of the complexity and slipperiness of all evaluation, Smith actually concludes with a positive recommendation for cautious evaluation, in explicit opposition to Frye's theoretical agnosticism and its obverse, empirical absolutism. Indeed, the logic of her argument seems ultimately to indicate Marxism as the only productive way forward, and she herself seems far from hostile to that option.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Smith begins by pointing out that, in a sense, evaluation is "always compromised, impure, contingent; . . . always Time's fool" (p. 8). Evaluation starts with the writer's own acts of creation, alteration, rejection, and approval (p. 8); this is followed by "an

intermediary history of valuing, also variable, also contingent": "publishing, printing, purchasing and preserving" (p. 9). Acts of suppression (as with the Quarto edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets) and of selection (as with all anthologists) are also implicit acts of evaluation, and so are the acts of teaching, scholarly analysis, and even informal quotation (pp. 9-10, 15). Yet value remains impure; evaluation remains contingent (p. 9). And perhaps nothing illustrates this fact more vividly than the history of all the negative responses to Shakespeare's Sonnets evoked through the centuries, from critics whom Smith respects as "men of education and discrimination": Dr. Johnson, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Byron, Hallam, John Crowe Ransom, Yvor Winters (p. 10). This is why, to emphasise her theoretical point, Smith herself refuses to offer "her own" practical evaluation of the Sonnets.<sup>24</sup>

But the conclusion that Smith draws from these observations is neither subjectivist-empiricist nor abstractly absolutist. For she firmly rejects "the well-known social parochialism of academic critics" (p. 15); "experience," she notes, is double-edged: it "not only deepens and broadens us; it also batters, scars, individualises and specialises us; experience is a provincialism of its own, separating us from our fellow creatures" (p. 11). On the other hand, equally out of the question for her is the possibility of absolute--what she calls "objective"--value (p. 17). Thus, "nothing hits the spot all the time, because the spot is always different" (p. 14); also, perception of value largely depends on "the nature and potency of our own assumptions, expectations, capacities and interests" (p. 16); literary value is thus "radically relative and therefore 'constantly variable'" and contingent (p. 17).

But, Smith firmly clarifies, "none of the terms here--contingent, relative or variable--is equivalent to 'subjective' . . ." (p.17). Rejecting both traditional "dead-end conclusions" of subjectivist axiology--"either de gustibus non disputandum est . . . or the conviction that there exists . . . objective value"--Smith argues instead that "the variables in question are limited and 'regular'": that is, "they occur within ranges" and "they exhibit patterns and principles"; and "in that sense, but only in that sense, we may speak of 'constancies' of literary value" (p. 17). Thus, these variable constants "should be distinguished from other kinds and conceptions of invariance that are associated with theories of literary value. . . . [T]he constancies are not equivalent to what are sometimes referred to as the 'universals' of human nature" (p. 20).

As Smith moves towards her conclusion, she more and more reveals the inadequacies of her seemingly purely rationalist framework. Thus, most crucially, she adds an algebraic corollary that finds no particular, concrete illustration within her article, but which poses her logical problem in such a way as to clearly indicate a concrete, class-defined solution. (And today, as always, it is not the liberal critics of the Frye school but Marxists who stand to gain most by advancing their solution from their own, openly class-partisan point of view). Research, Smith points out, "does not conclude with the discovery of variability: we must seek to account for the variabilities themselves. . . ." And invoking "basic [biological] mechanisms of human perception and cognition" is not enough, for they "will always operate differentially in different environments and interact with a broad range of other variables (historical, cultural, situational, etc.) . . ."

(p. 20). Similarly, "[t]he attempt to locate invariance in the nature (or, latterly, the structure) of the works themselves" is "misguided," for two reasons: "different features or properties will be valued differently by different audiences, etc., but, more significantly . . . [,] the very perception of those presumed properties will vary" (p. 21). Thus, Smith concludes--echoing the phenomenological argument, though never denying the reality and importance of all the relative, contributing factors--that,

like all value, literary value is not the property of an object or of a subject, but, rather, the product of the dynamics of a system. As readers and critics of literature, we are within that system; and, because we are neither omniscient nor immortal and do have particular interests, we will, at any given moment, be viewing it from some perspective. It is from such a perspective that we experience the value of a work and also from such a perspective that we estimate its potential value for others. There is nothing illusory in the experience, however, or necessarily inaccurate in the estimate. From that real--if limited--perspective, at that real--if transient--moment, our experience of the value of the work is its value. Or, in the terms I should prefer: our experience of "the value of the work" is equivalent to our experience of the work in relation to the total economy of our existence. And the reason our estimates of its potential value for other people may be quite accurate is that the total economy of their existence may, in fact, be quite similar to that of our own. (P. 21)

Smith's above formulations, essentially pointing to the "system" and the evaluator's "perspective" as decisive factors, seem to me to confirm--in their limited, indirect, and negative way--Marx and Engels' thesis that the history of all hitherto existing society since the advent of written records is the history of class-struggle. For, Smith's abstract rejection of subjectivism and absolutism implicitly and futilely begs a concrete resolution, one that can posit a real "variable constancy" in present society. It is here, I believe, that



the Marxist perceptions about "class" can provide the missing real factor to resolve the dilemma of Smith's abstract algebra.

With an article such as Robert Weimann's "'Reception Aesthetics' and the Crisis in Literary History," in Clio, 5, No. 1 (1975), 3-35, the pro-evaluation discussion begins to shade over into the Marxist side of the spectrum. Weimann's article is a telling pro-Marxist critique of limitless relativism, especially as exemplified by the "reception aesthetics" of Hans Robert Jauss. Yet, I categorise Weimann's article as "pro-Marxist" rather than Marxist, and I do this for a reason.

Undoubtedly, his exposé of Jauss's bourgeois-reformist political assumptions employs negative arguments that Marxists themselves would find indispensable; and his concise characterisation of "tradition," for instance, reveals his easy grasp of the general Marxist method of dialectical-historical materialism ("As an historical category, 'tradition' . . . applies to objective relationships in the literature of the past, but it also applies to a necessary relationship of the literary historian to the past" [p. 16]). However, he never emerges with a positive methodological class-alternative to Jauss's bourgeois-reformism: and his entire polemic lacks this alternative class-axis, so that even his generally materialist discussions of "tradition" sometimes reveal traces of absolutism (as in his sanguine tone in referring to past "masterpieces" [p. 28]). Nevertheless, Weimann's article does provide useful ammunition for the argument that "the dialectic between structure and function, between the history of genesis and the history of effect deserves to be at the centre of a new methodological conception of literary history" (pp. 20-21). While one might question the centrality of this particular dialectic as Weimann

describes it, depending on one's overall theoretical project, Weimann's attempt to historicise the entire problematic of literary production and consumption is one wholly compatible with and in the interests of Marxism.

In its current spate and form, the discussion of literary value among self-declared Marxists almost certainly dates from Terry Eagleton's chapter "Marxism and Aesthetic Value," in Criticism and Ideology (pp. 162-87). We shall examine Eagleton's argument in detail in Chapter 4. Here, we may merely note that he deplores a certain "theoretical prudery . . . in vogue within Marxist aesthetics" which, "[a]t its simplest level . . . appears as an egalitarian unease about the 'elitism' of assigning certain works to second-class status" and, "[i]n its more sophisticated form . . . presents itself as a rigorous scientificity hostile to the idealism of 'normative' judgment"; "evaluation," he observes, "is thus evacuated from the realm of literary science, to be furtively cultivated, perhaps, as a private pleasure" (CI, pp. 162-3).

Peter Widdowson's "'Literary Value' and the Reconstruction of Criticism," in Literature and History, 6, No. 2 (Autumn 1980), 138-50, offers a thoughtful and suggestive response to Eagleton (as well as to Tony Bennett), outlining certain "pragmatic" empirical projects compatible with Eagleton's theory and salvable from Bennett's extreme conjuncturalism (pp. 139-40). The projects constitute, within the realm of discourse, a virtual emergency programme to stop further bourgeois ravagement of culture (pp. 143-44, 147-48). At the same time, Widdowson acknowledges the overall limits of such purely discursive measures and the need for "a radical restructuring of the education

system and of the society which sustains it" as the only long-term solution (p. 147).

Widdowson's seven broadly-categorised exercises urge more detailed analyses of commonly-discussed literary "traditions" and their individual authors. They call for historical demystification of the institutions of "literature" and "criticism" themselves, for renewed emphasis on the details of literary production (as opposed to Bennett's emphasis on consumption, or response), and for explanations of "the way the 'major' authors of the past are 'produced' (and valued) in our own age" (pp. 147-49). It is a proposition deserving careful consideration. Yet, Widdowson's obvious ability to link the ideal to the real remains within the overall framework of the very academic discourse that he himself acknowledges to be self-defeating. In that sense, he ultimately writes as a critic first, and as a Marxist later, thus succumbing in reality to the same reversed priorities that handicap virtually all non-revolutionary intellectuals formally sympathetic to Marxism.

While the present axiological debate within ostensible Marxism seems to date from Eagleton's key chapter in Criticism and Ideology, its immediate pre-history reaches back to the rise of Stalinist ideology, commonly associated with the "thirties" and, in Britain, with such critics as Christopher Caudwell, Alick West, and George Thomson. I shall discuss Caudwell in the next chapter, but a glance at a sample-piece on literary value by West would be useful for introducing that entire mode of critical theory.

In his chapter on "The Relativity of Literary Value," in Crisis and Criticism,<sup>25</sup> Alick West makes the class-connection between values

and evaluation that non-Marxists ignore or minimise, though his positive programme is the contradictory, so-called "socialist humanism" of Stalin and his literary co-thinkers, the later Gorky and A.A. Zhdanov. West's formulations on the question are not always self-consistent or clear; but, in fact, they are more sharply focussed than those of his mentor and peer, Caudwell.

West proceeds from the materialist premise that the priorities and experiences of life--especially of political life--determine literary theory and evaluative criteria, not vice versa:

If we realise in our own lives that we have to contribute to making society, we like the literature which embodies that creation. If we are content to exploit society, we have no possibility of interest in literature. . . . But criticism does not decide whether we were stirred by emotion; our lives do that. (P. 102)

As he puts it earlier in the chapter, "We value literature as we value our lives, for it is a part of our lives" (p. 101). Further, West completes the logic of his albeit flawed Marxist orientation by explicitly asserting that "the most creative movement in our society" is none other than "socialism" (as he understands that concept). And from this self-avowedly socialist perspective flows his critical manifesto: "[T]he criticism of our lives, by the test of whether we are helping forward the most creative movement in our society, is the only effective foundation of the criticism of literature" (p. 102). Thus, "[t]he social organism to which literature has to be related, is humanity in its advance to socialism. The function of criticism is to judge literature, both content and form, as a part of this movement. It can only fulfill this function if it takes part in this movement itself on

the side of the workers of the world" (p. 103).

But West is far from employing that manifesto, in its abstraction, as a catch-all. He wants to explain reality by recognising it, not explain it away by reducing its complexity. Abstract theory, for West, must thus await refinement or face rejection if it cannot explain, in its given form, all the facts of one's literary experience:

It should perhaps be pointed out that the analysis of value given here cannot be used as a touch-stone. The theory of value depending on the expression of the alternations in fundamental social experience does not enable us to read a poem with a blank mind, note the alternations, and then pass judgment. The heightening of social energy [which is literature's valuable effect] has to be felt before the means by which it was aroused can be studied. The stir of emotion is prior to analysis, and the condition of it. . . . But criticism does not decide whether we were stirred; our lives do that. And if they are such that we are stirred by what is bad, no critical theory is proof against being twisted into self-justification. (P. 102)

Against any such artificial self-justification, West counterposes as the criterion of value "the test of whether we are helping forward the most creative movement in our society" (p.102). "The value of literature," he says, paralleling Caudwell, "springs from the fact that it continues and changes the organisation of social energy" (p. 101). Debatable though this criterion might be, to West it obviously appears to have the "advantage" (over many equivalent but abstract ones) of being practically verifiable.

Thus, for West, the dialectics of evaluation are both concrete and complex. They preclude not only absolutism and extreme (subjective) relativism, both of which deny the real but transitory nature of literary experience; they also preclude any view of the work that might deny the ingredients of the work itself by invoking what it presumes to

be the completely dissimilar and unrelated response of different social classes to it. Hence, says West, "our judgments are not only temporary class prejudices, but contain truth" (p. 101); and "the beauty of literature is the felt truth that we live through organised productive activity" (p. 101). Therefore, the "undertone of scepticism, that we cannot trust our taste, denies the experience of valuing. . . . To discuss the relativity of value from the standpoint that we have no reason whatever for believing in ourselves, is useless metaphysics; for we do believe in ourselves" (p. 101). Nevertheless, West admits, "we may be, and often are, wrong," and therefore must evaluate literature through the objective criterion of its impact on "the organisation of social energy" (p. 101).

With the "thirties'" school of Marxists, as exemplified by West, we touch contentious claims to and interpretations of Marxism that form a major area of concern in the rest of my dissertation.<sup>26</sup> These conflicts are best illuminated and resolved by reexamining the theories and practical histories of the classical, revolutionary Marxists themselves--Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky.

Certain important similarities as well as differences mark all the chief figures who are the objects of this study, including the revolutionaries. Thus, Marx and Engels' specific concerns are "different" from Lenin's and Trotsky's, in so far as they are separated by a world-historic event: the only successful and healthy workers' revolution in history--the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Furthermore, the chiefly political concerns of these four active revolutionaries are in turn distinct from the primarily cultural preoccupations of Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton. And finally,

Caudwell and Eagleton both openly claim to accept and even advocate Marxist theory, whereas Williams tries to maintain an explicit, sceptical distance from it. Yet I have compacted all seven of the above individuals in a single dissertation. My main basis for doing this is their common theoretical engagement with Marxism, shown in the seriousness of their attempts to examine the relevance of that theory to literary phenomena. Of course, I also note the fact that all three English critics claim to be working, with varying consistency, within the framework of Marxism. The revolutionaries from Marx to Trotsky constitute, in my view, an historically-vindicated political gauge for assessing the claimed Marxism of the professional critics. And Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton out-qualify an obviously larger galaxy of similarly oriented professionals simply by being British, mutually near-contemporaneous, and well-known--decisive delimiting credentials for a study this size.

The common engagement of these seven critics with Marxism has tended to reveal and clarify a central problem in Marxist axiology: the nature of revolutionary commitment, or the determining effect of building (or rejecting) the revolutionary workers' party on Marxist critics' criteria for judging literature. It seems to me that a damaging hiatus has long existed between two areas of ostensible Marxist commitment--the directly political and the cultural (the latter including, of course, the literary and the critical). Marxist political commitment is, logically, incremental, concentric, and (ultimately) comprehensive; and it presupposes consistency. Thus, a committed Marxist cannot seriously fight imperialism on the battlefield and simultaneously write sincere paeans to it in the press. Yet, with the

general exception of the revolutionary Marxists, this is almost precisely the anomaly characterising much ostensibly Marxist critical theory. This is not to say that, as in my above, self-evidently<sup>v</sup> absurd example, everyone from Marx to Eagleton at some point or other practises in culture the exact opposite of what he preaches in politics; the problem is a little more complex, as we shall see in the section on Lenin in this Introduction.

Put simply, however, it reduces itself to the question of the changing Marxist notion and practice of what has often loosely been termed "commitment."<sup>27</sup> After Lenin, I have argued, a Marxist critic's commitment to revolution can only be ultimately tested and confirmed by his or her seriousness about building a revolutionary workers' party. One measure of seriousness would be the general priority that is accorded to this task; another measure would be the orientation, even within one's own sphere of specialisation, resulting from such commitment: that is, one's seriousness as a Marxist critic would ultimately depend on whether one approached Marxism primarily from the point of view of literary and critical interests, or whether one approached every particular sphere of activity, including literary criticism, primarily from the standpoint of a revolutionary, organisation-oriented Marxist.<sup>28</sup> I have maintained that the latter approach is a logical prerequisite--though never a guarantee--for any further, consistently Marxist advancement of literary axiology.

Yet, in much so-called Marxist aesthetics, a virtual political indifferentism pervades attitudes towards evaluation. "Culture" is somehow deemed close enough to "life" to benefit from radical glossing but too far from "politics" to be affected by the organisational



question. To a large extent, such a dichotomy between Marxist politics and "Marxist" aesthetics has been historically inevitable, for the socio-political revolution today logically constitutes a much more urgent, fundamental, and demanding task than its cultural consolidation. But this "dichotomy" between politics and culture is more a question of immediate practical priorities than of a strategic ideological orientation. This is why I see no reason why self-avowed Marxist "critics," whose specialty is literature, should have to be blind to the need for sharing with other Marxists the political direction of the revolution, in particular as streamlined through the revolutionary workers' organisation. The mere objects of one's special professional interest need not, by their sheer existential variety, impose a correspondingly inconsistent and directionless evaluative approach to them--least so among people claiming to be conscious Marxists.

Instead, I have argued, Marxist critics should begin the struggle for genuine revolutionary consistency. That is, they should tackle, in its concrete complexity, the problem of squaring the production and appreciation of literature with the overall needs of the socio-political revolution, at a steady though cautious pace. This has been my principal theme in this dissertation. It suggests that, for Marxists, the conditions for a dialectical resolution of the anomaly between systematised politics and arbitrary literary assessments can only be provided by the interpenetration resulting from synchronised activities in a workers' revolutionary organisation. The surrealist André Breton, though speaking here chiefly about art and not criticism, put the matter well: "From where we stand, we maintain that the activity of

interpreting the world must continue to be linked with the activity of changing the world. . . . 'Transform the world,' Marx said; 'change life,' Rimbaud said. These two watchwords are one for us."<sup>29</sup>

We now return to the areas of controversy mentioned earlier. I will first explain my pro-Marx position on the categories of "base" and "superstructure," "class," and "partisanship"--categories arousing much controversy, especially among the political theoreticians of the so-called New Left. I shall then explain my pro-Lenin stance on the related question of the revolutionary workers' ("vanguard") party, distinguishing it from both modern social democracy and Stalinist bureaucratism and seeing its continuity in the programme of Trotsky's presently-defunct Fourth International.

In a suggestive comment on all class societies, Marx and Engels noted in The Manifesto of the Communist Party that "the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms."<sup>30</sup> More than half a century later, another Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg, amplified that cryptic observation:

We are often told that our movement lacks the persons of talent who might be capable of further elaborating Marx's theories. . . .

It is pure illusion to suppose that the working class, in its upward striving, can of its own accord become immeasurably creative in the theoretical domain. . . . [A]ctive participation of the workers in the march of science is subject to the fulfilment of very definite social conditions.

The utmost it can do today is to safeguard bourgeois culture from the vandalism of the bourgeois reaction, and create the social conditions required for a free cultural development. . . .

Not until the working class has been liberated from its present conditions of existence will the Marxist method of

research be socialised in conjunction with other means of production, so that it can be fully utilised for the benefit of humanity-at-large, and so that it can be developed to the full measure of its functional capacity.<sup>31</sup>

The argument in this dissertation has been advanced in view of the above paradox, and yet precisely with the intent of facilitating its eventual methodological resolution.

#### Marx and Engels: Base-Superstructure, Class, and Partisanship

From the well-known fact that Marx left no coherent and comprehensive treatise on literary theory, ostensibly Marxist critical specialists have drawn one of two seemingly opposed conclusions: (1) either that "the views of Marx on art and its function" can be "deduced" exclusively from his "numerous internally connected statements" or (2) that "[i]t is the materialist method of the Grundrisse and Capital, not hints gleaned from the 'literary criticism,' which must form the basis of anything worthy of the title of a 'Marxist criticism.'"<sup>32</sup> This is a false counterposition that damagingly ignores the real unity of Marx's developing theory with his changing revolutionary practice. It is crucial for Marxists to remember that Marx (like Engels) wrought his theories in close connection with his practical revolutionary activities, first as a radical-democratic disciple of the Jacobin communists (such as Babeuf and Blanqui) and then as a pioneering organiser of the modern proletariat and its early leadership, the First International.<sup>33</sup>

Now, scholars have long established that, in aesthetic matters, Marx was "a creature of his own age";<sup>34</sup> the major philosophical

components of his aesthetic theory are usually recognised to be German (Hegelian) classicism and the broader, European Romanticism, in the tradition of Rousseau.<sup>35</sup> But it would be a mistake to explain Marx's views on literary and artistic value merely in light of his philosophico-cultural training, ignoring their proven imbrication with his economic analysis and political values and practice. After all, as Marx and Engels themselves pointed out as early as The German Ideology (written in 1845-46), "not criticism but revolution is the driving force of history, also of religion, of philosophy and all other types of theory."<sup>36</sup>

It is this view of the objective dynamic of history that doubtless confirmed Marx in his famous thesis that while philosophers have only interpreted the world, the problem is how to change it. The materialist premise of this programme was the analytical model of "base" and "superstructure," first elaborated by Marx in his 1859 Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (henceforth cited as Preface):

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite state of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or--what is but a legal expression for the same thing--with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive

forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic--in short ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the relations of production. No social order ever perishes before all productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. (Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol. I, Moscow: Progress, 1973, pp. 503-504; excerpted in Marx/Engels, pp. 41-42)

Marx here is attempting to capture a complex relation between structure and process, both of which he sees as also being internally complex. The positive aim of the description is to suggest a genuinely dialectical and materialist model of social life which will be concrete enough to counter the idealism of Hegel but general enough to marginalise the particularities of national, cultural, and other variants. The social structure itself is regarded as internally differentiated between two main realms: the "real foundation" and the "superstructure." The foundation consists, in its turn, of two chief components: the "material productive forces" and the social "relations of production"; the superstructure consists of "legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic--in short ideological forms." These different components interlock, and even interpenetrate, in a changing relationship, as the social structure as a whole passes through various

"transformations," from birth to death.

Now, some of these components and realms are subordinate in overall power, and secondary in the chronological order of their appearance, to others. Thus, the social relations of production are "definite," "indispensable," and "independent" of people's "will": but they in turn merely "correspond to a definite state of development of their material productive forces." Together, however, these mutually complementary productive forces and relations constitute "the economic structure of society, the real foundation. . . ." The superstructure, on the other hand, "rises" on these foundations, and "definite forms of social consciousness" "correspond" to it. In this sense, the economic infrastructure, or base, "conditions" the ideological superstructure; existence "determines" consciousness and its products and cohabitants. But all this determination, correspondence, construction, domination, and subordination operates within a (changing) relationship.

The first phase of any overall structural change witnesses a "conflict" within the base, between the economic relations and the economic forces. This is a contradiction primarily of "material" life. However, this primarily infrastructural, material contradiction induces a corresponding superstructural change as well, though the overall appearance of the latter can only follow the overall appearance of the former, and may do so "more or less rapidly."

I should emphasise here that Marx suggests not only that the superstructural change is contingent on the economic, but also that the superstructure is necessarily transformed. Obversely, he does not set a time-limit on this conditional but (given the pre-condition) ultimately

inevitable superstructural change. And while he voluntarily admits the relative difficulty of "determin[ing]" a revolutionary transformation in that sphere, he does not make such determining the test of the transformation's reality or of its dependence on the economic contradictions. (This is clearly the point behind Marx's quip that "Don Quixote long ago paid the penalty for wrongly imagining that knight errantry was compatible with all economic forms of society" [Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. I, ed. Frederick Engels, tr. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (1867; tr. 1887; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1967); cited in Marx/Engels, p. 265].) Finally, we may note that--for good reasons (as he explains at length in Capital)--Marx does not specify the exact economic relations, forces, or products that may be considered indispensable to any one society at any given point in time: for, the model of "base-superstructure" expresses an algebraic relationship, whose actual quantities will reveal wide fluctuations internationally and periodically while confirming in each individual case the validity of that same configuration.

Now, as the political revisionists testify, this view and interpretation has its opponents. Jameson perceptively describes the general political psychology of revisionism as "the act of making a theory comfortable and palatable by leaving out whatever calls for praxis or change, whatever is likely to be painful for the purely contemplative intellectual consumption of a middle-class public" (Marxism and Form, p. xv). Certainly, in its incidental characterisation of the objective political effect of revisionism, Jameson's primarily psychological description seems to fit both the

early revisionists, such as Eduard Bernstein, and the New Left revisionists, such as Herbert Marcuse, as well as their literary-critical co-thinkers, such as Peter Demetz and Raymond Williams.

The specific terms of the debate currently centring on "base" and "superstructure" are rightly associated with Marxism. But one component of it--the debate over the relationship between "matter" and "consciousness" in general--goes at least as far back (in the West) as Plato and Democritus, known in philosophy as the proponents of idealism and materialism, respectively. In its philosophical aspect, Marxism is the modern continuator of Democritus' materialism: it believes that, in the objective scheme of existence, matter is primary and consciousness secondary. E.P. Thompson provides a simplistic but vivid illustration of this materialistic view when he observes that "the wood cannot determine what is made, nor whether it is made well or badly, but it can certainly determine what can not be made . . ." (Poverty of Theory, p. 18). But Marxism is more than just a philosophy: it is also a guide to social change. And the "base-superstructure" model is one that addresses the complex dynamics of general social change, without relegating all matter to the base and all consciousness to the superstructure alone. This is why the concept of modes, forces, and relations of production together as constituents of the base becomes crucial to an understanding of Marx's model. The revisionists are unable to grasp this difference between mere "matter" and Marx's economic "base," which latter requires for its own perpetuation a complementary--though distinct, often deformed, and contingent--consciousness.

While a detailed refutation of the revisionists belongs more



properly to another subject and project, certain key points can be discussed here. Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932), the German Social Democrat, was the major initiator of theoretical revisionism, but even he did not chiefly attack the "base-superstructure" model (or, for that matter, the concepts of "class" and "partisanship"). More centrally, he began to advocate, after Engels' death, the programme of gradualism, or slow, evolutionary, reformist "growth" into socialism.<sup>37</sup> The so-called New Left revisionism, stemming from the nineteen-fifties, is much more thoroughgoing.

A random but typical example of a New Left revision of Marx's "base-superstructure" model would be Ellen Meiksins Wood's "The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism."<sup>38</sup> Wood simultaneously acknowledges a "differentiation" between economics and politics in practical life and attacks a certain conceptual "separation" between them which she misattributes to Marx (and Engels). In self-imagined opposition to those theorists, she argues that the (capitalist) economy is indeed affected by political decisions. But in thus stressing their obvious interaction, Wood denies the decisive centrality of economic power in relation to its matching political ideas and practices. She analyses the relationship between economics and politics as a static, unhistoricised, co-equal, conjunctural intersection, thereby misrepresenting their existential simultaneity as a balance of determining power. In attacking Marx and Engels on this question, therefore, she not only brings against them charges that are factually misplaced; she commits a category-mistake, missing the exclusively interventionist perspective motivating Marx and Engels' particular analytical methods. (The divergence in aim and method between the

Marxists and Wood becomes especially clear if we compare her definition of the state to Engels' or Lenin's.)

Nor is Wood alone in thus revising and attacking Marx. Indeed, more germanely, an entire school of literary critics, including ostensible Marxists as well as explicit anti-Marxists, misreads Marx's Preface and indulges in similar, misdirected criticism. One of the most concise and forthrightly hostile of such criticisms issues from René Wellek. Wellek, a critic not particularly concerned with Marxism, dismisses Marx's view of social change as "rigid economic determination" that has been decisively, "totally belied by history."<sup>39</sup> Falsely charging that Marx and Engels "deny that ideology has any history or development" (Wellek, p. 234), Wellek quotes and then tries to parody what he misconstrues to be Marx's idea of a communist society: "'In a communist society there will not be any painters, but at the most men who, among other things, also paint' (men apparently like Churchill and Eisenhower)" (Wellek, p.235). Wellek obviously and wrongly believes that history has ended. Similarly, Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch (p. 87) claim that, in his 1857 draft of the Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (to be discussed below), "Marx departs from the deterministic concept that developments in the superstructure, notably in the realm of aesthetics, must necessarily follow from changes in the economic basis." Their basis for this claim is merely that, in the Introduction, he "emphasises that there may be an unbalanced development of artistic and material production." And from this distorted construction, these critics conclude that "if Marx's theory of unbalanced development is applied to modern times, it follows that a socialist society does not necessarily give rise to a superior

literature." Again and again, at the hands of most revisionists, Marx's model is vulgarised: his careful qualification about the "more or less" rapid transformation of the superstructure is ignored, as is the never-denied though contingent role of conscious activity in ensuring that the superstructure is necessarily transformed. "Necessarily" is symptomatically misread as "automatically" and "immediately," and the self-centredness and passivity of much academic speculation and hindsight are falsely projected onto the distinctively interventionist and active nature of Marxism.

Marx's Preface is its own best standing defence against the distortions of revisionists and anti-Marxists. But even earlier, in their German Ideology, Marx and Engels had acknowledged that "[t]he production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men--the language of real life," although "[i]t is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness" (Marx/Engels, pp. 42-43). Moreover, effective clarifications and defences on the question have existed at least since the later Engels and appear frequently today.<sup>40</sup> My own interpretation of Marx's Preface is obviously another such undertaking, carried out in the belief that his model, when accurately and sympathetically understood, argues its own continuing validity. For, though the logic of the revisionists and idealists of various kinds may imply otherwise, it remains impossible to write novels while freezing to death in the open on an empty stomach. And, in one sense, Marx's Preface merely elaborates this practical bottom-line.

Of the many clarifications offered since Marx's publication of his

views on "base" and "superstructure," one particular set may be singled out because of the authority behind them: Engels'. In at least three letters to different correspondents (see Appendix A), Engels sufficiently clarified the implications of Marx's model to obviate charges such as Wellek's. In one particular letter (to Conrad Schmidt), Engels wrote, "The ultimate supremacy of economic development is for me an established fact in these philosophical and literary spheres too, but it operates within the terms laid down by the particular sphere itself . . . Here economy creates nothing new, but it determines the way in which the thought material found in existence is altered and further developed and that too for the most part indirectly, for it is the political, legal and moral reflexes which exert the greatest direct influence on philosophy" (Marx/Engels, p. 60). It then seems perfectly logical to assume, as well, that "exceptional" intellectual forays by individuals are at least partly and indirectly--if not wholly and directly--made possible by their own, specific material circumstances. For, Marx in his Preface speaks not of some mythical homogeneous material base but of the real "contradictions" of material life, which include the "matur[ing]" of the "new" relations of production and their material conditions of existence "in the womb" of the older social (economic and cultural) order. "When people speak of ideas that revolutionise society," observe Marx and Engels in their Manifesto, "they do but express the fact, that within the old society, the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence" (Marx/Engels, p. 73).

In an abstract way, this Marxist position will long remain a

subject of debate, precisely since its conclusion (like that of its critics) is generically incapable of empirical verification under controlled, laboratory conditions; it is a conclusion operationally inseparable from particular socio-political interests. But also precisely because this is so, this not entirely abstract question will be concretely resolved if and when the working class captures state power and the means of production globally, long before the world is able to glimpse anything resembling even the shoots of socialist culture. Meanwhile, revisionists and anti-Marxists might ponder the fact that it was not Marx but Freud who stated, "The motive of human society is in the last resort an economic one" (Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis).<sup>41</sup>

But, one may still ask, what is the relevance of the Marxist concepts of "base" and "superstructure" to the problems of Marxist literary axiology? The short answer is that both Marxist social analysis and Marxist literary evaluation ostensibly aim to change society in the same direction and that the latter explicitly professes allegiance to the former. Therefore, they can ill-afford a self-contradictory world-view and programme that would imply mutually counterposed values, priorities, and methods of analysis and evaluation. This debate is thus part of the struggle for all-round consistency within Marxism. And the contradiction of the New Left is that it claims to be Marxist while revising some of Marxism's most crucial, definitive perceptions, representing hard-won historical lessons, sometimes paid for by the working class with their lives.

Related to his concept of a distinction-cum-interaction between the ultimately determining economic base and the ideological superstructure is Marx's awareness that all subject-object interaction (and, hence, all

evaluation) is both real and relative. Value in general, therefore (and Marx speaks of "economic" value only as his immediate concern, not his only one), is value both for somebody and in something outside the mind of the perceiver, at a particular conjuncture. Thus, in an early characterisation of the social dialectic involved in aesthetic evaluation, Marx suggests that "[t]he object of art, as well as any other product, creates an artistic and beauty-enjoying public. Production thus produces not only an object for the individual, but also an individual for the object" (Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, in Marx/Engels, p. 129; this key piece is henceforth cited as Introduction).

From this, it follows that the criteria of evaluation can only be historically and socially relative. And in Marx and Engels, the explicit term that is used as an index for these relative criteria is the historical/temporal "period." Thus Engels, in a letter to Lassalle (18 May 1859), notes his own varying responses to "things of inferior value" between the "first reading" and any subsequent ones (Marx/Engels, p. 102). More generally, Marx notes in his Introduction the temporal continuities and discontinuities of specific "elements" of social "production," presumably with their attendant values (Solomon, p. 34); and, as we have seen, Marx and Engels note the lag in "the social consciousness of past ages, . . . which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms" (Marx/Engels, p. 74).<sup>42</sup> The general temporal and consumptional continuity and discontinuity of values are thus both real. But, as that last quotation clearly suggests, their socio-historical patterns still cannot be easily explained or predicted through a simply "temporal" but "classless"

sociology. A more precise tool of analysis is called for. This tool is the notion--not originating in Marxism but merely finding a permanent place in its analytical method--of "class."

One non-Marxist critic working with a philosophical approach to literary evaluation has simplistically but tellingly complained that the "search for criteria has been going on for a long time, but without any results that all sides agree to be successful."<sup>43</sup> Marxists have an explanation for that. As the decreasingly Marxist historian E.P. Thompson concedes in the course of warning against any "improperly hardened" use of "a category as generous as 'the working class,'" that "without the (elastic) category of class--an expectation justified by evidence---I could not have practised [writing history] at all" (Poverty of Theory, p. 57). I believe that the same law obtains for Marxist literary axiology.

If the temporal category of "period" explicitly dominates the evaluative terminology of Marx and Engels, the socio-economic criterion of "class" at least implicitly underlies their entire view of modern history and society. "The history of all hitherto existing society," wrote Marx and Engels in 1847, "is the history of class struggles."<sup>44</sup> Explaining the sub-heading of this section ("Bourgeois and Proletarians," referring to the two modern classes), Engels wrote, "By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live" (English ed. of Manifesto [1888], in Tucker, p. 473, n. 5). The specific relation of dominance and subordination between

these two classes within the superstructure was early indicated by Marx and Engels in their comments on "the ruling ideas" in any given society. In The German Ideology, they pointed out that "[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force . . . , so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it" (Marx/Engels, p. 70). Here, the general, temporal category of the "epoch" clearly undergoes an internal class-differentiation; and the differentiation is a sophistication of the analytical model, not a negation. Hence it is actually able to prefigure the writers' later comment, in the Manifesto, about the dependence of lagging "social consciousness" on "class antagonisms" and "the old conditions of existence."

With the appearance of the proletariat as a self-conscious class, bourgeois society is decisively polarised; the dominant bourgeois values face an increasingly systematised challenge; and the question of the writers' and critics' class-allegiance is explicitly posed. Marx and Engels themselves intersected this conjuncture and allied themselves with the working class and its historic interests. It is from this position--a position of partisanship for the proletariat--that they addressed all questions of value, literary or otherwise. Thus Marx and Engels warned the bourgeoisie in their Manifesto: "don't wrangle with us so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc." (Solomon, p. 49). And Engels, in his 26 November 1885 letter to Minna Kautsky, noted the dilemma of trying to write a "socialist problem novel" for an audience composed predominantly of "readers from



bourgeois circles," in the process coming up with an explicit (though negatively conceived) criterion of literary value: "under our conditions novels are mostly addressed to readers from bourgeois circles, i.e., circles which are not directly ours. Thus the socialist problem novel in my opinion fully carries out its mission if by a faithful portrayal of the real conditions it dispels the dominant conventional illusions concerning them, shakes the optimism of the bourgeois world, and inevitably instils doubt as to the eternal validity of that which exists . . ." (Marx/Engels, p. 88). Clearly, Engels here speaks from a particular class point of view--that of a proletarian ("anti-bourgeois") socialist.<sup>45</sup> But it is not only that. Once the question of a writer's merely passive class "sympathies" is settled in favour of the proletariat, the issue of active partisanship in literature--"tendenzpoesie" in Marx and Engels and (in a different context, discussed below) "partiinnost" in Lenin--is logically posed. For, the proof of one's sympathies lies in one's willingness to fight actively and effectively for one's side.

Now revisionists, non-, and anti-Marxists usually challenge this conclusion, often falsely pitting Lenin--and even Marx--against Engels.<sup>46</sup> Yet the two key letters by Engels (to Minna Kautsky, 26 November 1885, and to Margaret Harkness, April 1888 [Marx/Engels, pp.87-92]) that they usually quote from themselves provide telling proof of Engels' sympathy for partisanship in literature. This is true despite the fact that these letters are primarily critical and cautionary notes (addressed to acknowledged fellow-socialists); for it is those novelists' apparent technical unsubtlety, and not "obvious political bias," that in this case worries Engels.<sup>47</sup> Nor should this be

taken to mean that Engels values "technique" separately from and above content. The revisionists' case against bias per se, then, has no basis in Engels (or in any other revolutionary Marxist); and the following quotation from Engels strongly confirms that interpretation:

You obviously felt a desire to take a public stand in your book, to testify to your convictions before the entire world. This has now been done. . . . I am by no means opposed to partisan poetry as such. Both Aeschylus, the father of tragedy, and Aristophanes, the father of comedy, were highly partisan poets, Dante and Cervantes were so no less, and the best thing that can be said about Schiller's Kabale und Liebe is that it represents the first German political problem drama. The modern Russians and Norwegians, who produce excellent novels, all write with a purpose. (Letter to Minna Kautsky, 26 November 1885, in Marx/Engels, p. 88)

As for Marx's admonition to Lassalle, in his letter of 18 April 1859, that "I regard as your gravest shortcoming the fact that à la Schiller you transform individuals into mere mouthpieces of the spirit of the time" (quoted approvingly by Wellek, p. 236; see Appendix B for fuller text of letter), we should note that Marx is objecting to propagandising at the expense of individualisation of character, and not to propagandising as such.

Marx and Engels' general evaluative criteria thus remain historically relative and class-partisan, for the proletariat and for socialism. This last, positive and active orientation towards socialism (however indirect or negative some of its incidental formulations) crucially determines a number of Marx and Engels' specific authorial preferences. Most relevantly, it explains Marx's evident preference of the perceived social orientation of a Shelley to the historically retrogressive orientation of a Carlyle. Nevertheless, a certain formal

contradiction does exist between Marx and Engels' methodological stress on proletarian progress as a positive value and their actual choice of historical example or analogy to illustrate and explain that criterion.

The single most quoted and misinterpreted source of confusion on this count is Marx's passage, in his Introduction, on the continuing ("eternal") "charm" of Greek art.<sup>48</sup> In a curious way, it presents what might superficially seem merely like an odd combination of Classical tastes and Romantic criteria; but this would be to mistake the sheer form for the idea, which is complex and sketchy but nevertheless merits a closer look. Here is the passage in question:

As regards art, it is well known that some of its peaks by no means correspond to the general development of society; nor do they therefore to the material substructure. . . .

The difficulty we are confronted with is not, however, that of understanding how Greek art and epic poetry are associated with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still give us aesthetic pleasure and are in certain respects regarded as a standard and unattainable ideal.

An adult cannot become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does the naiveté of the child not give him pleasure, and does not he himself endeavour to reproduce the child's veracity on a higher level? Does not the child in every epoch represent the character of the period in its natural veracity? Why should not the historical childhood of humanity, where it attained its most beautiful form, exert an eternal charm because it is a stage that will never recur? There are rude children and precocious children. Many of the ancient peoples belong to this category. The Greeks were normal children. The charm their art has for us does not conflict with the immature stage of the society in which it originated. On the contrary its charm is a consequence of this and is inseparably linked with the fact that the immature social conditions which gave rise, and which alone could give rise, to this art cannot recur. (Marx/Engels, pp. 82, 84)

In this early passage, one which it is important to know he withheld from publication, Marx introduces a concern we have not yet encountered in our discussion of him: what are the laws of aesthetic

response and of the continuity of perceived value across long stretches of time? This is his main concern in the passage as I have quoted it. But note, even here, how he actually foreshadows the "base-superstructure" analytical model of his published 1859 Preface, thereby pre-confirming its status within his overall scheme (Greek art and poetry clearly "are associated" with certain forms of social development). Significantly, therefore, he characterises his question as a "difficulty," not as an insoluble contradiction, and attempts to answer it as a materialist.

The passage itself is a combination of two main parts: the statement of the problem ("the difficulty") and the positing of a series of mutually related answers, half of them in the form of rhetorical questions. The "difficulty," as Marx puts it, is that "some of . . . [art's]. . . peaks by no means correspond to the general development of society." Thus, ancient Greek art and epic poetry "still give us aesthetic pleasure and are in certain respects regarded as a standard and unattainable ideal"; they "exert an eternal charm." Marx's strongly suggested explanation is that, in the case of ancient Greek art, this continuing potency results from two characteristics. One is Greek art's truthful portrayal of the external reality of the time ("veracity" about the objectively "immature social conditions"). The other is the less explicit, more self-revealing, truthful effect of Greek art's own, child-like mode of perception, applied to and arising from that early history. The connecting thread is truthfulness--a representational "veracity" and a perceptual "naiveté." And this indicates to Marx that, as modern society's historical predecessors, "[t]he Greeks" were neither "rude" nor "precocious" but simply, in terms of their objectively

ordained limitations, "normal children" corresponding to the overall conditions of their life.

Now it is true that, especially when quoted out of context in the above fashion, Marx's passage reveals certain inadequacies from the point of view of consistent dialectical-historical materialism. Thus, traces of idealist absolutism exist in formulations such as "most beautiful form" ("peaks") and "eternal charm," as well as in the lack of class-differentiation within "us" and "[t]he Greeks"; and they also exist in the assumption of a unanimous aesthetic response flowing from such homogeneity ("they still give us aesthetic pleasure" and, in certain respects, universally and undeniably "are regarded" as an ideal). All this may well indicate the legacy of Schiller and resemble the "Golden Age" conceptions of Freud and Proust, as Hans Robert Jauss claims.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the representational "veracity" is left undifferentiated from the perceptual "naivet  ," and, consequently, these and other words such as "charm" and "normal" seem to convey both psychological modalities and behavioural expressions and effects. Finally, Marx's attempted answer addresses--albeit materialistically--chiefly his personal love for ancient Greek art: its materialism is empirical. Thus, the general, theoretical question posed at the beginning of the passage may well be regarded by some as unanswered. But such a view can be challenged, and clarifications appended, as I shall try to do below.

However, even within the quoted passage itself, there are many signs that should make critics pause before they try, on the basis of it, to dismiss the argument about economic base and ideological superstructure in Marx's 1859 Preface. Here, the qualifying,

speculative, and cautiously "negative" thrust of Marx's formulations is crucial. The reasons why ancient Greek art continues to charm people in the nineteenth century are not incomprehensible, merely difficult to understand. Greek art and poetry are a standard ideal, but they are so only "in certain respects" and are, moreover, "regarded" as such by possibly--but not necessarily--everyone. In fact, one presumes, the undefined subject must be culturally and politically akin to "us"--a definable and almost certainly non-inclusive group, of whom Marx himself is one. Moreover, Marx's notion of "our" pleasure in ancient Greek art does not claim the status of a permanent prescriptive dictate to all people for all times but rather presents itself as a mere observation of reality, one at least personally verifiable by Marx himself. And finally, the alleged charm results from the negative fact that the effective impression created by the ancient Greek artists "does not conflict" with the evaluator's knowledge of its social conditions of production and from the certainty that those primitive but intriguing precursors of the modern age "cannot recur."

In positive terms, then, for the Marx of 1857, classical Greek art seems valuable chiefly for its truthfulness. This truthfulness consists, in the first place, in that art's very choice of object--a real though irrecoverable society (slave-holding Athenian democracy) which, despite its historical limitations, affords us a glimpse of the possible future, its subject being "the historical childhood of humanity." In the second place, this truthfulness consists in Greek art's and artists' very mode of perception, resembling (for Marx) a child's naivety. Finally, it might be interesting to speculate about whether or not Marx also sees the truthfulness manifesting itself in the

artists' mimetic mode of depicting the "natural veracity" of that historical "child" ("reproduce . . . on a higher level" [my emphasis]). If it does, especially in an absolute way, Marx here might conceivably be accused, by some, of "failing" to anticipate the problematic, twentieth-century unfolding of the fate of "realism." But we shall return to this issue later.

Marx's above-quoted passage from the Introduction thus attempts simultaneously to address three different aesthetic phenomena: (1) the (socio-)economic determination of art, (2) the assimilation and elevation of "certain" perceived aspects of art in one era to the aesthetic ideals of another, and (3) the response of some people to these perceived qualities across a span of centuries. As we know, the general problematics relevant to these concerns seem to have been roughly anticipated in the Manifesto's remark about lagging social consciousness in class-societies (Marx/Engels, p. 74). Marx's passage in the Introduction thus suggests an abiding theoretical concern on his part and constitutes a theoretical cornerstone that cannot be ignored and should not be facilely distorted.

Yet, this is precisely what happens when, disregarding Marx's actual formulations, Hans Hess (for instance) pronounces that "what he [Marx] calls 'charm' is really prestige" (Hess, p. 11). Interestingly, however, Marx in his Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations anticipates and obviates Hess's superficial conjecture, clarifying the relativity and partialness of the classical world's "charm" for him. "[I]n one way," he admits, "the childlike world of the ancients appears to be superior; and this is so, in so far as we seek for closed shape, form and established limitation"; but, he adds, "[t]he ancients provide a narrow

satisfaction, whereas the modern world leaves us unsatisfied, mean" (Solomon, p. 57; also quoted in Praver p. 288n). That is, the ancients are not perfect, though the modern world is positively bad. Indeed, early in his career, Marx satirised the anti-historicist conservatism of Emperor Julian and "the Alexandrine school, . . . which believed that it could make the newly developing spirit of the times disappear by keeping its eyes closed so as not to see it," thus striving "to prove by force the 'eternal truth' of Greek mythology and its complete agreement 'with the results of scientific research.'"<sup>50</sup> Moreover, as Lifshitz significantly observes about the "left-Hegelians" (of whom, of course, Marx was one), the "new barbarism of capitalist Germany is identified [by them] with the barbarism of old [as in the Old Testament]," while the "defence of Greek art was at the same time an attempt to restore the [egalitarian, radical] ideals of the French Revolution" (Lifshitz, pp. 34, 49). Any misreading of Marx on this question, therefore, must necessarily ignore the concrete political programme in whose ultimate service he was, as a Jacobin-derived communist, trying to answer it. The result will tend to become vulgar-materialist or metaphysical, not dialectical-materialist and historical.

Since Marx's passage in his Introduction has, for various reasons, come to signify different things to different people, a brief critical reckoning with four fairly symptomatic readings of it would be useful here. Roughly, the first one represents a flatly anti-Marxist approach, the second a "history of ideas" approach, the third a simplistic, "vulgar materialist" approach, and the fourth a dialectical-materialist and historical (Marxist) approach, in so far as one exists on this question. Of course, these approaches sometimes overlap; and, moreover,



all of them often have valid insights to offer.

Hans Robert Jauss in "The Idealist Embarrassment" asks some useful questions about when exactly the famous "alienation" (described by the young Marx as the omnipresent bane of life under capitalism) is supposed to enter into the actual process of production. For, from that moment on, "beauty" must surely become more and more difficult to ensure, in the face of increasingly commodity-oriented market demands (p. 198). Moreover, by selecting some straw men for his false counterpositions and illustrations of "Marxism," Jauss is easily able to demonstrate that some ostensibly Marxist critics underestimate the role of the reader, that is, of reception dynamics (pp. 204-05).<sup>51</sup> However, the wording of his article's title, his use of conventional anti-Marxist codewords and epithets,<sup>52</sup> and his claim that the distinction between idealism and materialism is not valid "in the field of aesthetics" (p. 207) all bespeak a qualitative dearth of political understanding and a distinct unfriendliness of intent issuing from the right.

Jauss's thesis is that "a materialist aesthetic . . . cannot get along without a central core of idealism" (p. 192), that Marx believes that "we scarcely know how standards arise," unless they do so through sheer ideas (p. 203). To prove his thesis, Jauss must largely restrict himself to the young, Hegelian Marx and then misrepresent some of Marx's key positions into the bargain. Thus, for instance, Jauss early makes the claim that "Marx's high esteem for Greek art . . . breaches the principle of the prior economic determination of all artistic production and confers on the relation of substructure and superstructure a nonsimultaneity of the necessarily simultaneous . . ." (p. 192). But where did Jauss find in Marx the proposition that "the relation of

substructure and superstructure" is "necessarily simultaneous"? Certainly in our own scrutiny of Marx's Preface, we found "simultaneity" to be explicitly precluded by the "more or less" rapid transformation of the superstructure (following economic change); and, much earlier, even the Manifesto talks about historic lags in social consciousness and views "the dissolution of old ideas" as being contingent on "the dissolution of the old conditions of existence."

Yet, while egregious in its misrepresentations of Marx, Jauss's article remains indispensable for one pedagogical purpose: to show how the debate over "base" and "superstructure" impinges directly on literary axiology and how idealism as a philosophical trend, when allowed free rein, readily places itself at the service of unabashed anti-Marxism.

Relatively subsidiary inaccuracies, self-contradictions, and questionable interpretative methods abound.<sup>53</sup> One could dissect a sentence such as the following, for instance, to reveal the same shallowness of Jauss's critique as we have seen above: "And it makes it impossible to overlook the embarrassment that in sum the art of a slave-owning society should also still rank as a 'standard and model beyond attainment' for an emancipated mankind" (p. 102). Merely at a factual level, we might pose to Jauss certain questions: where "in sum" does Marx view the problem in terms of a classless "art" of a slave-owning "society" and its reception by an equally classless "mankind"? Where "in sum" does Marx state or imply that "us" represents "emancipated" mankind? Where "in sum" does Marx revise his view that ancient Greek art still constitutes an ideal model only "in certain respects" and not "in sum"? Where, even "in sum," does Marx pose the

perceived residual power of aspects of ancient Greek art as a question of moralistic or psychological "embarrassment"? If ("in sum") Jauss's use of that word is not meant ethically but only methodologically, to point to the above extension in artistic effectivity, how does he rationalise his application of "embarrassment" to the obvious fact that it was Marx himself who first noticed the extension (and the apparent dislocation between economic base and artistic peaks) and attempted to address it? Further, if his thesis is that "base" is irrelevant to "superstructure," why does Jauss deflect the relevant and crucial comparison of the two economies (ancient Greek and modern) into the primarily political question of slavery and emancipation, thus forfeiting an opportunity to debunk Marx on his own terms? Beyond the quoted sentence itself, one could pose many equally germane questions: in their Manifesto, Marx and Engels welcomed the positive achievements of the bourgeoisie in their historically progressive phase;<sup>54</sup> why, then, in view of the authors' professed proletarianism, does Jauss not regard that as an "embarrassment" as well? Lenin repeatedly insisted that socialists must intelligently assimilate and build on the contradictory cultural heritage of the bourgeois past;<sup>55</sup> why, then, in view of Jauss's hazy but correct perception of Leninism's claim to Marxism, does that critic not regard Lenin's advice as another such "embarrassment"? "In sum," provided he is held accountable for the authenticity of every paraphrase he offers of Marx or Engels or Lenin, Jauss simply cannot pretend to have an answer.

The next two commentators on this issue are less overtly contrary. They are also more generalist in their approach. Michael McKeon, in "The Origins of Aesthetic Value," Telos, No. 57 (Fall 1983), 63-82,

usefully lays bare in Aristotle the likely historical roots of the idea of "aesthetic value" and argues its differential implementation among literary consumers. The overall effect is one of destroying any absolute notions of aesthetic value or valuation. McKeon articulately insists that the issue of value is distinct from the issue of sub- and superstructural relationships (p. 64) and that, moreover, economic "exchange"-value in Marx is a quantitative concept, having little to do with general "use"-value, which is a qualitative concept directly relating to society's physical and mental needs (pp. 69-70). Marx's "difficulty" in the Introduction, then, McKeon implies, arises not from Marx or from his model of base and superstructure but from the arbitrary and conventional notions of "aesthetic value" and "aesthetic pleasure" through which Marx uncritically views Greek art and its effect on him (pp. 63-64, 65). Instead of applying to these notions his usual array of demystificatory, historical analyses, observes McKeon, Marx naturalises them in the prevalent manner of his contemporaneous aestheticians (p. 66). Marx thus becomes inconsistent in terms of his own methodology, though this empirical incongruity naturally does not theoretically undermine the ignored methodology itself. The solution remains, according to McKeon, the "dialectical" one of uniting the continual re-production of the non-absolute text with the continual re-evaluation of its varied and changing effects on different consumers (p. 82). "Aesthetic value" thus stands revealed as an historically-produced, arbitrary construct--as a "mode" or "counterpart" of exchange-value (pp. 80, 91)--that can be circumvented with the aid of historical consciousness.

In its historicising and relativising thrust, McKeon's argument can

be generally valuable for a Marxist axiology. However, in its specific manner of applying these methods to axiology, McKeon's article tends to disappear the problem rather than solve it. Chiefly, all the problems with his argument may usefully be traced to one particular philosophical characteristic: McKeon's premises are those of idealism, and his method of analysing and solving the practical problem of evaluation is largely restricted to that of a "history of ideas." Thus, for instance, McKeon typically asserts that not only were "aesthetic value" and "poetry" each "a mental category . . . conceived in the Greek Enlightenment" but that "'capitalism' itself emerged as a mental category during the European Enlightenment, coinciding with the re-emergence of poetry and aesthetic value as abstract universals, now to be embraced as widely and as enthusiastically as the ideology of capitalism would be" (p. 79). In the beginning--as well as in the middle and at the end--was the Idea.

Thus, claims McKeon, Aristotle's "abstraction of 'poetry' as an autonomous category two thousand years before the rest of Western culture was interested in listening . . . is an . . . individual anomaly, testimony to the will of a supreme intellect to pursue, in solitude, the logic of a radically innovative method as far as it would go" (p. 80). Obversely, Marx's failure to historicise the problem of "eternal charm" is merely "testimony, perhaps, to the formidable power of received mental categories . . . to resist the self-critical act of understanding by which they may be transformed from natural 'things' into historical products" (p. 81). To axiologists seeking a purely psychological explanation and solution, McKeon's argument may seem self-sufficient. To Marxists, however, it is not.

McKeon, as a professed Marxist scholar, is aware of this. He

therefore elaborates, as his main hypothesis, Marx's suggestive speculations (in the Introduction) about the relation of specific literary genres to specific technological forces of production.<sup>56</sup> As in Marx's Introduction, this line of enquiry yields some of McKeon's most detailed "materialist" results. Briefly, McKeon argues that although Marx's comments "direct our attention to the typographical revolution of the Renaissance, the more pertinent technological change must be the revolution which transformed the oral, 'archaic' culture of Homeric antiquity into the literate culture of the Greek Enlightenment. . . . [I]t is to this great historic transformation that we owe . . . the invention of that mental category of aesthetic value under which Marx himself occasionally, as here, may be seen to labour" (p. 66). McKeon identifies in Aristotle's theory of "catharsis" (the latter's putative index of a genuinely unified plot in tragic "poetry") the first conceptualisation of an autonomous "aesthetic pleasure" (pp. 72, 74, 76).

Yet, for all the technological history and analysis, two key questions keep nagging a Marxist: is "technology" all there is to the Marxist concept of economic base? And what are the material reasons for such apparently abstract and arbitrary concepts as "aesthetic pleasure" and "aesthetic value" taking hold in a mind as self-reflexive and critical as Marx's? Other, related questions soon follow. If "aesthetic pleasure is nothing but the dissolution of pleasure through its indeterminate expansion, the temporal expression of which is perpetuity" (p. 81), is this dissolution self-generating and uniform across classes, cultures, and ages? If it is, how would McKeon's model accommodate and explain dissenting evaluations such as those advanced by

the string of critics of Shakespeare's Sonnets that Barbara Herrnstein Smith mentions? Furthermore, what is Marxist about limiting one's social categories to "individual" and "trans-individual," as McKeon does (e.g. p. 82), if one is at the same time discussing the "capitalist age" (p. 82)? Finally, does not McKeon's attempt to explain "aesthetic value" almost exclusively through an incremental "analogy between economic and cultural production" suggest a fundamental distrust in any real and active inter-relation between those two spheres? These questions, and the answers already encoded in McKeon's article, lead one to appropriate his contribution to Marxist axiology with caution.

In many ways, Marc Shell's tack in The Economy of Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978) closely resembles that of McKeon's. Both attempt to read real, material connections into what are initially presented as mere analogies (McKeon with "culture" and "economy," Shell with "language" and "money"); both concentrate on a history of (classical, especially Greek) ideas; both pay substantial attention to the young Marx; and neither evinces much sense of the shaping influence of active social struggle on the consciousness embodied in art. However, Shell exemplifies, more than does McKeon, the empirical literalism (otherwise known in Marxist philosophy as vulgar materialism) that is the obverse of McKeon's type of abstract idealism.

If McKeon traces the origin of the present problematic of "aesthetic value" back to the "literacy" revolution and the Greek Enlightenment, only to deny then that it is a real problematic at all, Shell's particular fixation is "numismatic semiology" (p. 68), seeking "to understand dialectically the relationship between thought and matter by looking from the formal similarities between linguistic and economic

symbolisation and production to the political economy as a whole" (p. 152). "The economics of thought, set down by Greek dialecticians at the origin of critical thinking," he claims, "has not ceased to influence us" (p. 62). His advice is that coins "should be studied as *sēmata* at once artful and economic. In this sense, numismatics not only counts coins but also accounts for the significance of and the relationship between economic and aesthetic signs" (p. 88). However, the decisive relevance of Greek ideas about money--an item that is an imperfect quantitative general index of (economic) exchange-value--to the qualitative criteria of literary evaluation remains, even after a hundred-and-fifty-odd pages of exposition, perfectly obscure.

Quite simply, Shell's methodology uncritically accepts an artifact's projection of its own "value." This attitudinal impressionism is then aggravated by a conceptual blurring. Shell does not adequately distinguish between kinds of value--centrally, between (real) use-value (measured solely by criteria of felt social needs) and (ostensible) economic value in a capitalist market (measured ultimately by the relation of the profit-oriented terms of exchange to the conditions of production, and inconsistently expressed through pricing, usually in the "language" of currency, or money). Thus Shell is able to endorse Nietzsche's argument in The Genealogy of Morals that "the price-making of early man was not so different from our own" and that "[m]odern man returns to Greek philosophy with nostalgia, but he finds therein described only the origin or discovery of himself" (p. 62). Differing from Melville in his attitude towards the symbolism of the doubloon in Moby Dick, Shell asks, rhetorically, "is one kind of exchange (economic), like the other (aesthetic), endlessly tropic and



infinitely hermeneutic?" (p. 85). His implied answer, which actually challenges Melville's apparent separation of the two kinds of roles, is in the affirmative: "Melville's numismatic semiology is a biting theory of language and economics in which the ontological status of the world itself is threatened with annihilation" (p. 85). This is a philosophical way of saying that the difference does not matter.

For dialectical historical materialists, however, it does. For, it is precisely arguments such as Shell's that, by collapsing discourse into "money," allow impressionistic anti-Marxists to lump vulgar and dialectical materialists together, to be the better able, then, to accuse the latter (Marxists) of "reductionism." That vulgar materialists such as Shell routinely swear by dialectics does not, of course, simplify matters in this regard. It is therefore unfortunate that Shell blurs the line separating him from Marxism by situating his project in the context of "chang [ing] the tyranny of our world" (p. 10) and even goes on to offer an unexceptionably "orthodox"--if meaningless--tautology: "Artistic production, perhaps, is a superstructure, and material production a substructure. If so, however, they correspond to each other not mimetically but dialectically" (p. 149). To help us see through that terminological formalism and grasp the narrowness of Shell's numismatic interest, a sentence such as the following, praising Rousseau, is more instructive: "He does, however, exemplify how political and ideological theory must study money and discourse together, whether or not they are structurally similar [let alone related!] components of society" (p. 126; emphasis and remark added).

The most one might say in defence of Shell's thesis, then, is that

some people may indeed be enticed by a book's price or the self-advertising blurb on its cover to buy and read it; indeed, their evaluation of it may well be decisively shaped in its favour by these machinations of numismatic semiology. But these are hardly the kind of readers serious Marxists would hope to work with consistently as either data or forces particularly central to literary axiology or to the socialist cultural revolution. And these are certainly not the kind of readers whose evaluative psychology would help illuminate Marx's broad, considered remarks on the relative dislocation of artistic "peaks" from their matching base.

Superficially, Max Raphael's critique of Marx's Introduction, in The Demands of Art,<sup>57</sup> may appear identical to Jauss's. But a closer look reveals their diametric opposition. Both critics focus on the apparent contradiction between Marx's sociological model and his concept of "eternal charm." Moreover, Raphael is indeed much more direct and relentless in his criticism than is Jauss. Yet, Raphael's purpose is exactly counterposed to that of Jauss. For, whereas Jauss seeks to use Marx's supposed "embarrassment" to generalise his assault on Marxism, Raphael deplores the perceived problem as an instance of Marx's failure to extend the valid logic of his activist, interventionist general motto to the particular sphere of aesthetics. Here is a graphic contrast between constructive, Marxist and destructive, anti-Marxist political motivation in critical theory: while Jauss seeks to use the occasion to drive a wedge through a commonly-perceived gap, Raphael seeks to close that gap in the face of its enemies..

Marx's answer to his own question in the Introduction, Raphael believes, "has nothing whatever to do either with historical materialism

or with Communism as a guide for changing the world" (p. 451). Indeed, he elaborates, it "sounds petty bourgeois . . ." (p. 451). He characterises the phrase "eternal charm" as "doubly untenable, both as 'eternal' and as 'charm,'" and claims that it "shows how far Marx was from having solved the problem he raised so astutely" (p. 452). "We repeat," he asserts, "the problem remains unsolved" (p. 452).

But, as Raphael goes on to explain, from a Marxist point of view, "there are good reasons for this" (p. 452):

A transitional epoch always implies uncertainty. . . . In such a period two attitudes are possible. One is to take advantage of the emergent forces of the new order with a view to undermining it, to affirm it in order to drive it beyond itself: this is the active, militant, revolutionary attitude. The other clings to the past, is retrospective and romantic, bewails or acknowledges the decline, asserts that the will to live is gone--in short, it is the passive attitude. Where economic, social, and political questions were at stake Marx took the first attitude; in questions of art he took neither. (P. 452)

While Raphael's reading of that passage is clearly at variance with mine (which in turn stems partly from the historical insights provided by Lifshitz, for instance), his theoretical solution anticipates at a stroke the general direction of my own: "Had he been able to show that an active attitude toward art also exists, he would have brought the understanding of art up to the level of his revolutionary position [in other spheres of life]" (p. 452). Thus, it will be my argument that a knowledge of the (possibly hitherto largely unknown) history of "aesthetic value"--whether ideological or technological or numismatic--is a factor ultimately subordinate to one's own, specific orientation to social struggle, in determining Marxist criteria of literary evaluation.

We speculated, over the excerpt from Marx's Introduction, about

whether the criterion of truthfulness may well be seen to apply to the artifact's formal role ("reproduce") as much as to its perceived content. And Engels, we recall, in his 26 November 1885 letter to Minna Kautsky, advocated among other things "a faithful portrayal of the real conditions" of bourgeois society (Marx/Engels, p. 88). These formulations legitimately raise the question whether or not Marx and Engels ever conceptualised and consciously advocated that particular eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mode of fictional writing known to us today (albeit within certain limits of controversy about definitions) as realism. And the answer would seem to be a guarded yes.

Morawski (p. 30) notes that the "term 'realism' does not appear in any text by Marx," but he believes that "Marx agreed with the general conception formulated by Engels in his letters to Minna Kautsky and Margaret Harkness." Marx's comments on specific writers, as well as his choice of favourite authors (both of which we will look at later) would seem to bear out Morawski's second assertion. What, then, were some of the general features of realism as Marx and Engels apparently envisaged them? Prawer (p. 19), in a useful encapsulation, observes that Marx, in his critiques of his own literary fragments, clearly valued "'form, measure, concentration,'" though he had no use for what Prawer calls "pure formalism." Without entering at this point into a controversy about the meaning of that last phrase, which in any event is a negative criterion of value for Marx, we may look to Engels to supplement the positive criteria spelt out by Marx and to learn his (Engels') own explicit definition of realism.

"Realism, to my mind," writes Engels to Harkness (April 1888), "implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical

characters under typical circumstances" (Marx/Engels, p. 90). And his letter to Lassalle (18 May 1859), besides providing perhaps the most complete enumeration of his criteria for realism, also connects significantly with similar specific criteria spelt out by Marx, in his independent comments on the same text, the play Franz von Sickingen. Engels calls the play "too abstract, not realistic enough for me" (Marx/Engels, p. 105); Marx complains that Sickingen is "much too abstractly depicted" (Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle, 19 April 1859, in Marx/Engels, p. 100). Engels explains, further, that "my view of drama consists in not forgetting the realistic for the idealistic, Shakespeare for Schiller . . ." (Marx/Engels, p. 105). His letter also establishes that, within the realistic mode, the most valued feature for him is dramatisation, with "clever development of the plot" and the "full fusion" of profundity of thought, "conscious historical content," and "Shakespearian liveliness and fullness of treatment" as its chief components (Marx/Engels, pp. 102, 103). Finally, in what is perhaps the most complete enumeration of positive realist criteria anywhere in Marx or Engels, the latter, while warning against undramatised propaganda, commends Lassalle's class-principle of "representative" characterisation:

Your Sickingen is on absolutely the right track; the main characters are representatives of definite classes and trends and therefore of definite ideas of their time. They find their motives not in petty individual lusts, but in the historical stream which is carrying them along. But . . . the action itself should bring these motives more vigorously, actively and, so to speak, elementally into the foreground, while the debates . . . become more and more superfluous. (Marx/Engels, p. 103)

At the hands of other critics, Marx and Engels' notion of realism

has, of course, undergone changes, as have the specific terms of their advocacy of it. To a larger extent, the changing literary practices going by that name have themselves been instrumental in effecting this, but there is also another factor. In the nineteen-thirties, the German experimental writer and critic Bertold Brecht clashed with the Hungarian academic critic Georg Lukács, essentially over the Stalinised conception of realism (in its ostensibly socialist form called "socialist realism"). The history of this debate is fairly involved and the sides are not clearly mutually exclusive.<sup>58</sup> The gist of the matter, however, is the following. Challenged, as ostensible Marxists, by the reality of fascism, but unable to break decisively from a purely cultural strategy for defeating it, Brecht and Lukács sought to resolve their political-tactical differences strictly within the realm of critical theory. In the ensuing confrontation, conducted within the equally discursive illusions of Stalinist cultural theory, Brecht declared for exposing reality through ceaseless practical (cultural) experimentation and subversion, the latter including subversion of the conventionally accepted differences between art and reality. Lukács, on the other hand, pressed for an exposé of reality through explicitly theoretical, polemical demystification. Thus, for Brecht, any strategy in art--particularly modernism--that facilitated the exposure of reality was essentially realism, or at least was the only desirable kind of artistic strategy. For Lukács, on the other hand, any strategy in art--particularly modernism as he understood it--that did not analytically expose reality, but instead pretended to merge into it, was a strategy ultimately in the service of fascism, not against it. To counter this allegedly pro-fascistic obfuscation perpetuated by modernism, Lukács

upheld the "typical" and "rounded" characters of nineteenth-century European "realism," along with its integrative, "totalising" plots and structures, which enable the reader to see the individual characters in their historical context. Thus, for Lukács, realism always evinced identifiable, discrete, textually intrinsic properties; for Brecht, realism was a specifically unpredictable strategy that could be judged only by its revelatory effects or otherwise. As Eagleton puts it, "One might say quite simply of his practice, to adapt one of his own adages: realism is as realism does" (WB, pp. 88-89).

In Eagleton's own literary theory, we eventually arrive at one possible resolution of the problem. He offers a detailed definition and assessment of realism "in general," as an historical and conjunctural mode and criterion of literary value. And he argues that realism is neither technically limited to unmediated "reflection" of reality nor inevitably useful (or harmful) to the interests of socialism and its culture:

It might be argued, for example, that in an earlier stage of industrial capitalist accumulation, where the dominant ideological experience was one of fragmentation and nuclearity, literary realism fulfilled a progressive role in revealing covert inter-connections--in demonstrating, in short, the power and character of something like a system. It might then be argued that, once that system was indeed fleshed within ideological experience--once industrial capitalism had passed into its monopoly forms--modernism in art arrived upon the agenda as a resistance to precisely all that, exploiting the fragment, the private and the unspeakable, the agonised and irreducible moment, as the lone necessary negation of the apparently "monolithic" society it confronted. (WB, pp. 89-90)

But such retrospective relativisation of realism's changing character and role does not, I would maintain, either invalidate Marx and Engels' (albeit unelaborated) notion of it at the time or contradict one iota

their view of its ideological role up to the time of their writing about it. On the contrary, it actually confirms, in the particular, the unity of their general criteria for evaluation--of truthfulness and partisanship in the service of social emancipation.

Marx and Engels' judgments on specific literary traditions, authors, and texts are relevant here primarily only as empirical verification of what I have said about their general evaluative criteria, although one could as legitimately grope one's way through to those general criteria by starting from these specific judgments. In their limited way, the individual evaluations also afford us a glimpse of certain interesting aspects of Marx and Engels' literary world: whom they read, what common literary modes characterised their choices, what perceived particular qualities endeared particular authors and works to them, exactly how much attention they paid to technique, and so on. Besides, their engagement with nineteenth-century English prose and continental fiction links them to one dominant concern and empirical focus shared by Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton. Yet, in the last analysis--not just methodologically but factually, given what Marx and Engels actually say in them--these judgments neither contradict nor shape but at most confirm in the particular, with varying emphases, the general criteria of literary value elsewhere argued by their authors. But even if they did not, to Marxist axiologists, it is the general criteria behind these judgments that would be relevant, because theoretical, not their consistent or inconsistent applications to specific authors and works. Only this order of priorities, unlike its reverse, could make it meaningful to discuss, say, the pro-Balzac Marx and Engels within the same theoretical framework as Rosa Luxemburg, who



is known to have had no particular admiration for that same novelist (see Solomon's biographical note in Solomon, p. 144), or to discuss the anti-Byron Marx within the same theoretical framework as the pro-Byron Trotsky (see my section on Trotsky, below).

From among the particular authors whom Marx and Engels incidentally comment on, Goethe and Carlyle emerge as the only currently well-known writers to have earned extended literary analyses, with Balzac and Shakespeare attracting the next greatest--though mainly socio-economic--attention. One other author, Eugene Sue, actually draws an extensive critique for his The Mysteries of Paris (in The Holy Family, excerpted in Marx/Engels, pp. 298-313), but most of that critique is really an ironic recounting of the novel's principal episodes, occasionally interspersed with the critics' early philosophical polemic against Hegelian idealism. And between Goethe and Carlyle, it is of course the latter whose works span much of the period dealt with by Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton. I shall therefore end this section with a brief look at Marx and Engels' critique of Carlyle's Latter-Day Pamphlets, after first noting the implications of Engels' well-known comments on Balzac.

That Marx and Engels' premium on truthfulness by no means excluded sympathy for pro-socialist partisanship is most graphically borne out in their explicit admiration for writers such as Shelley, Cobbett, and Georg Weerth and in their effective favourable counterposition of the perceived trend represented by these writers to that represented by Byron and the later Carlyle.<sup>59</sup> Yet, as I have pointed out, many critics, in their efforts to "free" literature and criticism from class-partisanship, vainly attempt to use the authority of Engels

against the Leninist refinement of that concept. Most frequently cited or alluded to in various ways is Engels' praise of the royalist Balzac, in his letter to Margaret Harkness (April 1888):

Balzac whom I consider a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas passés, présents et à venir, in La Comedie Humaine gives us a most wonderfully realistic history of French "Society". . . . Well, Balzac was politically a Legitimist; his great work is a constant elegy on the irretrievable decay of good society, his sympathies are all with the class doomed to extinction. But for all that his satire is never keener, his irony never bitterer, than when he sets in motion the very men and women with whom he sympathises most deeply--the nobles. And the only men of whom he always speaks with undisguised admiration, are his bitterest political antagonists. . . . That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, . . . that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of realism, and one of the grandest features in old Balzac. (Marx/Engels, pp. 91-92)

First, it is curious how critics who really want to argue against conscious partisanship in literature almost universally light on the above passage and miss what would at least appear to be a much more conducive and explicit admonition for their purpose--Engels' comment on Goethe: "We criticise him not from a moral or from a party point of view, but at the very most from the aesthetic and historical point of view; we measure Goethe neither by moral nor by political nor by 'human' standards" (Marx/Engels, p. 356). Perhaps they do so because Engels equally explicitly points to lack of space as the reason: "We cannot here involve ourselves in a description of Goethe's relationship to his whole age, his literary precursors and contemporaries, his process of development and his station in life. We therefore restrict ourselves simply to noting the facts" (emphasis mine; Marx/Engels, p. 356).

At any rate, this brings us back to the comment on Balzac. To

begin with, any use of that passage to justify smuggling genuinely reactionary writers into Marxist respectability must necessarily ignore the fact that Engels singles out only specific features in Balzac as positive values and praises their truthfulness precisely in spite of the novelist's reactionary official politics: "That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies [my emphasis] and political prejudices, that he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favourite nobles, and described them as people deserving no better fate; and that he saw the real men of the future where, for the time being, they alone were to be found--that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of realism, and one of the grandest features in old Balzac" (Marx/Engels, p. 92). Thus, not Balzac's general royalism but his specific, observational truthfulness in spite of it ("for all that") is Engels' criterion for his overall assessment of the novelist.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, I think we may assume that Engels lends more weight to Balzac's specific truths because the latter's official politics occupies a spatially marginal niche in his Human Comedy as a whole, anyway.

Next, we should note that, in his formulations, Engels describes what is clearly not a simple conflict between a homogeneous, internally consistent mass of prejudices and a separate, equally homogeneous set of observations. Rather, it is a contradictory, conflicting set of dramatised sympathies and professed loyalties most closely corresponding to the "material" contradictions in contemporary ("republican") society outside the novelist's mind: "And the only men of whom he always speaks with undisguised admiration, are his bitterest political antagonists, the republican heroes of the Cloître Saint-Méry . . ." (Marx/Engels, p. 92). In effect, therefore, Engels in this letter illustrates, rather

than contradicts, the base-superstructure model of social analysis posited by Marx. The contradiction between Balzac's "old," general, royalist ideals and his "new" admiration for the republicans is manifestly the superstructural expression<sup>61</sup> of the more basic, social contradiction between the old "womb" of France's aristocracy and the embryonic, "maturing" heroes of the bourgeois republic.

Above all, however, we should note that Engels' comment on Balzac's contradictory works and value is, obviously, only a description of a specifically materialised rift within the camp of an enemy class, not a prescriptive exhortation to all contemporaneous and future socialist writers to go forth and be consistently self-contradictory. Proof that Engels never thought political inconsistency to be intrinsically valuable can be amply seen in his devastating critique of Goethe's liberalism (Marx/Engels, pp. 359-67); and perhaps that is a more likely reason (than Engels' note about the lack of space) why liberal critics prefer to stick to the "Balzac letter." Finally, we might wonder whether Balzac himself saw his political beliefs as something distinct from his dramatised, literary slices of life and, if he did, whether he saw them as being actually counterposed. However, it is true that Balzac's own views in this regard need not prevent us from advancing our own, retrospective characterisations of his works, as long as such characterisations are germane to our critical purpose and based on reasonable evidence.

Marx and Engels' review of Carlyle's Latter-Day Pamphlets is relevant here for two main reasons: it is their only extended evaluation of a nineteenth-century English writer, that century being a central

empirical focus for Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton; and in some ways, it combines the evaluative criteria employed by Engels in judging both Balzac and Goethe. (All quotations used here are from Marx/Engels, esp. pp. 326-39).

In their review, Marx and Engels perceive in Carlyle's Latter-Day Pamphlets "the decline of literary genius in the face of the current acute historical struggles, which it attempts to confront with its unrecognised, direct, prophetic inspirations" (p. 326). The reviewers acknowledge that Carlyle once wrote "in a manner which is at times even revolutionary," as in his history of the French Revolution, in his "apology for Cromwell," and in Past and Present, confronting the bourgeoisie "at a time when its views, tastes and ideals held the whole of English literature in thrall" (pp. 326-27). Nevertheless, they note that, even in these radical pieces, "the critique of the present is closely bound up with a strangely unhistorical apotheosis of the Middle Ages . . ." (p. 327).

However, the Latter-Day Pamphlets are "a remarkable step backwards" even compared to those contradictory writings (p. 327). In these latest pamphlets, Carlyle adopts a "pantheistic standpoint," in which all real, historically produced class-conflicts are metaphysically resolved "into the one great, eternal conflict"; Carlyle thereby depicts class-distinctions as "natural," and "class rule is thus sanctioned anew" (pp. 333-34). Marx and Engels aptly characterise this idealist and reactionary feat as a "[b]rilliant return to the 'Night of the Absolute' in which all cats are grey!" (p. 335) and expose the thoroughly bourgeois bias underlying Carlyle's ostensibly non-partisan, "class-transcendent" posture:

Thus after Carlyle has time and again in the first forty pages vented all his virtuous fury against selfishness, free competition, the abolition of feudal bonds between man and man, supply and demand, laissez-faire, cotton-spinning, cash-payment, etc., we now suddenly find that the main exponents of all these shams, the industrial bourgeoisie, are not merely counted among the celebrated heroes and geniuses but even constitute a vitally indispensable part of these heroes, that the trump card in all his attacks on bourgeois relations and ideas is the apotheosis of the bourgeois individual. It appears yet odder that Carlyle, having discovered the commanders of labour and the commanded, in other words a certain organisation of labour, nevertheless declares this organisation to be a great problem requiring solution.

. . . . .  
If the English bourgeoisie equated paupers with criminals in order to create a deterrent to pauperism and brought into being the Poor Law of 1834, Carlyle accuses the paupers of high treason because pauperism generates pauperism. . . . This pamphlet is distinguished from the first only by a fury much greater, yet all the cheaper for being directed against those officially expelled from the existing society, against people behind bars; a fury which sheds even that little shame which the ordinary bourgeoisie still displays for decency's sake. (Pp. 336, 338)

Moreover, say Marx and Engels, "Carlyle's style corresponds to his ideas" as a "remarkable step backwards" (p. 327). The critics imply a real link between the "pompous cant" of "Carlyle, the Noblest" and his "self-important shallowness" (p. 326). Philosophical obscurantism generates its own exaggerated bluster.

Marx and Engels' obvious disapproval of Carlyle's mediaevalist conservatism (which, they note, is "a frequent characteristic of English revolutionaries too, for instance Cobbett and some of the Chartists" [p. 327]) throws revealing light on Carlyle's disciple William Morris as well as on Raymond Williams' dubious value-criterion of "a whole way of life," which we shall examine later. Moreover, the early Eagleton's thesis that the Carlylean type of contradiction qua contradiction can

always be effectively valuable because allegedly conjuncturally "inevitable" (as in Yeats) faces a rather uphill task as a Marxist argument, in light of all our discussions of Balzac, Goethe, and Carlyle.

Marx, however, viewed William Cobbett quite differently from the way he viewed Carlyle, despite Cobbett's obvious Carlylean proclivities. For, Marx claims, because of his instinctual solidarising with "the mass of the people against the encroachments of the middle-class" (p. 323), Cobbett at least never consciously crossed over to the other side of the class-line:

[S]hortly before his death, after the establishment of the new Poor Law, . . . William Cobbett began to suspect the existence of a millocracy as hostile to the mass of the people, as landlords, banklords, public creditors, and the clergymen of the Established Church. . . . He did not see the modern bourgeoisie, but only that fraction of the aristocracy which held the hereditary monopoly of office, and which sanctioned by law all the changes necessitated by the new wants and pretensions of the middle-class. He saw the machine, but not the hidden motive power. (Pp. 322-23)

"Hence the curious phenomenon," observes Marx, that William Cobbett, who was "a plebeian by instinct and by sympathy" (p. 322), "passed in the eyes of the world and in his own conviction for the representative of the industrial middle-class against the hereditary aristocracy" (p. 323). One can see, therefore, why Marx and Engels should value the "curious phenomenon" of Cobbett--a radical who thought he was bourgeois--over the pompous pretences of Carlyle--an ideological spokesman for the bourgeoisie who presented himself as a radical. As in the analogous distinction between Balzac and Goethe, Marx and Engels here had an anti-impressionist, materialist political criterion of value

to distinguish one kind of contradictory figure from another. This criterion was that of the class-interests objectively served by the works of the given figure at any particular point in time.

Thus, real contradictions in the author or work to be judged never led Marx or Engels to pronounce "all cats" "grey." For they knew that this could only represent a capitulation to the prevailing hierarchy of social and literary values, which, as the "ruling ideas" of capitalist society, could not but be ultimately inimical to the interests of the world's working class. Lenin's theory of party-oriented literature systematised this Marxist principle in self-conscious terms, thus also effectively (if less self-consciously) bringing Marxist literary axiology into contact with the central issue of modern Marxist politics--the organisational question.

#### Lenin and the Party Question

Lenin and Trotsky, in my view the two most complete Marxists of the twentieth century, devoted most of their talents to organising and defending the Bolshevik Revolution. As with Marx and Engels earlier, the demands of revolutionary politics prevented the Bolshevik leaders from constructing an elaborate and complete system of literary analysis and evaluation. Yet, for Marxist axiology, Lenin's few literary articles and comments and Trotsky's Literature and Revolution, along with his miscellaneous articles on the subject, represent this century's major continuity with the analytical methods and aims of Marx.<sup>62</sup>

In his "Lenin as a Literary Theorist," Science and Society, 29,



No. 1 (Winter 1965), 3, Stefan Morawski points out that Lenin's conclusions about literature were similar to those of Marx and Engels despite Lenin's lack of a complete collection of their statements on that subject and that "the explanation is to be found in the method of Marxism, which led in that direction." Further, to gain a fuller sense of Lenin's historical context, we must remember that his most frequently cited pronouncements--such as the Tolstoy articles or the major statement on party literature--were polemics aimed at clearly identified class-audiences. Thus, Lenin explicitly directed his September 1908 article "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution" (later cited as "Mirror") against the "crude hypocrisy of the venal [liberal bourgeois] hack," who facilely switches from hounding Tolstoy to praising him as a patriot, and against the monarchist writers for the Constitutional Democratic ("Cadet") Party's newspaper Rech (Speech).<sup>63</sup> Similarly, in 1905, in his most widely misinterpreted statement, "Party Organisation and Party Literature" (later cited as "Party Literature"), Lenin made unmistakable the distinction between the voluntarily loyal, intra-party section of his audience and any hostile and disloyal claimant to party rights and privileges within the party: "First of all, we are discussing party literature and its subordination to party control. Everyone is free to write and say whatever he likes, without any restrictions. But every voluntary association (including the party) is also free to expel members who use the name of the party to advocate anti-party views" (Lenin, p. 27; emphasis mine). Freedom of association must exist at least as much as "freedom of speech," and Lenin is interested in addressing mainly those who have freely chosen to be associated with the Bolshevik Party.<sup>64</sup>

Central to grasping the Leninist principle of literary evaluation is an understanding of precisely this unique contribution of his to revolutionary Marxism (and, by extension, to Marxist axiology): the concept and model of the "politically-conscious vanguard of the entire working class" ("Party Literature," Lenin, pp. 25-26). If the general methodology of Marx and Engels implied that all literary values in a class-society ultimately correspond to partisan, class-values, and that "tendentious" writing and responses are inevitable and can even be desirable, Lenin emphasised that, for revolutionary purposes, mere proletarian class-tendentiousness remains socially impotent unless it is internally politically differentiated and defined. This internal process, according to Lenin, should explicitly demarcate and organise communists against the pervasive bourgeois values of their own politically uneducated social base.<sup>65</sup> Lenin's explicit insistence on organising the politically most advanced sections of the working masses thus qualitatively develops Marx and Engels' implicit notion and model of the "party of the whole class." This latter tacitly and damagingly subsumed the proletariat's most retrogressive elements and--despite Marx and Engels' occasional, class-defined and historically-limited reflexes to the contrary<sup>66</sup>--indeed shaped the Second International of Engels, Morris, and the early Lenin. But Lenin's fight against the Mensheviks in 1903 decisively marked modern Marxism's departure in practice from building politically unsorted workers' parties (though he himself did not generalise this position in theory till after the First World War). It was Lenin's Bolsheviks who made the revolution.

However, revisionists, especially those writing since the fifties, almost universally deny the decisive importance of a revolutionary

workers' party. From Herbert Marcuse in One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (Boston: Beacon, 1964), in which the name of Lenin does not occur even once, to Régis Debray in Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America (New York: Grove, 1968), especially pp. 104, 115-16, to Frantz Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth, tr. Constance Farrington (1961; New York: Grove, 1966), especially p. 91, to Norman Geras in "Classical Marxism and Proletarian Representation," New Left Review, No. 125 (Jan.-Feb. 1981), 75-89, revisionists insist that vanguardism is merely elitism: it is allegedly "the masses"--if anyone--who will, they imply, "spontaneously" make "the revolution." But it should be enough to point out that the world has not seen a single socialist revolution (that is, a workers' revolution healthy from birth) since Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik vanguard led theirs in 1917. The Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese workers' revolutions were not only overwhelmingly peasant-oriented and peasant-led; they were, for that very reason, socially and politically deformed revolutions, lacking in internationalist proletarian leadership as well as in proletarian democracy. In France, in 1968, the spontaneous uprising of students and workers did not produce a revolution--precisely, I would argue, because there was no revolutionary party to expose and replace the anti-Bolshevik French Stalinists, who ordered the workers back to work.

Logically, then, if the proletariat must be internally politically differentiated for it to be successfully mobilised in its physical majority against capitalism, the values of Marxists at this conjuncture must surely correspond to those of the political vanguard, rather than to those of the rear. And the criteria for specifically literary

evaluation must then, equally logically, flow from this (voluntary and active) correspondence. Of course, in all this, a party's claim to be the vanguard must reflect reality, not wishful thinking or formal dogmatism, as was the case with Stalin's literary commissar, A.A. Zhdanov.<sup>67</sup> The convergence of and correspondence between literary values and political values as embodied in the Marxist party should ideally represent a voluntary orientation, not an automatically accomplished state or one forced on the critic. The attractiveness and revolutionary authority of the party's values will always be historically contingent. On the other hand, they can nevertheless be earned and maintained.

Clara Zetkin, in My Recollections of Lenin (Moscow: Progress [?], 1956, quoted in Lenin, p. 275), recalls Lenin insisting that "[a]rt belongs to the people. Its roots should be deeply implanted in the very thick of the labouring masses." Thus, in general, "[i]t should be understood and loved by these masses. It must unite and elevate their feelings, thoughts and will. It must stir to activity and develop the art instincts within them." Lenin's emphasis on building and activating the vanguard, even when this is to be pursued through art, is not difficult to see in these criteria ("elevate," "stir to activity," "develop"). But precisely because art belongs, in his view, not to some abstract, classless category called "the people" as a universal but more specifically to "the labouring masses," and precisely because these labouring masses must be won to the leadership of the socialist revolution, Lenin argues logically that the most advanced partisan criteria for literary-critical evaluation must be those of the proletarian vanguard.

Hence, in judging the works of Tolstoy, Lenin insists on a two-track, dialectical approach. We must analyse Tolstoy in his complete historical context, Lenin urges, when we are merely explaining his contradictions; but when we are using Tolstoy's work, we must selectively appropriate only that which is of positive, current revolutionary value. Thus, on the one hand, an "appraisal" of Tolstoy's ideological contradictions must encompass "the standpoint of the present-day working-class movement and present-day socialism" as well as Tolstoy's own "standpoint of protest against advancing capitalism . . .--a protest which had to arise from the patriarchal Russian countryside" ("Mirror," Lenin, p. 32). On the other hand, because of its structurally unique position as the exploited of the last class-society and because of its historically unique ability--already tested to some extent--to resolve the contradictions of capitalist society without regressing into feudalism, it is the proletarian vanguard alone that can provide a "correct" appraisal of Tolstoy: "such an appraisal is possible only from the viewpoint of the Social-Democratic proletariat" ("L.N. Tolstoy," Lenin, p. 55; this article is later cited as "Tolstoy").<sup>68</sup>

Yet, this openly party-loyal standpoint for judging the present worth of any literature is not a legal decree monitoring the production of "imaginative literature," especially of non-party literature. On the contrary, as is the case in political commitment in general, the usefulness of this perspective depends entirely on the conscious and enthusiastic initiative of its espousers. Explicitly disavowing (in the specific) "any kind of standardised system, or a solution by means of a few decrees," Lenin instead urges "the entire politically-conscious

Social-Democratic proletariat throughout Russia" to become "aware of this new problem, specify it clearly and everywhere set about solving it" ("Party Literature," Lenin, p. 27). But Lenin's point is that the notion of non-partisan literature in a class society is nevertheless a myth, and this myth must be decisively exposed and destroyed in general: "The freedom of the bourgeois writer . . . is simply masked . . . dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution." Socialists expose this reality, "not in order to arrive at a non-class literature and art (that will be possible only in a socialist extra-class society), but to contrast this hypocritically free literature, which is in reality linked to the bourgeoisie, with a really free one that will be openly linked to the proletariat" ("Party Literature," Lenin, pp. 28-29).

We should note, however, Lenin's clear prediction that a non-class literature will be possible "in a socialist extra-class society." Again, clearly, the "base" of this new society, free from capitalist economic production, is seen by him as the condition of that classless literature's possibility. Such literature "will be possible" precisely because it will be voluntary and hence genuinely free, unmotivated by purely economic necessity.<sup>69</sup> Obversely, if Tolstoy's "great works are really to be made the possession of all, . . . a socialist revolution must be accomplished . . . overthrowing the yoke of the landlords and capitalists" ("Tolstoy," Lenin, pp. 52-53). This revolutionary-activist thrust consistently marks Lenin's general approach to literary evaluation.

Specifically, Lenin continued, with Tolstoy as his focus, Marx and Engels' championing of truthfulness as the single most valuable literary

criterion: "if we have before us a really great artist," he wrote in "Mirror" (Lenin, p. 30), "he must have reflected in his work at least some of the essential aspects of the [1905] revolution." Recognising Tolstoy's many contradictions and the incidental inaccuracy of comparing these contradictory works to a mirror ("A mirror which does not reflect things correctly could hardly be called a mirror" ["Mirror," Lenin, p. 30]), Lenin nevertheless argued for salvaging from the novelist whatever was currently valuable to the Russian Social Democratic proletariat. Thus Lenin admitted that Tolstoy's ideological and aesthetic contradictions were "indeed glaring," but pointed out that as a whole they accurately "express the contradictory conditions of Russian life in the last third of the nineteenth century" ("Mirror," Lenin, pp. 31, 32), embodying "both the strength and the weakness . . . precisely of the peasant mass movement" ("Tolstoy," Lenin, p. 53). Hence it was possible for Tolstoy simultaneously to draw "incomparable pictures of Russian life" with "the most sober realism"--launching a "remarkably powerful, forthright and sincere protest against social falsehood and hypocrisy" as evident in "capitalist exploitation, . . . government outrages, the farcical courts and the state administration"--and to be "the landlord obsessed with Christ, . . . the jaded, hysterical sniveller called the Russian intellectual, . . . the crackpot preaching of submission" and performing guilt-ridden penance by eating rice cutlets instead of meat ("Mirror," Lenin, p. 31).

Thus, Lenin felt that, in salvaging for themselves the currently valuable elements from Tolstoy's contradictory novels, the vanguard and the "advanced classes" must not become mired in the socio-historical explanations, lapsing into Tolstoy's own anachronistic world-view to try

to understand him better. Instead, they must sift the wheat from the chaff with an eye to their own present needs. Lenin therefore warned against idealising Tolstoy's doctrine of "non-resistance" and "universal 'love'" today. For, "[a] quarter of a century ago, the critical elements in Tolstoy's doctrine might at times have been of practical value for some sections of the population in spite of its reactionary and utopian features." But reality has evolved since then. And, "[i]n our days," it is the "consciously reactionary" ideas of the liberal-bourgeois mouthpiece Vekhi (Landmarks) that permeate people's minds, infecting not only the liberals themselves but "even a section of those who were almost Marxists" (the Mensheviks), creating "a liquidationist trend" among the latter ("Leo Tolstoy and His Epoch," Lenin, p. 68). Thus, while evaluating a "genius" such as Tolstoy, who has made "first-class contributions to world literature" ("Mirror," Lenin, p. 31), the revolutionary workers and critics should recognise and reject his negative features, even while seeking to wrest his positive features in their own, socialist interests. Such is the political purpose of Marxist evaluation:

Tolstoy is dead, and the pre-revolutionary Russia whose weakness and impotence found thier expression in the philosophy and are depicted in the works of the great artist, has become a thing of the past. But the heritage which he has left includes that which has not become a thing of the past, but belongs to the future. This heritage is accepted and is being worked upon by the Russian proletariat. The Russian proletariat will explain to the masses of the toilers and the exploited the meaning of Tolstoy's criticism of the state, and the church, private property in land--not in order that the masses should confine themselves to self-perfection and yearning for a godly life, but in order they should rise to strike a new blow at the tsarist monarchy and landlordism, . . . in order that they should learn to utilise at every step in their life and in their struggle the technical and social achievements of capitalism, that they should learn to weld



themselves into a united army of millions of socialist fighters who will overthrow capitalism and create a new society. . . . ("Tolstoy," Lenin, pp. 56-57)

Viewing truthfulness as the single most important literary value, Lenin was freely able to recommend to the revolutionary workers writers as politically disparate as the anti-communist White Guard Arkady Averchenko, the mystical humanist Tolstoy, and the American communist John Reed.<sup>70</sup> He was able to recommend the non- and anti-communist literature to communists partly because the texts' reactionary attitudes co-existed, as Lenin saw it, with accurate observations of life. But, above all, he was able to do this because he trusted the capacity of the politically-educated proletariat to wrench the insights free from their attendant politics: and, indeed, he enjoined them to do so. Like Marx and Engels before him, he valued contradictory works, such as Tolstoy's, not because of but in spite of their negative features; and these features he never failed to attack and reject, however historically explicable they may have been. Again, a critic such as Eagleton, as we shall see, compares unfavourably with the Marxists on this question.

Lenin's criteria of literary evaluation, then, followed Marxist principles, and in at least one respect constituted a major development of Marxist theory and practice. This was Lenin's realisation that, to be implemented, these principles required an organisation to embody and fight for them and that the most advanced criteria for revolutionary literary evaluation cannot logically violate the perceptions, values, and priorities of the advance guard of the socialist revolution, the (genuine) party of the revolutionary working class. After Lenin, it was

Trotsky who spelt out and updated the detailed implications of such organisationally-shaped axiology for Marxist criticism. He did so, however, not only more extensively than Lenin but also in a different and changing historical context--namely, that of the defence of the Russian Revolution, followed by the developing fight against the Stalinist bureaucracy and its reactionary values, though that fight was still based on the unconditional military defence of the Soviet state against capitalist attack, and was, indeed, the most effective internal strategy for its defence. This is precisely the political configuration of forces that, in unprecedentedly sharpened and catastrophic form, still confronts us today.

#### Trotsky and the Defence of the First Workers' State

Our policy in art, during a transitional period, can and must be to help the various groups and schools of art which have come over to the Revolution to grasp correctly the historic meaning of the Revolution, and to allow them complete freedom of self-determination in the field of art, after putting before them the categorical standard of being for or against the Revolution.

The Revolution is reflected in art, for the time being only partially so, to the extent to which the artist ceases to regard it as an external catastrophe, and to the extent to which the guild of new and old poets and artists becomes a part of the living tissue of the Revolution and learns to see it from within and not from without. (Leon Trotsky, Introd., Literature and Revolution, tr. Rose Strunsky 1924; tr. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960 , p. 14; this book is later parenthetically abbreviated as LR )

Trotsky's principles of literary evaluation stemmed from his perception of two supreme complementary and conjunctural political needs. On the one hand, the fledgling Soviet workers' state had at all costs to be defended against capitalism, on two fronts: against the

imperialists from abroad and against the White Guards, wealthy peasantry, and other bourgeois, petit-bourgeois, and feudal-communalist forces from within. On the other hand, as the twenties progressed, especially after Lenin's death in 1924, a bureaucratic caste, led by Stalin, had usurped political power from the Soviet workers. This caste, petit-bourgeois in outlook and composition, was fundamentally hostile to international workers' revolution. Thus, though it grew and thrived on the social and economic fruits of the revolution achieved at home, it eventually moved to formalise its political counter-revolution by slaughtering and banishing tens of thousands of Bolsheviks, among them Trotsky. In purely selfish and utopian hopes of coexisting peacefully with world capitalism while building "socialism in one country," it was prepared to endanger even its own territory and collectivised economic base, in a common political front against the international working class. Such a posture, Trotsky saw, clearly posed a real long- or short-term internal threat to the very existence of the Soviet Union. Thus, for his entire life after Lenin's death, he conducted a relentless struggle to oust the Stalinists from power and to re-install the revolutionary working class in its place, as the best--and, indeed, only--internal guarantee of the first workers' state's security, including that of its art and culture.

Literature and Revolution, Trotsky's major statement on the subject, was published in 1924. It therefore discusses the prospects and evaluative criteria for post-revolutionary literature mainly in light of the recently defeated threats of capitalist restoration from without and within during the Civil War (1918-21). The open fight of Trotsky and the Left Opposition against the Stalinist reaction is only about to

begin, though the main overall enemy of the revolution was always-- later, as well as now--rightly seen by Trotsky as not Stalinism but capitalism. In that book, therefore, Trotsky describes the conjunctural character of the Russian revolution thus:

Because of its peasant foundation, and because of its vast spaces and its patches of culture, the Russian Revolution is the most chaotic and formless of all revolutions. But in its leadership, in the method of its orientation, in its organisation, in its aims and tasks, it is the most "correct," the most planful and the most finished of all revolutions. In the combination of these two extremes lies the soul, the internal character of our Revolution. (LR, pp. 102-03)

This description captures in its own way the relationship between the Soviet workers' vanguard and the Soviet working masses at a particular conjuncture. And Trotsky was alluding to this real configuration of forces when he categorically declared in his Introduction that "the problem of creating a new art proceeds entirely along the lines of the fundamental problem of constructing a Socialist culture" (LR, p. 12).

He then elaborated thus:

The art of this epoch will be entirely under the influence of revolution. This art needs a new self-consciousness. It is, above all, incompatible with mysticism, whether it be frank, or whether it masquerades as romanticism, because the Revolution starts from the central idea that collective man must become sole master, and that the limits of his power are determined by his knowledge of natural forces and by his capacity to use them. This new art is incompatible with pessimism, with skepticism, and with all other forms of spiritual collapse. It is realistic, active, vitally collectivist, and filled with a limitless creative faith in the Future. (LR, p. 15)

Trotsky's positive general criteria, as in the excerpt above, are therefore clearly a function not only of the cultural problems of his day but also of the overall problem of post-revolutionary economic,

political, as well as military consolidation faced by the first workers' state in history. In his thorough and urgent speech on "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues" (1921), Lenin had repeatedly hammered home the same point: "consolidate the foundation" (Lenin, p. 154). The proletariat needed to "re-educate a section of the peasantry," to "win over the working peasants" in order to defeat the rich, profiteering ones. "The class struggle is continuing," Lenin had repeated; "it has merely changed its forms . . . and it is our task to subordinate all interests to that struggle." And from this overview of the revolution, Lenin logically concluded, "Communist morality is based on the struggle for the consolidation and completion of communism. That is also the basis of communist training, education, and teaching" (Lenin, pp. 158, 159, 161). It is clearly this same perception, then, of the overwhelming need to defend and consolidate the besieged new Soviet state on an all-round basis that also underlay Trotsky's defiantly (and deceptively) simple statement that "[d]uring the period of the revolution, only that literature which promotes the consolidation of the workers in their struggle against the exploiters is necessary and progressive" (LR, pp. 229-30). First things had to come first.

Now such an account of Trotsky's views, though useful as a balance to an opposite kind of account that would make Trotsky out to be little more than a democratically right-minded anti-Stalinist liberal,<sup>71</sup> of course ignores their internal complexity and sophistication. Yet, while the detailed ramifications of these views are varied and many, their formative principles are few and simple. On the one hand, it is clear, Trotsky saw the "poetry of the Revolution" not merely in the "elemental rise of the October tide, but in the clear consciousness and

in the tense will of the leading Party" (LR, p. 101). On the other hand, "the leading Party" of Lenin and Trotsky was a far cry from Stalin's bureaucratic travesty of it. Thus, in a 1938 letter to Partisan Review, Trotsky insisted (against the populist jibes of a Chicago magazine editor) that "[n]ot a single progressive idea had begun with a 'mass base,' otherwise it would not have been a progressive idea. It is only in its last stage that the idea finds its masses. . . ." But then he added, immediately, "--if, of course, it answers the needs of progress" ("Art and Politics in Our Epoch," Trotsky, p. 112). An entire section of his classic analysis of the Soviet state's degeneration under Stalin--The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going? (1937; New York: Pathfinder, 1972)--elaborates this distinction between a genuine vanguard and a self-appointed, arbitrary bureaucracy (reprinted as an excerpt, "Culture and the Soviet Bureaucracy," in Trotsky, pp. 94-100). Comparing even the harshest dictates of the Bolshevik government to the panicking, insecure brutality of the Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky pointed out in his analysis that even "in the hottest years of the civil war, it was clear to the leaders of the revolution that the government could, guided by political considerations, place limitations upon creative freedom, but in no case pretend to the role of commander in the sphere of science, literature and art" ("Culture," Trotsky, p. 96). The confident and optimistic civil-war dictatorship had "no fear of experiments," while the bureaucracy "superstitiously fears whatever does not serve it directly, as well as whatever it does not understand" ("Culture," Trotsky, p. 97). Ideological and aesthetic debate and competition, the "struggle of tendencies and schools," have yielded to "interpretation of

the will of the leaders," so that "literary estimates are transformed within a few weeks, textbooks made over, streets renamed, statues brought forward," all as a result of "a few eulogistic remarks of Stalin about the poet Mayakovsky" ("Culture," Trotsky, p. 99). Thus this "100 percent conformism" merely induces cultural "sterility" ("Culture," Trotsky, p. 98). Yet--and this is where Trotsky leaves no room for anti-communist populism--bureaucratism and populism are but two aspects of the same rejection of vanguard responsibility:

That old [populist] Narodnik formula, rejecting the task of artistically educating the masses, takes on a still more reactionary character when the right to decide what art the people want and what they don't want remains in the hands of the bureaucracy. . . . In the last analysis the whole affair comes down in its eyes to taking care that art assimilates its interests, and finds such forms for them as will make the bureaucracy attractive to the popular masses. ("Culture," Trotsky, p. 100)<sup>72</sup>

Trotsky's criteria of literary value thus grew out of an integrated and coherent revolutionary politics. In this politics, not only was "the well-being of the revolution" the "highest law" but this priority recognised the real limitations inherent in art as a socially discrete force: "artistic creativity, by its very nature, lags behind the other modes of expression of a man's spirit, and still more of the class."<sup>73</sup> Thus, while Trotsky was in a sense right to point to "culture" as the "main instrument" of past class oppression and to argue that "it also, and only it can become the instrument of socialist emancipation" ("Culture and Socialism," Trotsky, p. 88), we must remember that he was talking about culture reinforcing and completing, not replacing, the process begun by the socio-political revolution. For, as he explained

in the first few lines of his Introduction to Literature and Revolution (pp. 9-10), "If the victorious Russian proletariat had not created its own army, the Workers' State would have been dead long ago, and we would not be thinking now about economic problems, and much less about intellectual and cultural ones. . . . Art needs comfort, even abundance." Thus, base always ultimately determined superstructure for Trotsky, though he understood quite deeply--as his example of the French Revolution's non-French artistic chroniclers shows<sup>74</sup>--how different superstructures and superstructural factors could interact to lend a particular form to the general cultural elements produced and defined by the developments at the base.<sup>75</sup>

The well-being of the revolution, then, and the real, material limitations of art as a revolutionary social force were the twin parameters within which Trotsky theorised about specific criteria of literary value. And Trotsky's stance towards revolutionary literature was one of broad, cautious guidance, with his stance towards non-revolutionary literature remaining, like Lenin's, selectively appropriative. Philosophically, Trotsky's specific criteria of literary value were fully consistent with those of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, with certain elaborations added. Thus, while "truthfulness"--in all its various connotations--had earlier figured as the common highest criterion of value from Marx to Lenin and does so again in Trotsky, in the latter we find some formal components of this criterion elaborated, such as psychological distance, proportion, sense of context, correct posing of social contradictions and capacity to solve them.

The last criterion, of course, verges on the attitudinal; and on this matter, Trotsky advocates more earnestly than any revolutionary



Marxist before him the importance of optimism. Yet, though he maintains that the "invisible axis" of at least all post-revolutionary literature should logically be "the Revolution itself" (LR, p. 79), he cautions against artificial didacticism (as much as against facile optimism) and recommends realism only "in the sense of a philosophy of life," not necessarily in the sense of "the traditional [technical] arsenal of literary schools" (LR, p. 236).<sup>76</sup> Dialectically linking technical innovations to the needs of practical struggle, Trotsky makes the point that "the new artist will need all the methods and processes evolved in the past, as well as a few supplementary ones, in order to grasp the new life. And this is not going to be artistic eclecticism, because the unity of art is created by an active world-attitude and active life-attitude" (LR, p. 236).

As with most of Marx's, Engels', and Lenin's comments on literature, it is often in Trotsky's comments on particular authors that some of his evaluative criteria achieve concrete embodiment. But while his analyses of particular authors and works are far more extensive and specialised than those of his Marxist predecessors, they too serve, in the end, merely as confirmatory illustrations of the critic's general evaluative method. My survey of Trotsky's "practical criticism" will therefore be proportionately brief and chiefly illustrative in purpose.

Trotsky's probably most significant analyses involve a handful of authors--Dante, Tolstoy, Céline, and Mayakovsky--although his scattered comments on authors such as Malraux, Malraquis, Martinet, Pilnyak, Blok, and Gorky are illuminating too. In Literature and Revolution, Trotsky advances his specific criteria of literary value in the wake of what he considers the bankruptcy of most pre-1917 non-revolutionary (Russian)

literature, in view of his recognition of "proletarian" literature as an un-Marxist concept, and in face of the virtual unforeseeability of the details of socialist and communist culture. Most relevantly, the "fellow-travellers" and Imagists, such as Boris Pilnyak, are described as colourful technicians but ambivalent sympathisers of the revolution; and only Alexander Blok is allowed the possibility that one of his poems, the semi-mystical "The Twelve," might remain valuable beyond its time. The Futurists' absolute negation of the past, Trotsky notes, was always politically ambiguous at best: they had espoused fascism in Italy, and Mayakovsky, probably the Russian Futurist to have impressed Trotsky the most, seems to him to be at his poetic worst when he is trying hardest to be a genuine communist.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps the most serious evaluative problem from within the camp of revolution was that represented by the "Proletkult" group, made up of writers such as Libedinsky and patronised by figures such as Lunacharsky and Bukharin (behind whom stood Stalin himself), who argued for a hypothetically unalloyed "proletarian" literature. While Lenin dismissed them unceremoniously, the group received their most thorough and damaging prognosis at the hands of Trotsky. Echoing the views elaborated earlier by Luxemburg, Trotsky insisted that the historically unique cultural destitution of the revolutionary proletariat, the intensity of the political struggle during the dictatorship of the proletariat, the historically limited duration of this struggle, and this period's eventual transition into socialism--that is, into a classless society--all logically contradicted the concept of a stable and pure "proletarian" culture.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Trotsky observed, the "Proletkult's" notion of a lasting and self-enclosed "proletarian"

culture was not incompatible with Stalin's anti-Marxist policy of a prolonged period of "socialism" in isolated Russia, of "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialists of the world: "Mayakovsky was not and could not become a direct progenitor of 'proletarian literature' for the same reason that it is impossible to build socialism in one country" ("The Suicide of Valdimir Mayakovsky," Trotsky, p. 178).

But of course all this, says Trotsky, does not mean that no literature at all can be produced during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. "Of course," he notes, "the political methods and revolutionary customs of the proletariat can also be called its culture"; besides, "[i]t is quite possible that revolutionary poets will give us martial verses . . ." (CA, pp. 23, 27). But he believes that their value, judging by current evidence, is not encouraging and that "the workers' verses in Zvezda and Pravda . . . were a political event, not a literary one" (CA, p. 6). "There is no revolutionary art as yet," Trotsky declares; but "elements of this art" exist, so "why should not this art, at least its first big wave, come soon . . .?" (LR, p. 229)

This transitional revolutionary art, Trotsky holds, will be most valuable when it manages to express the "poetry of the Revolution," which lies in the party-led proletariat's struggle, growth, persistence, defeats, triumphs, calculated retreats, watchfulness, assaults--"in the elemental flood of mass rebellion, in the exact computation of forces, and in the chess-like movements of strategy" (LR, p. 98). In this struggle, during a period when uniquely socialist values are necessarily embryonic and incompletely differentiated from merely logical and radical ones, the proletariat will have to reject--in literature, as in science--"what is clearly unnecessary, false and reactionary." It will

need to utilise available scientific methods and conclusions, "taking them necessarily with the percentage of reactionary class-alloy" contained in them. For, "[o]ne has to learn regardless of the fact that learning carries within itself certain dangers because out of necessity one has to learn from one's enemies" (LR, pp. 199, 205).

Learning from one's enemies, in Trotsky's scheme, involves at least two main components: the artistic heritage left by capitalism and the politically only indifferently socialistic intelligentsia also bequeathed by it. Starting from this complex and far-from-ideal reality, Trotsky makes the following observations and suggestions. On the one hand, anyone who sincerely wishes to contribute--however ineptly--to socialistic literature should be accorded all help and full protection to experiment on that basis.<sup>79</sup> Dialectical materialists will also be aware, Trotsky knows, of the largely unpredictable way in which new historical forces must inevitably intersect new literary movements to produce specifically unforeseeable forms, thus changing the complex course of literary history repeatedly and forever.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, he insists, revolutionaries can and should intervene actively to shape that history to their own benefit as much as possible. But the most that is logically possible (and also truly productive) in a transitional period is what Trotsky calls "culture-bearing" by the proletarian intelligentsia, a planned preparing of the ground for the more stable future edifice of truly socialist culture to stand on.<sup>81</sup> More than this, Trotsky argues, it is neither immediately possible nor ultimately fruitful for revolutionaries to attempt in such a period of all-round flux.<sup>82</sup> And it is in this spirit of revolutionary culture-bearing, of trying to coax various bourgeois (and revolutionary) alloys to yield

their gold to the proletariat--despite the danger of contamination and poisoning--that Trotsky takes up his instruments to evaluate specific authors, broaching general questions about literary judgment in the process.

In its close paralleling of Lenin's evaluation, Trotsky's independent assessment of Tolstoy's works is the clearest confirmatory illustration of their common, Marxist analytical method and purpose. However, a preliminary overview of some of Trotsky's comments on other writers is perhaps more in place here. As I mentioned earlier, truthfulness (in its various dimensions) was Trotsky's fundamental criterion of value, for the obvious reason that even pro-revolutionary professions of political loyalty mean little when emanating from a dishonest work. It was the bare minimum that could be expected of any work purporting to be valuable to revolutionaries. "The struggle for revolutionary ideas in art," Trotsky thus wrote in a 1938 letter to André Breton, after Stalin's systematic falsification of Soviet revolutionary history, "must begin once again with the struggle for artistic truth. . . . 'You shall not lie!'--that is the formula of salvation" ("The Independence of the Artist: A Letter to André Breton," Trotsky, p. 124). In his comments on Céline's Journey to the End of the Night ("Céline and Poincaré: Novelist and Politician," Trotsky, pp. 191-203), Trotsky explained the intricacies of this simple criterion. Céline, said Trotsky, showed pessimism and a certain modesty of ambition: he "is no revolutionist, and does not aim to be one"; he "does not occupy himself with the goal of reconstructing society" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 201). Nevertheless, he claimed, Céline "appears as a revolutionist," for he "shows what is"; "through supreme effort he divests himself of

all canons, transgresses all conventions" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 201). And this tenacious appetite for "exposing the lie" redounds to the author's and the work's advantage. Thus, Céline's explicit pessimism, because of its "very intensity, . . . bears within it a dose of the antidote" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 203). For, as Trotsky observes, in real life, "active indignation is linked up with hope" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 191). Thus, though Trotsky can discern in Céline's novel "almost no politics," he can discern "something more: the living substratum out of which it takes form" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 199).<sup>83</sup>

Céline's passion for truth, moreover, linked to his indignation, results in a stylistic revolution as well. Academically and aesthetically taboo words "become irreplaceable to give expression to life in its crudeness and abjectness. Erotic terms serve Céline only to rip the glamour from eroticism" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 193). As Trotsky sums up, "He only wants to tear away the prestige from everything that frightened and oppresses him. To ease his conscience from terror in the face of life, this physician to the poor had to resort to new modes of imagery. He turned out to be the revolutionist of the novel" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 201). But the particular example of Céline also holds some general pointers for would-be revolutionary theoreticians of literary value:

Decay hits not only parties in power, but schools of art as well. The creative methods become hollow and cease to react upon human sensibilities. . . . Living creativeness cannot march ahead without repulsion away from official tradition, canonised ideas and feelings, images and expressions covered by the lacquer of use and wont. Each new tendency seeks for the most direct and honest contact between words and emotions. The struggle against pretence in art always grows to a lesser or greater measure into the struggle against the

injustice of human relations. The connection is self-evident; art which loses the sense of the social lie inevitably defeats itself by affectation, turning into mannerism. ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 201)

Trotsky thus dialectically links truthfulness as a moral and literary ethic to its subversive impact on the existing relationship among conventional genres, modes, images, and language, thereby revealing in the end its effectively revolutionary role in creative art as a whole.

Of course, as I indicated earlier, Trotsky also recognises various components of truthfulness, as distinct from its effects. Perhaps all of them, however, could be seen as aspects of one major component: a sense of proportion. Thus, one aspect of this sense of proportion would be what "the Germans call the pathos of distance" (LR, p. 155): "for art to be able to transform as well as to reflect, there must be a great distance between the artist and life" (LR, p. 139). This should not be interpreted as aloofness, or a fixed chasm between the writer and life; rather it should be understood as an adjustable, sensitive mode of approach and retreat, an aid to achieving perspective, or a "sense of measure" (LR, p. 151). The intended telescopic nature of this distance is indicated by Trotsky in his comments on Jules Romain ("Critical Jottings," Trotsky, pp. 209-10), where he explains that "only a participant can be a profound spectator. . . . With a participant, his 'distance' changes depending on the nature of his participation, while with a spectator it does not." Consequently, says Trotsky, a "spectator like Romain can be a remarkable writer, but he cannot be a great writer." The reverse fault is that of false familiarity, one which Trotsky finds Mayakovsky guilty of. Mayakovsky, he complains, uses

"vulgarism so that he could be pals with Socialism and with the Revolution." But such gestural intimacy, when unfounded in any substantial programmatic and emotional compatability, merely amounts to disingenuousness--that is, to a violation of truthfulness. As Trotsky notes elsewhere, "[f]amiliarity is not at all an expression of an inner intimacy, for frequently it is merely an evidence of political or moral slovenliness. An internally developed bond with the Revolution would exclude a familiar tone" (LR, p. 155). This false familiarity is of course quite different from the dramatic irony based on trust that any Soviet comedy, so longed for by Trotsky (LR, pp. 238, 240), would normally employ. Thus, both lack of capacity to adjust one's "distance" and spurious intimacy damage the sense of proportion. This in turn disorients the reader, so that, to use Trotsky's example of Boris Pilnyak, "you do not feel the satisfaction which comes from solving contradictions, which is the greatest sign of a work of art" (LR, p. 81). For, contradictions, as well as people's need and capacity to solve them, are for Marxists the stuff of life. And to ignore or distort them is to ignore or distort the truth.

The other major aspect of a sense of proportion is internal to a work's formal (rather than perceptual) mechanics and relates to structural measure, intensity, and pace. Here, too, Trotsky finds Mayakovsky wanting, complaining that the poet's "[e]ach phrase, each expression, each image . . . tries to be the climax. That is why the whole 'piece' has no climax" (LR, p. 52). And in this formal failure, Trotsky sees a reflection of the "chaotic and formless" nature of the Russian revolution, just as Lenin saw the contradictions of nineteenth-century peasant Russia in the mystical, confused indignation of Tolstoy.



But Mayakovsky ignores the existence of a compensating factor--the revolutionary workers' organisation--that Tolstoy could only dimly have apprehended. This neglect, I would argue, permits his one-sided depiction of the revolution, and hence his partial untruthfulness. Trotsky himself comes close to making this point. "It is not true," he protests, "that Mayakovsky was first of all a revolutionary and after that a poet, although he sincerely wished it were so. In fact Mayakovsky was first of all a poet, an artist, who rejected the old world without breaking with it. Only after the revolution did he seek to find support for himself in the revolution, and to a significant degree he succeeded in doing so; but he did not merge with it totally, for he did not come to it during his years of inner formation, in his youth" ("Mayakovsky," Trotsky, pp. 174-75). Yet Mayakovsky was a victim of political naivety, not a malicious and deliberate distorter of truth, and Trotsky's characterisation of his plight clinches the political-poetic connection: "the general contradictions of revolution [are] always difficult for art, which seeks perfected forms. . . . [Mayakovsky was] defeated by the logic of the situation" ("Mayakovsky," Trotsky, p. 177). He thus could not meet Trotsky's clearly spelled out criteria of value in this respect: "A work of art must show the gradual growth of an image, of a mood, of a plot, or of an intrigue to its climax and must not throw the reader about from one end to another end, no matter if it is done by the most skilful boxing blows of Imagery" (LR, p. 152). In light of Trotsky's admiration for Céline's anti-conventional boldness of imagery, we can only read the above criteria as ones subject to the presence or absence, in a given work, of general, perceptual truthfulness.

Trotsky's most extensive engagement with the issue encountered by Marx in his continuing attraction to ancient Greek art can be found in the former's discussion of Dante's Divine Comedy (in Class and Art, pp. 9-12). This discussion separately tackles the concrete problems involved in selectively appropriating non- and pre-revolutionary "classics" in the interests of the on-going socialist revolution.

From the outset, Trotsky distinguishes between an approach based on historical-research interests and one based on aesthetic and emotional empathy, while insisting--contrary to some interpretations<sup>84</sup>--on the respective legitimacy and even interdependence of both. The context of the discussion leaves no doubt that Trotsky's emphasis falls on the aesthetic empathy only because he finds himself combating the vulgar materialist arguments of Fedor Raskolnikov. This is borne out by Trotsky's repeated assurances that the documentary researcher's and the layman reader's approaches, though at "two different levels," are "connected" (CA, p. 9): "I am not against history--that's pointless. Of course the historical approach to Dante is legitimate and necessary and affects our aesthetic attitude to him . . ." (CA, p. 11). His emphasis that "one can't substitute one for the other" (CA p. 11) and that they "do not overlap" (CA, p. 9) is therefore one necessitated by the given relationship of polemical forces in this particular discussion.

Beyond the different specific elements identified by Marx in ancient Greek art and by Trotsky in Dante, respectively, as the bases of their aesthetic empathy, the explanatory principles of the two revolutionaries remain strikingly similar. Thus, we recall Marx and Engels' observation in the Manifesto that the old, class-based "social

consciousness," despite its frequent variations, nevertheless "moves within certain common forms, or general ideas," that have existed for as long as class society itself and will continue to exist till "the total disappearance of class antagonisms" (Marx/Engels, p. 74); and we recall Marx's specific identification of certain socially pre-figurative elements in ancient Greek art as the source of its charm for him (Introduction, Marx/Engels, p. 84). Similarly, Trotsky explains the phenomenon of his continuing empathy for the mediaeval Dante by indicating the "common features" of "class-society." He singles out one "elementary psychological feeling"--the "fear of death"--as a shared concern through the ages (and, indeed, across human-animal barriers) and points out that such a shared concern "can" move "us" even today, though this is no guarantee that the same concern will either be shared or be appreciated in quite the same way in a different age or social context:

How is it thinkable that there should be not an [merely] historical but a directly aesthetic relationship between us and a mediaeval Italian book? This is explained by the fact that in class society, in spite of all its changeability, there are certain common features. . . . Let us take, for instance, such an elementary psychological feeling as fear of death. This feeling is characteristic not only of man but also of animals. In man it first found simple articulate expression, and later also artistic expression. In different ages, in different social milieux, this expression has changed, that is to say, men have feared death in different ways. And nevertheless what was said on this score not only by Shakespeare, Byron, Goethe, but also by the Psalmist, can move us. (CA, pp. 9-10)

When Libedinsky utters an incredulous exclamation at this point, Trotsky explains that it is possible--even inevitable--that Shakespeare and Byron themselves will at some point "stop speaking" to their souls: "undoubtedly a time will come when people will approach the works of

Shakespeare and Byron . . . exclusively from the standpoint of scientific-historical analysis" (CA, p. 10). Indeed, he adds, this is the way "we approach most poets of the Middle Ages" (CA, p. 10). But Trotsky nevertheless challenges Libedinsky to deny, on the basis of their own acknowledged, real responses, that Shakespeare and Byron at this juncture "somehow speak to your soul and mine" (CA, p. 10). Moreover, he continues, works of art need not always be valuable as a whole: it is therefore possible for an historically non-specialised reader to receive enjoyment, "if not from the whole of the Divine Comedy then at least from some parts of it" (CA, p. 11). Exactly what literary values are appropriable is a question whose answer depends on the given, concrete conjuncture of literary, psychological, and historical components. And, finally, such appropriation is a possibility, not an inevitability. Hence, though Trotsky's actual peroration of Dante's current revolutionary value suffers from certain tautological and apparently non-materialistic formulations,<sup>85</sup> his argument proper about the general principles, historical factors, and real evaluative criteria involved in the process of revolutionary appropriation remain entirely materialist and dialectical.

Trotsky's evaluation of Tolstoy is of interest primarily as a common focus for closely comparing Lenin's evaluative criteria and methodology to his (Trotsky's). Briefly, Lenin and Trotsky both agree that Tolstoy's works are contradictory but that the socialist proletariat can usefully separate Tolstoy's reactionary doctrine from his truthful and often unwittingly accurate depiction of the Russian pre-revolutionary society, and value the latter quality, along with its technical results, to its own advantage. Thus Trotsky, in his 1908 essay

"Tolstoy: Poet and Rebel" (Trotsky, pp. 127-42), calls Tolstoy a "[m]oralist and mystic, foe of politics and revolution," who "nourishes with his criticism the confused revolutionary consciousness of many populist sects"; at worst, Tolstoy is characterised as a "conservative anarchist" ("Poet and Rebel," Trotsky, pp. 140, 139). Yet, Trotsky notes, two years later ("On Tolstoy's Death," Trotsky, pp. 143-47), "there is a deep moral affinity between the beliefs of Tolstoy and the teachings of socialism" (Trotsky, p. 145).

As in the case of Céline, Malraux, and other modern writers admired and recommended to socialists by Trotsky, the key to this paradox of Tolstoy's value for socialist culture, he maintains, lies in his indignant truthfulness, "in the honesty and fearlessness of their [Tolstoy's teachings'] denunciation of oppression and slavery and in their indomitable striving for the brotherhood of man" ("On Tolstoy's Death," Trotsky, p. 145). War and Peace, which Trotsky calls Tolstoy's "best and unsurpassed work" among an epic repertory that shares a "kinship with the Pentateuch and the Iliad" ("Poet and Rebel," pp. 131-32), illustrates for Trotsky all of Tolstoy's strengths: his breadth of vision, his generosity, his capacity to see (and depict) life as "a limitless panorama whose parts are inseparably bound together by an internal bond," as well as his capacity to maintain a steady detachment from all his objects of concern.

Lenin had maintained that even though Tolstoy had completely missed the significance of the proletariat as the nemesis of the class that he so hated ("L.N. Tolstoy and the Modern Labour Movement," pp. 55-63), "that certainly does not mean that the doctrine was not socialistic or that it did not contain critical elements capable of providing valuable

material for the enlightenment of the advanced classes" ("Leo Tolstoy and His Epoch," Lenin, p. 67). For, as a powerful, self-confident, and sincere artist, Tolstoy had "raised a number of questions" concerning bourgeois society ("Tolstoy and Labour," Lenin, p.58)--questions that could be solved only by the revolutionary working class. Trotsky's assessment in this respect is identical to Lenin's: "Tolstoy did not know or show the way out of the hell of bourgeois culture. But with irresistible force he posed the question that only scientific socialism can answer. And in this vein one might say that everything in Tolstoy's teaching that is lasting and permanent flows into socialism as naturally as a river into the ocean" ("On Tolstoy's Death," Trotsky, p. 146).<sup>86</sup>

In the generally barren or non-existent field of post-revolutionary "proletarian" literature, Trotsky did seem to recognise one exception, whom he significantly called "a Bolshevik whose weapon is poetry" (LR, p. 212). Considering Trotsky's earlier trenchant criticism of Mayakovsky's false intimacy with the revolution as well as of the artificiality of his ostensibly communist poetry (LR, pp. 155, 146), we may safely assume that neither "Bolshevik" nor "poetry" is here lightly associated with this exception. In him, one may well argue, Trotsky sees a model genuinely worthy of emulation by the revolutionary proletariat. This poet's work represents, to Trotsky, the greatest historically available consummation of the two supreme criteria of literary value under the on-going dictatorship of the proletariat--unswerving first loyalty to the defence and consolidation of the revolution, led by the Bolshevik Party, and authenticity of content, attitude, and literary technique. The name of the poet is Demyan Biedny:

It is curious that those who make abstract formulas of proletarian poetry usually pass the poet by who, more than anyone else, has the right to be called the poet of revolutionary Russia. He is a Bolshevik whose weapon is poetry. . . . The Revolution is, for him, no [mere] material for creation, but the highest authority, which has placed him at his post. His work is a social service not only in the final analysis, as all art is, but subjectively, in the consciousness of the poet himself. . . . He grew up in the Party, he lived through the various phases of its development, he learned to think and to feel with his class from day to day and to reproduce this world of thoughts and feelings in concentrated form in the language of verses which have the shrewdness of fables, the sadness of songs, the boldness of couplets, as well as indignation and appeal. There is nothing of the dilettante in his anger and in his hatred. He hates with the well-placed hatred of the most revolutionary Party in the world.

. . . . .  
Demyan Biedny did not and will not create a school; he himself was created by the school, called the Russian Communist Party, for the needs of a great epoch which will not come again. If one could free oneself from a metaphysical concept of proletarian culture and could regard the question from the point of view of what the proletariat reads, what it needs, what absorbs it, what impels it to action, what elevates its cultural level and so prepares the ground for a new art, then the work of Demyan Biedny would appear as proletarian and popular literature. . . . If this is not "true" poetry, it is something more than that. (LR, pp. 212-14)

Trotsky's admiring description of Biedny encapsulates the former's entire evaluative orientation towards contemporaneous literature. It draws together all his positive criteria of literary value, incidentally contrasting some of them to their common counterparts (such as Biedny's professional, "well-placed revolutionary hatred" to its dilettantish version). Given the revolutionary conjuncture, the poet's party-loyalty figures prominently as a virtue. As well, Trotsky emphasises the importance of paying close attention to the proletariat's real needs, responses, preoccupations, and incentives. Indeed, he demonstrates, through his own method of appraising Biedny, the political-

interventionist stance that a Marxist critic should logically learn to adopt as a general rule. Above all, Trotsky's evaluative description of Biedny distills and makes available the most advanced analytical methods and evaluative criteria in the century-old tradition of the revolutionary Marxists. However, as we shall see, for mutually related though distinct historical and socio-political reasons, neither Caudwell nor Eagleton continues that particular tradition, while Williams remains fundamentally inimical to it. It thus remains for someone else to pick up where Trotsky left off and restore the revolutionary tradition's evaluative principles to the forefront of Marxist literary criticism.



<sup>1</sup> René Wellek, "Criticism as Evaluation," The Attack on Literature and Other Essays (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> Useful accounts of the history of Marxist literary theories, though not always sympathetic, comprehensive, or concise, can be found in Henri Arvon, Marxist Aesthetics, tr. Helen R. Lane, intro. Fredric Jameson (1970; rpt. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973); Peter Demetz, Marx, Engels, and the Poets: Origins of Marxist Literary Criticism, rev. and enl. by Peter Demetz, tr. Jeffrey L. Sammons (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959), esp. Chs. 7-9 (on post-Marx/Engels developments), pp. 178-236; Terry Eagleton, Marxism and Literary Criticism (London: Methuen, 1976); Terry Eagleton, Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism (London: Verso, 1981), pp. 81-100; Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory (1975; rpt. London: Verso, 1978), pp. 21-43 (on English Marxist literary theory); D.W. Fokkema and Elrud Kunne-Ibsch, Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century: Structuralism, Marxism, Aesthetics of Reception, Semiotics (London: C. Hurst, 1977), Ch. 4, pp. 81-193; Berel Lang and Forrest Williams, Introd., Marxism and Art: Writings in Aesthetics and Criticism (New York: David McKay, 1972), pp. 1-17; Cliff Slaughter, Marxism, Ideology and Literature (London: Macmillan, 1980); George Steiner, Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman (New York: Athenum, 1967), pp. 305-24; Raymond Williams, "Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis," New Left Review, No. 129 (Sept.-Oct. 1981), pp. 51-66; and Edmund Wilson, The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 197-212. Particularly useful treatments of Marx and Engels' literary-critical pronouncements, in addition to Arvon, Demetz, Eagleton, and Slaughter, can be found in Ian Birchall, "The Total Marx and the Marxist Theory of Literature," in Situating Marx: Evaluations and Departures, ed. Paul Walton and Stuart Hall (London: Human Context Books, 1972), pp. 118-45; Mikhail Lifshitz, The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx, tr. Ralph B. Winn, Preface by Terry Eagleton (unsigned) (1933; tr. 1938; London: Pluto Press, 1973); Stefan Morawski, Introd., Marx and Engels on Literature and Art: A Selection of Writings, ed. Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (St. Louis, Milwaukee: Telos Press, 1973), pp. 3-47; Maynard Solomon, "General Introduction: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels," in Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979), pp. 3-21; and S.S. Praver, Karl Marx and World Literature (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976). David Craig, in "Towards Laws of Literary Development," Marxists on Literature: An Anthology, ed. David Craig (Harmondsworth, Mdx.: Penguin, 1975), pp. 134-60, attempts a survey of various non-Marxist literary theories throughout history in order to begin to forge a uniquely Marxist theory of literature.

3 "Prefatory: Marxism and Cultural Continuity" and "Under Which King, Bezonian?" in For Continuity (1933; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), pp. 5, 168, and generally, pp. 1-12 and 160-75.

4 "Under Which King, Bezonian?" in For Continuity, pp. 171-72.

5 The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 25.

6 "Sociology and Literature," The Common Pursuit (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), p. 200; generally, see pp. 195-203 and also "Literature and Society," ibid., pp. 182-94.

7 "Prefatory: Marxism and Cultural Continuity," For Continuity, p. 9.

8 Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts, tr. Mark E. Suino (1936; Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan, 1970), p. 65.

9 Criticism and Ideology, p. 17; see also the entire section covered by pp. 11-43. This title is henceforth abbreviated in parenthetical references as CI.

10 Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 209; see also the entire "Conclusion: Political Criticism," pp. 194-217, as well as the "Introduction: What is Literature?" pp. 1-15. This book's title is henceforth abbreviated as LT in all parenthetical references.

11 Walter Benjamin, p. 93; see the entire chapter on "'Marxist Criticism,'" pp. 81-100, as well as "A Small History of Rhetoric," pp. 101-13, where he shows that "a political literary criticism is not the invention of Marxists" but rather "one of the oldest, most venerable forms of literary criticism we know" (p. 101), and "The Angel of History," pp. 173-79, where he measures the historical significance of Benjamin against that of Leon Trotsky, the organiser of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 in Russia. Henceforth, in all parenthetical references, this book's title will be abbreviated as WB. Also see Eagleton's "The End of Criticism," Southern Review, 14, No. 2 (July 1981), pp. 99-106.

12 Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. x.

13 "Literature and Politics Now," Critical Quarterly, 20, No. 3 (August 1978), p. 68. Also cf. the following: "Breaking with the literary institution does not just mean offering different accounts of Beckett; it means breaking with the very ways literature, literary criticism and its supporting social values are defined" (LT, p. 90).

14 To run through a fairly comprehensive anthology of criticism is instructive in this regard. For most of my references in this

discussion of past critics, I have relied on Walter Jackson Bate's anthology, Criticism: The Major Texts, enl. ed. (New York: Harcourt, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> See Eagleton's Literary Theory for a Marxist account and analysis of this history.

<sup>16</sup> Harold Osborne, "Aesthetics and Value," Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 28 (1974), 280-92; Northrop Frye, "On Value Judgments," The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970), p. 69; Roger B. Rollin, "Against Evaluation: The Role of the Critic of Popular Culture," Journal of Popular Culture, 9 (1975), 355-65; Tony Bennett, Formalism and Marxism (London: Methuen, 1979), esp. chs. 7-9, pp. 127-75. E.R. Harty in "Value Judgments in Criticism," Unisa English Studies, 11, No. 3 (Sept. 1973), 30-37, working within the liberal framework defined by critics from Arnold to Frye, argues simply that "evaluation cannot be accorded equal status with analytic and interpretative procedures" and that this is "at least consistent with the essentially unverifiable character of value judgments" (p. 37).

<sup>17</sup> An extremely pure form of such thinking is evident in Michael Fischer's approving account of Thompson in "The Literary Importance of E.P. Thompson's Marxism," English Literary History, 50, No. 4, (Winter 1983), pp. 818-19.

<sup>18</sup> K.K. Ruthven, in Critical Assumptions (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), claims that Frye "has been more successful than any other literary theorist in persuading us that the supreme critical act is not evaluation but recognition" (p. 202). Fischer observes (p. 811) that "Northrop Frye's critique of Marxism expresses the uneasiness of many contemporary literary critics."

<sup>19</sup> "The present book assumes that the theory of literature is as primary a humanistic and liberal pursuit as its practice" (Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957], p. 20). "The dialectic axis of criticism, then, has as one pole the total acceptance of the data of literature, and as the other the total acceptance of the potential values of those data. This is the real level of culture and of liberal education . . ." (Anatomy, p. 25).

<sup>20</sup> Anatomy, p. 345.

<sup>21</sup> "When we examine the touchstone technique in Arnold, however, certain doubts arise about his motivation. The line from The Tempest, 'In the dark backward and Abyss of time,' would do very well as a touchstone line. One feels that the line 'Yet a tailor might scratch her where'er she did itch' somehow would not do, though it is equally Shakespearean and equally essential to the same play" (Anatomy, p. 21). Frye does not provide the reader with either the immediate context or the overall aim of either quotation; yet he expects the reader to identify with his persona ("one"): therein lies his abstract absolutism, or challengeable generalisation.

22 Thus, on the completely narrow end of the scale, we find Pat Lamorte lamenting the absence in modern poetry of "the concept of the line and the stanza," of "musicality" and "syntactical expression"; she counterposes Pope's dicta as a touchstone ("The 'Ancient Rules--A Vanishing Species?' in Georgia Review, 27 [1973], 489-502). Marcia Cavell's "Taste and the Moral Sense," JAAC, 34 (1975), 29-33, on the other hand, completely subjectivises the criteria: "At its worst, art blunts sensibility, inhibits self-recognition, rewards mindlessness and rigidity; at its best, it expands vision and feeling" (p. 33). Norman N. Holland, in his chapter "Evaluation" in The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), Ch. 7, pp. 193-224, tries to balance objectivist practice and psychoanalytic explanation--and vice versa--in a socio-historical vacuum. In a tautological vein, Bernard Richards argues in "Memorability as a Critical Criterion," Essays in Criticism, 26 (1976), 42-49, that despite its dangers as an absolute criterion of value, "[m]emorability in poetry should continue to be valued . . ." (p. 47); and John Hoaglund in "Originality and Aesthetic Value," BJA, 16 (1976), 46-55, sounds similar when he concludes that "a tiny . . . difference can greatly affect aesthetic value . . . if that tiny difference is what distinguishes copy from original [esp. in the visual arts] with the attendant great difference in aesthetic value" (p. 54). From an opposite tack, Gerald Robel in "The Concept of Unity and Its Normative Tendency," Recovering Literature, 1, No. 1 (1972), 42-53 and Kenneth M. Stamp, Jr. in "Unity as a Virtue," JAAC, 34 (1975), 191-97, both concentrate on debunking the claims of any one criterion of value ("unity") as absolute. Elias Schwartz, driven to distraction by his own similar rejection of various particular criteria in the abstract, nevertheless finds that evaluation "must acquire a tradition, as Eliot defines it," and concludes, helplessly: "it would be gratifying to know that in the not-too-distant future our grandchildren will be taught to love Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson rather than E.A. Poe and Richard Brautigan" ("On Literary Evaluation," College English, 39 [1978], p. 332). For other interesting discussions of literary value by non-Marxists, see the following: (a) Extreme particularists: E.L. Epstein, "The Self-Reflexive Artifact: The Function of Mimesis in an Approach to a Theory of Value for Literature," Style and Structure in Literature: Essays in the New Stylistics, ed. Roger Fowler (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 40-78 ("Sub-lexical mimesis as an indicator of value . . . applies mainly to varieties of Renaissance and post-Renaissance poetry from the technologically advanced countries of Western Europe and America. Other sorts of poetry would be measured by other standards" [p. 75]); Heide Gottner, "Analysis of the Problem of Relevance in the Study of Literature," Poetics, 5 (1976), 35-56 (discusses relevance as a mathematically quantifiable criterion of value); Hilde Hein, "Aesthetic Consciousness: The Ground of Political Experience," JAAC, 35 (1976), 143-52 (talks about "the Greater Glory of God" and defends "aesthetics as the core of philosophical thinking and the foundation upon which all cognitive as well as affective judgment rests" (pp. 147, 144); Anthony Savile, "On Passing the Test of Time," BJA, 17 (1978), 195-209 ("reveres" Churchill and Eisenhower and discusses how works of art can legitimately "pass the test of time"); Susan Stewart, "Some Riddles and Proverbs of Textuality: An Essay in Literary Value and Evaluation,"

Criticism, 21, No. 2 (Spring 1979), 93-105 (discusses evaluation as an act or process at least leading to "performance," or "composition," through comparison); (b) (General Mechanics of Evaluation: Vida Carver, "The Measurement and Comparison of Value Systems," Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Aesthetics, ed. Rudolf Zeitler, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Figura Nova Ser. X (Uppsala: n.p., 1972), pp. 457-61 (attempts a structural class-analysis, based on George Kelley's 1955 "personal construct theory"); John J. Fisher, "Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Evaluation," Ibid., pp. 531-32 ("positive value can coexist with the positive aesthetic experience" [p. 532]); Manfred Naumann, "Literary Production and Reception," NLH, 8 (Autumn 1976), 107-26 (on "the general dialectic of appropriation" of specific values by specific readerships in specific contexts); Elder Olson, "On Value Judgment in the Arts," Critical Inquiry, 1 (1974), 71-90 (completely relativistic except for one criterion: "The standard or criterion must represent an actual value," "an actual good" [p. 83]); Burce Vermazen, "Comparing Evaluations of Works of Art," JAAC, 34 (1975), 7-14 (on "intrinsic" [i.e., uniquely generic] versus "independent" [from generic considerations] value); (c) Axiological Philosophy: Peter Kivy, "What Makes 'Aesthetic' Terms Aesthetic?" Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 36 (1975), 197-211 ("art-for-art's sake" articulately reattributed to criticism as contemplation, description, or evaluation for its own, "terminal" sake); Matthew Lipman, "Can Non-Aesthetic Consequences Justify Aesthetic Values?" JAAC, 34 (1975), 117-23 ("aesthetic values must be justified solely by aesthetic consequences and must be explained solely by aesthetic antecedents" [p. 123]); for a more balanced point of view, see Eugene Goodheart, "Art Criticism and the Anatomy of Aesthetic Values," Salmagundi, 35 (1976), 56-64 ("Perhaps what is needed is an Enlightenment criticism from the outside, which at the same time is sensitive to the virtues and constraints of the medium, for the ultimate logic of medium purification which is immune to criticism from the outside is triviality" [p. 64]); (d) Non-Marxists on Marx: Melvin Rader, "Marx's Interpretation of Art and Aesthetic Value," BJA, 7 (Jul. 1967), 237-49 (pro-social democratic Sweden anti-communist, who labours the obvious point that "aesthetic values, . . . vivid, unique and diverse, . . . are never reducible to a homogeneous monetary measure" [p. 241]); Heinrich von Staden, "Nietzsche and Marx on Greek Art and Literature: Case Studies in Reception," Daedalus, 105 (Winter 1976), 79-96 (points out Marx's "Neoclassical and Romantic Hellenism" [p. 82]).

23 "I might add that a number of unusually interesting inquiries into aesthetic value have been pursued in Eastern Europe (either as developments of or 'in dialogue with' classical Marxist thought), among the most original and penetrating of which is Jan Mukařovský's (1970) (orig. pub. Prague, 1936)" (pp. 18-19, n. 2). Smith herself is clearly influenced by Mukařovský.

24 In a parallel situation, E.P. Thompson refuses "to counter Althusser's paradigm of knowledge-production with an alternative, universal, paradigm of my own" (Poverty of Theory, p. 13).

25 Crisis and Criticism and Selected Literary Essays, foreword

Arnold Kettle, introd. Elisabeth West (1937; London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), esp. pp. 100-03.

26 Kenneth Burke's "Literature as Equipment for Living," The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1967), Ch. III, a., pp. 293-304, which is a product of the same period, only superficially resembles even the most mechanical versions of that strain of criticism, arguing for so-called "active categories" that "would consider works of art . . . as strategies for selecting enemies and allies, for socialising losses," and so on (pp. 303, 304). However, its propositions deserve pause, as a research article such as Elizabeth E. Irvine's "The Clayhangers: Father and Son: The Value of Creative Literature in Giving Body to Abstractions of Psychology," British Journal of Social Work, 12 (Feb. 1982), 77-89, should show. Irvine's article demonstrates the literally "practical" value of Arnold Bennett's Clayhanger in social therapy for father-hating sons. Perhaps the closest modern approximation of Burke's 1930's argument can be found in Jeremy Hawthorn's Identity and Relationship: A Contribution to Marxist Theory of Criticism (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973). In that book Hawthorn maintains that "in the last resort, the process of living distinguishes good works from bad, and fruitful responses to them from unfruitful ones. Questions of 'legitimacy' only confuse the issue. Using a Chippendale chair to batter down a door in a fire is not an 'illegitimate' use of it, but it is not a use which develops and utilises all the rich potentialities which the chair has, in the long term, for humanity" (p. 152).

27 The term and concept "commitment," in the sense of individually-decided allocation of personal energies to non-party political work, was made fashionable by Jean-Paul Sartre. The many preconditions to and loopholes in such "commitment" are cogently revealed in Max Adereth's Commitment in Modern French Literature (1967), from which a section entitled "What is 'Littérature Engagée'?" is reprinted in Craig's Marxists on Literature: An Anthology, pp. 445-85.

28 From his diametrically opposite, anti-Marxist standpoint, F.R. Leavis recognises this distinction and its importance when he remarks, "I . . . am avowedly in the first place a literary critic . . ." (The Common Pursuit, p. 183).

29 "Speech to the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture," Solomon, pp. 512-13.

30 Marx/Engels on Literature and Art (1976; Moscow: Progress, 1978), p. 74. This definitive anthology is the source of all my quotations from Marx and Engels unless otherwise stated, and its title is henceforth cited as Marx/Engels.

31 "Stagnation and Progress of Marxism," from Karl Marx: A Symposium, ed. D. Ryazanoff (London: n.p., 1929), pp. 105-14; anthologised in Solomon, pp. 155-59. Note that Luxemburg's proposal, directed to a committed communist proletariat, is qualitatively different from that of, say, Sheila Delany in the following quotation which "splits" the tasks of the addressee on the academic assumption

that he or she is already internally "split," or uncommitted, on the political question of revolution: "I don't propose that we as teachers give double answers. But for the radical teacher who is not himself a communist, that sort of logical/doctrinal split consciousness will be necessary until a revolutionary (that is, a communist) literary tradition exists. . . . As long as our greatest aesthetic achievements convey nonprogressive moral and political values, it will be impossible to gratify aesthetic and political convictions at once. We lack contemporary mythic models for radical convictions, and such models cannot convincingly be developed in the arts until history again provides the prototypes, as it always has done" ("Up against the Great Tradition," The Politics of Literature: Dissenting Essays on the Teaching of English, ed. Louis Kampf [1970; New York: Pantheon, 1972] , p. 321).

32 The first view is that of Hans Hess in "Is There a Theory of Art in Marx?" Marxism Today (1973), 307; the second is that of Terry Eagleton in "Marxist Literary Criticism," from The Sociology of Literature: Theoretical Approaches, ed. Jane Routh and Janet Wolff, Sociological Review Monograph 25 (Keele: Univ. of Keele, 1977), p. 86.

33 A series of articles in Young Spartacus by Joseph Seymour, entitled "Marxism and the Jacobin Communist Tradition," elaborates the close inter-weaving of theory and revolutionary practice in the evolution of Marx's (and Engels') thought. The bibliographical details are as follows: No. 40 (Feb. 1976), pp. 6-7, 10; No. 41 (Mar. 1976), pp. 6-8; No. 42 (April, 1976), pp. 6-7; No. 45 (July.-Aug. 1976), pp. 6-7; No. 46 (Sep. 1976), pp. 8-10; No. 48 (Nov. 1976), pp. 6-7; No. 49 (Dec. 1976), pp. 6-8; No. 50 (Jan. 1977), pp. 6-8; No. 57 (Sep. 1977), pp. 6-8; No. 59 (Nov. 1977), pp. 6-7, 11; No. 61 (Feb. 1978), pp. 6-8; No. 64 (May 1978), pp. 6-8, 11; No. 65 (Summer 1978), pp. 8-10, 15; No. 68 (Nov. 1978), pp. 6-8; No. 69 (Dec. 1978/Jan. 1979), pp. 6-7, 10; No. 70 (Feb. 1979), pp. 6-7, 11.

34 Praver, p. 284.

35 Morawski, pp. 42-44. Praver points out that Marx was "a voracious reader . . . unusually sensitive to ideas that were in the air" (Praver, p. 33). See also Demetz, Chs. 1-4, pp. 1-115.

36 Solomon, p. 42. It is true that Marx and Engels here are using "criticism" in the general sense of "social protest through words," but the point applies all the more forcefully to literary criticism for that.

37 See his Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation, tr. Edith C. Harvey (1899; New York: Schocken, 1961).

38 New Left Review, No. 127 (May-June 1981), 66-95.

39 "Marx and Engels," A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, III (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1965), 236, 235.

<sup>40</sup> See esp. Lenin's classic pamphlets and articles collected in Against Revisionism (Moscow: Progress, 1966); Daniel de Sousa, A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary "New Left" Sociology (Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1979), pp. 245-49; Maurice Godelier, "Infrastructures, Societies and History," New Left Review, No. 112 (Nov.-Dec. 1978), 84-96; Maynard Solomon's "General Introduction," Solomon, pp. 7-8, esp. n. 13; and Göran Therborn, "The Frankfurt School," New Left Review, No. 63 (Sep.-Oct. 1970), 65-96. Incidentally, Wood's article frontally attacks and destroys the different revisionist arguments of G.A. Cohen, a believer in technological determinism (pp.74-75), and of Raymond Williams (pp. 74-75).

<sup>41</sup> Quoted by Eagleton in Literary Theory, p. 151. Even F.R. Leavis, however, concedes at one point that "there is a sense in which economic problems are prior" (For Continuity, p. 6); unfortunately, he does not elaborate.

<sup>42</sup> To the category of historical period, we must add that of place. Thus Engels, after remarking in a letter to Minna Kautsky that the plot in a certain part of her novel The Old Ones and the New "develops sometimes too rapidly," adds: "Many things that may give us this impression perhaps look quite natural in Vienna, considering the city's peculiar international character and its intermixture with Southern and East European elements" (26 November 1885, in Marx/Engels, p. 87).

<sup>43</sup> John M. Ellis, "Evaluation," The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis (Berkeley, Ca.: Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. 75.

<sup>44</sup> Manifesto, in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 473. Engels explained in a footnote to the English edition of the Manifesto (1888) that he and Marx were referring to "all written history. In 1847, the pre-history of society, the social organisation existing previous to recorded history, was all but unknown" (Tucker, p. 473, n. 6).

<sup>45</sup> The ultimate goal of all socialists is communism; in usage that was standardised by Lenin, socialism--preceded by the dictatorship of the proletariat--is a stage in post-revolutionary society's development towards communism. Marx, in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, called "communism . . . the positive transcendence of private property" (Solomon, p. 55); it corresponds to what he calls in Capital "the realm of freedom." This realm "actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases: thus . . . it lies beyond the sphere of actual production. . . . Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by the blind forces of Nature. . . . Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite"



(Marx/Engels, p. 183). The above "realm of necessity" is designated socialism, and the "true realm of freedom," communism, in Marxist usage. Crucial to the consolidation of the workers' revolution and to its evolution towards the socialist stage is the dictatorship of the proletariat, a policy that is fully explained in Lenin's State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution (1917; 2nd rev. ed. Moscow: Progress, 1965). It was first consciously implemented during the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

46 See, for instance, Demetz's counterposition of Marx and Engels in his section on "Balzac," in the Chapter "Three Interpretations: Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac," pp. 169-77. George Steiner (p. 308) concludes: "Clearly, there is between Engels' pronouncements and the Leninist conception of partiinost a profound divergence in bias and drift of argument--if not a formal contradiction." We shall see what Lenin himself says, later.

47 Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch (p. 88) claim that Engels was "critical . . . towards obvious political bias in literature," without ever pointing to his qualifying statement defending--and even praising--biased literature in general.

48 Among the misinterpreters of this passage are Demetz (p. 229), Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch, Wellek (pp. 235-36, where the passage is artificially distinguished from the Preface's "rigid economic determinism"), and O.K. Werckmeister, in "Marx on Ideology and Art," NLH, 4 (1973), 502-504. Werckmeister attacks Zhdanovism's Stalinist distortions of Marx as "communist," finding two "apparently contradictory notions of art" in Marx--"one idealistic-utopian [Introduction], and the other historical-deterministic [Preface]." In turn, Hans Robert Jauss attacks Werckmeister in "The Idealist Embarrassment: Observations on Marxist Aesthetics," NLH, 7, No. 1 (Autumn 1975), 191-208. See Appendix C for full text of the relevant sections of Marx's Introduction. Also see Slaughter, pp. 21-85.

49 "The Idealist Embarrassment," p. 192.

50 "The Leading Article in Kölnische Zeitung, No. 179," Marx/Engels, p. 206.

51 The straw men include Manfred Naumann, a reception theory specialist, in addition to Marcuse and Werckmeister. The false counterpositions include the young Hegelian Marx versus Lenin, and Werckmeister versus Marcuse.

52 "Embarrassment," "Observations on," "reflection dogma" (p. 191), "Marxist-Leninist epistemology" (p. 203).

53 Especially questionable are his attributed counterpositions of "labour" to "consciousness" (p. 196), of the "laws of beauty" to "Nature" and the "material" for objects (p. 198), of "alienation" to "the cultivation of the senses" throughout history (he is prepared to

between: p. 199), and of the art product to the felt need for it (p. 202). Also, he wrongly adduces to the entire Marxist method a Hegelian idealism, based on the one ostensible parallel between the two in Marx's Introduction ("the idealist embarrassment": p. 197). On the other hand, it is Jauss himself who suggests that the dialectical resolution of the false counterposition of "alienation" to "the cultivation of the senses" lies in "Art" rather than in "material production" (p. 206). Meanwhile, using linear, particularist, empiricist thinking, Jauss remarks, "The trouble is that the art object could hardly elicit a need that was initially quite absent in a public which the art object first had to create if beauty is to be given only the function of copying in a materialistic way" (p. 202). Jauss wants to have it both ways: he wants to be more "materialistic" than Marx where the latter seems to him insufficiently so, and more receptive towards Hegelian idealism where Marx seems to him too crassly "materialistic." However, my reading of Marx does not reveal any such substantive philosophical dislocation in his statements, as I have tried to show. If my reading holds, then Jauss's alternating "leftism" and "rightism" with regard to Marx would appear to be merely the effect of his consistent political hostility to Marxism rather than the effect of any consistent fidelity to perceived reality. And this will not do.

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, their Manifesto's section on "Bourgeois and Proletarians," Tucker, pp. 475-78.

<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, the following articles in the anthology Lenin on Literature and Art (1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978), henceforth abbreviated as Lenin: "A Little Picture in Illustration of Big Problems," pp. 127-31; "The Achievements and Difficulties of the Soviet Government," pp. 132-38; "The Tasks of the Youth League: Speech Delivered at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League, October 2, 1920," pp. 148-66; "On Proletarian Culture," pp. 167-69; and "On the Significance of Militant Materialism," pp. 174-77.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix C or Marx/Engels, p. 83.

<sup>57</sup> "Art, Opiate, Transcendence," Solomon, pp. 450-53.

<sup>58</sup> The best concise account and analysis of this debate can be found in Terry Eagleton's Walter Benjamin, pp. 83-91. Also see his Marxism and Literary Criticism, pp. 28-31, 70-72; henceforth, this title will be parenthetically abbreviated as MLC. The definitive documentation of this debate is Aesthetics and Politics, afterward Fredric Jameson (London: New Left Books, 1978).

<sup>59</sup> For Marx on Byron and Shelley, see Marx/Engels, pp. 32-21 (Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx-Aveling, "Shelley as Socialist"): "The true difference between Byron and Shelley consists in this that those who understand and love them consider it fortunate that Byron died in his thirty-sixth year, for he would have become a reactionary bourgeois had he lived longer; conversely, they regret Shelley's death at the age of twenty-nine, because he was a revolutionary through and through and would consistently have stood with the vanguard of socialism." As I stated earlier, my interest here is not in the empirical accuracy of Marx's (or Engels') particular assessment of any individual author or

work but in the rationale provided for that assessment; it is in this light that I also view the above evaluation of Shelley. For comments by Marx and Engels on other authors, see especially the following: for Marx on Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Fielding, and Balzac, Marx/Engels, pp. 436, 438-40 (Paul Lafargue, "Reminiscences of Marx"), pp. 440-42 (Eleanor Marx-Aveling, "Karl Marx"), pp. 442-43 (Franziska Kugelmann, "Small Traits of Marx's Great Character"), and p. 444 (Anselmo Lorenzo, "Reminiscences of the First International"); for Marx on Cobbett, "Layard's Inquiry: Fight over the Ten-Hour Working Day," Marx/Engels, pp. 321-23; for Marx on Homer, Eleanor Marx-Aveling, "Karl Marx," Marx/Engels, p. 441; for Marx on Dante, "Affairs in Prussia," New York Daily Tribune (15 October 1860), Marx/Engels, p. 248 and Paul Lafargue, "Reminiscences of Marx," Marx/Engels, p. 438; for Marx on Goethe, "Karl Marx Confessions," Marx/Engels, p. 436, Lafargue, "Reminiscences," Marx/Engels, p. 438 and Kugelmann, "Small Traits," Marx/Engels, p. 442; for Engels on Byron and Shelley, The Condition of the Working Class in England, excerpted in Marx/Engels, pp. 164-65; for Engels on Shaw, letter to Karl Kautsky (4 September 1892), Marx/Engels, p. 340; for Engels on Scott, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, excerpted in Marx/Engels, p. 321; for Engels on William Morris and his circle, letter to Laura Lafargue (23 November 1884), Marx/Engels, p. 342; for Engels on Homer, "'Song of the Apprentices' by Georg Weerth," Marx/Engels, p. 405; for Engels on Dante, "'Preface' to Marx's Capital," Vol. III, Marx/Engels, pp. 247-48, "To the Italian Reader (Preface to the Italian Edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party)," Marx/Engels, pp. 248-49, and German Socialism in Verse and Prose, excerpted in Marx/Engels, esp. pp. 370-71; for Engels on Goethe, ibid., pp. 349-74; for Engels on Heine, Ludwig Fuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, excerpted in Marx/Engels, pp. 374-75 and "Communism in Germany," New Moral World (13 December 1844), excerpted in Marx/Engels, pp. 375-76; and for Georg Weerth, "'Song of the Apprentices' by Georg Weerth," Marx/Engels, pp. 402-05. Finally, Marx's well-known comment referring to Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, and Mrs. Gaskell as "the splendid brotherhood" occurs in "The English Middle Class," Marx/Engels, pp. 339-40.

<sup>60</sup> And here, I disagree with Fredric Jameson's (misformulated) contention that "[s]uch a separation [sic] is possible only for a world-view--liberalism--in which the political and the ideological are merely secondary or 'public' adjuncts to the content of a real 'private' life, which alone is authentic and genuine. It is not possible for any world-view--whether conservative or radical and revolutionary--that takes politics seriously" (The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act [1981; rpt. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983], p. 289).

<sup>61</sup> Here again I disagree with Jameson's effective rejection (in Political Unconscious, pp. 282-84) of what he terms the "instrumental" or "functional" view of superstructural phenomena on grounds that this suggests a non-conflicted realm; the original Marxist model clearly allows for heterogeneity and conflict, both at the base and at the top.

<sup>62</sup> Anatoly Lunacharsky's frequently brilliant "Theses on the Problems of Marxist Criticism" (1928) shares the intellectual capacity

of the Bolshevik tradition; nevertheless, it displays an organic prescriptiveness more representative of Zhdanovism: see Anatoly Lunacharsky on Literature and Art (1965; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1973), pp. 9-21.

<sup>63</sup> See "Mirror," Lenin, pp. 30-31.

<sup>64</sup> "[ 'Party Literature' ] must be read, therefore, in the context of Lenin's debates with the Menshevik parliamentarians on one side and the anarchists and Narodniks on the other" (Solomon, p. 168). Morawski in his "Lenin as a Literary Theorist" (p. 21) confirms that Lenin's "fundamental thesis was aimed in a definite direction, at Minsky and his supporters." This clearly includes, though it does not focus on, "imaginative literature": see Lenin's reference to "thought and fantasy" (p. 26).

<sup>65</sup> The following quotation should sufficiently illustrate Lenin's point: "the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology . . . , for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism . . . and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task . . . is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy" (What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement [1902; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978], p. 41).

<sup>66</sup> See esp. their "Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, and Others," Tucker, pp. 549-55.

<sup>67</sup> See A.A. Zhdanov, sel. from "Report on the Journals Zvezda and Leningrad, 1947," in Marxists on Literature: An Anthology, pp. 514-526. Lenin was generally extremely cautious about unnecessarily and prematurely aligning his party or his faction with one or another school of philosophy; moreover, he considered philosophy to be more politically embattled and less "neutral" than the literary criticism of his day: see Lenin's various letters to Maxim Gorky on this subject (Lenin, pp. 184-203). But, for active revolutionaries, it is crucial to remember the balance provided by Lenin in "Party Literature," where he explicitly urges the early and organic alignment of revolutionary politics and literature sympathetic to it, despite the difficulties involved: "There is no question that literature is least of all subject to mechanical adjustment or levelling, to the rule of the majority over the minority. There is no question, either, that in this field greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content. All this is undeniable; but all this simply shows that the literary side of the proletarian party cause cannot be mechanically identified with its other sides. This, however, does not in the least refute the proposition, alien and strange to the bourgeoisie and bourgeois democracy, that literature must by all means and necessarily become an element of Social-Democratic Party work, inseparably bound up with the other elements" (Lenin, p. 26).

68 As in all previous though less ambiguous instances, the "Social-Democratic" descriptive label here refers to the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), parent body to Lenin's revolutionary Bolshevik (Majority) faction as well as to Plekhanov's Menshevik (Minority) faction; it is, of course, Lenin's Bolsheviks who carried through the October Revolution and went on to become the (original, non-Stalinised) Communist Party of the Soviet Union--RCP(B).

69 "It will be a free literature, because the ideal of socialism and sympathy with the working people, and not greed or careerism, will bring ever new forces to its ranks. . . . [B]ecause it will serve, not some satiated heroine, not the bored 'upper ten thousand' suffering from fatty degeneration, but the millions and the tens of millions of working people . . . enriching the last word in the revolutionary thought of mankind with the experience and living work of the socialist proletariat, bringing about permanent interaction between the experience of the past . . . and the experience of the present" ("Party Literature," p. 29).

70 Lenin praised Reed's Ten Days That Shook the World for its "truthful and most vivid exposition" of the October events (Introd. to Reed's book, in Lenin, p. 147); and he recommended that some of Averchenko's stories be reprinted because they were "amazingly vivid" and showed the writer's "knowledge of the subject [of upper-class, pre-revolutionary life] and his sincerity," both of which Lenin called "most extraordinary." The last line in that review reads--only partly with tongue in cheek--"Talent should be encouraged" ("A Capably Written Little Book," Lenin, pp. 170-71).

71 Edmund Wilson's frankly "liberal" assessment of Trotsky takes to its logical extreme such "democratic" anti-"Stalinism": "we can go even further than Trotsky . . . and declare that Marxism by itself can tell us nothing whatever about the goodness or badness of a work of art" ("Marxism and Literature," The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects [New York: Oxford University Press, 1948], p. 204). Paul Siegel, writing for the publishing arm (Pathfinder Press) of the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (U.S.), less brazenly concludes that Trotsky's "literary criticism . . . has its origin in the vision of social humanism that animated his whole life" (Introduction, Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art ed. Paul N. Siegel, 2nd ed. 1972; New York: Pathfinder, 1977, p. 26); this title is later abbreviated as Trotsky. And Isaac Deutscher, Trotsky's most comprehensive biographer, reveals his "democratic" principle of selection when he quotes Literature and Revolution one-sidedly on the limitations of "the methods of Marxism" as applied to art (The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky: 1921-29 [New York: Random House, 1959], p. 190). Wilson quotes a similarly misleading passage from Literature and Revolution (p. 178) two pages before arriving at his above conclusion. Useful surveys of Trotsky's aesthetics can be found in Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed: Trotsky: 1879-1921, Vol. I (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 46-56; in Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, pp. 164-200; in Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology, pp. 169-85; Marxism and Literary Criticism, pp. 42-43, and Walter Benjamin, pp. 173-79.

72 In his polemic against the Formalists, Trotsky explained his position from another angle, closely resembling Lenin's in "Party Literature": "It is not true that we regard only that art as new and revolutionary which speaks of the worker, and it is nonsense to say that we demand that the poets should describe inevitably a factory chimney, or the uprising against capital! Of course, the new art cannot but place the struggle of the proletariat in the centre of its attention. But . . . no one is going to prescribe themes to a poet or intends to prescribe them. Please write about anything you can think of! But allow the new class which considers itself, and with reason, called upon to build a new world, to say to you in any given case: It does not make new poets of you to translate the philosophy of life of the Seventeenth Century into the language of the Acmeists. . . . The proletariat has to have in art the expression of the new spiritual point of view which is just beginning to be formulated within him, and to which art must help him give form. This is not a state order, but an historic demand" (LR, pp. 170-71). This historic demand--as opposed to a state order--is what inspired the early Gorky's "spirit of daring, the romantic bravery of people who had nothing to lose," and the "splendid spontaneity" that Trotsky admired ("Maxim Gorky," Trotsky, pp. 217, 218).

73 In Trotsky's 9 May 1924 speech to the Press Dept. of the Central Committee of the RCP(B), published as Class and Art: Problems of Culture under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1925; Eng. tr. Brian Pearce, 1967; rpt. London: New Park, 1968), pp. 4 and 7; this title is henceforth parenthetically abbreviated as CA. Trotsky adds that "[i]t is one thing to understand something and express it logically, and quite another thing to assimilate it organically, reconstructing the whole system of one's feelings, and to find a new kind of artistic expression for this new entity. The latter process is more organic, slower, more difficult to subject to conscious influence--and in the end it will always lag behind" (CA, p. 7).

74 "It is untrue that revolutionary art can be created only by workers. Just because the Revolution is a working-class revolution, it releases . . . very little working-class energy for art. During the French Revolution, the greatest works which, directly or indirectly, reflected it, were created not by French artists, but by German, English, and others. The French bourgeoisie which was directly concerned with making the Revolution, could not give up a sufficient quantity of its strength to recreate and to perpetuate its imprint. This is still more true of the proletariat, which, though it has culture in politics, has little culture in art" (LR, p. 217).

75 "New artistic needs or demands for new literary and artistic points of view are stimulated by economics, through the development of a new class, and minor stimuli which originate outside of art. In this large sense of the word, art is a handmaiden. It is not a disembodied element feeding on itself, but a function of social man indissolubly tied to his life and environment" (LR, p. 179).

76 "At various periods, and by various methods, realism gave expression to the feelings and needs of different social groups. Each

one of these realistic schools is subject to a separate and social literary definition, and a separate formal and literary estimation. What have they in common? A definite and important feeling for the world . . . , a feeling for life as it is, . . . an artistic acceptance of reality, . . . an active interest in the concrete stability and mobility of life. It is a striving either to picture life as it is or to idealise it, either to justify or to condemn it, either to photograph it or generalise and symbolise it. But it is always a preoccupation with our life of three dimensions as a sufficient and invaluable theme for art" (LR, p. 235). With regard to drama and the theatre Trotsky commented, "One good Soviet comedy will awaken the theatre for a few years to come, and then perhaps we will have tragedy, which is truly considered the highest form of literature" (LR, p. 240).

<sup>77</sup> Literature and Revolution, pp. 19-161. See The Prophet Unarmed, pp. 180-88 for a more detailed summary.

<sup>78</sup> See Literature and Revolution, pp. 184-214; Class and Art, pp. 22-23, 25; The Prophet Unarmed, pp. 169-181, 188-90.

<sup>79</sup> "The domain of art is not one in which the Party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help it, but it can only lead it indirectly. It can and must give the additional credit of its confidence to various art groups, which are striving sincerely to approach the Revolution. And at any rate, the Party cannot and will not take the position of a literary circle which is struggling and merely competing with other literary circles. The Party stands guard over the historic interests of the working class in its entirety. . . . [I]t regards the literary fellow-travellers not as the competitors of the writers of the working class, but as the real or potential helpers of the working class in the big work of reconstruction. . . . If it is not possible to determine the place of any given group today, then the Party as a Party will wait patiently and gracefully. Individual critics or readers may sympathise with one group or another in advance. The Party, as a whole, protects the historic interests of the working class and must be more objective and wise" (LR, pp. 218-19). "The proletariat also needs a continuity of creative tradition. At the present time the proletariat realises this continuity not directly, but indirectly, through the creative bourgeois intelligentsia which gravitates towards the proletariat and which wants to keep warm under its wing. The proletariat tolerates a part of this intelligentsia, supports another part, half-adopts a third, and entirely assimilates a fourth. The policy of the Communist Party towards art is determined by the complexity of this process, by its internal many-sidedness" (LR, p. 227).

<sup>80</sup> "By projecting our present-day problems into the distant future, one can think himself through a long series of years into proletarian culture. But no matter how important . . . our culture-building may be, it is entirely dominated by the approach of European and world revolution. . . . We are, as before, merely soldiers in a campaign . . . bivouacking for a day. . . . This becomes especially clear when one considers the problem as one should in its international character"

(LR, pp. 190-91). "[T]he artistic creativity of a given epoch . . . comes into being through complex inter-relations, in the first place with the different fellow-travelling groups"; "[a]fter the present breathing-space, when a literature strongly coloured by the 'fellow-travellers' is being created . . . , there will come a period of new, terrible spasms of civil war. We shall inevitably be drawn into it. . . . [T]he result of this new, much mightier period of civil war, if we are victorious, will be the complete securing and consolidation of the socialist basis of our economy. . . . And . . . only then will begin a real building of culture, and, consequently, also the creation of a new literature . . . built entirely on constant intercourse between the artist and the masses who will have come of age culturally. . . . No tree can be grown from a kidney-bean" (CA, pp. 13 and 27). See also Literature and Revolution, p. 227.

81 "True, historic foresight cannot have mathematical precision. Now it exaggerates, now it underrates. But the conscious will of the vanguard becomes a greater and greater factor in the events which prepare the future" (LR, pp. 101-102). "But in its essence, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not an organisation for the production of the culture of a new society, but a revolutionary and military system struggling for it" (LR, p. 190). "The main task of the proletarian intelligentsia in the immediate future is not the abstract formation of a new culture regardless of the absence of a basis for it, but definite culture-bearing, that is, a systematic, planful and, of course, critical imparting to the backward masses of the essential elements of the culture which already exists. It is impossible to create a class culture behind the backs of a class" (LR, pp 193-94). "The proletariat rejects what is clearly unnecessary, false and reactionary, and . . . makes use of . . . present day science. . . . The practical result will justify itself generally and on the whole, because such a use when controlled by a Socialist goal will gradually manage and select the methods and conclusions of the theory. And by that time there will have grown up scientists who are educated under the new conditions" (LR, p. 199). "But does not the work of culture-bearing, that is, the work of acquiring the A B C of pre-proletarian culture, presuppose criticism, selection and a class standard? Of course, it does. But the standard is a political one and not an abstract cultural one. The political standard coincides with the cultural one only in the broad sense that the Revolution creates conditions for a new culture" (LR, p. 220).

82 Trotsky does, however, adumbrate the expectable general values under socialism and communism. "Under Socialism, solidarity will be the basis of society. . . . All the emotions which we revolutionists, at the present time, feel apprehensive of naming--so much have they been worn thin by hypocrites and vulgarians--such as disinterested friendship, love for one's neighbour, sympathy, will be the ringing chords of Socialist poetry" (LR, pp. 229-30). As a general phenomenon, "the farther we go," the "wall between art and industry will come down" (LR, p. 249). Communism, moreover, will oversee the fall of the wall--"not only between art and industry, but simultaneously between art and nature also" (LR, p. 250). Beyond that, the "average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And



above this ridge new peaks will rise" (LR, p. 256).

83 We may note that Trotsky prefers Tikhonov's "passionate" poetry "about a little grocery store" to Alexei Tolstoy's conservative story "about" the revolution (called "The Road to Calvary" LR, p. 228 ), and that his criteria for evaluating Céline's work are virtually duplicated in his criteria for judging Malaquais's Les Javanais and Malraux's The Conquerors: "Although social in its implication, . . . Les Javanais . . . is in no way tendentious in character. He does not try to prove anything, he does not propagandise. . . . It is 'only' a work of art. At the same time, we sense at every step the convulsions of our epoch" ("Les Javanais," Trotsky, p. 230); "The Conquerors offers a source of political lessons of the highest value. Do they come from Malraux? No, they flow from the recital itself, unknown to the author, and they go against him. This does honour to the author as an observer and an artist, but not as a revolutionist. However, we have the right to evaluate Malraux too from this point of view; . . . the author does not hesitate with his judgments on the revolution" ("The Strangled Revolution: André Malraux's The Conquerors," Trotsky, p. 180). Of course, the resemblance of that last evaluation to Engels' evaluation of Balzac, and Lenin's of Tolstoy, is too obvious to miss.

84 Francis Barker, in "Some Problems in Trotsky's Literary Criticism," Literature, Society and the Sociology of Literature: Proceedings of the Conference Held at the University of Essex, 1976, ed. Francis Barker et al ( Colchester: Univ. of Essex, 1977), p. 178, charges that "the historical is entirely bracketted out." Terry Eagleton: "It is not a question of 'suspending' the work's historical conditions of possibility, placing them in brackets (as Trotsky suggests) to attend to its 'aesthetic' . . ." (CI, p. 177).

85 "Works of art developed in a medieval Italian city can, we find, affect us too. What does this require? A small thing: it requires that these feelings and moods shall have received such broad, intense, powerful expression as to have raised them above the limitations of the life of those days. Dante was, of course, the product of a certain social milieu. But Dante was a genius. He raised the experience of his epoch to a tremendous artistic height" (CA, p. 9).

86 In passing, we might note some of Trotsky's judgments on Tolstoy's style. Trotsky values the "simple," "calm, unhurried, frugal, . . . muscular, on occasion awkward and rough" style of Tolstoy, which is, he feels, "without being miserly or ascetic. . . , . . . always incomparable in its results" ("Tolstoy: Poet and Rebel," Trotsky, pp. 133-34). These criteria reappear in Caudwell's, Williams', and Eagleton's differences (and agreements) over Hardy's literary style.

## Christopher Caudwell

### Caudwell's Politics and His General Theory of Literature

"It is axiomatic," perceptively observes a recent commentator on Caudwell, "that no Marxist literary theory can be more adequate than the conception of historical materialism which underlies it."<sup>1</sup> And, given that "[u]ndoubtedly Caudwell supposed himself to be a Marxist,"<sup>2</sup> has been viewed as such by others,<sup>3</sup> and that he formally joined the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), Marxist axiology would be remiss if it were to ignore the political assumptions and practice to which Caudwell's thinking on literary evaluation was indeed decisively linked.

A precise, if brief, political assessment of Caudwell's "Marxism"--especially on the key issues of base and superstructure, class, revolution versus reform, and the vanguard party--is crucial to any Marxist evaluation of his axiology. For if, as E. P. Thompson claims in his major essay on the critic, Caudwell really exercised "considerable influence upon the Marxism of the Forties,"<sup>4</sup> one may legitimately ask what kind of influence it was. To this, Thompson's own answer in fact seems to be that "[t]he entire body of Caudwell's work may be read as a polemic against mechanical materialism of this [Stalinist] kind, masquerading as Marxism" ("Caudwell," p. 248). But if this is indeed the case, one might then question how Thompson can simultaneously have us believe that "[i]t is no longer possible to suppose a Marxist orthodoxy against which Caudwell can be judged, confirmed or found wanting. We can no longer ask whether Caudwell was or was not 'correct'"

("Caudwell," p. 229).

In his argument, Thompson tends to equate his own conception of "orthodoxy" with empirical blindness, a priori attributing both features to Marxism as an hypothetical system. He seems unaware that "Marxist orthodoxy" could be systematic in its codification of principles, because of historically observed and tested patterns in objective life, and still remain open to modification or dissolution if confronted with a reality that demands such change. Indeed, the Marxist revolutionaries always predicted the demise of Marxism in a classless society. But Thompson clearly scorns all orthodoxy, because of its supposedly monolithic inflexibility. Consequently, he dismisses any notion of a systematised Marxism; for that, too, would be "orthodoxy." Yet, interestingly, we recall that he argues differently when he rightly defends the specific notion of "classes," in his Poverty of Theory (p. 57).

Now, I hope to show that Thompson's characterisation of Caudwell's work as an undifferentiated, anti-Stalinist whole is only partly true. I have no reason to regard that critic's work as "a"--that is, as a consistent--polemic against the kind of mechanical materialism exemplified by Stalinism. Sometimes Caudwell argues against it; but, as we shall see, he often does not. Hence arises the question: what exactly does Thompson think Caudwell argues for? In fact, if Caudwell does occasionally criticise particular aspects and instances of Stalinist counterpositions to Marxism (without, however, identifying them as Stalinist), he also sanctions the overall political programme and stance of Stalinism itself.<sup>5</sup>

One might expect that this would have been only too obvious to any informed reviewer, particularly one such as Thompson, encountering Caudwell's political code with some knowledge of his political training.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in Illusion and Reality, Trotsky and his supporters are labelled as "counter-revolutionaries" (p. 104), and their programme is accused of being "destructive," "anarchic" (p. 313), and "complete treachery" (p. 319). At the same time, Stalin--already widely known as the organiser of massive international proletarian defeats, from the German revolution of 1923 to the German disaster of 1933--earns an admiring and respectful mention as a proletarian leader, alongside Marx and Lenin (p. 327).

But, of course, Caudwell's Stalinism goes deeper than the ritual slander and glorification of Trotsky and Stalin respectively. In fact, the ritual itself stems from a more fundamental, programmatic agreement, centring on essentially two interdependent hallmarks of Stalinism. One is the policy of domestic class-collaboration in capitalist countries, most widely recognised as the Popular Front policy. The other is the advocacy of international class-appeasement, of indefinitely extended efforts by the Soviet state to conclude a class-peace with its imperialist enemies. The latter policy, today known as "détente," or "peaceful coexistence," originated with Stalin as the theory of "Socialism in One Country."

Briefly, Caudwell's most explicit condonement of the Popular Front policy occurs in Romance and Realism. In one particular passage, he pointedly groups heterogeneous classes together, including "all bourgeois revolutionaries," in a utopian vision of a "fight against capitalism" that significantly leaves the specific basis for such political unity unmentioned:

In its fight against capitalism, the proletariat needs all helpers; to its standard rally all those bourgeois disgusted or crippled by the world they have made. . . . All bourgeois scientists, artists, and intellectuals revolt. . . . Nationalists as well as creators of a classless world fight against the finance capital that

enslaves and destroys all national cultures. . . .  
All bourgeois revolutionaries, valuable and important  
auxiliaries. . . [,] march with them [the proletariat]  
in demonstrations. . . . (RR, pp. 137-38)

That the specific programme for this unique lash-up "against" capitalism remains unmentioned here is probably no accident. For, as Caudwell himself elsewhere lets slip, in fact in the course of admiring the Popular Front, this policy is merely the "final movement of the bourgeois illusion" (or, more accurately, bourgeois deception). Through it, "all the liberal elements" ostensibly put themselves "under" the "leadership" of the proletariat--"in a formal written alliance limiting the scope of that leadership" (IR, p. 132; all emphases mine). No more eloquent condemnation of his own political programme can be found in Caudwell. Yet, the fact remains that he explicitly defends the Popular Front policy.

Similarly, Caudwell's most explicit attempt at justifying the policy of "Socialism in One Country" produces a revealing array of self-contradictions and illogicalities ("Pacifism and Violence," S, pp. 108-10). But he defends that purely Stalinist invention nevertheless. Inveighing against "the Trotsky nightmare, from which it followed that Socialism could not be established anywhere without a world revolution," all he is concretely able to claim is "the fact that Soviet Russia is not an [internally, capitalistically] exploited State" (p. 108). But Trotskyists have always affirmed the same, pointing out, however, that the mere absence of capitalist economic exploitation, though crucial, does not constitute socialism. (And, incidentally, this fact also does not preclude or account for the existence of a parasitic bureaucracy.) But Caudwell simply claims that the Trotskyist theory "overlooked" this absence

of capitalist exploitation in the Soviet Union. Needless to say, not even a pretence is made at offering evidence for this charge. After all, we have no reason to believe that Caudwell ever bothered to read Trotsky for himself.

Moreover, it is mildly amusing that Caudwell should describe the Marxist position as "the Trotsky nightmare." For, not just Marx, Engels, and Lenin but Stalin himself, on one occasion, had pointedly dismissed the notion of building socialism in one country as absurd.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, one page later, Caudwell himself is forced to retreat, conceding, "That is not to say Russia is not in danger" (p. 109). He even admits that "[i]t is therefore necessary for her to arm herself as heavily as her bourgeois neighbours . . ." (p. 110). But then he adds, in the next clause, that she must "try to strengthen herself by pacts, the international equivalent of cartels and trade agreements" (p. 110): such as the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939? one might ask, recalling the twenty million Soviet lives lost in the aftermath.

Already, the twin policies of the Popular Front and "Socialism in One Country" can be recognised as parts of the common programme of class collaboration. This identity becomes graphic when Caudwell claims that capitalist Britain is in "as much danger" from Nazi Germany as is the Soviet Union (p. 110). It is merely an implicit version of what the Stalinist public press was claiming much more explicitly: that the bourgeois Churchill could lead the fight against fascism (see Black, pp. 179-91). The practical implication of Caudwell's view that "the Fascist States constitute the main danger to Russia today" (p. 110) was, for Stalinists in Britain, to line up behind their own bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the Soviet Stalinists tried to appease Hitler and assure all imperialists that capitalism would be spared in the West.

On two key programmatic issues for Marxists in this century, therefore, Caudwell was defiantly--if not too competently--a Stalinist. In faithfully reproducing, including with the inevitable self-contradictions, the arguments for a Popular Front and for "Socialism in One Country," Caudwell remained deeply class-collaborationist in his political programme. But to say this is to state merely that Caudwell was an average Stalinist, a fairly representative member of the CPGB.

Thompson's attempt to portray Caudwell as an intransigent anti-Stalinist Marxist therefore contradicts the facts. But no more successful, even at a purely logical level, is Thompson's scornful attempt to dismiss any possibility of a "Marxist orthodoxy," or "correct[ness]." For, if his argument were valid, why would he feel compelled to ask, as he does, "was Caudwell a Marxist at all? And, if so, of what kind?" ("Caudwell," p. 232). And even less explicable, then, becomes Thompson's subsequent urge to offer a verdict: "nothing that he wrote is of a maturity or consistency to merit election as a Marxist or any other kind of 'classic'" ("Caudwell," p. 262).

The fact is that Thompson is undecided about a clear choice; either abandon any attempt at analysing Caudwell in terms of a clearly definable and established method known as Marxism or acknowledge the existence and relevance of that system and proceed accordingly. One cannot have it both ways. Precisely because Thompson refuses to recognise and acknowledge any established Marxist tradition or method, he cannot politically characterise or resolve those contradictions in Caudwell that, empirically, he so accurately describes. Thus, on the one hand, Thompson is concerned to deny Marxism any discrete and verifiable identity. On the other hand, he feels compelled to note that

the particular point within the Thirties" at which Caudwell wrote his works was indeed a "crisis" that was "not imaginary . . . [but] . . . imposed itself 'like a pressure from without' upon his acrid style and within the antinomies of his thought" ("Caudwell," p. 271).

"Caudwell's failure to elaborate any concept of value or of value-system," he goes on to admit, is indeed due to "the inadequacy in his conceptual terms which has the most serious practical consequences . . . [.] . . . obliterate[ing] where all the significant questions lie" ("Caudwell," pp. 255-56). But if this is true, then surely the logical next step would be to diagnose that crisis politically/historically and define the "adequate" norm against which Caudwell's terms are found wanting. Thompson does not do this. In the event, therefore, historians such as he should carefully ponder Francis Mulhern's observation: "The popular after-images of 'The Thirties' (in the main, the handiwork of the contrite and the scornful) can be displaced only by scrupulous research and argument. . . . ' [T]he intellectual fellow-traveller' was not, as has sometimes been supposed, a globally undifferentiated phenomenon. It is necessary to delineate, however provisionally, the specific character of the Marxist milieu in which Caudwell was formed" (p. 39).

Central to any specific characterisation of Caudwell's Marxist political milieu would seem to be the one confrontation--with international repercussions--that Thompson completely ignores: the historic and continuing battle between Stalinism and Trotskyism. While manifestly sensitive to the deforming effects of what he explicitly identifies as "Stalinist doctrine" ("Caudwell," p. 233), Thompson remains curiously silent about the existence of the tendency within the post-Lenin Communist International that gave Stalinism its name



and which, since 1923, has constituted the Bolshevik challenge to it: Trotskyism, once internationally organized as the Fourth International.<sup>8</sup>

One immediate result of this slight oversight is Thompson's utterly vague description of Caudwell's faults, as distinct from his clear articulation of that critic's perceived virtues. While Caudwell's ostensible virtues are presented as exemplary, no corresponding negative lessons are drawn from his many theoretical catastrophes. Thus, on the one hand, Thompson welcomes Caudwell's allegedly "fruitful ambiguity as to being/consciousness," his "liberating and 'heretical' influence" ("Caudwell," p. 256). He assures us that "[i]n refusing the orthodox closures offered by reflection theory, by the basis-superstructure model, and by the allocation of 'economics' to the base and norms, or affective culture, to the superstructure, he was holding open a door to a more creative tradition" ("Caudwell," p. 270). Yet, on the other hand, Thompson vaguely complains that "[t]he terms of Caudwell's attempted revision are often unsatisfactory: the conceptual vocabulary which he inherited or which he invented from diverse disciplines sometimes broke apart in his hands: but the Marxism of his time offered him no other. And I am less confident than some others that 'Western,' or any other, Marxism has subsequently resolved these problems ("Caudwell," p. 256).

Now I submit that the phrase "the Marxism of his time" exactly reveals Thompson's contradictory criteria for evaluating Caudwell--a matter whose comprehension is key to our following or abandoning Thompson in his political conclusions about that critic. From the generally recognised (and indisputable) deformity and paucity of the dominant Marxism in Britain, Thompson deigns to generalise

about Caudwell's "time" (emphasis mine)--a formulation that, willy-nilly, implicates genuine Marxism internationally and virtually writes it out of existence: "There was a time, a very recent time, when to ask such questions and to receive an irresolute answer would have been to have courted dismissal. Marxism--or the people who spoke most loudly and authoritatively in Marxism's name--already knew the answers. I am glad that this intellectual iron age is now passing; one has waited for a long time for it to go by" ("Caudwell," p. 270). It is that barely acknowledged distinction between "Marxism" and its self-proclaimed (mis)representatives that is decisively revealing. When such politically indifferent anti-"orthodoxy" hails Caudwell's "'heretical' influence" (note the mocking single quotation marks), one may rest assured that it is not exactly being done out of concern for the advancement of Marxism. For Marxists, then, the task becomes one of surpassing Thompson and of forging a broader, politically counterposed analysis, in defence of Marxism.

Such an analysis should include not only the fact that the Left Opposition had begun its struggle against Stalinism as early as 1923 in the Soviet Union and expanded into continental Europe since the early thirties; it should also include the fact that the Opposition had, by the "time" of Caudwell's politicisation, already made a known impact on Caudwell's party itself. The CPGB had, as early as 1932--three years before Caudwell joined--expelled the Trotskyist sympathisers of the so-called "Balham Group," thus formalising the birth of British ostensible Trotskyism.<sup>9</sup> The fact of Stalinism's overall continuing dominance, therefore, though irrefutable, can hardly be regarded as one that went unchallenged during Caudwell's own political life, even

in his own country. Consequently, the limitations of his terminology--while historically explicable in terms of Stalinist hegemony and Caudwell's own induction into it--can by no means be politically legitimised by invoking some mythically homogeneous "conceptual vocabulary" allegedly monopolising an equally mythically-undifferentiated "Marxism of his time." That is simply an anti-Marxist ploy for evading the intervening history and the continuing revolutionary credentials of Trotskyism. Its familiar effect is simultaneously to amnesty past Stalinist atrocities as inevitable "errors" and portray the present-day continuation of basically the same policy as the legitimate--if occasionally fallible--heir to Leninism. Such accounts are only superficially amusing; their political implications reverberate more perniciously and at levels other than the merely theoretical. The time is more than ripe for establishing correctives wherever possible; and a Trotskyist assessment of Caudwell could be a small but useful step in that project.

In 1951, The Modern Quarterly conducted a debate subsequently known as the "Caudwell Controversy." Maurice Cornforth initiated the debate with his "Caudwell and Marxism."<sup>10</sup> Now Cornforth's attack on Caudwell has been shown to be vitiated by misquotations and misinterpretations.<sup>11</sup> Despite these methodological problems, however, Cornforth does manage to grasp the thrust of Caudwell's argument and to reveal with devastating effect the confused quality of Caudwell's philosophical and political "Marxism." Certainly, I myself am yet to see or feel moved to provide an answer to Cornforth's observation that Caudwell himself "typically" adopts idealist positions before trying to escape from them by asserting their Marxist counterparts; and yet, Cornforth notes, "he allows his original idealist inversion to stand . . ." (p. 18; the charge

here refers, in the first place, to a specific example). Whatever Caudwell's posthumous excuse may be (and lack of time for revisions was certainly a real problem), the political consequences of such unresolved contradictions remain.

Now Thompson, referring to Cornforth's attack, seeks to avoid dealing with the justice (or otherwise) of its substance simply by claiming that "the assault on Caudwell was perhaps seen, by the directors of the Party's press, as a small purgative exercise in the Zhdanov mode" ("Caudwell," p. 232). Yet, if Thompson wants us to infer from this that the targets of Zhdanovists could not possibly have been Zhdanovists/Stalinists themselves, he should try to explain his own (accurate) observation that, "[d]espite the efforts of Caudwell's defenders, the argument never succeeded in escaping from the terms in which it had at first been set" ("Caudwell," p. 233). For Marxists, of course, the crucial question would be: what exactly are these mystifyingly alluded-to "terms"? One answer may have been inadvertently revealed by George Thomson himself, whom E. P. Thompson calls Caudwell's "leading defender" ("Caudwell," p. 273, n. 16). In his reply to Cornforth, Thomson explicitly reminds him that he could have "learnt . . . from Caudwell many years before" the class-nature of science under capitalism that he "only learnt . . . from Zhdanov and Lysenko" some years later.<sup>12</sup> So much for Caudwell's spotless anti-Stalinism according to E. P. Thompson.

Admittedly, Caudwell's political statements and analyses occasionally do evince elements of Marxist methodology and its formal programme, thereby even sometimes paralleling certain general observations by Trotsky. Among these, the importance of action as the aim and the testing ground of theory earns the most emphasis.<sup>13</sup>

The leading agents of the revolution are usually specifically identified as the industrial proletariat (IR, p. 303), and their historically-designated immediate goal is recognised to be the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Caudwell often comes close to grasping, empirically, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and its complementary critique of the Stalinist Popular Front.<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, he is thus able to expose, from this ostensibly Marxist standpoint, the implications of class-collaboration--sometimes even in the course of praising the Popular Front: "The same final movement of the bourgeois illusion is reflected in the growth of the People's Front, where all the liberal elements, representing the craft content of modern society, put themselves under the leadership of the proletariat in a formal written alliance limiting the scope of that leadership" (IR, p. 132; my emphasis). Similarly, he is able to expose the tacit condonation of bourgeois violence underneath the pacifists' official "principle" of "non-violence,"<sup>16</sup> revealing the "voluntary cartel" League of Nations for the "bourgeois illusion" it is.<sup>17</sup> And he is able to criticise the anti-revolutionary role of all reformism, though sometimes (as with his critique of Christ) on the basis of historically unjustified expectations.<sup>18</sup>

Aesthetically, in defining the politics behind surrealism, Caudwell arrives at a conclusion virtually identical to Trotsky's--namely, that, "as a revolutionary situation develops, the surréalistic poets either retreat to reaction and Fascism (as many in Italy) or are thrown into the ranks of the proletariat, like Aragon in France" (IR, p. 129). Similarly, Caudwell admits that proletarian art "is really an art in transition," although it "is sometimes regarded as being essentially

proletarian art" (IR, p. 302). Moreover, he believes, no Marxists--unlike H. G. Wells--will try to predict what the full-fledged communism of the distant future will look like in its details, including in its art. For, "[t]hought visualising the future and divorced from action, can do no more than project the disheartening poverty of the present into the richness of the future."<sup>19</sup> This unpredictability of future details does not, however, logically negate for him the fact that the future is nevertheless fully determined by material history.<sup>20</sup>

Now, since Caudwell was an organised, official Communist, we should not be surprised to find him nominally familiar with the elementary concepts of classical Marxism. In fact, that he was not more consistent than he was in his understanding, is the point of my criticism. Thus, the issues around which the Marxism of a Communist Party member such as Caudwell is tested will naturally tend to centre on the finer and more specific points of Marxist theory and practice: no self-respecting CPGB member, for instance, should have to be argued with about socialism's historical superiority to capitalism. Rather, the specific arguments and actions by such a member that effectively confirm or contradict his or her stated general agreement on that question should, more logically, constitute the test of that member's claimed Marxism. And, since the issues of economic determination, ideology, reformism, and the necessity of proletarian revolution have, on the whole, long been formally settled inside the so-called Marxist movement, the most frequent ultimate test of a Marxist in the twentieth century logically tends to be his or her understanding of the organisational question.

Considering all this, it is important to remember Caudwell's

own formal arguments for building a revolutionary party. For, my criticism will be that he nevertheless does not understand the party question as Lenin and Trotsky understood it. That is, he does not sufficiently see the party as a democratic-centralist weapon of proletarian revolution. Rather, Caudwell tends to see the party's role as a question of trans-class "democracy" (popular frontism) programmatically and as a question of usually arbitrary dictates and pure centralism operationally/organisationally. Consequently, he tends to demand ostensibly revolutionary and proletarian axiological criteria through exhortation and fiat. This is counterposed to the Leninist-Trotskyist argument for an always voluntary but organised revolutionary orientation in all cultural matters. One effect of this confusion about the party's precise role reveals itself in Caudwell's numerous pleas to overtly anti-Marxist "fellow travellers" to join the Communists in making the revolution.<sup>21</sup> As I will try to show, this disorientation produces axiological effects that closely correspond to the politics of Stalinism, whose un-Marxist assumptions Caudwell shared to a large degree.

However, if we are to criticise Caudwell for insufficiently assimilating his Marxism, it is illuminating--before we substantiate our criticism with evidence--to see exactly how close Caudwell occasionally did manage to come to Marxism on the question of the need for a vanguard party. Towards the end of Illusion and Reality, Caudwell asserts that "no one who has patiently followed the argument thus far can fail to see its relevance to contemporary art, and the importance of understanding the revolutionary transformation of the basis of society which is everywhere affecting art and the artist" (IR, p. 308). Further down,

Caudwell becomes more specific, actually defining revolutionary commitment, as he sees it, in terms of membership in the Communist Party (IR, p. 314). "A revolutionary must be a member of the revolutionary party," he asserts in Romance and Realism. "As long as he remains outside this revolutionary party, it is a sign that although he believes in the need for a revolution he remains bourgeois"; one must, therefore, "be a revolutionary not only in blank verse but in every activity" (RR, pp. 134-35). He tellingly complains that "fellow travellers" such as Spender and Day Lewis "announce themselves as prepared to merge with the proletariat, to accept its theory and its organisation, in every field of concrete living except that of art"; everyone is "prepared to accept proletarian leadership in every field except the one which is valuable to them, and where they demand the retention of bourgeois categories. . . . [T]he artist is, for example, quite content to see the scientist proletarianised" (IR, pp. 315-16). Caudwell explains how this "reservation . . . is absolutely disastrous for an artist. It leads to a gradual separation between his living and his art. . . . All his proletarian aspirations gather at one pole, all his bourgeois art at the other," although they cannot help influencing each other in a distorting way (IR, p. 315). Thus, says Caudwell, such people's chief interest in the revolution turns out to be "to secure guarantees of freedom in the field of art after the revolution"; they go to Russia "not so much to see if the people are free, but if the artists are 'interfered with' by the authorities" (IR, p. 316).

Moreover, obversely, Caudwell is formally opposed to spurious, forced "commitment" in art. "Our demand--that your art should be



proletarian--" he explains to the literary fellow-travellers, "is not a demand that you apply dogmatic categories and Marxist phrases to art. To do so would be bourgeois. We ask that you should really live in the new world and not leave your soul behind in the past. . . . It is a demand that you, an artist, become a proletarian leader in the field of art; that you do not take either of these easy roads which are in essence the same--mechanically shuffling the outworn categories of bourgeois art or mechanically importing the categories of other proletarian spheres. You must take the difficult creative road--that of refashioning the categories and technique of art so that it expresses the new world coming into being and is part of its realisation" (IR, pp. 318-19). He tells them that their kind of "agitational poetry cannot be great poetry, because it springs from a divided world-view . . . ." (RR, p. 135). "Is the proletariat made conscious of its goal by rhymed economics?" he asks (RR, p. 136). And in his essay on Shaw, Caudwell criticises that dramatist for filling his plays with, among other things, "deliberately forced conversions" and "unconvincing dénouements."<sup>22</sup> Yet, as I hope to show, the net effect of Caudwell's contradictory arguments shows at most an unsustained approximation of Marxism. And in this regard, Caudwell's official subscription to Stalinism, with its concomitant ignorance of and hostility towards the Bolshevik tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, seems decisive.

Despite Caudwell's considerable assimilation of Marxism, then, and even taking into account the brevity of his acquaintance with it, he remains unacceptably inconsistent on many of the fundamentals of its philosophy and political strategy. Thus, he often advances formulations in which he overestimates the motivating and determining

power of consciousness and art and ignores their necessary economic and social pre-conditions. His generalisations sometimes suggest that "a complete refashioning of consciousness" alone would suffice to bring about the desired "change of values, the devulgarisation of life, the growth of collective freedom and the release of individual consciousness which takes place in communism" (IR, pp. 320, 326). Apart from mentioning a vague "increase in freedom" with the advent of communism, Caudwell at one point completely ignores the material changes underlying the new "social solidarity," and speaks only of "individuation and consciousness" (IR, p.323). Similarly, ignoring the economic basis of so-called proletarian art, Caudwell at another point seems to imply that this art can simply evolve superstructurally into communist art, in detached tandem with, not as an integral part of, the socialist revolution (IR, p. 311). One particularly concise example of Caudwell's unsureness on this question occurs in his essay on "Men and Nature," where he categorically and patently contradicts himself: "[A]s a result of economic production a man finds himself born not into nature, but into a society already organised by interpenetration with nature, and into a nature already changed and X-rayed by this. He does not ever at any stage consciously form a society; society forms him. He in turn, as a result, is an active centre for a fresh transformation; he in turn forms society" (emphasis mine).<sup>23</sup> How can one "actively" form society without being at all conscious of the act, however unwillingly performed? It does not alter the fact of the contradiction one iota that Caudwell himself is bothered by it and returns to it later (FS, p. 136); as Cornforth might have put it, Caudwell allows his original mechanical-materialist inversion to stand--a fact, incidentally, that hardly bolsters

E.P. Thompson's promotion of "the entire body of Caudwell's work . . . as a polemic against mechanical materialism of this kind, masquerading as Marxism" ("Caudwell," p. 248). A more accurate description of Caudwell's formulations on this question, as of those on most others, would be "vacillation between an anti-Marxist idealism and an un-Marxist materialism." And that problem, as E.P. Thompson half-recognises, is an integral part of the historically larger, political problem of Stalinism.

It should not be difficult for Marxists to see, from Caudwell's occasional confusion on the question of base and superstructure, how this vacillation could logically blur his notion of classes. That is, since consciousness and culture can advance independently of the economy, this logic might run, people no longer find specific opposed interests around which to group themselves, in accordance with the dictates of economic necessity. One can also see, then, how even such an incipient notion of classes as a myth could sow doubts about the necessity of a workers' revolution and lead straight to reformist and popular frontist appetites. Such a "logical" thread does, in fact, exist and run through Caudwell's work, though sometimes less overtly than at others.

E.P. Thompson has shown that Caudwell, "in his essentialist paradigm of society, . . . often loses all sight of the real historical contradictions, in social being, of social class" ("Caudwell," p. 256). "Caudwell's move from primitive to modern society is so swift," he notes, "that (despite passing references to class) it allows for the interposition of only one new important concept: that of the market, and of commodity-fetishism . . ." ("Caudwell," p. 258): "what happened (one wonders) in the interval between 'primitive' and 'later

bourgeois civilisation'?" ("Caudwell," p. 258). Indeed, I would argue, a conception of even this "later bourgeois civilisation" as merely "association," rather than as a power-structure comprising forces with fundamentally opposed socio-economic interests, pervades Caudwell's analysis of it.<sup>24</sup> It is such conceptual imprecision about an elementary sociological truth--discovered, in fact, by bourgeois ideologues a century before Marx--that renders Caudwell vulnerable to Stalinism's programme of class-collaboration. From insufficiently grasping the significance of Marxist class-analyses, Caudwell needs to make no special effort to accept the programme of the Popular Front: he willingly presents the rarely and always only marginally radicalised bourgeois intelligentsia (along with anarchists, pacifists, and Christians) as being, without exception or gradation, revolutionary peers of the communist workers.<sup>25</sup> Disregarding his own assertion that "[t]here is no abstract man,"<sup>26</sup> Caudwell can advance the concept of a seamless and classless "average genotype" who partakes of an equally classless "collective emotion of . . . the era" (IR, p. 83).<sup>27</sup> Finally, Caudwell can pronounce dialectical materialism "the product of a classless society"<sup>28</sup> and even advance the concept of a "classless state," notions that would have intrigued Marx, Engels, and Lenin.<sup>29</sup>

If a state can be classless, one can see why Caudwell assumes that workers can achieve "freedom" while still under capitalism.<sup>30</sup> This then dovetails neatly into the Stalinist policies of "peaceful co-existence" and "Socialism in One Country." For, as every worker (in the eyes of Caudwell and the Stalinists) ought to know, whether circumstances are favourable or not, socialist revolution is achievable (if at all) only through inevitable stages of pain and suffering.<sup>31</sup>

The programmatic Stalinism of Caudwell, then, is substantial,

and this can hardly be expected to leave his general system of values--literary or otherwise--unaffected. But it is the specific correspondence between this programme and Caudwell's official membership in the CPGB that decisively marks his politics, as well as his axiology, as more Stalinist than Marxist. General and abstract discussions about his sense of "commitment" will not suffice. The party question with Caudwell is either a matter of formally argued, specific, and official loyalties, or it is nothing; and his own remarks on that subject, as we saw earlier, testify to this fact. Every biographical account echoes in one form or another Mulhern's claim that Caudwell "worked hard to carry out his day-to-day party duties . . ." (p. 38). And it is in the specific political question "What party duties?" that the possibility of precisely defining Caudwell's axiology lies.

Aware of the need for organised activity if one indeed wants to become "a thorough Marxist" (RR, p. 136), Caudwell is trapped between his often more-than-rudimentary understanding of Marxism and the non-Marxist programme of his own, official party. Unable to grasp the meaning and unacquainted with any practice of genuine democratic centralism within a Bolshevik party, Caudwell shuttles confusedly between liberal-democratic, popular frontist premises and authoritarian, spurious dictates. On the one hand, reflecting the class-capitulatory political appetites of Stalinism, Caudwell stresses the adaptive and conciliatory properties of art.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, expressing Stalinism's internally dictatorial and mechanistic organisational norms, Caudwell issues the Zhdanovist decree that "whatever methods are necessary for a social transformation must

be necessary in art" (RR, p. 132; my emphasis). For Marxists, it is within this political compass that Caudwell's axiology is most revealingly diagnosed.

E.P. Thompson has noted that "Caudwell commonly ascribed to 'art' functions and properties which might more properly be ascribed to language, and thence to culture. . . . We slide around too much between language, culture, art and poetry" ("Caudwell," pp. 260-61). Nevertheless, to be able to extract any sense of Caudwell's "general theory of literature" at all, one is provisionally compelled to regard his use of those categories as co-equal and interchangeable.<sup>33</sup> Briefly, then, in his ostensibly more Marxist stretches, Caudwell regards all art and literature in bourgeois society as expressions of the dominant bourgeois myth of complete freedom, a myth that nevertheless assumes a certain reality through the beliefs of the rest of society.<sup>34</sup> The ultimate determinant of this art is the capitalist mode of commodity-production, which, by over-fragmenting the social division of labour, generates a sequence of splits in social phenomena.<sup>35</sup> These splits range from the invention of writing and the birth of the reading public to the birth of the lyric, the movement for "art for art's sake," and its ultimate, illogical extreme--the development of self-enclosed, "intrinsic" meanings of words, corresponding to the pathological alienation of the individual and the over-privatisation of emotion. Towards the end of and alongside this sequence, a compensatory movement for synthesising and reintegrating the scattered ideological realm appears. This is witnessed in the shifting emphasis, in literature, towards social theory, novels of ideas, propaganda, and other such

generalising strategies and mechanisms.<sup>36</sup> While different literary genres exhibit different and often opposing functional tendencies (poetry tending to be individualistic and rebellious, for instance, while the novel and the short story tend to be more social and increasingly submissive),<sup>37</sup> literature in general performs two--eventually dialectically counter-posed--functions. As long as the bourgeois myth dominates, literature mostly helps human beings tame their animal instincts into emotions, thereby facilitating the task of social adjustment, or "adaptation" to "external reality" (IR, p. 289). But because of its contradictory nature as both adaptive and rebellious, and because of the maturing economic, political, and general social contradictions of bourgeois society at large, bourgeois literature (like all class art) also proves to be the nemesis of the bourgeois myth of absolute freedom. It eventually reveals, through its most skilled practitioners, the many strings tying that myth down to bourgeois necessity. And (for Caudwell) in this revelation, this facilitation of the reader's "recognition of necessity," lies even bourgeois art's capacity to bring about "freedom," which is its chief general value.<sup>38</sup> Caudwell's classification of nine conventionally recognized periods in the history of bourgeois English literature in terms of their economic framework attempts to apply broadly the above theory, centred on his particular understanding of Marx's "base-super-structure" analytical model. It is within the framework of the above theory that he carries out his own evaluations of particular authors, when he is being consistent. But one of the sources of Caudwell's inconsistent Marxism is precisely the frequent clash between his "materialistic" analyses and his often unexamined, idealistic value-judgments between relativism and absolutism, objectivism and subjectivism,

rebelliousness and capitulation. These philosophical contradictions, in their specific axiological relation to his Stalinist politics, we shall now examine below.

#### Caudwell's Principles of Literary Evaluation

Doyle (p. 247) claims that Caudwell's work definitively shifts the axiological problematic from the conventional concern with explaining the assumed greatness of particular authors, works, traditions, and oeuvres to "a more dialectical understanding of the determinate modes by which fiction, self and society inter-penetrate in different ways, within specific documentary, monumental, and institutional formations." That is, according to Doyle, Caudwell replaces the old practice of exclusively intra-literary assessments "with questions of a rather more functional nature." But the fact is that although literature's contextual function does interest Caudwell more than the relative intrinsic values of its individual products, he does not so much replace the earlier evaluative practice with dialectics as attempt to "dialecticise" that practice itself. Thus we find Caudwell stating categorically (IR, p. 150) that it is "the essential task of aesthetics to rank Herrick below Milton, and Shakespeare above either, and explain in rich and complex detail why and how they differ. . . . Such an act implies a standard." This is no declaration of abandonment of the older problematic. Rather, it is an attempt--in the event albeit contradictory and problem-ridden--to revolutionise the "standard" itself, in light of his understanding of literature's general function in life. This explains why, although he seems at one point to favour Aristotle's concern with "function" over Plato's



concern with "enjoyment" (IR, p. 51)--at least provisionally assuming their counterposition--he feels impelled to conclude Romance and Realism (pp. 139-40) with a call for an all-round transvaluation of life and art:

[T]he study of aesthetics includes the appreciation of primarily aesthetic values detected in the tasting and creation, in values of beauty, emotion, colour and life. . . . We cannot neglect such a study if we are to enrich and expand our values, and escape from the barren categories of the present. . . . [W]hen a culture disintegrates, when we lose a world-view, then aesthetics, too, disintegrates; our values, which seemed so clear, so much part of the artwork, abruptly fade. To restore them, to advance beyond, to create a new art or new world-view, a new set of aesthetic values, a new life, is the purpose now of any analysis of the social generation of art. It then becomes an essential preliminary task for the recreation of art and aesthetics.

The passage is tangentially reminiscent of Trotsky's observation that social decay hits "not only parties in power, but schools of art as well" ("Céline," Trotsky, p. 201)--but only tangentially. For, whereas Trotsky is discussing the determining influence of material and political changes on art, Caudwell is, in a sense, discussing something precisely opposite: the determining influence, within the superstructure, of "culture" on "aesthetics." This limitedness of the semi-parallel is significant. For, as Caudwell's perhaps most substantial statement on aesthetic value will typically show (below), his emphasis on the superstructure sometimes verges on a reversal of its overall relationship to the base, as that relationship is defined in Marxism:

[A]rt adapts the psyche to the environment, and is therefore one of the conditions of the development of society. . . . It . . . remoulds external reality nearer to the heart's desire. Art becomes more socially and biologically valuable and greater art the more that remoulding is comprehensive and true to the nature of reality. . . . Art gives us so many

glimpses of the inner heart of life; and that is its significance, different from and yet arising out of its purpose. It is like a magic lantern which projects our real selves on the Universe and promises us that we, as we desire, can alter the Universe, alter it to the measure of our needs. (IR, pp. 289-90; emphasis mine.)

From the above passage, we can separate Caudwell's two chief criteria of aesthetic (including literary) value: truthfulness to life and a quality that increases the art-appreciator's capacity to cope with life, eventually leading to "liberty." I will discuss the first criterion later. The second criterion, in Caudwell's code, actually conceals a tension between submissive values and rebellious values that clearly reflects his own more fundamental, political vacillation between reformism and revolution--between Stalinism and Marxism. The net implication is a valorisation of "the consoling, healing and invigorating power of art"--all "adaptive" attributes that usually lead at most to "the vigour and serenity of an organism sure of itself in the face of external reality" (IR, pp. 294-295). That is, within the framework of class society, one criterion of valuable literature is seen by Caudwell as its ability to conciliate the reader to the dominant, conservative status quo. Literature, to become valuable, must perform "a wide and deep feat of integration" (IR, p. 225), leading, like most poetry, to "an adaptation to external reality" (IR, pp. 237-240).

This historically unspecific, seemingly classless criterion of literary value--mediated by the equally classless "social" conventions of art (RR, p. 36)--of course finds its logical extension in Caudwell's indiscriminate labelling of all forms of society as "association." Thus, Caudwell's humanist statement that "one can only find salvation

for oneself by finding it for all others at the same time" (emphasis mine) naturally leads to an evaluation of D. H. Lawrence in which he criticises the novelist's "essential bourgeois selfishness" but fails to indicate its specifically proletarian alternative ("D.H. Lawrence," S, p. 69). For, after all, "it is the process of association which makes men noble and heroic, which gives their character more beauty and worth. Hence, the 'I' of dream, stripped of so much of its social adaptation, is stripped of its largeness and human value" (IR, p. 203). An imaginary, contradiction-free "association" is posited as an existing fact. Herein lies one crucial element of Caudwell's philosophical idealism.

In his passage on the criteria of aesthetic value quoted above (IR, pp. 289-90), Caudwell speaks of art remoulding "external reality nearer to the heart's desire," promising us "that we, as we desire, can alter the Universe. . . ." "The heart's desire": that is the other, weaker pole of the tension in Caudwell's second main set of criteria. His tendency to "adapt", which is stronger, is indeed to a degree balanced by an impulse to actively implement "change." Thus, for instance, in discussing the dual character of the "adaptive value" of poetry, Caudwell notes that "great poetry will not disguise the nakedness of outer necessity, only cause it to shine with the glow of interest. Poetry soaks external reality--nature and society--with emotional significance . . . [which] gives the organism an appetitive interest in external reality, enables the organism to deal with it more resolutely, whether in the world of reality or of phantasy" (IR, p. 241). In one particularly revealing metaphor (for the thalamus, a part of the human brain), Caudwell links the (presumably non-fascistic) "instincts" to the proletariat and to rebellion: "All violent

effective outbursts . . . are assumed to be thalamic. The thalamus is the rebel, the seat of the unconscious, the instinctive proletariat, which that well-educated and refined bureaucracy, the cortex, with its unemotional logical consciousness, keeps (not without difficulty) in order."<sup>39</sup>

Elsewhere, Caudwell explicitly links rebelliousness with liveliness, freshness, "naturalism," and the Renaissance, on the one hand; on the other hand, he associates the classical tradition with mechanical lifelessness, smug, conservative academicism, "formalism," and Hellenism. "We value the revolutionary, dissatisfied art works of the Renaissance," he says in "Beauty" (FS, p. 78), "and see nothing in those of the Hellenising classicists or tired formalists who mechanically repeat the beautiful things of times gone by." Relating the character of those insurgent, innovative, discontented traits to their common socio-economic basis and historical class-heritage, Caudwell first equates pre-Gothic art with stiffness and feudalism, and Gothic art with the "vigour" of the nascent bourgeoisie, and then draws a parallel between "the art of revolutionary Greece" and that of the Renaissance bourgeoisie:

[A] class developed beneath the quiet, stiff art of feudalism, whose vigour is first announced by the Gothic cathedrals. This class in turn became a ruling class, but one whose condition of existence is a constant revolution of the means of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society.

Its art is therefore in its essence an insurgent, non-formal, naturalistic art. Only the art of revolutionary Greece in any way forecasts the naturalism of bourgeois art. It is an art which constantly revolutionises its own conventions, just as bourgeois

economy constantly revolutionises its own means of production. This constant revolution, this constant sweeping-away of "ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions," this "everlasting uncertainty and agitation," distinguishes bourgeois art from all previous art. Any bourgeois artist who even for a generation rests upon the conventions of his time becomes "academic" and his art lifeless. This same movement is characteristic of English poetry. (IR, p. 67)

For Caudwell, these revolutionary values in their bourgeois form derive their power from "heroism". Heroism combines--as in Shakespeare--the "instinctive," "unconscious" "self-hood" of the long-oppressed petit-bourgeois "individual" with the socially progressive significance of his arts.<sup>40</sup> As literature evolves, the "affective heat" of other socially-generated emotions such as love and comedy also lends "vividness," "vigour," "colour," and "life" to literature, these values themselves being positive ones, as in Dickens.<sup>41</sup>

Yet, as even Caudwell sometimes recognises, in the last analysis, the emotional "desire" that gives rise to these values and criteria of evaluation is itself determined by the supervening laws of nature and class society.<sup>42</sup> And the most perspicuous bourgeois artists' recognition of this necessity, without their recourse to any real strategy for freedom, constitutes both their relative ideological freedom and their situational pathos. Caudwell sees this dilemma expressed most intensely in the tragic genre and mode, especially as exemplified by Shakespeare (IR, pp. 28, 80, 86-88, 91, 271). However, he does not imply that tragedy is "in itself tragic"; "it is beautiful, tender and satisfying--in the Aristotelian sense cathartic," he says. "But there is also the spectacle of culture tragically perishing because its matrix, society, has become dispersed and sterile" (IR, p. 328). The relevance of tragedy as a criterion of literary value, to Caudwell's

mind, therefore derives from a tragic dilemma extrinsic to literature itself. It points to an undesirable but apparently intractable contradiction in bourgeois society at large, and incidentally registers the bourgeois artist's partially liberating recognition of that dilemma:

This is the pathos of art, which cannot be tragic because it cannot resolve its problems in a tragic way, but is torn by insoluble conflicts and perplexed by all kinds of unreal phantasies [from The Tempest (IR, p. 91) to Ulysses (IR, p. 328)]. This is the tragedy . . . of will that does not understand itself; of the unconscious individual who is slave to he knows not what. Art is the privilege of the free. (IR, p. 328)

This dual crisis of situation and perception, and hence of existing (bourgeois) values, obviously calls for an alternative set of criteria by which to judge art as well as social intercourse in general. Yet, Caudwell believes, the purely cerebral Shaw, the abstract dreamer Wells, the regressive Meredith, the eventually colourless romantic Conrad, the anarchic Yeats, or the reactionary skeptic Eliot, for instance, though all critics of bourgeois values in their own way, decidedly cannot provide that alternative.<sup>43</sup> But before we discuss Caudwell's own proposed solution to this crisis, let us examine his other chief evaluative criterion--truthfulness to life.

In Illusion and Reality, Caudwell defines truth in general as "the special complex formed by the partial reflections of reality in all living men's heads--. . . as the views are organized in a given society, by its level of experimental technique, scientific literature, means of communication and discussion and laboratory facilities." And precisely because the truth at any given time is

formed by "partial reflections" of specific conditions and objects, "[t]here is no absolute truth," though there is an objectively determined "limit to which the truth of society at any moment continually aims" (IR, 155). The connection between such philosophical truth, bourgeois necessity, and rebellious instincts, on the one hand, and art, on the other, is formulated by Caudwell as follows: "In so far as art exposes the real necessity of the instincts by exposing all the various possible changes following from the various possible means of influencing them, art becomes conscious of the necessity of the world of feeling, and therefore free" (IR, p. 158).

Consciousness (and, specifically, the consciousness of necessity) thus becomes for Caudwell a major criterion of value in a work of art. But, he claims, such consciousness is precisely what is seriously lacking in the works of writers such as James (RR, p. 103), Joyce (RR, pp. 110-11), Woolf (RR, p. 114), and Hemingway (RR, p. 118). To Caudwell, all of them, like Conrad, conceal "a complete poverty of internal philosophy and a limitation therefore of possible reactions to reality" (RR, p. 103). The consciousness that people's conception of beauty is "always a beauty rooted in their cultures" ("Beauty," FS, p. 111) and that, ultimately, the bourgeois' "conceptions of justice and right were also determined by society" ("Consciousness," FS, p. 169), is to him an indispensable component of (relative) ideological freedom. And this consciousness, he would seem to believe, is absent in the above novelists.

Yet, even in the following "socialist realist" critique of the bourgeois "observer's" deluded absolutism, nowhere does Caudwell posit any alternative more Marxist than a merely general,

sociological relativism:

The bourgeois is unconscious of the determining character of social relations. He therefore believes it possible to construct a closed, absolute world of art from which the observer is excluded, a world of absolute values existing in themselves, not a world of values for the observer. The more this objectivity is consciously sought, the more subjective the novel becomes.

The solution is Marxist. The closed world of art is not possible. The observer is himself and in his values determined by his social relations. Nonetheless, the observer can be freed. This freedom is also the aim of the bourgeois closed world of art, an aim which failed only because of bourgeois ignorance concerning the nature of freedom. Freedom is obtained, not by the elimination of the observer or by suppressing his role, but only by recognising it, by understanding of the determining power of social relations. . . . This fact does not lead to rigidity and stagnation, for this world-view recognises the relativity of all values and the change of all being. (RR, pp. 118-19)

Nevertheless, a key to unlocking this trans-class fusion of values could be found in Caudwell's observation that while there is "not much left of importance in bourgeois ethics" ("Pacifism and Violence," S, p. 96), it is bourgeois values that rule in a bourgeois society, to the point of their not even recognising the existence and relative legitimacy of other class-values. For the bourgeois, and eventually for "society" as a whole, "beauty is a state of the bourgeois" ("Beauty," FS, p. 80). Bourgeois philosophy

defines the environment as 'all that is not the bourgeois,' while the Bourgeois stands outside it free and separate. The world thus becomes divested of all values arising from the relation of bourgeois to environment, for all such values, since they contain the bourgeois, are abstracted from the environment, for otherwise they would tie him to it. Such a non-valued environment ultimately contains nothing knowable and contains therefore nothing at all, but by the time this



is discovered bourgeois culture is in such an advanced stage of disintegration that it seems immaterial whether the world is a real, coloured, qualified world or a ghostly ballet of equations. ("Beauty," FS, p. 80).

In passages such as the above, Caudwell shows his creative application of a key Marxist concept--that of ideological hegemony--to aesthetics.

Despite the frequent lapses into confusion and idealism, and notwithstanding the real incursions of bourgeois ideology, Caudwell does manage in his work to sketch an outline of (chiefly English) historical moments that suggestively relates socio-economic base to ideological values. Thus he argues persuasively that chastity, for instance, becomes a social virtue, and Benedictine monasteries spring up, precisely when the model feudal agricultural unit emerging from the disintegrating Roman imperialist monolith demands a "reduction in population" ("Breath of Discontent," FS, p. 64). Similarly, he maintains that Puritan thrift and sobriety as values reflect the new-found ability of the English petty bourgeoisie to replace its previous primitive accumulation of capital through robbery with economic independence through "saving" (IR, p. 92; also see RR, p. 62); the manufacturing bourgeoisie's sudden (post-revolutionary) clamour for "order," "measure," "law," "good taste," "tradition," and "conventions" stems from its new need to organise and streamline the chaotic growth of capitalist manufacture, now that the victory of capitalism as a system is assured (IR, p. 98); and the resulting capitalist market-economy--with its relentless transformation of all objects and values into self-contained commodities, and of all consumers into one unpredictable, faceless "public"--gives rise to commodity-fetishism, which, as we have seen, makes art-works seem "worthy ends-in-themselves" (IR, p. 101; also see pp. 116-17, 124, 162, 323).

Thus, for instance, Caudwell more than once emphasises the socio-economic dissimilarities underlying apparent literary similarities between, on the one hand, Shakespeare and Marvell and, on the other, writers from Moore to the Dadaists: "the increasing individualism which, seen at its best in Shakespeare, was a positive value, . . . pushed to its limit finally spelt the complete breakdown of art in surrealism, Dadaism and Steinism" ("D. H. Lawrence," S, p. 54): "[t]he gulf between Marvell's America (the remote Bermudas) or Shakespeare's (the still-vex'd Bermoothes), and Moore's (a journalist in New York) is the gulf which has opened between early vigorous bourgeois culture and old tired bourgeois culture" (RR, p. 107).

The wide generic range and some of the characteristics of the decaying "old tired" bourgeois culture, or "bad art," can be glimpsed in Caudwell's indictment of what he curiously (though with partial justice, in terms of some of its consumers) calls "the real proletarian literature of today":

Films, the novel and painting all share in the degradation. Immense technical resources and steady debasement and stereotyping of the human psyche are characteristics. . . . The modern thriller, love story, cowboy romance, cheap film, jazz music or yellow Sunday paper form the real proletarian literature of today--that is, literature which is the characteristic accompaniment of the misery and instinctual poverty produced in the majority of the people by modern capitalist production. . . . This art, universal, constant, fabulous, full of the easy gratifications of instincts starved by modern capitalism, peopled by passionate lovers and heroic cowboys and amazing detectives, is the religion of today, as characteristic an expression of proletarian exploitation as Catholicism is of feudal exploitation. . . . "Low-brow" proletarian art grows on the proletariat's unfreedom and helps, by its massage of the starved revolting instincts, to maintain that unfreedom in being. (IR, p. 123)

Meanwhile, argues Caudwell, "modern poetry grows barer and barer

of life, of real social content, and the only word-values useable by poetry become increasingly personal until poetry is altogether esoteric and private" (IR, p. 325). Such art often tends to presage "liberty's opposite," fascism ("Shaw," S, p. 9). Fascistic "art," for Caudwell, is marked above all by an instinctive, introverted primitivism—the ultimate form of enslaving "regression" (IR, p. 312). The fascist glorifies barbaric social relations;<sup>44</sup> fascism is hostile to contemporary culture,<sup>45</sup> to Marxism/socialism/communism,<sup>46</sup> as well as to racial (usually non-Aryan) minorities.<sup>47</sup> It fosters hero-worship ("D.H. Lawrence," S, p. 56) and purports to exalt so-called reason over emotion (IR, p. 131), while simultaneously fetishising "unconscious" instincts ("D. H. Lawrence," S, pp. 63, 67). Fascist ideology, claims Caudwell, stems from and results in "a lowering of consciousness and an impoverishing of values" ("D. H. Lawrence," S, p. 67). Complicity in the "old," bourgeois values is therefore fatal; and to regard them as absolute is no less so.

Sharing in the bourgeois' conception of "his desires and notions of justice, morality and so forth, as not in any way determined, but as primary and therefore eternal" ("Consciousness," FS, p. 169), then, is also counterposed to any movement towards independence and freedom. This is what happens with Wells, who "is intellectually one with those he wishes to convert" ("Wells," S, p. 85). Thus, on the one hand, the value of a detached ideological stance on the part of the artist is for Caudwell graphically demonstrated in the case of Shakespeare:

Shakespeare could not have achieved the stature he did if he had not exposed, at the dawn of bourgeois development, the whole movement of the capitalist contradiction, from its tremendous achievement to its mean decline. His position, his feudal "perspective," enabled him to comprehend in one era all the trends which in later eras were to separate out and so be beyond the compass of one treatment.

.....

[Footnote:] In the same way, More., from his feudal perspective, anticipates the development of capitalism into communism in his Utopia. (IR, p. 90)

Perspective entails a comprehensiveness and realism of vision. "Art becomes more . . . valuable and greater art the more that remoulding of external reality nearer to the heart's desire is comprehensive and true to the nature of reality, using as its material the sadness, the catastrophes, the blind necessities, as well as the delights and pleasures of life" (IR, p. 289).

On the other hand, this particular kind of truthful remoulding in turn leads not only to a wide canvas and a realistic technique for the artist but also to a sense of historical context for the critic judging works belonging to other cultures and ages.<sup>48</sup> It is this sense of contextual "appropriateness" that enables Caudwell not only to compare but also to contrast Marlowe, Shelley, Lawrence, and Dali: "each expresses this revolt of 'feeling' against 'reason' " but does so "in a manner appropriate to the period" (IR, p. 103). Similarly, both Hardy and Euripides are pessimists, but each exhibits "a pessimism appropriate to that era and that situation" (RR, p. 92). And Milton's blank verse-- "latinist, sonorous, full of studied inversions"--may not seem to us revolutionary "but then we forget against what he was revolting--against the easy fluent glitter of the Court, the sweetness and corrupt simplicity

of a Suckling or a Lovelace who were courtiers still living in the world of Elizabethan absolutism from which the courtly lyric sprang. Graveness, austerity, dignity, and Latinity are now revolutionary, and to be Roman and classical is to be republican and a contemner of new-fangled luxury. To be noble in style is then to be [revolutionary] petty bourgeois" (RR, pp. 47-48).

Note that Caudwell's criterion of revolutionary value comprises what is--at least in his view--objectively, historically progressive, not whatever might appear to the individual artist (or critic) to be so simply because it is "different." This distinction explains Caudwell's negative assessment of Lawrence's primitivism: "Survivals of barbaric social relations between men . . . stand out as valuable in a culture where these relations have become relations between man and a thing, man and dirt"; but that does not make those relations less barbarous for seeming "valuable" ("D. H. Lawrence," S, pp. 58-59). On this particular principle, therefore, Caudwell is closer to Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky than he is to Williams or Eagleton.

"Appropriateness" in general, for Caudwell, is therefore an historically relative though real positive criterion, and so is realism as a specific instance of it. Generically and modally, realism is viewed as having played a revolutionary role when it first emerged from, and went into partial conflict with Romanticism, synthesising "the very wildness of romanticism, as in Flaubert's exotic Salammbô, Zola's extravagant bestiality, or Tolstoy's surging war canvas," with the "cold objectivity" of eighteenth-century classicism (RR, pp. 31-32). But this same realism "more and more seems to rob the picture of romantic

vigour, until finally it becomes unemotional, dead, and without virtue. Realism in turn explodes, and we have anti-realism" (RR, p. 32). Caudwell's valuing of philosophical and historical truthfulness, therefore, cannot be viewed as identical with his valuing of "realism" as a formal mode. Rather, it is the literary work's "credibility" within the context "appropriate" to it that should serve as the evaluative principle. Caudwell explains his point by analysing what he considers the failure of de la Mare and Yeats. He criticises their attempts to (re-)construct once potentially valuable myths that can neither possess any literary credibility in this scientific age nor hold any particular, resonant significance for a bourgeois readership who seem to be bereft of all positive values:

De la Mare attempts to construct a world-view of the fairy supernatural, but the impossibility of belief in such a world robs it of value. It is not suggested that one must believe in fairies or ghosts to make poetry of them. But one must believe in a world in which they have a definite place, either as things really existing, or as projections of the unconscious, or as myths, or as examples of the absurdity of mankind, or as emanations of the devil.

The decaying bourgeois has no definite belief about fairies, no positive attitude, only a suspension or mixture of beliefs and a negative attitude. Poetry is not built from negative attitudes. Hence, de la Mare has ceased to write poetry. Exactly the same attempt to patch up a world-view occurs with Yeats. . . . Yeats may by an heroic act of will build up a world-view of definite belief in magic, fairies, the gods, and symbols of occult truths, but he cannot ensure that his belief will be present in his contemporaries. . . . Consequently, his poetry is full of evocative references and allusions which are simply missed by his readers who do not share this world-view, and even the notes he gives do not help. (RR, pp. 126-27)<sup>49</sup>

Again, as we shall see, the contrast with Eagleton, for instance, is illuminating.

Counterposed to de la Mare and Yeats and, in this case, to T. S. Eliot, for instance, is Dante:

[I]n its attitude to beliefs of an older generation--for example to Dantesque scholasticism--our culture sees clearly both Dante's truth and Dante's error . . . in terms of our higher faith and larger world-view. . . . It is not a case, therefore, of pretending to believe what Dante believed; it is a question of understanding what his belief was. Then, although we no longer believe in his God: "In la sua volontade e nostra pace" is still poetry. . . . It is historic. (IR, pp. 129-30)

Note, once again, Caudwell's close approximation here to Trotsky's method, in fact to Trotsky's very comments on Dante himself.

On the other hand, Caudwell is hardly opposed to a certain "simplicity" as one criterion of value. Indeed, perhaps no other criterion of value in Caudwell's scheme is more evocative of the values of Marx himself. "Simplicity," for Caudwell, actually possesses several characteristics. In a negative way, it suggests a certain absence of social complications and worries: the uncomplex collective life of primitive society, before the modern division of labour. In doing so, it links the present to the past--and both to the desired future (advanced communism)--thereby lending "immediacy" to the work. And it also emanates a certain innocence, comparable (in spite of Caudwell) to that of the Rousseaudian, "Natural" child: "in general, the timelessness of poetry matches his own childish simplicity which thinks, like Traherne, that the wheat was golden and immortal, corn that had never been sowed or reaped" (IR, p. 207).<sup>50</sup>

However, unlike Marx, Caudwell makes certain that he

emphasises his awareness of the relativity of such freedom (IR, p. 51), of the partial extent of such "timeless" continuity,<sup>51</sup> and of the generally more advanced consciousness of civilised people over that of primitive people ("Beauty," FS, pp. 111-112). But the relationship between Caudwell's usually absolutist generalisations and his occasionally relativist empirical qualifications is inconsistent and is well captured in his comments on Greek art's relevance to modern bourgeois aesthetics. While Caudwell claims that "[o]nly the art of revolutionary [fifth century] Greece in any way forecasts the naturalism of bourgeois art" (IR, p. 67), he expects us to "value the revolutionary, dissatisfied art works of the Renaissance, and see nothing in those of the hellenising classicists or tired formalists who mechanically repeat the beautiful things of times gone by" ("Beauty," FS, p. 78). And yet, even here, one might well detect the evaluative criterion of contextual (in-) "appropriateness" operating through this "paradox"; what looks at first like arbitrary taste and absolutist stereotyping may nevertheless reveal consistently historical underlying criteria after all.

Contextuality is thus what defines, for Caudwell, the beauty or the ugliness of a given literary text, genre, or mode, and furnishes his explanation for the paradoxical beauty, as he sees it, of bourgeois tragedy in the midst of ugly bourgeois social reality. For, bourgeois tragedy often tells the truth about the repression of the working class. Further, the particular context of proletarian defeats at the hands of the capitalist state, from which modern tragedy often derives its characteristic moods, poses squarely the question of the Marxist reader's own desire to intervene actively in the struggle to reverse its course. The issue of partisanship, as well as the nature of the actual partisan



programme for victory, therefore arises immediately. Evaluative criteria for "beauty" and "ugliness" thus become linked to the specific character of one's own, socialist intervention to change their enabling conditions. And it is here that Caudwell's limitations and contradictions as an ostensible Marxist surface and exert a distorting pressure once more--as soon as aesthetic values reveal political ones.

As with Yeats' and de la Mare's myths, Caudwell finds all potential vehicles of beauty to be subject to enabling or disabling social and historical conditions. Thus, while he clearly states in "Beauty" that "[b]eauty is the end of art" (FS, p. 102) and that "the experience [of felt beauty] is real" (FS, p. 88), he also points out that beauty is not "universal" but "social" (FS, pp. 87-88), and hence subject to variation from one "society" to another (FS, p. 104). "Standards" in society, after all, as he notes, "are made, not found" ("Pacifism and Violence," S, p. 125); and that is one reason, incidentally, why Aristotle's bio-emotional theory of cathartic literary value is apparently not adequate for us (IR, p. 63). Further, Caudwell observes, beauty is relative even within a single culture's historical context; for, in the last analysis, it must be defined in terms of its opposite--ugliness. Yet, the concept of ugliness is itself contextually intricate and relative, too:

Beauty, then, is defined by all that is not-beauty. . . . Ugliness itself is an aesthetic value: the villain, the gargoyle, the grotesque, the Caliban, the snake-headed Furies, the triumph of Time's decaying hand, all these qualities interpenetrate with beauty, and help to generate and feed it. All live in the same world. Nowhere can we draw a distinct line and say, on this side lives the beautiful, and on that the ugly. ("Beauty," FS, p. 77)

From this arises, for Caudwell, the contradictory value of tragedy. As a discursive analysis of bourgeois necessity unable in reality to transcend that necessity itself, tragedy remains bourgeois and "ugly"; yet, as a truthful expression of the bourgeois artist's struggle against necessity, it is "beautiful." Hence, Caudwell describes the paradox of (especially late) bourgeois art thus: "The true is no longer beautiful, because to be true in bourgeois civilisation is to be non-human. The beautiful is no longer real, because to be beautiful in bourgeois civilisation is to be imaginary" ("Beauty," FS, p. 106). That is, an honest artist in bourgeois society will logically write the truth, which in its attitudinal aspect might earn him or her some bourgeois plaudits--and therefore an acknowledgment of beauty. But in its descriptive details, such truthfulness will naturally reveal the "ugliness" of that society, as Marxists would characterise it. Moreover, Caudwell imagines, this will tend to generate a mood of tragic gloom, something that the smug and socially secure bourgeois audience will logically fail to understand and will hence call "ugly," from its own point of view. Hence, the "depth with which Shakespeare moved in the bourgeois illusion, the greatness of his grasp of human society, is shown by the fact that he is ultimately a tragedian. . . . Before he died Shakespeare had cloudily and phantastically attempted an untragic solution, a solution without death. Away from the rottenness of bourgeois civilisation, in the island of The Tempest, man attempts to live quietly and nobly. . . . Such an existence still retains an Elizabethan reality; there is an exploited class--Caliban, the bestial serf--and a 'free' spirit who serves only for a time--Ariel, apotheosis of the free wage-labourer.

This heaven cannot endure. The actors return to the real world. The magic wand is broken" (IR, pp. 87, 91). And for much the same reason, with the advent of the Romantic Revival, "an air of tragedy . . . looms over all bourgeois poetry that is worth the adjective 'great'" (IR, p. 110).<sup>52</sup>

However, defeat need not produce defeatism. Caudwell thus admires the revolutionary defiance of Milton's Samson, who, even in defeat, "pulls down the pillars on the insolent Court that mocks him" (RR, p. 50). Yet, this defiance does not reverse the impending counter-revolution, does not solve the conflict in reality: it represents "'only a wish fulfillment'" (RR, p. 50). The social solution thus remains to be found.

But Caudwell also sees that in class-art, as in class-society at large, such "defeats" are class-inflicted, partisan; the struggle to reverse them must therefore also be class-partisan. In all struggles--successful or unsuccessful--against the bourgeoisie, the communist takes the side of the proletariat; now the politically mobile bourgeois artist must choose his or her side:

In the sphere of art this appears as the fugitive or confused alliances of bourgeois artists with the proletariat, and the emergence (at first within the limits of bourgeois technique) of proletarian artists.

"There is no neutral world of art. . . . Ours is . . . a demand that you, an [bourgeois] artist, become a proletarian leader in the field of art. . . ."  
(IR, pp. 311, 318-19)<sup>53</sup>

Yet--and this is what Caudwell overwhelmingly seems to miss--as long as today's pro-proletarian critic restricts his or her supposed

class-struggle to the sphere of discourse, the reality of society remains bourgeois, the proletariat's subordination unreversed. In such a recalcitrantly bourgeois society, even granted that the partisan critic is intellectually as well as emotionally completely honest (besides being technically competent), such "sympathetic" criticism can be said to have at best a very limited and ambiguous value, almost entirely restricted to the sphere of "culture." That is to say, the reality of the social problem the critic set out to tackle still remains unchanged: the revolution remains on the agenda.

Towards the end of Illusion and Reality, Caudwell remarks that "easy solutions or shallow grasps of reality are poor art" (IR, p. 278); and in Romance and Realism (p. 136) he calls upon the poet to attain "a world view that will become general," as a "prerequisite" for great art. Furthermore, Caudwell--in a faint echo of Engels' advice to Minna Kautsky, though historically far removed from that pre-Lenin conjuncture--maintains that the poet can attain such a view "only by destructively analysing all bourgeois culture, separating the best elements, synthesising them, and advancing to a new world-view--in a word by becoming a thorough Marxist and not merely acquiring a Marxist facade. . . ." The poet can then, "when he has a new experience, . . . project it into the new world struggling to be born and become a poet of the future. But this requires the destructive analysis and synthesis of bourgeois culture, itself a revolutionary task." However, the problem with the above set of theses, from a consistently Marxist point of view, is of course that one does not become a "thorough Marxist" by operating strictly within the confines of discourse and thought--attaining a "world view," "analysing," "separating," "synthesising," "advancing," or "projecting." All this is necessary and even indispens-

able--but it is insufficient.

Given Caudwell's established political vacillation between reform and revolution (among other things), therefore, it is not only not surprising but positively indicative of his latent axiology that the above statements by him contain a certain important ambiguity in precisely that regard: they do not make it clear whether or not the recommended "synthesis of bourgeois culture" can proceed and succeed without the prior destruction of capitalism's material (and political) components and the inauguration of a socialist economy. In other words, Caudwell is unclear about whether the cultural "revolutionary task" described is an adjunct of or a substitute for the socio-political workers' revolution. And crucially following from Caudwell's actual formulations is my own conclusion that here, as in most instances, he does effectively view the cultural revolution as at least independent from and possibly even prior to the socio-political revolution. Hence follows the absence, from his entire theoretical system, of that mechanism for unlocking precisely such un-Marxist dilemmas as his own: the kind of consistent orientation provided by a proletarian organisation that tackles every problem fundamentally from the standpoint of revolutionary class struggle. And, lacking the political consistency, Caudwell cannot possess the unitary evaluative standpoint deriving from it.

Many characteristics of Caudwell's axiology can be found condensed in his theory of the function and value of particular genres, especially of poetry and the novel. This can also serve as a bridge to his specific evaluation of Thomas Hardy's works, with which I shall end

this chapter. Caudwell's theory of the generic function and value of poetry shows the familiar overlap between his relativism and his absolutism. Analytically, when explaining the history of poetry, Caudwell is a relativist, situating each phase of that genre's development in a particular social context. But programmatically, when spelling out poetry's current obligations as he perceives them, Caudwell seems to become more absolute. Nevertheless, a consistent Marxist may well glean from that methodological alloy a couple of useful, though simple and not entirely original, pointers. One is the importance of being honest about one's own real responses to literature. The other is the importance of maintaining the search for a method that will explain the responses through dialectical-historical materialism rather than through explicit idealism. Caudwell possesses both these qualities.

Caudwell regards poetry as a synthesising, universalising, emotive and imaginative genre, compared to the novel, which he regards as much more mundane, pragmatic, logical, and finely discriminating. Thus poetry, for him, "expresses the freedom which inheres in man's general timeless unity in society"; it "is interested in society as the sum and guardian of common instinctive tendencies" and "speaks of death, love, hope, sorrow and despair as all men experience them" (IR, p. 229). Moreover, poetry apparently "requires the highest degree of technical skill of any artist" (IR, p. 123). The novel, on the other hand, "is the expression of that freedom which men seek, not in their unity in society but in their differences" (IR, p. 229), and is "much more realistic and factual than the shimmering, dreamlike mock-world of poetry" (IR, p. 209). Yet-- and here Caudwell himself seems to miss the paradox, though his own formula-

tion of the supposed difference points to one--while the internally accommodating and integrative genre of poetry frequently expresses people's social rebelliousness because it expresses their "instinctive tendencies,"<sup>54</sup> the internally differentiating and analytical genre of the novel tends to be socially and politically "conservative and satisfied" (RR, p. 69).<sup>55</sup> However, the more fundamental paradox that Caudwell misses, or at least does not emphasise enough, is that all mere discourse is in effect "conservative and satisfied."

Nevertheless, from Caudwell's theory of generic function and value flows, then, quite directly, his explanation of Hardy's fatalistic philosophy (RR, p. 94).<sup>56</sup> Yet, as I mentioned earlier, when Caudwell spells out his criteria for evaluating poetry, the generic ("intrinsic") characterisations discussed above are implicitly discarded and replaced by a temporal-contextual criterion. And the only consistent link between his two (intrinsic and historicist) approaches to the same genre (poetry) is his determination to provide a Marxist explanation for all his felt responses, many of which themselves implicitly violate the logic of a consistently Marxist orientation. Thus, Caudwell applies no generic prejudgment or explanation when suggesting criteria for evaluating "new" poets, as opposed to the "old." In that instance, he adopts a contextual approach to the poetic genre as a whole, which might be expected, but then arbitrarily places different form/content specifications for different poetic periods. That is, specifically, he suggests that old poets should be judged "almost entirely by their affective tone." But new poets, according to him, must provide "new manifest contents and new affective colouring." Finally, if someone (including, presumably, "old" poets) does manage to combine novelty and range in both content and form, he or she will be deemed "good"

or even "great":

It is plain that poetry may be judged in different ways; either by the importance of the manifest content or by the vividness of the affective colouring. To a poet who brings a new portion of external reality into the ambit of poetry, we feel more gratitude than to one who brings the old stale manifest contents. . . . Old poets we shall judge almost entirely by their affective tone; their manifest contents have long belonged to our world of thought. Hence the apparent triteness of old poetry which yet is a great triteness. From new poets we demand new manifest contents and new affective colouring, for it is their function to give us new emotional attitudes to a new social environment. A poet who provides both to a high degree will be a good poet. A poet who brings into his net a vast amount of new reality to which he attaches a wide-ranging affective colouring we shall call a great poet, giving Shakespeare as an instance. . . . But the manifest content, whatever it is, is not the purpose of the poem. The purpose is the specific emotional organisation directed towards the manifest content and provided by the released affects. (IR, pp. 240-41)

One might note, incidentally, the symptomatic fact that even though Caudwell manages to free himself from the particular text enough to be able to locate its "purpose" outside its "manifest contents," he stops short of locating it outside the mere mental operations of the poet, in any political dynamic.

Finally, such apparent minimising of the importance of content in poetry (as in the above passage) might surprise us coming from Caudwell, primarily a critic of ideas. But it is actually consistent with the activist component of his contradictory (idealist-materialist) method. This component, which is real but politically askew, shows itself most prominently in Caudwell's many insights into the social significance of the language and "style" of individual poets and novelists. But even from these comments, we can extract the same



chief criteria of formal value that we noted earlier with respect to content: truthfulness, simplicity, liveliness, realism.<sup>57</sup>

In two particularly suggestive passages, Caudwell links the characteristic texture of a writer's language to not only the ideology informing it, but, ultimately, to the historical context shaping the ideology itself: and, thereby, he also underscores his own criteria for evaluating that style. One passage in Romance and Realism (pp. 65-66) demonstrates how "Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth represent three main currents of the petty bourgeois revolution, and how their styles reflect the same flow." And in Illusion and Reality (p. 89), Caudwell provides the following glimpse of the Elizabethan "world" in the grain of its "language," Notice how he vividly compacts his understanding of the material relationship between, on the one hand, revolutionary activity and, on the other, commitment to truth, with its attendant spareness of expression:

[M]en like Bacon and Galileo and da Vinci did not specialise, and their language reflects this lack of differentiation. Elizabethan tragedy speaks a language of great range and compass, from the colloquial to the sublime, from the technical to the narrative, because language itself is as yet undifferentiated.

Like all great language, this has been bought and paid for. Tyndale paid for it with his life; the English prose style as a simple and clear reality, fit for poetry, was written in the fear of death, by heretics for whom it was a religious but also a revolutionary activity demanding a bareness and simplicity which scorned all trifling ornament and convention. Nothing was asked of it but the truth.

Caudwell's criteria of literary value thus present a mixed and even anti-climactic range of ideologies--from Plato to Marx to Zhdanov/Stalin. From a Marxist standpoint, their common, defining

absence is the lack of any notion of an organised evaluative orientation. Of course, to possess that notion, Caudwell would need to understand the concept of the vanguard party in a Leninist way. He would need to view the party as the class-instrument capable of continually assessing the revolution's changing overall needs and of synchronising this assessment with its own projection of what might constitute literary value at any given time within that general revolutionary context. Caudwell's insufficiently Leninist politics, however, foster a pronounced hesitancy between an almost exclusively negative, non-interventionist response to capitalist values (restricting itself to demythifying criticism) and an occasional advance into an actual description and advocacy of socialist values.

Yet, if Caudwell's theoretical discussion of literary value clearly lacks a consistent Marxist component on the question of an organized revolutionary orientation, and if, furthermore, his criteria regularly vacillate between idealism and materialism, between absolutism and historical relativism, it is also true that in passages such as the above, he leaves an indication of the historical and materialistic connections he was capable of perceiving. But, perhaps more importantly, his work exemplifies the obligation of all professed Marxists at least to strive for Marxist consistency, in discourse as well as in practical life. And this example, no subsequent axiologist claiming to be Marxist can afford to ignore.

#### Caudwell's Evaluation of Hardy

In its empirical aspects, Caudwell's evaluation of Hardy

seems barely useful to Marxist axiology today, and certainly not for the accuracy of his historical assumptions about Hardy and his society, from which his specific judgments flow. But Caudwell never pretended to produce fool-proof characterisations of particular authors or their works. His critical project was rather to forge a technique for extending the logic of Marxism, as he understood it, to critical theory; and he used familiar names in literature as and when he felt that those might illustrate his theoretical point. As Mulhern observes (with a different emphasis from mine), "[w]ith Caudwell, as with Marx, the theory is implicit in the concrete studies" (p. 52). And it is on Caudwell's theory (or theoretical logic) that I wish to focus once more.

Caudwell's evaluation of Hardy occurs in the course of the larger project of Romance and Realism, which he describes in that book's sub-title as "A Study in English Bourgeois Literature." In this study, Caudwell attempts--often thought-provokingly--to capture certain broad movements in English (and some American and European) literary history under capitalism, from a point of view and with methodological aims deemed valuable to fellow-Marxists. The many fleeting but sweeping generalisations that characterise this study are thus at least partly an attempt to capture certain larger patterns of political logic in literary history.

Caudwell's framework for evaluating individual writers under capitalism is that socio-economic system's own overall historical movement, from its emergence through feudalism to its climax and demise as imperialism. Within this movement, the revolutionary period of Milton is broadly distinguished (by Caudwell) from the counterrevolutionary

centuries thereafter, from Dryden to Kipling. Distinctions are made along the way between subjective, conscious fighters against reaction--such as Blake--and objective capitulators to it--such as Dryden. Distinctions are made as well between the various classes opposing the industrial capitalists; from out-of-power aristocrats, such as Disraeli and Galsworthy, through begrudging careerists, such as Donne, to successful but critical careerists, such as Dickens, and complete rebels, such as Lawrence. Another set of oppositionists perceived to be complicit with bourgeois values is that of the women novelists from Charlotte Brontë to Virginia Woolf.<sup>58</sup>

Hardy is seen, in this context, partly as a confluence of a number of social and literary traditions. Socio-economically, Caudwell places Hardy simultaneously at the interface of an ostensible residual feudalism and an encroaching capitalism (RR, pp. 88-91), as well as at the interface of industrial capitalism and emergent imperialism (RR, p. 79). Now this overlap of feudalism and industrial capitalism, on the one hand, and of the nascent and the advanced stages of capitalism, on the other, is itself symptomatic of Caudwell's imprecise analysis. Moreover, this primary imprecision is exacerbated by an arbitrary and near-absolute overlap of capitalism with the "town" and of feudalism with the "country." Finally, Hardy is in some ways (wrongly) viewed as a spokesman for an unruptured, homogeneous feudal way of life as supposedly obtained in the West country at the turn of the nineteenth century. But a positive unifying project does link all these empirical inaccuracies: namely, Caudwell's attempt to find and evaluate, from a Marxist point of view, an eloquent, vivid, and largely supportable non-Marxist critique of capitalism in English fiction. Such a project can be of considerable methodological interest to critics. Second, in terms

of a literary context, Hardy is seen, on the one hand, as the culmination of the bourgeois-realistic tradition in the novel, inaugurated by Defoe and perpetuated by Austen (RR, pp. 84, 97). On the other hand, he is seen as the predecessor of the Jamesian novel, with its self-doubting narrator reflecting the new epistemological preoccupation of philosophy (RR, pp. 79, 100-01). Further, objectively, Hardy is paired with Kipling in a shared framework of imperialism, though with opposing attitudes. And, in Caudwell's view, this shared framework imposes, among other things, many of the limitations of its dominant (Victorian-bourgeois) ideology on most of its intellectuals, including on Hardy. This is especially so considering that this is the audience which the novelist continues to have to address, however much he may resent the contradiction. These, then, are the chief factors that overtly enter into Caudwell's explanation of Hardy's views and affect his evaluation of the novelist's works.<sup>59</sup>

Caudwell's assessment of Hardy's works rests on the fundamental perception that the novelist's social existence and thought were subject to two decisive factors--a chaotic economic system called capitalism and a general absence, in Hardy's bourgeois intellectual milieu, of Marx's revolutionary analysis of and proposed solution to that system. Thus Caudwell speaks of "the unplanned bourgeois economy" logically generating Hardy's emphasis on "accident and chance" (RR, p. 93) and of the "lack at that time of any positive culture to replace it [the bourgeois one] except Marxism, which was beyond the vision of a [then culturally dominant] Victorian bourgeois" (RR, p. 92). Consequently, Caudwell concludes, "Hardy's philosophy is neither profound

nor complex, but it is a satisfying symbol, to the bourgeois, of bourgeois life" (RR, p. 93).

Now this simple analytical model is complicated by Caudwell's understandable uncertainty about the exact class-affiliation of Hardy, as well as about the degree to which geography corresponds in Hardy to economics and the degree to which Hardy expresses one geographically-conditioned point of view as opposed to another. Thus Caudwell mistakenly believes that "the rustic economy [itself an ambiguous category, neither feudal nor capitalist--K.D.G.] in which he developed was backward . . . and it was a homogeneous, self-contained countryside" (RR, p. 91). But while the statement does capture the relative insularity of Hardy's country people as well as their geographical isolation, it also flatly contradicts what Caudwell states elsewhere about that "homogeneous" "rustic economy":

Even in Hardy's life the most profound changes were affecting the life of this countryside. . . . The changes in the countryside were in fact more far-reaching and important during Hardy's time than those in the town.

Just because town economy was in Hardy's time changing with unprecedented rapidity, so was the country. Hardy came in for his full share of these exports. (RR, pp. 89-91)

Now, I think we may correctly assume that by describing the rural changes as "more far-reaching and important during Hardy's time than those in the town," Caudwell is actually trying to convey the impact of any such change at all on Hardy's particular consciousness: "Blind unconscious bourgeois society is the antagonist of Jude the Obscure and also the real enemy of the Dynasts. . . . Hardy, as a

rural novelist, would feel most vividly this aspect of it, for it is the country which above all has things done to it and is the passive party in the accidents and mishaps of bourgeois culture" (RR, p. 93). But Caudwell manifests another apparent problem. On the one hand, he describes Hardy as "the spokesman" of the "economy" of the "countryside" (RR, p. 89), insisting that the novelist "feels himself rooted in the country," "is absolutely of the country," and "has a clear picture of what agricultural society is" (RR, p. 90). On the other hand, he maintains that Hardy's pessimism stems from his complicity in the bourgeois (Arnoldian, Tennysonian) "Victorian doubt," which itself--Caudwell claims--is a product of the industrial "town," an "export" to the countryside (RR, p. 91). Yet, this "problem" becomes irresolvable only if we ourselves imagine that a novelist's descriptive focus on and general sympathy with the late-nineteenth-century West-country people must inherently preclude any acquaintance with and sharing of the nationally disseminated despair of the "urban" bourgeois intelligentsia. And this is quite apart from the question of how exclusively "urban" either the bourgeoisie or its ideology may have been at that or any other point. In other words, granted Caudwell's frequently dubious specific understanding and use of the words "capitalism" and "feudalism" with respect to Hardy and the Victorian "town" and "countryside," his general description of the confrontation between two value-systems--for Marxists, one evidently based on those two distinct economies--retains a certain heuristic value for a Marxist analysis and evaluation of Hardy. For, of this confrontation, I think there can be no doubt.

Given all the empirical inaccuracies of Caudwell's version

of English history, then, his evaluation of Hardy nevertheless confirms the operative principle behind all his positive criteria of literary value: intransigent opposition (as he understands it) to capitalism and its mores (as he understands these), coupled with truthful depiction of (bourgeois) society itself, in the interests of liberty. A "functionalist" component, of course, also attaches to this principle, given Caudwell's general emphasis on socially functional rather than intrinsic value. This is borne out by the number of features in Hardy that he finds satisfying because they are contextually "appropriate." But overwhelmingly, within the framework of an analysis that is not very extensive or detailed or even consistently illustrated to begin with, Caudwell's main criterion of positive value in Hardy remains the latter's resolute anti-bourgeois truthfulness, as Caudwell understands that.

Thus, among Hardy's virtues, Caudwell lists what he perceives to be the simplicity and humanity of the novelist's characters, the simplicity clearly facilitating the depiction of the truth and the humanity obviously underpinning that truthful depiction with an indication of Hardy's preferred values. Caudwell finds Hardy's depiction of "his rural background and its inter-relations" particularly authentic: "His characters really act on each other in a human way (by contrast with Meredith's or Kipling's). They really love (Jude) or hate (Mayor of Casterbridge). This is then the strength of Hardy, his soundness and richness" (RR, p. 91).

Significantly, moreover, Caudwell sees a connection between what he considers Hardy's unflinching realism and the "genuine" and courageous personal qualities of Hardy as a critic of bourgeois values:



"he did not escape from reality to a closed world of art, and shut the door after him, like Swinburne" (RR, p. 92). By this Caudwell obviously means not that Hardy abandoned art as a profession but that he always tried to let life (as he saw it) dictate what he wrote, rather than let a relatively arbitrarily-defined view of "art for the sake of art" dictate what he saw. And in this endeavour, Caudwell feels Hardy was aided by his own rural background and partisanship: "Hardy feels himself rooted in the country. . . . He is absolutely of the country; this fact is the reason for Hardy's strength. Not only does the country in Hardy's youth still retain enough of older norms to give the writer a stable world, with no need for 'escape,' but also . . . Hardy has a clear picture of what agricultural society is . . ." (RR, p. 90).

Now, while such an evaluation misses the tension that exists in Hardy between both attraction to and repulsion from different aspects of both country and city, it does capture an important aspect of the impression that Hardy's rural settings and descriptions can leave on one's mind, long after the plots have been forgotten (for example, Egdon Heath). But, once again, Marxists will gain less from scrutinising Caudwell's accuracy in assessing Hardy's factual accuracy than they will by pondering the principle of anti-bourgeois partisanship that motivates Caudwell's (mis)reading in the first place.

Caudwell identifies the most prominent (potentially) negative feature in Hardy's works as his pessimism. This he views as a function of Hardy's complicity in the (generally quite different kind of) "Victorian doubt" seen in Arnold or Tennyson, which itself Caudwell characterises as a product of the industrial "town," an

"export" to the country (RR, p. 91). Yet, Caudwell feels, this "doubt" is prevented from turning into conventional, religious fatalism because what he sees as Hardy's own religious doubts lead him instead to scrutinise Nature for possible final causes. And the conclusion about the mechanistic cruelty of Nature that Hardy arrives at in turn expresses itself in Hardy's pessimistic "irony." Unacquainted with the Marxist analysis of his own society, Hardy--Caudwell argues--remains partially trapped within the terms of bourgeois mystification, despite his opposition to its felt manifestations: "Hardy cannot believe in God or any of the simple formulations of earlier bourgeois culture now dissolved by its own development; yet quite plainly human lives and human hopes are forcibly thwarted 'from outside' by forces whose nature and behaviour are quite unknown" (RR, p. 92). Hence, Hardy espouses a bitter pessimism, one that Caudwell sees as a function of its historical conjuncture, "a pessimism appropriate to that era and that situation" (RR, p. 92). It is, for Caudwell, at once a measure of Hardy's superiority to prevalent bourgeois cultural values and of his ideological subjection to the limits of the existing terms of social analysis and (non)programmes for change.

Moreover, Caudwell sees the tension in Hardy between the old and the new, the capitalist and the anti-capitalist, the conservative and the progressive, as shaping some of the formal idiosyncracies of his work. Applying to this particular instance his classification of the novel (especially the English novel in Defoe's tradition) as a conservative genre, Caudwell observes in Hardy's works a tension between the rebelliousness of his ideas and feelings and the allegedly submissive (and repressive) nature of his chosen vehicle of expression,

the novel:

It is not surprising that Hardy is drawn to poetry, and that the novel is to him an alien form. The novel is the great medium of acceptance of social relations; this acceptance is imposed by its form, inherited from Defoeism. . . . Hardy inherited the accepting English tradition and he was not sufficiently conscious artistically to shatter and remould it. Thus he always wears it a little awkwardly. His self-expression is primarily a doubting sceptical attitude and he is forced to include long tracts of non-narrative in which the author directly expresses his attitude. These unassimilated chunks give his novels a starched, old-fashioned air. (RR, p. 94)

In that final section on "long tracts of non-narrative in which the author directly expresses his attitude," tracts which Caudwell disapproves of as "unassimilated chunks [that] give his novels a starched, old-fashioned air," we may perceive a parallel with Engels' comments on tendenzpoesie. But they also hint at a possible indecision in Caudwell's mind about "good" novels versus "bad" that implicitly undermines his characterisation of novels as an intrinsically conservative genre. This then raises the further possibility that he might well be thinking of the more dramatised novels of Woolf or Joyce or Hemingway--novelists that he discusses but otherwise condemns--as better alternatives on this score. All of this in turn suggests that Caudwell may well have shared Engels' predilection for partisanship through effective dramatisation as a criterion of positive value. (Of course, the other aspect--that he dislikes the modernists, principally for their ideas and moral values--is obvious.)

Finally, Caudwell sees Hardy's alleged awkwardness extending beyond narrative structure into the very texture of his language--in his

poetry as much as in his prose: "the superior importance of diction in poetry makes us note the rugged, uneasy choice of words, springing from the complete unconsciousness of Hardy's attitude to life. . . . It is only such a complete unconsciousness which makes acceptable Hardy's violently awkward way with words, as of one insensible to their affective values and concerned only with their cognitive meanings" (RR, pp. 93-94). Caudwell furnishes no examples; further, we may well question, even from a purely theoretical point of view, his claim about Hardy's "unconscious" attitude to life. Yet it is significant that precisely this issue, as formulated by Caudwell, will resurface explicitly in Williams and in Eagleton, when they attempt to evaluate its significance in reply to widespread identical charges by non-Marxist critics such as F. R. Leavis.

But the special twist that Caudwell lends to this ostensible charge is what distinguishes him from the non-Marxists, places him partly in the same camp as Williams and Eagleton, and, most importantly, indirectly reaffirms his consistency in regarding truthfulness as the highest positive criterion of literary value, in form as well as in content. For, he adds, "that is not the whole story":

Such unconsciousness would result in diffuseness and falsity if it were allied to an optimistic or Golden-Age reaction to bourgeois culture, but springing as it does from a quite unflinching acceptance, allied with a rural passivity and stolid endurance, it causes the verbal gawkishness to be an asset, and gives the distinctive Hardy flavour. (RR, p. 94)

Truthfulness (as opposed to "falsity") thus emerges as the decisive criterion of positive value, in this instance crucially bolstered

by an "unflinching" and "stolid endurance" that constitutes the index of Hardy's apparently intransigent opposition to bourgeois values. In one of his characteristic images, Caudwell vividly conveys his assessment of Hardy's value by connecting the perceived quality of rural Victorian England to Hardy's persona and his language: "Hardy seems at first to stand apart . . . like a gnarled self-determined British oak. In this he seems a reflection of that English countryside which, like its unchanging grass and daily life, appears to go on and on . . .; the rustic economy in which he developed was . . . a homogeneous, self-contained countryside. This fact gives Hardy his rural foundation--his gnarled epithets . . ." (RR, pp. 89, 91). Whatever the obvious historical faults of that characterisation, its imagistic appropriateness to Hardy's predominant "gnarled" qualities as seen by Caudwell cannot be easily denied. Nor can the continuity between these particular qualities in Hardy and the general criteria of literary value in Caudwell, fundamentally centred on partisan truthfulness in the service of freedom.

Caudwell's theoretical project was a pioneering one, in the combination of its subject, method, and scope; also, it was executed in considerable haste, by a fairly young and variously occupied writer officially recruited to Stalinism. Taking these factors into account when assessing his theory of literary value might help highlight the points that Marxists today could well benefit from. One reason Caudwell could not refine his theory beyond its present state is that he died young, fighting for his (albeit confused) values in practice, covering a bourgeois Republican military retreat from

Franco's fascists in Spain. The active struggle for liberty from capitalism, as he understood those words and ideas, constituted in a profoundly real way his highest criterion of value--literary or otherwise. In the process of forging a comprehensive literary theory that might capture his felt response to literature through analytical terms devised by Marx, he came up with some specific criteria of value that any Marxist critic would have to confront before advancing farther. Of course he also came up with other specific criteria that are indeed less compelling. In his occasional reiteration, however, that the highest social value is freedom and that it arises out of a recognition of the inescapable laws of nature and class-society (including laws of class-emotions and instincts), he at least connected--however inconsistently and however overwhelmingly within the parameters of mere discourse--two hitherto almost entirely mutually exclusive domains: bourgeois literary theory and (the semblance of) a materialist and historical methodology.

In a number of interconnected aspects, Caudwell's axiology shows extensive signs of philosophical idealism, political passivity, and reformism, in forms that--from all indications--bespeak Stalinism as their most likely specific conveyor. Egregious among these signs are Caudwell's rather uniform tendency to overestimate, in one way or another, the real social power of culture, as opposed to that of the economy. Paradoxically, however, in articulating his own maximum expectations of "great" literature in bourgeois society, Caudwell remains studiously negative; he fails to stress any positive outlook beyond the primarily destructive analysis perceived in the works of a Shakespeare or a Hardy. Meanwhile, his self-restricted concern with

the "adaptive" social role of poetry and the "accepting" generic nature of the novel effectively confirms his substantial inertia. Indeed, at least implicitly, these parameters bespeak and even reiterate his more purely political reformism and popular frontism. His is frequently the Stalinist logic of "Socialism in One Country," of class-collaboration, and "live and let live," extended to literary theory. It is therefore logical that Caudwell should be inconsistent in his class-analyses and unfamiliar with the Leninist conception of the revolutionary party and its axiological implications.

Nevertheless, despite considerable theoretical inconsistency, Caudwell does highlight two important confirmations of the Marxist argument. One is that as long as the bourgeoisie rules society, the dominant definition of beauty and the prevailing choice of specific artefacts considered beautiful will continue to accord with the bourgeoisie's own views and interests. The second, a corollary of the first, is that if literary evaluation is to be freed of purely economic motivations, one must necessarily first remove the "disruptive factor" called the capitalist profit motive. For, as Luxemburg long ago pointed out, the virtual cultural destitution of the proletariat, under the virtual cultural and economic monopoly of the bourgeoisie, necessarily precludes any finished and "perfect" Marxist culture.

But, of course, the further question remains: how is a Marxist critic to evaluate a literary text prior to and during the socialist transition, in the interests of the working class? And of course, as I have argued, the answer depends on the specific conjuncture of text, critic, readership, and political situation. Nevertheless, one can say in general that, without the unique orientation of a professional

critic belonging to the organised vanguard of that class, this question becomes logically impossible to answer. And that lack of consistent orientation, in the final analysis, was Caudwell's crucial handicap, doubtless consolidated by his affiliation to a brand of politics fundamentally hostile to Marxism. Decay can hit not only parties but schools of criticism as well: Stalinism deformed not only Caudwell's understanding of Marxist politics, but also his understanding of the principles of Marxist literary evaluation.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Francis Mulhern, "The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell," New Left Review, No. 85 (May-June 1974), 52; see pp. 37-58 for entire article.

<sup>2</sup> E. P. Thompson, "Caudwell," The Socialist Register: 1977, ed. Ralph Miliband and John Saville (London: Merlin, 1977), p. 233; see pp. 228-76 for this key evaluation of the critic in its entirety.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Charles Le Roy Elkins, "The Development of British Marxist Literary Theory: Toward a Genetic-Functional Approach to Literary Criticism," DAI, 33 (1973) 5119A (So. Ill.), 616 pp.; Stanley Edgar Hyman, The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism (New York: Knopf, 1952), pp. 173-207; Samuel Hynes, Introd. to Caudwell's Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature, ed. Samuel Hynes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 14, 27; Samuel Hynes, The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s (London: The Bodley Head, 1976), p. 256; David N. Margolies, The Function of Literature: A Study of Christopher Caudwell's Aesthetics (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 7; Mulhern, p. 40; Solomon, p. 305; G[eorge] T[homson], in Biographical Note, Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry (1937; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1977), p. 11 (this book is later parenthetically abbreviated as IR); George Thomson, "In Defence of Poetry," The Modern Quarterly, NS, 6, No. 2 (Spring 1951), p. 123; and, perhaps most dramatic of them all, the poet W. H. Auden, when Illusion and Reality first appeared: "We have waited a long time for a Marxist book on the aesthetics of poetry. Now at last Mr. Caudwell has given us such a book" (quoted in Hynes, The Auden Generation, p. 258).

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, "Caudwell," p. 244. "Studies in a Dying Culture played a significant part in the intellectual biography of my own generation" (ibid., p. 229); "Caudwell's insights and Caudwell's confusions were imprinted upon many of my generation" (ibid., p. 270).

<sup>5</sup> See, esp., Illusion and Reality (pp. 132 and 138) and Romance and Realism (pp. 137-38); the latter title will be parenthetically abbreviated as RR. I elaborate on Caudwell's Stalinism in the body, below. Here, I merely summarise the key political events inaugurating that programme internationally. Between 1928 and 1933, Stalin's "Comintern" (Communist International) pursued a policy of extreme practical sectarianism, baselessly declaring that a new period of rising class-struggle was at hand. One consequence of such sectarianism was the Communist parties' denunciation of the Social Democratic workers as "social fascists," even though the latter were themselves targetted by the fascists. Thus, the German Communist Party even blocked with the Nazis in the so-called "Red Referendum" in Prussia, in an

unsuccessful attempt to bring down the Social Democratic government there; and German and French Stalinists refused to act together with the Social Democrats in a united workers' front against the fascists. In 1933, capitalising on the Stalinist-induced paralysis of the working class, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Stalin then pushed the Comintern to the other, right-wing extreme, seeking to placate the international bourgeoisie itself, in an ostensible attempt to defeat the alleged main enemy, fascism. This concretely meant postponing and suppressing actual workers' revolutions internationally, which, as Trotsky repeatedly pointed out, would have constituted the real nemesis of fascism on home ground. In the year that Caudwell started reading the Marxists (1934), Stalin took the USSR into the League of Nations, an organisation that Caudwell himself rightly called one form of "bourgeois hope" and which Lenin had once labelled a "den of thieves." In the year that Caudwell wrote most of Illusion and Reality and joined the Communist Party (1935), Stalin formalised his first Popular Front pact, with the French premier Pierre Laval, who paved the way for the fascist Vichy regime five years later. The same year, the Bulgarian Stalinist G. Dimitrov defended this class-collaboration and generalised it into a Comintern policy, and the British Communists, led by Harry Pollitt, decided to support "their own" imperialists in the war against the Italian fascists. In 1936, the year before his death, Caudwell travelled to France to experience the Popular Front at first hand for the first time in his life; later that year, he went to Spain to fight Franco, and there he experienced a second Popular Front--the bourgeois Azaña and Companys coalition government, into which Stalin was forcing the revolutionary Spanish working class and which paved the way for Franco by defeating key workers' insurrections, most crucially in Barcelona (Catalonia). Meanwhile, the French Socialist premier Leon Blum broke a general strike in France; and the first of Stalin's notorious fake-trials of Bolsheviks took place in Moscow. Betrayals of revolutions abroad went hand in hand with the physical obliteration of communists at home. The logical climax to this search for a mythical bourgeois support at the physical cost of socialist revolutions came in 1939, about a year after Caudwell's death; that year, Stalin signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler, thus paving the way for the Nazi invasion of his own disarmed country in 1941. The threat of Hitler's attack was systematically underplayed and specific forewarnings dismissed as fascist and "Trotskyite" misinformation. Twenty million Soviet workers paid with their lives, over the next four years, in their now famous counter-offensive, to retrieve their state from the consequences of another of Stalin's cynical "errors." Caudwell's reference to the League of Nations as one form of "bourgeois hope" occurs in "Pacifism and Violence: A Study in Bourgeois Ethics," in Studies in a Dying Culture, in Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture, introd. Sol Yurick (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 106. Studies in a Dying Culture, introd. John Strachey, and the second part, Further Studies in a Dying Culture, ed. and pref. Edgell Rickword, are henceforth parenthetically abbreviated as S and FS, respectively. A useful, concise history of the struggle between Stalinism and Trotskyism can be found in Reply to the Guardian: The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited (New York: Spartacist Publishing Co., 1976), p. 10, henceforth abbreviated as SSFR.

<sup>6</sup> Solomon (p. 310) pinpoints the non-Bolshevik Plekhanov and the inconsistently Bolshevik Bukharin as the specific intermediaries through whom Caudwell understood his Marxism: "Caudwell absorbed Marxism through the framework that Plekhanov and Bukharin had erected." He maintains that, in addition to Marx's Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, the Manifesto, Capital, and Engels' Anti-Dühring, "Caudwell was familiar with only a few brief passages from Marx's The German Ideology." And, finally, the bibliography appended to Illusion and Reality lists Stalin, but not Trotsky.

<sup>7</sup> As early as 1850, Marx and Engels had warned that "[w]hile the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, and with the achievement, at most, of the above[bourgeois-democratic] demands, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased. . ." ("Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," Tucker, pp. 504-05). This argument was subsequently elaborated by Trotsky in his Results and Prospects (St. Petersburg, 1906; rpt. in The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects, 3rd ed., tr. Brian Pearce, introd. Peter Camejo [New York: Pathfinder, 1969], pp. 29-122). Lenin reached the same conclusion later, in his 1917 Letters from Afar (Moscow: Progress, 1971) and April Theses (3rd rev. ed. [Moscow: Progress, 1970]). His numerous warnings against parochialism are well documented by Robert Black in Stalinism in Britain (London: New Park, 1970), pp. 35-50. And, finally, even as late as 1924, this is what Stalin himself was saying in his subsequently "disappeared" first edition of Foundations of Leninism: "For the final victory of socialism. . . the efforts of one country . . . are insufficient: for that the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are required" (quoted in SSFR, p. 11).

<sup>8</sup> The Soviet Left Opposition expanded into the International Communist League in 1933; in 1938, the Fourth International was born. It remained undivided and undegenerated till about 1952. The American section of the now defunct Fourth International, the Socialist Workers Party, has now formally denounced Trotskyism and excised its own founders, Trotsky and James Patrick Cannon, from its official history.

<sup>9</sup> See Peter Shipley, Revolutionaries in Modern Britain (London: Bodley Head, 1976), p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> The Modern Quarterly, NS, 6, No. 1 (Winter 1950-51), 16-33.

<sup>11</sup> See esp. George Thomson's "In Defence of Poetry," pp. 107-34.

<sup>12</sup> "In Defence of Poetry," p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> See Illusion and Reality, pp. 164, 219, 261-65 and "Beauty: A Study in Bourgeois Aesthetics" (FS, p. 95). Hynes, in his introduction to Romance and Realism, suggests that "[f]rom Marx, Caudwell took two key ideas": the theory of the economic determination of consciousness and the implications of Marx's remark that "[t]he philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point, however, is to change it" (p. 16).

<sup>14</sup> See Illusion and Reality, pp. 74, 304,; "Pacifism and Violence" (S, p. 172), and "Liberty: A Study in Bourgeois Illusion" (S, p. 201).

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., his comment on how, in Barcelona (during the Spanish Civil War,) "the anarchists have had to support a strong Central Government . . . and in every way negate their own creed" (IR, pp. 128-29); the Stalinists were part of that counter-revolutionary Popular Front government: see Felix Morrow, "The May Days: Barricades in Barcelona," Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain (1938; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1974), pp. 140-64. Also see Caudwell's comment on the massacre of the Chinese Communists at the hands of "their own" bourgeois "anti-imperialists," the Kuomintang, in "T. E. Lawrence: A Study in Heroism" (S, p. 43); and see his remark, apropos of Swinburne's "shallowness," that this "reflects the essential shallowness of all such [bourgeois-democratic] movements in this late era when, owing to the development of the proletariat, they almost instantly negate themselves" (IR, p. 116).

<sup>16</sup> "Pacifism and Violence" (S, p. 128).

<sup>17</sup> "Pacifism and Violence" (S, pp. 106-08).

<sup>18</sup> "[T]o try to change the world by operation entirely within the tiny group formed by the dissolution of bourgeois culture--the poetic public--is like trying to pull a house down by dragging at the smoke from the chimney" (RR, p. 136). "[T]hings have gone so far that no tinkering with social relations . . . will cure this. Social relations themselves must be rebuilt. The artist is bound for the sake of his integrity to become thinker and revolutionary" ("D. H. Lawrence: A Study of the Bourgeois Artist," S, pp. 64-65). The "reformist instead of revolutionary approach was just what secured the defeat of Christianity. . . . [T]he entry into Jerusalem showed the wide measure of popular support he [Christ] had obtained, but with no programme of action directed to the seizure of power, this basis of popular support was useless. . . . This reformist step appears to have been taken by Christ at the very moment when he forbade Peter to use violence. He was prepared to whip the moneychangers out of the Temple but not out of the State" ("The Breath of Discontent: A Study in Bourgeois Religion," FS, pp. 56-57).

<sup>19</sup> "H.G. Wells: A Study in Utopianism" (S, p. 88). Marx's "detailed picture" of communist society (in The German Ideology)--"hunt

in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic" (Tucker, p. 160)--will, of course, be taken literally and rigidly as a "rebuttal" of Caudwell's point only by simple-minded people. Caudwell believes that for the communist proletariat, science and art, as "guides to action," "can have only one goal, that of freedom" (IR, p. 173); for, "[u]nlike a class of nomads, smallholders or burghers, a class of slaves has no art" (IR, p. 52). The "goal" of communism is "a blend of what is possible and what is desirable . . . . Of all possibles and all desirables, the laws of reality enforce only one wedding, and the child is a new generation" ("Beauty," FS, pp. 101-102). When this "new generation" arrives, "[p]sychology, biology and physics will not be absorbed by history, any more than factory organisation or school organisation or theatre organisation will be absorbed by social organisation. By the removal of the disruptive factor, private profit, these organisations will generate the social organisation and, as a result of this organisation, themselves differentiate and become enriched. The renaissance of history will not therefore be the amalgamation of the sciences, but the removal of the hidden force that was distorting and isolating them to an increasing degree" ("Men and Nature: A Study in Bourgeois History," FS, p. 125).

20 "Reality: A Study in Bourgeois Philosophy" (FS, p. 230).

21 "Cannot you see," he pleads with Spender and Day Lewis, "that in this one matter [of art] you line up with our enemies--you, our ally--which is why on this point we fight your theory so bitterly?" (IR, p. 318).

22 "George Bernard Shaw: A Study of the Bourgeois Superman" (S, pp. 14-15). See also Illusion and Reality, pp. 318-19 and Romance and Realism, pp. 134-35, on voluntary commitment in art.

23 "Men and Nature" (FS, p. 134).

24 See, e.g. Illusion and Reality, pp. 156 ff., 162 ff., 183, 189, 191, 203, 206, 216, 218, 308.

25 See Romance and Realism, pp. 137-38. In typical Stalinist fashion, Caudwell never mentions any concrete political programme around which the revolutionary working class can achieve what he calls an "assimilation of its bourgeois allies" (IR, p. 139). He also does not explain whether, in the absence of a socialist programme and a revolutionary party, "pulling down the old world" automatically pushes the "new world" in a socialist direction. He does not explain how bourgeois dissenters can be called both "bourgeois" and "revolutionary" (in a proletarian-socialist sense) at the same time (see IR, p. 138); and he does not explain why openly communist workers should disregard the Leninist, early Comintern's directive to "March separately, strike together" ("Comintern Theses on the United Front," 1922, cited in SSFR, p. 22) and heed Stalin's policy of marching together and perishing alone instead.

26 "Pacifism and Violence" (S, p. 121); see also Illusion and Reality, p. 153.

27 For Caudwell's "average genotype," see esp. Illusion and Reality, pp. 153, 229, and "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 52).

28 "The Breath of Discontent" (FS, p. 21).

29 "Shaw" (S, p. 10) and "Pacifism and Violence" (S, p. 127). For Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the state is a special body of armed people organised to guard the material interests of one class against one or more other classes. The very existence of a state therefore implies, to Marxists, the existence of its basis--i.e., of classes. Consequently, a "classless state" is a contradiction in terms, a pure, un-Marxist hypothesis. See, esp., Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, Sec. IV (Tucker, pp. 537-39) and the concluding paragraph in the section on "History" in The German Ideology, Part I (Tucker, p. 163); Engels, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific (1880: Moscow: Progress, 1970), and Lenin, State and Revolution.

30 "The condition of the freedom of the worker in a capitalist society is the non-existence of capitalist rule. This is also the condition of freedom for a completely free society--that is, a classless society" (IR, p. 77; emphasis mine). "The value of art to the artist then is this, that it makes him free" ("D.H. Lawrence," S, p. 53). "The neurotic is deluded because the complex is in his unconscious; he is unfree. The artist is only illuded because the complex is in his conscious: he is free" (IR, p. 294).

31 Thus, in an apology for the deliberate Stalinist betrayals in Germany (1933) and Spain (1936), and its political counter-revolution within the Soviet Union (1923-28 onwards), Caudwell philosophises: "It costs the keenest of human pangs to produce a man: and events in Russia, Germany and Spain have only proved the correctness of the communist warning that a new society would be born only in suffering. . . . This rebellion of the suffering people . . . is for the majority no clear-headed passage to a common goal" (IR, p. 303).

32 See Illusion and Reality, pp. 225, 237, 240, 294, 295.

33 The general concerns of his theory have already been variously summarised by previous scholars. See especially Mulhern, pp. 40-51; Hynes, pp. 16-20; Margolies, pp. 10-12, 23-27, 42-75, and 85-125; Solomon, pp. 305-308; Hyman, pp. 173-79; Brian Doyle, "The Necessity of Illusion: The Writings of Christopher Caudwell," Literature and History, 6, No. 2 (Autumn 1980), 240-47; Michael Draper, "Christopher Caudwell's Illusions," in The 1930's: A Challenge to Orthodoxy, ed. John Lucas (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978), pp. 86-90; and Thompson, "Caudwell," pp. 228-76. For an account of Caudwell's fiction and verse and their links to some of his

theoretical cornerstones, see Draper, pp. 81-85; Doyle (pp. 238-40) makes some sharp characterisations of the intent and scope of Caudwell's theoretical project.

34 "The perceived world is real" ("Reality," FS, p. 210); "I live, therefore I think I am" (*ibid*; p. 239). See also Illusion and Reality, pp. 22, 24, 25, 82-83, 155, 158, 171, 173, 217, 220, 226, 246-47, 251, 295, 96, 264-65, 291; "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 66), "Love: A Study in Changing Values" (S, p. 151), and "Men and Nature" (FS, p. 116). Poetry embodies an accurate "feeling of society" despite a "confused perception of it" (IR, p. 44).

35 "[T]he artistic process is an economic process. . . . If this seems to vulgarise and cheapen the artistic process, this is because [craft-work such as] the building, and the hatmaking process has been vulgarised and cheapened, and is now in turn vulgarising and cheapening art" (RR, p. 38). In Illusion and Reality (p. 110), Caudwell notes one significant effect of commodity-production on literature in Keats's statement "that he could write forever, burning his poems afterwards."

36 With the spread of commodity-production, the solitary, Romantic bourgeois figure logically (though not always sequentially) develops from a tragic hero (Faust, Hamlet) to a pitiful figure (Lear?) to a vicious and despicable one (Timon) (IR, pp. 70, 80). The word, in social discourse, begins to acquire apparently intrinsic "meaning" in a manner analogous to that of the pound's "value" in the market economy (IR, p. 162). Commodity-fetishism in economic life finds its cultural echo in the fetishising of "art for art's sake" (IR, p. 116)--which soon becomes "art for the artist's sake" (IR, p. 124) and, for the artist, "art for the skill's sake" and "art for my sake" (IR, pp. 124-25). This simultaneous de-socialisation and over-personalisation of art takes place in the context of the bourgeois market assuming the mask of a faceless and inconsistently predictable "public" (IR, p. 117); and art can be re-socialised and re-infused with comprehensible significance only with the advent of a radically new society, whose aesthetic tastes and demands are as difficult to predict, from an historical position anterior to that new society, as are its administrative details (IR, p. 229). "It is for this reason that sincere artists, such as Lawrence, Gide, Romain Rolland, Romain, and so on, cannot be content with the beautiful art work, but seem to desert the practice of art for social theory and become novelists of ideas, literary prophets and propaganda novelists. . . . [I]t is inevitably the prerequisite for art becoming art again" ("D.H. Lawrence," S, p. 48).

37 Illusion and Reality, pp. 229-30. See Note 55.

38 See Romance and Realism, pp. 118-19 and Illusion and Reality, pp. 75-83.

39 "Consciousness: A Study in Bourgeois Psychology" (FS, p. 187). It is important to note two points here. One is that whatever Caudwell's

attitude towards the proposed physiological distinction between the thalamus and the cortex, the analogical apposition of "proletariat" to the thalamus is manifestly accepted, if not invented, by him. Second, even Caudwell's attitude towards the said physiological distinction--initially proposed by "bourgeois psychology"--seems to be favourable: he mentions that "the general trend of research has if anything confirmed Head's distinction between cortex and thalamus . . ." (ibid., p. 187).

40 Illusion and Reality, p. 285; Romance and Realism, p. 41; "Shaw" (S, pp. 4-5); "T. E. Lawrence" (S, p. 24); "Consciousness" (FS, p. 197).

41 Illusion and Reality, pp. 231-32; Romance and Realism, pp. 70-71, 103; "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 68).

42 Romance and Realism, p. 35; "Reality" (FS, p. 248).

43 "Shaw" (S, p. 7); "Wells" (S, p. 81); Romance and Realism, pp. 82, 102, 127, 128.

44 "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 58). Also see "Shaw" (S, p. 53).

45 Illusion and Reality, p. 57; "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 59).

46 Illusion and Reality, p. 314; "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 56).

47 Illusion and Reality, p. 314; "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 56), and "Wells" (S, pp. 88-89).

48 Some analogous points made by Caudwell would illustrate from an interesting angle his sense of structural "context," or framework. "It is well known," he says, "that we do not regard the visual field as an undifferentiated whole, but that different parts of it have different values. . . . We see interesting objects" ("Consciousness," FS, p. 189). Again, "before we can become conscious of a thing, we must first become unconscious of it. We must have awareness over a wide general field. . . . Our visual field is . . . limited to phenomena which, as we evolved, have proved of interest to us, such as the common light octave (in colour)" (ibid., p. 195). And finally, "[a] pianola roll is pierced with holes. These holes are real concrete entities. But they are not the music. The music is what happens when it is played. The poem is what happens when it is read" (IR, p. 40).

49 Among his list of unrealistic writers in this sense, Caudwell includes Browning (RR, p. 75), Galsworthy (RR, p. 96), James and Conrad (RR, p. 103), Bennett (RR, p. 105), Joyce (RR, pp. 110-11), and the Sitwells (RR, p. 126).



50 See also Illusion and Reality, pp. 227, 339.

51 Illusion and Reality, p. 229; "Beauty" (FS, pp. 84, 112); "Men and Nature" (FS, p. 138).

52 See also Romance and Realism, pp. 40-41, on Shakespeare. Caudwell criticises Shaw's works for lacking, among other things, "tragic finality" ("Shaw," S, p. 7).

53 See also "D. H. Lawrence" (S, p. 56) and Romance and Realism, pp. 133-38.

54 In Romance and Realism (pp. 68-69), Caudwell explicitly associated "political" with "revolutionary" periods, while reiterating that the novel "tends to be conservative and satisfied."

55 In Illusion and Reality (pp. 229-30), Caudwell is less categorical: see Note 37 to this chapter.

56 Hynes (p. 26) observes this fact, too. However, we must also note that Caudwell warns us against viewing this as an "intrinsic" quality and attributes it more to the English novel's "tradition" (RR, p. 94).

57 See, for instance, Caudwell's comparison between the "sensuous language" of Keats and the "decorative tapestry" of Tennyson and Browning (RR, pp. 72-73) or his comments on Kipling's "visual glitter" (RR, p. 85) or on Meredith's "quite unreal pretty phrases" (RR, p. 81).

58 On Milton, see Romance and Realism (RR), pp. 47-50 (cf. Caudwell's comments on Shakespeare in RR, pp. 40-41); in Illusion and Reality (IR), he is called "England's first openly revolutionary poet" (p. 93). On Dryden, see RR, p. 51; on Kipling, RR, pp. 79, 83, 86; on Blake, RR, p. 66 ("the most genuine revolutionary"); on Disraeli, RR, p. 70, and on Galsworthy, RR, pp. 94-96; on Donne, RR, p. 43 and IR, p. 93; on Dickens, RR, pp. 69-71; on Lawrence, RR, p. 118, IR, pp. 103, 310, and "D. H. Lawrence" (S, pp. 44-72; a substantive assessment); and on the women novelists, see RR, pp. 67-68 (Austen), p. 71 (George Eliot), p. 72 (the Brontë's and Woolf), and pp. 114-16 (Woolf and Dorothy Richardson).

59 For an important analysis of some key sociological and ideological factors that have shaped readers' varying perceptions and evaluations of Hardy through the century, see Peter Widdowson, "Hardy in History: A Case Study in the Sociology of Literature," Literature and History, 9, No. 1 (Spring 1983), 3-16.

Williams' Politics and His General Theory of Literature

Politically, Caudwell's axiology was shaped by a fairly simple objective contradiction. On the one hand, he proceeded from an explicit and complete affirmation of what he understood to be genuine Marxism; on the other hand, what he understood to be genuine Marxism turns out to have been Stalinism, both programmatically and organisationally. Williams' axiology is shaped by a more complex set of contradictions than Caudwell's and characterised, moreover, by a qualitatively greater self-consciousness about their existence and significance. Indeed, Williams' work is in large part a sustained polemic against Caudwell, from the social-democratic right.

Some sense of the complexity of Williams' politics may be gained from the confusion that it engenders in even such an apparently informed critic as Patrick Parrinder. In a review of Politics and Letters,<sup>1</sup> Parrinder finds himself simultaneously implying that Williams is and is not a Marxist. Thus, on the affirmative side, Parrinder speaks unqualifyingly of "the Marxist standpoint of his recent work," in which Williams supposedly "put forward a consistent theory of literature and culture, based on acknowledged Marxist tenets--an orientation which had not been declared openly in his work since his brief membership of the Communist Party in 1939-41" (p. 124). He speaks of "Williams' re-affiliation to Marxism" (p. 124) and simply "assumes that the contempt with which he treated some of its central concerns, even as lately as . . . 1971 ('If you're not in a church you're

not worried about heresies!') must be deeply embarrassing to him now" (p. 126). That assumption, as we shall see, is wrong.

Yet, Parrinder is only one among many who have, in one way or another, entertained that assumption.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate responsibility for this phenomenon must rest with Williams himself, who has formally asserted that his "cultural materialism" actually marks a practice "within historical materialism" and that it is in fact "a Marxist theory," "part of . . . the central thinking of Marxism."<sup>3</sup> Even in his studiously agnostic Politics and Letters, he claims that "[s]tarting now," with his present knowledge of Marxism, the Marxist tradition "would look different" to him from the negative picture he painted of it in his earlier book, The Country and the City (PL, p. 318).

The belief is widespread, then, that Williams is indeed some kind of Marxist; and Williams himself can hardly be accused of straining to combat that image. Therefore, Parrinder can have little reason to object (as he does) to the fact that "the goal of these interviews [in Politics and Letters], even in the case of Williams' literary-critical work, is to define an agreed orthodoxy" and that "the goal of an agreed orthodoxy is also present in certain formulations of the methodology of literary criticism" (p. 125). If the unduly diplomatic hints of the New Left Review editors (Perry Anderson et al)<sup>4</sup> seem to Parrinder like "inquisitorial techniques" (p. 125), he should ponder the political reasons for his and Williams' manifest inability to deny their truth. This should prove far more productive than complaining about the perfectly harmless--and, indeed, often even inept--investigative strategies deployed by "our interrogators" (p. 124). In fact, one

might recall here Williams' own disenchantment with "a certain kind of anti-political cynicism" as a result of which critics "are so attuned to faults that when there is an industrial dispute, they would rather be analysing the militants' language, which will always include some errors or clichés, than giving a damn what the dispute is about" (PL, p. 241). And the relevance of "an industrial dispute" here is more than analogical. For, if E. F. Timms is right, Williams himself "fails to bridge the gap which Marx so memorably defined in the 'Theses on Feuerbach': between interpreting the world differently, and changing it" (p. 830).

Now, as one can see from most commentaries on Williams' work, one does not need to be a Marxist to be led to expect Marxist argumentation in it, and then to be also able to perceive Williams' express rejection of the definitive components of Marxism. George Woodcock, for instance, in a violently anti-Marxist review of Marxism and Literature,<sup>5</sup> calls that book "a confessional document . . . of a true believer" (p. 593) but then goes on to observe that "in the realms of neo-Marxist aesthetics he appears as bewildered as he is bewildering" (p. 594). John Sutherland, another non-Marxist, remarks, "He has, in fact, surrendered less [to Marxism] than might be supposed since Culture and Society."<sup>6</sup> And, in an appropriately dubious compliment, the pro-anarchist Arthur Efron includes Marxism and Literature among "the best revisions of the [Marxist] theory" (p. 5). Even Timms' favourable review of the book classifies Williams' method as "scarcely a Marxist approach"--though it is supposedly Williams' "most explicit contribution to Marxism" (pp. 826, 829).

A general and not unfounded impression therefore prevails that Williams is at once a Marxist and not a Marxist. To any consistent Marxist, that is a politically absurd paradox. Nor is the issue here one of a legally or morally binding choice, but of a concrete and logical impossibility. If one consciously produces arguments and uses methods that are recognisable as conventionally non- or anti-Marxist, one's claim to being a Marxist cannot be simultaneously sustained. That is the problem with Williams. The axiom advanced above has nothing to do with the demands of abstract logic; it has everything to do with how Marxists and non-Marxists in the particular define and relate to each other in reality. And, in view of this, Parrinder's mystifying political defence of Williams serves merely to hinder any understanding of the latter's axiology.

Blake Morrison, another non-Marxist reviewer of Williams, pierces one useful hole through such ideological fog.<sup>7</sup> "Williams," Morrison shrewdly notes, "is only too eager [in Politics and Letters] to seize this opportunity to set the record straight, either by total recantation, or, very occasionally, by counter-attack, or, more subtly, by showing how apparent heresies in his early work actually contain submerged socialist theory. . . . Time and again what are obviously non- or anti-Marxist writings are presented as having hidden strategies, latent intentions, submerged histories, or particular contexts, and are thus rendered more orthodox than they appear" (p. 537). If now, therefore, Williams is finally brought under Marxist scrutiny, defenders of his theory will have to do rather better than raise the bogey of "Inquisition." They will have to produce arguments.

As Parrinder's own reference to Williams' long-standing

"contempt" for some of Marxism's "central concerns" indicates, Parrinder himself is fully aware that, as he puts it, "Williams' re-affiliation to Marxism was very much on his own terms" and that "the polite but firm rejection of a number of commonly-held Marxist positions is a crucial feature of Marxism and Literature" (p. 124). So, what were Williams' "own terms"? Efron correctly locates the chief terrain of Williams' revisionism and, with it, some of those specific "terms": "Williams goes so far; he is courageous in rejecting some of the oldest, most respected categories, such as that of 'ideology,' and the distinction between the productive 'base' of society and its cultural 'superstructure'" (p. 5).

That is certainly the definitive burden of Williams' literary theory and the shaping philosophical influence on its attendant axiology: if Caudwell was inconsistent in his use of Marxist categories, Williams overtly rejects them. On this issue, therefore, a gulf separates Caudwell's inadvertent departures from Marxism and Williams' defiant resistance to it. This can be seen even from some of Williams' ostensibly pro-Marxist statements, whose negative formulations and tone are too obvious to miss: indeed, they are in reality no more than reluctant concessions made by a cornered opponent of Marxism.

Williams' most complete explicit concession to Marxism on the key issues mentioned by Efron occurs in Politics and Letters. It is, typically, preceded by evasions, misses, qualifications, and hesitation (PL, pp. 182, 184, 212); it is phrased in the language of denial and innocence; and it is succeeded by what is effectively a retraction (PL, p. 356). Yet, for all that, it is a unique and telling acknowledgment:

[I]t is true that there are forms of material production which always and everywhere precede all other forms. I am very glad to make that clarification--it doesn't seem to me like a concession. What one then has to say is that these forms of production are really very basic indeed; they are the production of food, the production of shelter, and the production of the means of producing food and shelter--an extended range which is still related to the absolutely necessary conditions of sustaining life. The enormous theoretical shift introduced by classical Marxism--in saying these are the primary productive activities--was of the most fundamental importance. (PL, p. 353)<sup>8</sup>

Since this doesn't seem to Williams like a concession, we should recapitulate some of his previous pronouncements on the issue. Declaring that the economic determination of culture "is, ultimately, an unanswerable question," the early Williams criticised "a general inadequacy, among Marxists, in the use of 'culture' as a term."<sup>9</sup> Then, incidentally, not entirely in keeping with his claimed agnosticism on the question, Williams went on to counterpose to Marxism his own methodological alternative. Marxists "should logically use 'culture' in the sense of a whole way of life, a general social process," he advised, elaborating that "the whole received basis of social thinking [clearly not excepting Marxism--K.D.G.], its conception of what man in society is, must be deeply revised."<sup>10</sup> He charged that "[s]tructure and superstructure, as terms of an analogy, express at once an absolute and a fixed relationship" and falsely implied that, for Marx, the "superstructure is a matter of human consciousness" alone. (CS, pp. 260, 259).

Obversely, this latter charge of course further implied that the economy does not involve conscious regulation. Williams claimed that

the Marxist analytical model "excluded" two realms: "the system of learning and communication" and "the complex of natural relationships based on the generation and nurture of life. . . ." (Long R, p. 114). "The difficulty lies," he explained in Culture and Society (p. 273), ". . . in the terms of Marx's original formulation: if one accepts 'structure' and 'superstructure,' not as the terms of a suggestive analogy, but as descriptions of reality, the errors naturally follow. Even if the terms are seen as those of an analogy, they need . . . amendment." And in his recent Towards 2000 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1983), pp. 263-64, he asserted the following:

The concept of a 'mode of production' . . . has selected a particular historical and material orientation as essential and permanent. It can illuminate variations of this orientation [i.e., of capitalist society], but it can never really look beyond it. This fact has emerged in the most practical way, in that the great explanatory power of Marxism, where this concept has been most active, has not been accompanied by any successful projective capacity. . . . [I]n basing his thought on an inherited concept of production . . . Marx was unable to outline any fully alternative society. . . . The problem and the obstacle are in the concept itself.

I shall merely refer the reader back to my Introduction to confirm Williams' factual imprecision and the theoretical illogicality of his revealed expectation. And I shall focus instead on an incidental but tellingly symptomatic feature of the above-quoted passage; nowhere in it does Williams indicate any awareness of the social power-relations that dictate the choices for thought and discourse. Recreating the autism of his Long Revolution, Williams revolves tightly around "concepts," "thoughts," "explanatory powers," and "projective capacities,"



as if they issued from some implanted crystal ball in the brain.<sup>11</sup> But a Marxist feels inclined to point out that Marx was "unable" to "outline any fully alternative society" because he "saw," from experience and past history, the utterly fantastic--and, ultimately, reformist--consequences of such a detailed prophetic enterprise under capitalism.

It is precisely because of this that, while he was "unable" to paint detailed utopias, Marx also did not find himself shunted, like Williams, from one ideological extreme to another. Thus, it was Williams himself who, some decades earlier, had equally confidently denounced the very sin that he now regards as a virtue--"the persistent attempts to define the culture of the socialist future":

As a matter of fact, most of the speculation about the "socialist culture" of the future has been no more than a Utopian habit; one cannot take it very seriously. . . . My own view is that if, in a socialist society, the basic cultural skills are made widely available, and the channels of communication widened and cleared, as much as possible has been done in the way of preparation, and what then emerges will be an actual response to the whole reality, and so valuable. (CS, pp. 273-74)

In fact, though Williams wrongly counterposed this position to some hypothetical, "other" way of Lenin, decrying Lenin's stress on cultural planning without noting its post-revolutionary context (CS, p. 274), its substance is clearly much closer to Marxism than is the impatient propheticism of Towards 2000.

Again, it is precisely because of Marx's unique lack of "projective capacity" of the Williamsian kind that he did not find himself trapped, as does Williams, in contradictions of a methodologically

elementary nature. Thus, it is not Marx but Williams whom we find complaining with surprise about the blanket use of "culture" (à la Leavis) to denote "a whole way of life, a general social process": "we are continually forced to extend it, until it becomes almost identical with our whole common life" (CS, p. 249). "The basic intellectual fault of such formulations as that in Culture and Environment is, curiously, the taking of aspects for wholes" (CS, p. 253). Yet, for all his misgivings, Williams' own use of "culture" in this respect does not differ qualitatively from that of Leavis.

So the concession in Politics and Letters about the importance of Marx's "base-superstructure" analogy is hardly the matter of routine "clarification" Williams presents it as. Rather, from this critic who has consistently stressed the alleged "primacy of cultural production" (PL, p. 133) and maintained that, "contrary to a development in Marxism, it is not 'the base' and 'the super-structure' that need to be studied, but specific and indissoluble real processes . . ." (ML, p. 82), it is a rare and dramatic acknowledgment of theoretical defeat. As Williams himself once so movingly announced, with revealing delay and disbelief, "I am certain, as I review the evidence, that it is capitalism . . . which is in fact confusing us" (Long R, p. 300).

As with the analogy of base and superstructure, so with the notion of classes based on particular (and opposed) economic interests, Williams differs from Caudwell in this: that he will approximate the Marxist position only when compelled to, in the face of otherwise rather egregious self-contradictions. His approximations, accordingly, once again assume the form of reluctant and tortuously inductive

concessions.

Thus, we have already heard Williams regret the inadequacy of that still attractive, Leavisian use of "culture." Similarly, in The Long Revolution (p. 353), we hear him ask, in exasperation, "If . . . we are to be co-operative, responsible, non-violent, where exactly, in our actual world, are we expected to live? Is the economy co-operative, is the culture responsible, are the politics non-violent?" The spirit, it would seem, is willing to encourage all those ostensible virtues. Yet Williams is on record as once having explicitly criticised "the illusions of humanism"<sup>12</sup> and, on another occasion, ridiculed the Wellsian "little human peninsula, trying to forget what the high bourgeois mainland is like."<sup>13</sup> The deceptive "convention of the plain observer with no axes to grind, who simply tells the truth," Williams has more recently noted, ". . . cancels the social situation of the writer and cancels his stance towards the social situation he is observing" (PL, p. 388). The result of such a convention, as he puts it in the case of Jane Austen, is that "where only one class is seen, no classes are seen."<sup>14</sup> Thus, speaking of his unique, hitherto classless notion of "structures of feeling" (discussed below), Williams says that he would "now want to use the concept much more differentially between classes" (PL, p. 158). And discussing the evaluator's stance, he warns that although "everyone is initially in a different situation, . . . we should not forget the true common modes, beyond that, of class affiliation" (PL, p. 342).

Marxists can assure Williams that they will not forget. Indeed, they might go on to express a little amusement at the apparent change of mind wrought in their admonisher since the days when he used

to dismiss "myths of a 'proletariat' and 'deproletarianisation,'" confidently declaring that the Marxists' "traditional definitions have broken down" (Long R, pp. 327, 325). The "division of votes," the electoralist Williams used to insist, "cuts right across the usual analysis by class, introducing questions which cannot be negotiated within our ordinary political categories" (Long R, p. 330). Deploping an unnamed "main current in Marxism," he called it "profoundly mechanical in its determinism, in its social materialism, and in its characteristic abstraction of social classes from human beings" (MT, p. 78). In the most explicit of his dismissals of class-analysis, Williams asserted that "most of us" are "truly sick and tired" of the "irrelevant" discussion of class, and called for "the more interesting discussion of human differences, between real people and real communities living in their valuably various ways" (Long R, p. 169).

All this, too, Marxists will not forget. Indeed, even if they wished to, they could not: Williams has just pointedly reinstated his decades-old analysis of "Britain in the Sixties" (Long R) in his latest book, Towards 2000.<sup>15</sup> The "change of mind" in Politics and Letters therefore stands revealed as precisely the kind of reluctant admission of defeat I have talked about. At the first opportunity, Williams promptly resumes his anti-Marxist positions again. If Caudwell neglected to resolve his objectively contradictory formulations, Williams makes it a point to register his express defiance of Marxism, inserting concessions and claiming ulterior Marxist intentions only when left with no immediate prospect for escape, under conditions of scrutiny (or when presented with the cheap opportunity to criticise liberalism from its "left").

Williams' insistent denial of fundamentally divisive economic forces in capitalist society and culture, however, merely exhibits microcosmically what in fact is with him a much broader, openly reformist political programme, for which the organised expression is the virulently anti-communist British Labour Party. It is this overall political programme, rather than separate and remote manifestations of it, that is in the first place key to understanding Williams' system of values. In some ways, Williams' formal political sympathies undercut much more drastically than volumes of thematic analyses any claims he might advance to being a Marxist. For, there can be little doubt--least of all in Williams' own mind--that his entire system of cultural values is linked to his particular conception of necessary and possible social change, a conception practically indistinguishable from the consummate reformism of the Labour Party.

Thus, in Politics and Letters, Williams on the one hand implicitly indicates the absurdity of expecting the Labour government to fund "institutions of popular education and popular culture that could have withstood the political campaigns in the bourgeois press" (PL, p. 73). On the other hand, he goes on to remark that the "correct perspective" would have been "to try to help build a very strong popular cultural mobilisation to take part in a battle inside the Labour movement" (PL, p. 75; my emphasis). He correctly concedes that "we still shared one illusion with precisely the position we were attacking," although he misses the fundamental point when he identifies this illusion merely as the attempt to implement change "simply by literary argument, by cultural discourse" (PL, p. 75). Of course, that illusion is still undeniably part of Williams' politics; but it is secondary to the illusion that the century-old bourgeois policies

of the Labour Party can be reversed by a "popular cultural" mobilisation "inside" the Labour movement, rather than by splitting its social base politically from the top and electing a new leadership on a programme of revolutionary class-struggle.

In this regard, Williams' allusive talk of "economics" as the wrongly-neglected "main battlefield" (PL, p. 75) seems all the more deliberately vague, and hence significant. Does "economics" here refer strictly to economic theory? Does it refer to strictly economistic--i.e., studiedly anti-political--struggle? Does it refer to economic reform, in the sense of its acting as a deterrent to revolution? All of these connotations, as the passage below will indicate, are conceivable--since all of them are reformist to the core:

I should say that in general the very energies which make up the militancy of an authentic revolutionary left tend to make it much worse at working with others, to its own detriment, than reformists who have adopted the perspective of getting as much as you can within the system, developing skills of co-operation and compromise that any socialism needs. . . .

So far as the shift from a reformist to a revolutionary perspective is concerned, I think that still if I saw an area in which the first kind of course seemed possible, I would always follow it until I was finally convinced that it was not just difficult, or interminable, or intractable, but that it was actually delaying the prospect of a solution. (PL, p. 410)

In view of the above declaration of principles, it should hardly come as a surprise to Marxists that Williams' conception of even the "short" revolution is one in which the ruling system simply implodes; spontaneously, without any need for organisation or leadership, the revolution emerges through a presumably self-induced "loss by the state of its capacity for predominant reproduction of the existing social

relations" (PL, p. 421). His tired prediction of continuing racism and his bizarre advice to the unemployed that "even socialists will have to stop thinking in the capitalist category of full employment" (PL, p. 382), are the expected corollaries to Williams' proposed wait for a spontaneous reform of capitalism. After all, he had long ago defined the "choice" as one between "qualified acceptance in a subordinate capacity" and "the renewal of an apparently hopeless challenge" (Long, R, p. 303). This is the critic who a little more than twenty years ago had openly scoffed at "such general nostrums as the fight for socialism" (Long R, p. 294) and spurned revolution as "evidently a time of violence, dislocation and extended suffering," as "tragedy, in the everyday sense," as "ordinarily a time of lies and of suppression of truths," and as "a time of chaos,"<sup>16</sup> It is thus perfectly consistent for Williams today to find "the carriers of the new and positive issues and interests" in the single-issue peace, ecology, women's, third world, human rights, anti-poverty, housing, and cultural "movements" and "campaigns"<sup>17</sup> and to announce his sympathy for continental Europe's anti-communist social democracy as well.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, even sociologically, Williams' political trajectory should come as no surprise to Marxists. As Williams himself, pointing to his overwhelmingly petty bourgeois upbringing and academic experience has explained, his "situation was not typical" of the urban proletariat, and it took him "a long time to realise" this fact (PL, p. 22). On his return from Europe after the Second World War, he "took up academic work quite fanatically"; allowing his two-year membership of the CPGB to lapse, he consciously made "a certain notion of cultural politics" his

"more general priority" (PL, p. 52).<sup>19</sup> As he himself tellingly admits, his "fatigue with the complexities of politics at the time, expressing itself as superiority," was merely "the self-defence of an intellectual who has retired from immediate politics" (PL, pp. 103, 106).

The "complexities" alluded to were, of course, the murderous travesty of Marxism then being perpetrated by Stalin and his Communist parties internationally. But, while these "complexities" were only too real, Williams' "fatigue" had nothing in common with either the critique of or the practical political struggle against Stalinism conducted by Trotsky's Left Opposition since 1923. Indeed Williams himself, when confronted with the fact of Trotskyism, admits his relative ignorance on that question.<sup>20</sup> However, the problem of ignorance can be solved or minimised if there is a will. But, by his own account, it was ultimately the will, and not merely the knowledge, that was lacking: "I would agree that this is a block. . . . It is . . . a certain reluctance to go back into intricacies which were not present for the succeeding generation" (PL, p. 401).

The problem, therefore, is not merely circumstantial but political. Yet, neither Williams nor his interviewers draw any programmatic conclusions from the former's telling acknowledgment: both parties are, clearly, agreed that the said "intricacies" are "not present for the succeeding generation." In the minds of many, therefore, Stalinism continues to equal Marxism and communism.<sup>21</sup> But this is precisely what propels Williams deeper into reformist values today. Those "intricacies" constitute the artificially-maintained "blind"-spot that



both social democracy and Stalinism alike must necessarily continue to nurture, in order to hold their common line against revolution. It is therefore precisely at this point that Trotskyism must force an entry, subjecting Williams' "cultural politics" and its axiology to some elementary Marxist scrutiny.

When Williams joined the Cambridge CPGB Writers' Group, he "did not come across Caudwell"; but he did encounter Ralph Fox's The Novel and the People, Alick West, and Left Review--all known Stalinist-Zhdanovist literary forces (PL, pp. 42, 44). Thus when, on returning to Cambridge after the Second World War, Williams engaged with Leavis' anti-Marxist empiricism, he was completely overwhelmed, finding "English studies" to have matured as a discipline "to which Marxists could oppose only a precarious handful of works whose contribution to literary study was easily dismissed as reductionism" (PL, p. 45). Williams strove, within the Writers' Group, to attack the Zhdanovists; but, in the absence of a Trotskyist perspective, he clearly did so not from the terrain of Marxism but from that of social democracy.

Typically conflating one or another version of Stalinism with Marxism, Williams criticised so-called "Marxist writing in England" from the nineteen-thirties to the nineteen-fifties as "very mixed in both quality and occasion" and warned that "it is as well for Marxists to remember that very many mistakes were made, and that these are less easy to forgive because of the tone of dogmatic infallibility which characterised some of the most popular writings" (CS, p. 262). "In fact," he concluded, "as we look at the English attempt at a Marxist theory of culture, what we see is an interaction between Romanticism and Marx. . . .

We have to conclude that the interaction is as yet far from complete" (CS, p. 271). He has attacked Caudwell's use of the phrase "capitalist poetry"<sup>22</sup> and criticised "the conventional descriptions on the left of the major thought and writing in England from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries as bourgeois culture" (PL, p. 155).<sup>23</sup> Yet he himself understandably uses phrases such as "bourgeois novelists" and "socialist novel" (e.g., PL, p. 268).

Williams' specifically literary-theoretical project may be seen as an attempt to systematise and concretise the analysis of the material and historical factors determining the actual processes of literary production (as distinct from response): and behind that lies the attempt to discover ways of harnessing new cultural practices in general to the cause of Labourite reformism. Williams himself has variously described it as an attempt to "rejoin" "literary studies" with "experimental science" (PL, p. 341), a "theorisation of composition" (PL, p. 192), an attempt "to show simultaneously the literary conventions and the historical relations to which they were a response--to see together the means of the production and the conditions of the means of production" (PL, p. 304), and, most simply, as "cultural materialism: a theory of the specificities of materialism" (ML, p. 5). In any event, it grows out of his dissatisfaction with all previous systems of criticism--non-Marxist as well as ostensibly Marxist--coupled with an attraction to structural linguistics (PL, p. 324). And it takes as its ideological premise "the primacy of cultural production" (PL, p. 133), concentrating, for its part, on the "very deep material bond between language and the body," categories deemed only inconsistently and unevenly determined by

economics and class.<sup>24</sup>

Williams' main criticism of "traditional" systems--from the Aristotelian to the Richardsian/Leavisian and the structuralist--has been that "theorisation when it appears is always a theorisation of reading [or 'response']--it is not a theorisation of composition [or 'process']" (PL, pp. 191-92).<sup>25</sup> Moreover, he argues, "Criticism" as a specialised activity is a bourgeois phenomenon, too, dating back, in England, to the seventeenth century and passing through several historical shifts in meaning (ML, pp. 48-51).<sup>26</sup> Thus he categorically states, in the Conclusion to his Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, that "[w]e cannot usefully apply, to any modern art, the critical terms and procedures which were discovered for the understanding of earlier work."<sup>27</sup>

Typically, however, Williams' polemics against "traditional" methods are directed not so much at Aristotle or Leavis as at "Marxist literary criticism"; his alternative system of criticism, therefore, properly begins with the rejection of Marx:

English society and French society are both, today, in certain stages of capitalism, but their cultures are observably different, for sound historical reasons. That they are both capitalist may be finally determining, and this may be a guide to social and political action, but clearly, if we are to understand the cultures, we are committed to what is manifest; the way of life as a whole. What many of us have felt about Marxist cultural interpretation is that it seems committed, by Marx's formula, to a rigid methodology so that if one wishes to study, say, a national literature, one must begin with the economic history with which the literature co-exists, and then put the literature to it, to be interpreted in its light. It is true that on occasion one learns something from this, but, in general, the procedure seems to involve both forcing and superficiality.

For, even if the economic element is determining, it determines a whole way of life; and it is to this, rather than to the economic system alone, that the literature has to be related. (CS, p. 272)

The impressionism of the analytical method advocated in that passage is key: "We are committed to what is manifest." (Moreover, Williams is of course patently wrong to insinuate that Marx encouraged relating literature to "the economic system alone.") In subsequent statements, however, Williams will—with characteristic even-handedness—also point out the epistemological shortcomings of impressionism.<sup>28</sup> But that nevertheless remains his definitive critical mode, with its emphasis on a classless "whole way of life" (or "lived experience," or "the knowable community," as he variously terms it in his works).<sup>29</sup> Yet, of course, the sheer theoretical dissolution of the "base" and the "superstructure" into what is merely "manifest" does not in the least dissolve Williams' actual need to identify some "pattern" of "relations" in that "whole culture."<sup>30</sup> And it also does not cancel the need to discover, even in most modern literature, "the movements of an integrated world economy" which "a naïve observation . . . can never gain knowledge of . . ." (PL, p. 171). Thus Williams is compelled to invent a substitute for the Marxist analytical model (one which could well have co-existed with it, within the larger realm of the superstructure); "structure of feeling."

In Marxism and Literature (p. 100), for instance, Williams rejects the notion of "mediation" or "intermediary" because he rejects the notion of a "separate" base and superstructure (a notion falsely attributed to Marxism). But he early recognises, in his own way, the distinction between basic existence and expressed consciousness. This

dilemma--between the rejection of the Marxist distinction and the inescapability of his own, similar one--he then seeks to negotiate with the aid of his new category, "structure of feeling." In The Long Revolution (p. 48), he vaguely describes this category as "a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression, through which the characteristics of our way of life that an external analyst could describe are in some way passed, giving them a particular and characteristic colour." As he later elaborates in Marxism and Literature (p. 133), structures of feeling are "social experiences in solution" that recognise both the "specificity" of "'the aesthetic,' 'the arts,' and 'imaginative literature'" and "their specific kinds of sociality."<sup>31</sup> But the link between these structures' purely "cultural" functions and their (more subtly) political one becomes clear in The English Novel (p. 192), where he directly links, through that concept, his empiricism and English exceptionalism to an explicitly anti-Marxist polemic on the origins of "all art":

Much ordinary social experience is of course directly reflected, represented, in what is indeed an ideology, what can be called a superstructure. But in any society at all like our own, and especially in this one this last hundred and fifty years, there's a very vital area of social experience--social experience--that doesn't get incorporated: that's neglected, ignored, certainly at times repressed: that even when it's taken up, to be processed or to function as an official consciousness, is resistant, lively, still goes its own way, and eventually steps on its shadow . . . in such a way that we can see which is shadow and which is substance.

It is from this vital area, from this structure of feeling that is lived and experienced but not yet quite arranged as institutions and ideas, from this common and inalienable life that I think all art is made.

The urge to focus on societies "like our own"--"especially . . . this one this last hundred and fifty years"--as the defining norm for "social experience" of course captures the parochial and historically self-centred quality of Williams' "common and inalienable life." And yet, already in this passage, Williams feels obliged to begin with a concession to the Marxist analytical model, shifting slightly from his earlier insistence that analysis can begin only from "experience," which, moreover, for him "moves within an actual situation, in directions which the forces within that situation will alone determine" (CS, p. 195). Such (albeit partial and provisional) breaks from empiricism directly enable Williams to compare historically and socially disparate works and authors. And, only slightly less directly, not only does this incipient broadening of perspective influence Williams' criteria of general literary value and his selection of those particular works and authors in the first place; the selection and the criteria themselves in turn force a broadening of the perspective.

In this way, Williams is logically led to rejoin the problematic of "response" with his preferred problematic of "production." He acknowledges theoretically the possibility of both "permanent" and historically "conjunctural configurations" of aesthetic response (PL, pp. 325, 341); and this partial advance in perceiving differential response refines his earlier notion of the reader-critics' "selection"--or "assimilation" (MT, pp. 27-29)--of specific authors, texts, and "traditions," inducing him to attempt a materialist explanation for particular claims to literary value.<sup>32</sup> In this respect, Williams' own definition of and partiality towards the so-called "organicist"

tradition ("knowable community") in English literature provides a close measure of both his limited break from empiricism and his resistance to Marxism (especially to the importance it attaches to "class," which he pluralistically tolerates as merely one of "many kinds of special interest"):

[W]e discover our epoch . . . by those points, those lives, those experiences, in which the structure of our own most significant difficulties seems to begin to take shape. . . . And in my own case I go . . . to the problem of knowable community . . . under very specific and active and continuing pressures. (EN, pp. 186-87)

Within a given society, selection will be governed by many kinds of special interest, including class interests. The traditional cultures of a society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary system of interests and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation. . . . In the analysis of contemporary culture, the existing state of the selective tradition is of vital importance, for it is often true that some change in this tradition . . . is a radical kind of contemporary change. . . .

.....  
Often it is simply that in the good novel the ordinary situations and feelings are worked through to their maximum intensity. In other cases, though the framework is retained one element of the experience floods through the work, in such a way as to make it relevant in its own right, outside the conventional terms. . . . These are the creative elements, though the connection with the ordinary structure of feeling is still clear. (Long R., pp. 51-52, 53, 68)

Here are all the rudiments of Williams' contradictory analytical as well as evaluative theory. The "We" carries no definite class-denotation, hence nor does "the structure of our own most significant difficulties." The liberalism of "many kinds of special interest" is decidedly curtailed by the weight of the critic's "own

case," in which he goes to "the problem of knowable community" and not to "class." It is, for Williams, not social change that triggers cultural ones but rather a change in the "selective tradition" of a "culture" that itself simply "is" the "contemporary change." We "discover our epoch" and select traditions in keeping with "those points . . . in which the structure of our most significant difficulties seems to begin to take shape," with our "contemporary system of interests and values"; yet, "one element" of a fictional "experience" can become "relevant in its own right, outside the conventional terms." Absolutism clashes with classless relativism; liberalism translates into its obverse, individualism; consciousness determines everything; and "relevance" always needs to be classlessly "contemporary" in relation to the reader, though it may sometimes also be intrinsic. It is between these substantially idealist, absolutist, classless, pluralistic modes, on the one hand, and formal invocations of dialectical historical materialism, on the other, that Williams' general theory of literature, within the political framework of reformism, resides.

#### Williams' Principles of Literary Evaluation

Whether one approaches Williams' criteria of literary value inductively or deductively, the same logical questions about his general scheme of values must arise. . . . And, given his claim to working within Marxist assumptions, that ultimate modern test of Marxist consistency--the claimant's understanding of revolutionary party-commitment--must sooner or later be posed. Here, once more, Williams' real politics



of reformism virtually preempt that question politically and, simultaneously, define the limits of his "Marxism."

Williams' specific literary criteria for evaluation remain well within his political values and goals. Therefore, while Williams' evaluative methods show considerable sophistication in their detail, we must not forget the overall limit of the reformist project--"cultural materialism"--that circumscribe them all, defining the very terms of the problematics they raise. Among these individual problematics, the crucial one must surely be Williams' ambivalence about the validity and usefulness of the very act of evaluation itself. This ambivalence is the axiological manifestation precisely of the two key political features of his work: one, a pronounced activist appetite simply to proceed with the actual literary production, presumably leading to a "cultural revolution" independently of a socio-political one--that is, an appetite for reformism; and two (resulting directly from the first feature), a passive resistance to accepting any commitment to a revolutionary party and its general political orientation that might logically entail both Marxist critical consistency and reversed practical priorities, ultimately requiring revolutionary intervention. It is on this (essentially social democratic) political dilemma that our examination of Williams' evaluative criteria will centre.

Undoubtedly, there are occasions when Williams deplores "the typical emphasis of a consumer society-- . . . the descent towards a trivialism of preference, or towards a technicism that ends in no judgment of any kind--a simple technical recomposition of the text" (PL, p. 344). But he is also on record calling for a "significant

rejection of the habit (or right or duty) of judgments"; "what always needs to be understood," he explains, "is the specificity of the response, which is not a judgment but a practice. . . ."33 Indications are that he tends to extend to all evaluation his revulsion against the Victorian substitution of literary value for disappearing "religious and ethical values" (PL, p. 130); certainly his New Left Review commentators have noted his frequent studied abstentions from "any actual evaluation," as with the country-house poems analysed in The Country and the City (PL, p. 342).

Nevertheless, Williams does formally approve of evaluation and suggests a few positive strategies for practising it. The overall quality of his suggestions is contradictory, vacillating between the familiar polarities of absolutism and relativism, idealism and materialism. The mode in which they are advanced is mostly cautionary and negative, rather than exploratory and positive. And they are often abstract. Yet, because of Williams' emphasis on the historical context of a text's production and on the evaluator's mechanism for conjunctural selection ("structure of feeling"), he manages, usefully, to show the entire evaluative process to be relative, reminding us that, in their origin, "'taste' and 'sensibility' are characteristically bourgeois categories."34

Within this contradictory framework that is heavily conservative to start with, then, Williams nevertheless does provide some evaluative tools and strategies worthy of consideration by Marxists. We may aptly begin with his explicit warning that "[t]here is a good deal of apparently theoretical discourse about the process of making judgments which as an isolated activity repeats the limitations of the

isolated critical practice itself" and that "in general the isolation of the pure act of judgment between critical reader and text tends in the end to prevent even judgment" (PL, pp. 238, 338). But in general, given these qualifications, Williams declares himself "wholly in sympathy with reasonable uses of damn this/praise this" (PL, p. 311). And perhaps his most complete recent statement of general evaluative principles occurs around the following call for "a very complex typology of occasions and cues":

It is a major human gain to attend with complete precision, often without any other consideration, to the way someone has shaped a stone or uttered a musical note. To deny that would be to cancel so much of human culture that it would be comical. But I think we need a much more specific analysis of the situations, the occasions, the signals which release that response, that kind of attention. I am absolutely unwilling to concede to any predetermined class of objects an unworked priority or to take all the signals as equally valid. We need a very complex typology of occasions and cues, which I think is quite practicable, although it will inevitably be partial. One would then have to look at the situations and occasions in which those signals and cues conflict with other systems which it is really very important not to cede. It is crucial that we resist the categorical predetermination of them as a reserved area, and the extreme training against taking these experiences back out and putting them in relation to other value systems. No doubt in various judgments one will be caught out saying--I really do find this working on me, although I hate the fact that it does so. By really exploring that contradiction, I may find out something about myself and others. (PL, pp. 348-49)

This manifesto is fairly typical of Williams, in its theoretical contradictions. Thus, on the one hand, Williams attempts to highlight the importance of relativism by calling for "a much more specific analysis of the situations," for "a very complex typology,"

and for an exploration of contradictory responses that will "resist the categorical predetermination" of signals and cues, denying them "an unworked priority" (or even equal mutual validity), and instead placing them "in relation to other value systems." On the other hand, his absolutist tendencies surface despite himself: he clearly allows the possibility and the desirability of finding intrinsic (formal) value, "often without any other consideration"; he talks about an undifferentiated "human" gain and culture; and he prevalues the contemplative act, declaring that attention to formal detail is self-evidently a "major" human gain. Even his (negative) insistence on methodological balance is itself, objectively, a testimony to his contradictory impulses: he is anxious "[not] to deny" the alleged importance of purely formal evaluations; he is "unwilling to concede" pre-ordained and equal value to different objects; he is concerned "not to cede" the task of comparative evaluation, and is determined to "resist" the "extreme training" against such methods.

This is not to say that Williams' own, explicit observation about the heuristic value of contradictory responses is unimportant. Rather, it is precisely in his non-class-specific description of them that their significance for Marxist axiology lies. The "community"-oriented psycho-culturalist exercise suggested by Williams' invitation to "find out something about myself and others" directly corresponds to his frequently anti-Marxist usage of "human," and is reminiscent of nothing so much as the petit-bourgeois "Me"-generation talk of the New Left. Such mystification actually serves to prevent the class-perception and practical resolution of bourgeois cultural (and socio-economic) contradictions--thereby ultimately doing

its bit to defend capitalism against socialist revolution--while simultaneously projecting the image of an ideology anxious to imbue people with "social" awareness. This is also the role of classical social democracy and its political rhetoric (taken up, as and when convenient, by Stalinism).

The self-restriction to culture, then, is politically crucial. We have already seen Williams' dramatic shift on the question of a planned socialist culture. Underlying both his early dismissal of it (in Culture and Society) and his subsequent obsession with its every detail (in Towards 2000) is the same absence of a class-based projection, which then naturally circumvents the question of proletarian revolution and leads, rather directly, to undiluted reformism.

Thus it transpires, for instance, that although he reveals the bourgeois origins of current aesthetic categories to suggest their tenuousness, Williams does not extend that class-principle of analysis to the scenario of the future. This explains his silence about the values conceivably relevant to the political rise to power of the last ruling class, the revolutionary proletariat. For, without any oppressors and oppressed politically intruding into the cultural scene, who needs a proletarian revolution? Certainly, the old, bourgeois values are useless now; but (so runs his logic), since the proletariat is probably no longer a revolutionary class anyway, and since that removes international socialist revolution, along with its specific values, from the agenda, socialists will simply be compelled to re-cycle those old bourgeois values--sometimes in slightly updated form--and re-consume them within the perennial structure of bourgeois society. The

"cultural revolution" will thus have to precede--and possibly preclude--the proletarian capture of state power. This political logic certainly corresponds to all of Williams' specific axiological vacillations, contradictions, negativisms, and idealist compromises.

In keeping with his declared emphasis on (literary) production rather than on consumption, Williams has more to say about the literary product's ingredients and process of generation than about reader-response and evaluation. Nevertheless, he does occasionally generalise about the latter aspects of literary transaction, usually with a negative, classless relativism. "The argument of values," he explains in Marxism and Literature (p. 157), for instance, "is in the variable encounters of intention and response in specific situations." In Politics and Letters (p. 347), he clarifies that his "general position" is "to seek the maximum disclosure of the circumstances of judgment, which would allow someone to dissociate himself from it; but then openly and not by a presumptive category." If Williams' apparent stress on "circumstances" and "dissociate" seems then to imply a policy of indifferentism, this is not accidental.

But of course, even in its negative form, this stance--though itself not Marxist--can be useful to Marxist evaluation. Thus, as we shall see, Marxists can gain an insight into at least Williams' own specific criteria for valuing (and his methods of "appropriating") one of his favourite writers, Thomas Hardy, by following the particular materialist logic of his personal variables. In the abstract, too, these idiosyncratic variables, which I shall discuss later, do find some generalised theoretical formulation, especially regarding the interaction among text, reader, writer, and the rest of society, the objective effects of this interaction on the reader, and the reader's more or less conscious

efforts to regulate those effects in his or her own interests ("appropriation"). And through them all, indeed, emerge Williams' fundamentally social-democratic political values and viewpoint.

Thus, in an early description of his ideal of a "good community" and "living culture," typically phrased as an admonition aimed at "the working class movement" (rather than as an indictment of bourgeois society), Williams effectively urges a relaxing of proletarian vigilance and independence, in the direction of classless pluralism, within the explicit political framework of bourgeois "industry and democracy," or the "long revolution":

A good community, a living culture, will . . . not only make room for but actively encourage all and any who can contribute to the advance in consciousness which is the common need. Wherever we have started from, we need to listen to others who started from a different position. We need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it. . . . Thus, in the working-class movement, while the clenched fist is a necessary symbol, the clenching ought never to be such that the hand cannot open, and the fingers extend. . . . The forces which have changed and are still changing our world are indeed industry and democracy. Understanding of this change, this long revolution, . . . is not easy to reach. . . . We are learning, slowly, to attend to our environment as a whole, and to draw our values from that whole, and not from its fragmented parts, where a quick success can bring long waste. . . . The struggle for democracy is the pattern of this revaluation. . . . (CS, pp. 320-22; see also Long R, p. 340)

Here, "the struggle for democracy," or the "long revolution," is conceived expressly within the confines of bourgeois "industry and democracy"; the stick is openly bent against "the working-class movement" and its real, non-symbolic "clenched fist," in favour of

"all and any" who have "started from a different position." The class-orientation of the latter, typically, is never forthrightly revealed as bourgeois; that has to be deduced from the class-nature of its opposite, the "working-class movement." Moreover, again typically, the crucial issue is idealistically and classlessly ("common need") posed as one of "advance in consciousness" rather than one of social revolution through organised proletarian activity and consciousness.

But, of course, the passage also contains precisely those liberal enjoinders that are at once sensible because self-evident and abstract because non-committal regarding class. Of course one would be a foolish Marxist indeed if one did not "listen to others who started from a different position," did not "consider every attachment, every value," with one's "whole attention," and claimed to "be certain" of everything about the "future" and "what may enrich it." But, a Marxist may also legitimately ask, does Williams' recommended alternative of eclecticism here refer simply to a Marxist's range of parameters, the merely numerical scope of his or her objects of enquiry? Or does it rather refer to a clearly-charted orientation towards liquidating Marxist methodology and proletarian independence (in all spheres) into the amorphous "struggle" for bourgeois "democracy"?

My answer would be the latter. The studied agnosticism of "listen," "consider," "do not know," "open," "extend," "understanding," "learning," and "attend" is decisively exposed in its bourgeois bias by Williams' open campaigning for "democracy," in effective practical opposition to the real "clenched fist." Williams' real demand, therefore,



is neither for "neutral" non-intervention in the class-struggle, nor even for an entirely necessary democracy within the workers' revolutionary movement, but for an abandonment of proletarian class-independence in favour of the existing bourgeois "environment as a whole" and for an abandonment of the "short revolution" in favour of his "long" one. Thus, Williams' urging of workers to "consider" "every" attachment and value with their whole "attention" is really his coded advice to accept bourgeois attachments and values, in opposition to revolutionary proletarian ones. Williams' "uncertainty" about "future" values merely amounts to a determined predisposition to reject only those certainties flowing from the real, non-symbolic "clenched fist." All uncertainties are reserved for that particular "future," not--ironically--for the one that he himself terms the "long" revolution. In other words, Williams' apparent approval of the symbolic clenched fist actually hinges on his effective rejection of its practical implications.

Yet, reformist and ultimately conciliatory though Williams' stance towards capitalism may be, he does perceive this reformism as a real strategy for "human," "cultural" liberation. To that end, his general criterion of literary value is one that often favours effects that at least lead to (cultural-reformist, humanist) action. In this, even if in an attenuated fashion and at a qualitatively less radical level, Williams' criterion parallels that of Caudwell. And it is this reformist-utilitarian criterion that serves as his general political principle for selecting his favourite "tradition" in literature, for his "appropriation" of available literary values.

Thus, in Politics and Letters (p. 343) Williams explicitly rejects the purely personal criterion in favour of an objective one, but still avoids lending the latter a class-definition. Instead, his definition harks back to the community-oriented criteria of Culture and Society itself: "Serious acts of valuation. . . are those which have a wider [-than-personal] continuity of effect as an active process. They are modes of standing towards a particular form, which show it in a different light that affects not just some way in which we react to it, but some way in which we live." But exactly what "wider"-than-personal evaluative criterion to employ, which particular "modes of standing" to recognize as valid, and exactly how to define, assess, and act on the "way in which we live," are all questions typically left unbroached and unanswered: that is, from a consistently Marxist standpoint, the issues of class, (proletarian) partisanship, and (proletarian) revolution are all ignored. The values of "community," "complexity," and "democratic socialism"--in a word, of reformism--replace them instead.

In this light, even Williams' early talk about "[g]reat literature" as being "indeed. . . liberating" and about the near-absurdity--but also near-possibility--of literature functioning as a "substitute" for "living" (CS, p. 245) retrospectively shows itself to be quite compatible with his lifelong mode of active "culturalist" reformism. Both versions reject proletarian social revolution. Thus, even when Williams condemns Lawrence's passivity, defeatism, and inconsistency (MT, p. 138), he himself still remains firmly within this framework:

. . . Lawrence will not even oppose what he opposes, will not enter that dimension at all, in any active way, though he has known it as torment and written it as general and inescapable.

It is possible to say this, if one believes in meaningful social action, and of course to await that summary dismissal as politician or sociologist, a simple pedlar of the old social dream. . . . At this [the] farthest point of his crisis, Lawrence not only refuses to oppose what he opposes, but also refuses to affirm what he affirms. Under these tensions, only death is possible.

After all, Williams elsewhere explains, "[t]o succeed in art is to convey an experience to others in such a form that the experience is actively re-created--not 'contemplated,' not 'examined,' not passively received, but by response to the means, actually lived through, by those to whom it is offered" (Long R, p. 34). But, of course, in precisely how consistent a manner--from a Marxist point of view--Williams himself wants to see the "experience" "actively re-created" and "actually lived through," remains the question.

The link between Williams' occasional discussion of evaluative response and his more frequent discussions of ostensibly intrinsic literary value is his concept of the "selective tradition," in relation to the critic's mechanism for its appropriation ("assimilation"). Taking his cue from Marx's observation that the French neo-classical dramatists' "misunderstanding" of Greek drama "corresponded to the needs of their own art" (Marx/Engels, p. 269), Williams offers the generalisation that "[t]he traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary system of interests and values. . ." (Long R, p. 51). The particular criteria for the correspondence, Williams notes, may vary: sometimes a work may continue

to be valued because it constitutes "a genuine contribution to cultural growth"; at other times, he observes, "[w]e shall find . . . that we are using the work in a particular way for our own reasons . . ."

(Long R, pp. 52-53). And in any case, he concludes, "it is better to know this general, material law of valuation than to surrender to the mysticism of the 'great valuer, Time'" (Long R, pp. 52-53).

Now, in these statements, there seems to be nothing that explicitly contradicts the premises and methodology of Marxism. However, the entire argument is actually advanced within a purely evolutionary conception of "complex" and "continuous" social "growth," so that practical (and organised) class-struggle as a decisive and often drastic, revolutionary selective factor is replaced by "many kinds of special interest," of which "class interests" are but one, non-definitive set. Yet, Williams' rejection of class as definitive merely indicates his more general disagreement with the consistent historical materialism of the Marxist method.

Consequently, while denying the notion of absolute "human perfection (a movement towards determined values)," he simultaneously advances the possibility of equally absolute "true" values and "permanent" contributions (Long R, p. 53). This dual rejection of consistent class-centredness and historical relativism in his analytical method ~~crucially~~ matches his non-interventionist prognosis regarding "the relevance of past work, in any future situation," which--proceeding from a non-revolutionary point of view--he can only describe as unmitigatedly "unforeseeable" (Long R, p. 51). The Marxist revolutionaries, as well as Caudwell, could all recognise and adumbrate (in their historically distinct ways) the class-defined, qualitative historical break in social

configuration and values that bourgeois society would face at some point; but Williams' reformist programme, coupled with his denial of classes as a definitive social category, forces a complete evasion on his part, over this question.

Thus, in an early extrapolation of his oft-repeated platitude that "the break towards socialism can only be towards an unimaginable greater complexity" and that the "notion of social simplicity . . . is untenable" (PL, pp. 128-29), Williams envisions a society in which the working class has somehow already managed to "become dominant." It then "would, of course," he concludes, "produce new valuations and new contributions. But the process would be extremely complex, because of the complexity of the inheritance, and nothing is now to be gained by diminishing this complexity to a crude diagram" (CS, p. 309). Of course, a Marxist would want to know the specific diagram that Williams dismisses as "crude." Judging by other internal evidence, Williams is almost certainly referring to Zhdanovism. But Zhdanovism (literary Stalinism) is not Marxism, as Trotskyism has repeatedly pointed out. To liberals and social democrats, however, the two are identical. Herein lies Williams' objective political bloc with bourgeois anti-communism.

A connection exists, moreover, between Williams' undialectical leap into "complex" "socialism" and his reformist-nationalist frustration at not already having found the all-inclusive "proletarian" British novel, irrespective of even his own brand of "socialist society." "It is extremely sad," he laments, "to read proletarian novels which are totally authentic and have something of the breadth of interest of 19th-century bourgeois realism, yet to feel at the end that they are

profoundly regional in the sense that the very forces which operate from outside on the formation and the destiny of the class itself . . . cannot be represented within them. The most that can be introduced is the occasional class visitor or class enemy" (PL, p. 267). It is as though literary production has--and should have--nothing to do with its class-conditions of possibility.

One result of such a method is the extreme personalisation of virtually all the selective criteria, qualified by a perfunctorily self-admonitory confession of that fact. Thus, Williams--as the representative of an admittedly limited social sector--can easily be taken to imply that novelists such as George Eliot and Lawrence are generally "important because they connect directly with our own kind of upbringing and education"; they touch upon a period "in which some of us have gone to Oxford or Cambridge" and, of course, upon Williams himself "who went to Cambridge and now teach[es] there." Thus, for Williams, the criterion ensuring the claimed literary value of certain writers is the arbitrary and seemingly classless "question of the relation between education . . . and the actual lives of a continuing majority of our people . . . who are specifically, literally, our own families" (CC, p. 209).<sup>35</sup> Conjunctural literary value thus becomes indexed to the experiences, views, and values of "us"--a narrow section of a particular social stratum, namely, those of the "Oxbridge" academic establishment typified by Williams. This non-Marxist, petit-bourgeois perspective decisively conditions both the relative political self-consistency and the logical contradictions of Williams' method of judging particular authors or works and of selecting his favourite literary "traditions."

Williams' contradictory methodology and criteria for judging readers' response are duplicated in his approach both to the general internal components and processes shaping the text and to the specific values seen to be contained in it. Essentially, once more they operate within anti-Marxist assumptions; hence they swing between reformist logic and radical phrases, empiricist practice and theoretical disclaimers of empiricism, classless generalisations and absolutist choices of specific texts, authors, and "traditions" linked to entrenched sectoral values--some of which, of course, are broadly compatible (though not identical) with the revolutionary Marxists' criteria.

Methodologically, as we have seen, Williams' alternative to pursuing evaluation "as an isolated activity" consists not in placing it within the framework of revolutionary proletarian interests and tasks but in actually counterposing his "culture"-centred reformism to that Marxist strategy. Thus, significantly, he reproduces and attacks, from an anti-Marxist position, a familiar distortion of Marx's comment that, "as regards art, it is well known that some of its peaks by no means correspond to the general development of society":

putting it in a . . . familiar way, the artistic  
achievements of a class belong to its rise.  
This is a classical Marxist proposition and  
there are many examples to confirm it . . .  
.....

But I have often been tempted to think that it is a regular pattern that a particular kind of formally perfect work emerges at the end of a period in the history of a class, although not necessarily that of its defeat--clearly not in the case of Jane Austen's time. I think we have probably paid too little attention to this recurrent phenomenon, because the other proposition--that major art is connected with the confidence and vigour of the ruling class--takes us a good way. In fact there can be an especially perfect kind of art at a time when its social positions have become impossible. (PL, p. 250)

This statement is an elusive polemic against Marxism. It is elusive most obviously because it attacks but does not explicitly use or paraphrase Marx's actual words in his Introduction; it is elusive also because much of what Williams correctly attacks is a false target, a straw man simultaneously evocative of and untrue to Marx's Introduction. But it is worse than falsely evocative of Marx: it is distortive. For nowhere in my Marx can I find that "other proposition--that major art is connected with the confidence and vigour of the ruling class," or that "the artistic achievements of a class belong to its rise," though both propositions may be perfectly legitimate in themselves. And of course, beyond that, the very question of which specific works qualify as "major" art needs to be settled before one can test the merits of the proposition as a whole. Yet this near-severance of "major art," of "formally perfect work," from "its social positions," "the history of a class," ultimately



stems from Williams' familiar reformist perspective of carrying out a "cultural revolution" irrespective of social revolution. Once one has emphasised the looseness of the superstructure from its base and defined one's goal in life as "cultural politics," half the battle over values is already "won": the project for full-scale reform of "values" may now be begun within the confines of capitalism, free from the Leninist insistence on fundamental socio-economic change as the historic prerequisite for decisively solving all cultural problems.

At bottom one may recognise, in Williams' above inaccurate paraphrase, the familiar, revisionist rejection of "Base-Superstructure" and "Class." The consequences, as I have noted, are contradictory. Mainly, on the one hand, Williams lapses into an indiscriminate theoretical relativism, verging on indifference, towards particular (especially socio-political) values; his subjective impressionism fuels his resistance to class-analysis. On the other hand, his specific evaluative criteria and literary preferences turn out to be both sectoralist and absolute (flowing from a particular academic world-view), though their application is often accompanied by his attempts at criticising their limitedness.

Williams' absolutist premises usually do not receive explicit theoretical generalisation. But when they do, they seem quite categorical. Thus, the early Williams flatly asserted that "[i]f you don't like it in one century, you can't reasonably like it in another" (Long R, p. 265). In his more recent Politics and Letters interviews, he echoed this early axiomatic statement, albeit in order to expose the real gap between Leavis' ostensibly principled valorisation of "colloquialism"

and "everydayness" and his actual discrimination towards these qualities in relation to their varying contexts: "You can't extol these virtues in the past and then lament them in the present without the extraordinary cultural map which Leavis had to draw: once all these things had been part of real life, now they were a simple vulgarity" (PL, p. 247).

For Williams himself, however, "Leavis' stated position of colloquiality and lived experience" is still, on evidence, an absolute criteria of positive value, and should have remained so for Leavis (PL, pp. 247-48). That is why Williams is able to reveal to us, in an equally metaphysical vein, that he himself "very consciously reserved the possibility that there may be permanent configurations that would account for the responses to which, for example, the concept of beauty points" (PL, p. 341; emphasis mine). And although he goes on to say that "such a finding . . . cannot be adumbrated speculatively beforehand" (PL, p. 341), his record shows precisely several such attempts to capture some absolute general criterion of value. The net characteristic of this value may be defined as "the detailed and substantial performance of a known model" of people or artistic forms, the latter including syntactical, rhythmic, and thematic patterns, conceivably rooted in "certain shared 'physical' and 'mental'--active--life processes of evolved human organisation," though "of course made and remade within specific cultural traditions"; as Williams puts it, "the materialising of recognition is an evident formal element of much of the great art of the world" (ML, pp. 209, 188, 191).

Between Williams' categorical absolutism and his equally extreme classless relativism, hovers his premium on "constant experiment."

Among his absolute general criteria of intrinsic value, this one is least intrinsic to any one text per se. Early on, Williams had asserted that "it is the effort, the learning [by nineteenth-century writers] in experience which it is important for us to know" (CS, p. 38). And later, he went so far as to value Under Milk Wood on this basis alone: "It remains true, in the drama and the theatre, that we do not know what we can do until we have tried; . . . constant experiment is essential. Under Milk Wood justifies itself, if only as this" (DIB, p. 245). Yet, in calling for a "new realism," to strike a "balance" between experimental struggles for new artistic modes and the fetishising of those struggles themselves, Williams clearly warned against the latter ploy of mere experiment-for-experiment's sake:

Reality is continually established, by common effort, and art is one of the highest forms of this process. Yet the tension can be great, in the necessarily difficult struggle to establish reality, and many kinds of failure and breakdown are possible. . . . The recording of creative effort, to explore such breakdowns, is not always easy to distinguish from the simple, often rawly exciting exploitation of break-down. . . . It is certain that any effort to achieve a contemporary balance will be complex and difficult, but the effort is necessary, a new realism is necessary, if we are to remain creative. (Long R., pp. 288-89)

Naturally, the test of any realism must be "experience." For Williams, however, "experience" as a criterion and a method also becomes the rationale: for, on the one hand, positing all kinds of arbitrarily chosen values as absolute, and, on the other, for resisting a class-orientation in evaluative method and denying a class-axis within individual textual ingredients

"Experience" thus doubles as an adhesive for two mutually complementary "opposites": absolutism and classless relativism. It is, in one sense, his axiological charm for warding off the evil spirit of all "received doctrines," a charm whose accompanying code-words usually are "intensity," "vitality," "immediacy," "instinct," "emotion," "connection," "strength," and "life". This vitalist anti-"doctrinarism" is precisely the perspective from which he praises Godwin's use of experience in Caleb Williams, in contrasting his work to Burke's: "Things as They Are seeks at the outset to illustrate the original argument and then throughout the rest of the book is driven to challenge and to deny it. That kind of straining at the limits of a position without giving up the intention behind it is pre-eminently the kind of political thought I was evoking as other than the application of received doctrines--the reworking of a formula through experience, both in the personal sense and in the most immediate social sense of what was actually happening inside England" (PL, p. 124).

Here, not only are we back to our earlier discussion of constant experimentation as one of Williams' absolute criteria of positive value: we are also back to the issue of such fetishism's political significance. ("Reworking" for reworking's sake, "straining" for straining's sake, is, after all, nothing but a programmatic fetish for "experiment.") This fetish is merely a symptom. The more systemic disorder is Williams' abstract and automatic extension of the felt need to challenge specific flawed arguments (such as Burke's or even Godwin's) to the sphere of argumentation in general ("a position," "a formula"[emphasis mine]); it is a significant inter-

pretation of an occasional necessity as a principled virtue. This interpretation and emphasis is not an accident but an accurate polemical expression of deep critical impulses and, beyond that, of a political programme. For a settled social democrat such as Williams, to advocate resistance to Burkean conservatism alone (if at all) would be unforgivably to allow free rein to Marxism. But it is Marxism or nothing that has historically always been the ultimate target and victim of social democracy; and Williams' generalised codewords "received doctrines" accurately suggest that his own "intention behind it" is no exception to that history.

Corroboration of this view can be found in Williams' numerous, more explicit commentaries on radical literature of the post-Marx era. In general, it is safe to say that Williams invokes the authority of "experience" only when confronted with the abstract platitudes and stilted illustrations of Zhdanovite "Socialist Realism"--which, as we know, he then almost never distinguishes from genuine Marxism (see, for instance, his Cold War laudatory peroration on Pasternak, in Modern Tragedy, p. 173). "Experience" (with one or more of its specific attributes stressed) is deployed in Williams principally to combat the Marxist notion--what he terms the "stock notion"--of class and correspondingly to elevate the worth of "community." Thus, in Culture and Society (p. 126), Williams is using quotation marks quite unironically when he complains that "[t]he worst harm done by the 'stock notion' of class . . . was that it offered category feelings about human behaviour, based on a massing and simplifying of actual individuals, as an easy substitute for the difficulties of personal and immediate judgment." And in The Country and the City (p. 315), Williams significantly characterises Fred Kitchen's

novel Brother to the Ox (1939) as "the true voice of the surviving countryman . . . with the real connections of labour and community. . . . It is the real sense of context," he goes on, "experiencing directly what is ordinarily abstracted . . .; shrewdly observed, without class preconceptions."<sup>36</sup> This is the classic anti-Marxist double-standard, applied to axiology: "class" entails "category" feelings, but "countryman," "labour," and "community" do not; "class" is based on a "massing and simplifying of actual individuals," but "community" and "labour" are not; to see classes in society is to harbour "preconceptions," but not to see classes is to be "shrewd," "without class preconceptions." These are precisely the preconceptions, as we have seen, of the Arnoldian liberal. In this case, they are picked up and perpetuated by a social democrat.

Yet, as I noted, Williams is contradictory in his evaluative methods, just as he is in his politics. And part of that contradiction lies in his occasional recognition of the obvious epistemological absurdity and counterproductivity of empiricism. Thus, in criticising Camus' defeatist fictional philosophy, Williams openly declares that "while history is an abstraction it is still an abstraction from the actual lives of ourselves and others. There is a point at which the refusal of history, the limitation of significance to the personally known and affirmed, becomes in effect the refusal of others, and this also can be evasion and even complicity" (MT, p. 184).<sup>37</sup> In fact, in Politics and Letters (p. 342), he even goes so far as to warn that although, in the act of evaluation ("a declaration of interest"), "everyone is initially in a different situation, . . .

we should not forget the true common modes, beyond that, of class affiliation." And indeed, one can sometimes find in Williams' work the odd class-analysis of specific values.<sup>38</sup> But generally, Williams' rejection of subjective, empiricist impressionism produces not class-dialectics but a classless algebra straddling extreme "relativism" and "more general acts of valuation," a position of which the following is the clearest statement:

[T]he movement towards declaration of situation is . . . crucial, given the successive mystifications of the trained reader or the informed critic or the cultivated gentleman. It does not have to lead to relativism, because the active valuations to emerge from the whole process would not be connected with those elements of one's own situation which are really just biographical idiosyncracies that issue into personal preferences. . . .; they would instead be related to those which associated one with others in certain more general acts of valuation . . . .

What I am rejecting is the notion of valuation without the development of either of the two situating processes--that which has come to be encapsulated as criticism. Today it has become divorced even from the historical models to which it used to be attached. . . . But if you erect 'my first-hand response' into a criterion of judgment, it is very difficult to exclude such responses on grounds of principle--all that can be said is you've got a very clumsy first hand. . . . (PL, pp. 342-43)

Williams' application of the above "situating" principle to specific values (and valued categories) is frequent, and, admittedly illuminating, though there, too, the effect remains primarily abstract and negative, or de-mythifying.

But such a procedure is not far removed from a random sociology, in which the most obvious and direct determinants of particular values and evaluations are seized upon by way of "contextual explanation," without much concern for their broader logic or patterns of incidence and contradiction. In other words, it is methodologically of a piece with empiricism and impressionism; only the immediate ambit of those impressions becomes slightly more accommodating, more elastic. Williams' work furnishes several instances of precisely such analyses, vivid but theoretically limited. Perhaps the most elaborate and rounded of these is his commentary, in Marxism and Literature (pp. 11-54), on Neo-classical and Romantic values in general, what he calls the "central Romantic assertions" (ML, p. 50). Especially sharp is his analysis of "the denial of materiality by these necessary workers with material," as a protest against "the capitalist system of material production for a market" (ML, p. 162). Other similar conjunctural analyses--examining the writer's values, the text's contained values, the audience's values, as well as various critics' values--occur in his comments on Richardson's "specialisation of virginity" to a "personal and (in its context) fashionable issue" (CC, pp. 83-84), on the reasons why Wells, "moving around a more comfortable London [than Gissing's] came as a positive relief, a recovery of energy" (EN, p. 162), why sentimental tragedy "is now valueless" (MT, p. 93), and why sentimental comedy failed and "continues to fail" (Long R, p. 260).

Yet, the stamp of absolutism clearly marks the assumptions underlying at least the last three of those characterisations/evaluations:



Williams seems to have no doubt that Wells simply was and will be universally viewed as "a positive relief" from Gissing, that sentimental tragedy nowadays simply is "valueless," and that sentimental comedy undeniably failed and "continues to fail." He thus routinely proceeds to "explain" those phenomena (as he sees them), in each case. But herein lies the tenacity of his idealist premises and method: they will simply not be dispelled by formulaic, superficial "conjuncturalism." For, unless one provides a relatively stable frame of reference, such specific evaluations either seem to lack all principle or seem to be each a law unto itself--and neither outcome reflects reality or helps the axiologist.

A typical practical result of this method (more representative, incidentally, of Williams' general method than his analysis of Romantic values) can be seen in his evaluation of the theme of "rebellion" in drama. Thus, in discussing the shift in the central figure in modern drama from "the liberal hero" to "the hero as liberator," Williams points out that "[i]n fact this work has rested on a particular kind of social support, with audiences drawn from groups committed to reform, or at least prepared to give it a hearing" (Long R, p. 267). Obversely, drama based on national legends "has been less successful in finding a social basis" in England than in countries such as Ireland and France. "It has depended, in fact, on two kinds of audience: first, one associated with the church, which in some cases has sponsored such work, and which was the effective basis for the introduction of Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral; second, particularly with classical material, a limited public with some classical education, usually served by minority broadcasting rather than by theatres" (Long R, p. 268).

In such a situation--in a society divided into privileged, exploiting classes and deprived, exploited ones--Marxists would hardly expect from a writer such as Eliot anything more promising than what Williams calls "a decadence in manner," "the inertia of a convention he had begun by attacking," "a tragedy" in which Eliot "finds and then loses, in experiment and accommodation, a new and serious dramatic form" (DIB, pp. 217-219, 220-22). At least they would not be astonished to find aristocratic reaction from the American South "accommodating" to its class-image, ancient English obscurantism. Yet Williams finds this "decadence" "startling." In The Elder Statesman, in 1958, he complains, "[i]t is Eliot's familiar conclusion: The release, through consciousness, from an unreal ordinary life, 'only human beings'; the acceptance, in death, of another reality" (DIB, p. 222). To Marxists, it is--if anything--not Eliot's "decadence" (dating, according to Williams, from The Confidential Clerk [1953]) but Williams' astonishment at it that may seem really "startling."

One noticeable distinction between the previous group of critics--from Marx to Caudwell--and Williams is that the latter addresses the problem of evaluative method in greater detail than the former. But, as we have seen, many of Williams' general axiological principles themselves emerge from his actual valuation (or devaluation) of particular textual ingredients: and a common ideological thread runs through his evaluative methods and his specific criteria of value. Hence, the political premises from which Williams judges literary critics are the same as those from which he judges "creative" writers and their literature, though the latter premises do show one or two nuances appropriate

to their special spheres of operation. Williams' counterposition of community, complexity, and reform to class-analysis and revolutionary evaluation thus also makes itself generally felt in his detailed judgments.

In one sense, Williams' chief specific criteria of literary value may be regarded as the same as everyone else's before him: truthfulness. In another sense, such a characterisation might seem an oversimplification, for the particular components that add up to truthfulness, for him, are certainly complex. It might be useful, therefore, to emphasise his formal criteria of value over his ideological ones, while trying to convey a sense of them both through the term "realism."

Certainly, that term itself in Williams is not simple. The early Williams argued that the "simple technical use of 'realism,' to describe the precision and vividness of a rendering in art of some observed detail . . . [.] . . . involves all the later complexities" (Long R, p. 274). Later, in Politics and Letters, he defined realism as "a certain perception of reality and a certain awareness of inter-relationships," not a convention that "carries a certain mode of composition with it" or one that bears "a second-order relation to pre-existing reality" (PL, p. 350). Thus, he now concludes, "a convention could resemble no actual history at all, yet be positively productive by its representation of possible situations. The soundest conventions are not always realist, although this is more often the case than not."

Generalising about such axiological issues (PL, pp. 306-07), Williams suggests that "the crucial evaluative function is the judgment of conventions themselves, from a deliberate and declared

position of interest. . . . Each convention must be assessed by what it is rooted in and what it does. . . ." He distinguishes "two kinds of judgment": one is the kind that enables us to classify a convention as "historically productive and therefore historically valuable--in that sense . . . a major contribution to human culture"; the other kind stems from one's own presumed "affiliation to the working class" and enables one to classify "bourgeois society and its contradictory products" as "a disastrously powerful contribution." By way of illustrating the second kind of judgment, he asks, rhetorically, "[I]f I cannot be seriously offended that in ["To Penshurst" Ben Jonson] . . . wrote out the labourer, what affiliation can I now make to labourers? . . . [and] . . . what is the meaning of solidarity?" A Leninist would answer that "the meaning of solidarity" within discourse today is to seize every opportunity to extend it beyond discourse: it is to demonstrate the general need for a workers' revolutionary organisation that will remove the political obstacles exemplified by the liberal, moralistic gestures and abstract mental deliberations of someone like Williams himself. Williams would object to that. That is why his conception of working-class solidarity programmatically limits itself to discursive gestures signalling that he is "morally offended" (PL, p. 307). As he once self-revealingly indicated, "[t]he nature of . . . [the moral choices in liberal tragedy] . . . is in the end essentially a matter of attitudes towards revolution. It is in this process that we are still engaged" (MT, p 68). Judging by even his latest pronouncements, for Williams, the day of decision in favour of revolution will never come.

But his observations about the historically dual character of literary conventions, especially of those generally assumed to typify

"realism," are useful. Thus, in a discussion of Orwell, Williams remarks that "[i]n Orwell's Lancashire it is always raining, not because it often does or doesn't, but because it has to do so as a condition of convincing local detail of the North" (PL p. 391). Criticising the later Orwell's "extreme distaste for humanity of every kind," which he traces back "after all to the early Eliot," Williams suggests that "certain literary conventions really dictate modes of observation, not just of writing, although it's in the writing that the effective dictation comes and that what is taken as vivid and convincing and truthful is actually prescribed" (PL, pp. 390-91).

Of course, specific literary conventions in themselves can hardly "dictate" all of a writer's modes of observation unless he or she is predisposed to the general outlook embodied in them. In the last analysis, it would seem, no consistent description and explanation of the variable character of "realism" can avoid class-analysis. But that is anathema to Williams. Thus, it is entirely in keeping with his non-class methodology that Williams should strongly hint at but still not spell out the petit-bourgeois class-basis of Orwell's urge to let Eliotesque "conventions" "dictate" his own observations.

Generally, Williams is not at all hostile to what he calls modernism, especially when he is comparing it to Zhdanovite "Socialist Realism." Thus, he recalls that in the Cambridge CPGB's Writers' Group, they "were pretty critical of socialist realism--our interests were very much more in modernism. . . . Ulysses and Finnegans Wake . . . were the texts we most admired, and we counterposed to socialist realism" (PL, p. 45). He goes on to praise and illustrate the distinction "between

indicative and subjunctive modes within the [modernist-realist] dramatic form itself" (PL, p. 218). The indicative mode, he explains, "states that this is what reality is like," whereas the subjunctive mode "precisely captures the most Brechtian intention." Williams then cites "a striking example" from Brecht's Fears and Miseries of the Third Reich, where a scene is first played showing the defeat of a revolution, "and then it is replayed with the introduction of some other element and the result is a different outcome." Contrasting this kind of "transformation within a realist framework" to the undialectical progressions usually depicted within Socialist Realism, Williams explains: "A utopian or futurist drama . . . would make a completely false jump to a socialist docks run by the workers in which there was no more conflict. In that kind of mode, there is no way of getting from the present to the future, which was always what was wrong with the Stalinist definition of socialist realism" (PL, p. 219). As he argues in Marxism and Literature (p. 201), "[i]ndeed the critique [by Marx and Engels] of 'tendency literature' is not a case against 'commitment' but a case for serious commitment: the commitment to social reality."

Yet, like most of Williams' interpretations of Marxist concepts, this one too may be seen to have been bent to his particular social-democratic and culturalist inclinations, presenting "serious commitment" as a chiefly literary intervention into a politically amorphous "social reality." The interpretation is double-edged. However, one of its edges does cut against the blatant disregard for and distortion of class-reality spawned by bourgeois ideology and nurtured by Stalinism. And in this, Williams' argument does constitute a defense of some form of partisan realism.

Williams' manifest regret at the demise of nineteenth-century realism should be viewed in light of the above complicating factors. Nevertheless, his regret is clear, especially in his tracing of its "breakdown" from "expressionism" in drama to the "stream of consciousness" in the novel and, beyond, to "the fiction of special pleading," or the propaganda novel (MT, pp. 139-40). "In the best literature of the nineteenth-century," he recalls nostalgically, "the whole way of life and the individual human beings were not only simultaneous and contemporary, but were both real." But "in the middle of the twentieth century," he decides, significantly echoing Caudwell's complaint, "[a] general consciousness of illusion has taken over from the reality of both . . . . Illusion is not a means to reality, but an expression of illusion itself" (MT, p. 141).

Moreover, the Caudwellian parallel extends beyond general formulations, to several individual examples from literature itself. Thus, for instance, Williams' preference of reality to illusion can take the form of valuing "history" over "spectacle," as in Scott versus James, respectively (PL, pp. 256-57). He favours "historical imagination" (as in Shirley, Middlemarch, and Felix Holt) over the kind of "fanciful exercises" to be found in Romola or a Tale of Two Cities (EN, p. 14). He prefers "authentic observation" to Georgian "sub-intellectual fantasy" (CC, p. 308). He values dramatic "realism . . . at every level of creation--action, persons, and speech," as in Hauptmann's The Weavers, over "situation, plot, 'spokesman' characters," as in Widowers' Houses (DIB, pp. 273, 275). And he prefers "dramatic conventions . . . which the audience do not recognise as conventions"--such as, apparently, the chorus in Murder in the Cathedral--to "unfamiliar barrier[s]" (DIB, pp. 199-200).

Real individuals must be shown integrated into a "whole way of life"; a writer must evoke the complexity of "lived experience" within a community. These pro-realism demands encapsulate Williams' overall conception of positive literary value. They do so, moreover, despite his receptiveness--in the face of a stultifying Socialist Realism--to formally non-representational "modernism." They carry with them connotations of comprehensiveness of vision, internal consistency of expression (ideological, structural, and stylistic), and courage and optimism of perspective (the last, of course, expressly dissociated by Williams from organised communist partisanship). These aspects are sometimes also overtly expected by him as requisites.

Williams' emphasis on "lived experience," in particular, often verges on the absolute, though this criterion must be seen in light of his other premiums on experiment and general truthfulness. Yet, it is important to connect this specific criterion of "literary" value to Williams' philosophical subjectivism, in which "experience" becomes his coded "answer" to Marxist class-analysis. On the one hand, such a criterion can accommodate an entire gamut of arguably disparate writers, from Austen to Brecht, on the basis of either their comprehensive vision or their observational precision. Thus, Austen's engagement with "lived experience" can be praised for being "prying and analytic"; George Eliot's engagement with it in Adam Bede can be praised for bringing an essentially Austenite analysis "to bear without the class limitation," counterposing the depicted "social and economic relationships" to class (CC, p. 205; also see Culture and Society, p. 118); and Brecht's "complex seeing," despite its "alienating" strategies, can be praised precisely for evincing the opposite of "the intensity of special pleading on behalf of an



isolated figure": "The positive reference, the source of values and explanation, is at the other pole: the totality, the historical process" (DIB, p. 321).

Again, as we can see, the amorphous "historical process" simultaneously embodies concrete "experience" and eliminates the class-axis from any false individual/society counterposition. "The strength of his [Brecht's] form," Williams continues, "is that it permits this kind of clarification: at once clipped, bitter, distant, and yet, in its assumption of a common complicity, a common weakness, connecting and humane in very general ways: a human need and satisfaction ironically known and recalled" (DIB, p. 321).<sup>39</sup> Indeed, in Politics and Letters (p. 216), Williams expressly dissociates Brecht's "complex seeing" from the idea (let alone the act) of "revolutionary entry into a new world, because that repeatedly in the plays does not happen." Thus, if Williams finds Gaskell's Mary Barton "really impressive," he clearly does so not because of her social focus or sympathies--which seem, at most, of incidental, journalistic significance to him--but because of "the intensity of the effort to record, in its own terms, the feel of everyday life in the working class homes," for a "convincing . . . creation of the characteristic feelings and responses of families of this kind (matters more determining than the material details on which the reporter is apt to concentrate) . . . " (CS, p. 99: emphasis mine).

As a polemic against Stalinism's mechanistic demands in its theory of Socialist Realism, Williams' emphasis on subjectivity is understandable. But of even larger significance to a Marxist would be the revealing paradox that, as Williams' allegedly "Marxist" career

progresses, anti-Stalinism--rather than anti-capitalism--indeed becomes his abiding criterial preoccupation. This raises legitimate questions about whom he really sees as the main enemy of Gaskell's, Brecht's and his own, contemporary "working class." Of a piece with the above paradox, moreover, is Williams' methodically inconsistent literalism with regard to Brecht and Gaskell, respectively. That is, in Brecht's case, Williams refuses to recognise any message beyond what explicitly does or does not "happen" in the plays; in Gaskell's case, however, he is concerned to shift any possible focus away from the "material details." The common principle, then, seems to be to obviate, at all costs, any discussion of real class-struggle. And the only evident reason for that is his demonstrated distaste for all the "doctrinaire" questions about revolutionary and organisational commitment that such a discussion might logically raise in the minds of consistent Marxists.

Williams' evaluation of Lawrence's Sons and Lovers is probably paradigmatic in this respect. He explicitly calls that novel "very great": "I emphasise the achievement as indeed that; not a preliminary, an achievement" (EN, p. 175). And he details the various aspects of "lived experience" depicted by Lawrence: "A physical primary relationship" between a mother and her sons that "is lived through . . . as a whole and continuing experience, in which what can easily be separated as personal and social are, in fact, known as a single complicated process. And Lawrence writes of this with a closeness and a continuity that are still unsurpassed; writing with the experience; with the mother as well as the son; with the life they belong to that is more, much more than a portrait or an environment or a

background" (EN, p. 175). It is as if the only conceivable alternative to the false polarities of "portrait" and "environment or background" were merely "life" and "experience." One does not have to be a Marxist to see the theoretical banality as well as the practical passivity underlying the choices envisaged by Williams.

On the same basis--that is, of the claimed superiority of "experience" as, ideally, both a broadening and an intensifying non-class factor--Williams prefers Anna Karenina's concern with "a whole experience" to the "isolated moral action" of Lady Chatterley's Lover<sup>40</sup> and Lawrence's variety and internationalism over the parochialism of the "Wells-Bennett-Galsworthy type."<sup>41</sup> And, in like vein, he sees Camus' "tragic humanism" as a stepping-stone "from a liberal to a socialist humanism" (MT, pp. 174-76).

Williams' search for literary "totalities" and "connections" to complement his perceived social "communities" also ranges over a wide spectrum of categories, including authorial ideology, characterisation, and idiom. His conception of a "common credible world" (CC, p. 303)-- of "connection" (MT, p. 13), of a "knowable community" (EN, pp. 186-87)-- illustrates this range. It extends from a writer's own participation in a "believing community" (as with Orwell's Homage to Catalonia [CS, p. 281] ) to the author's overall "vision" (as in Dickens [EN, pp. 54, 57] and in Ulysses [CC, p. 291]) to "whole actions which spring from the substance of . . . [the characters'] . . . lives" (as does not happen in Eliot [CC, p. 211]) to "complex feeling" (as in Mother Courage and Her Children [MT, p. 202]), as far as "community of speech," "the most deeply known community" (as in Ulysses [CC, p. 294], in "[the early] Lawrence's miracle of language" [EN, pp. 172-73], and in "the anonymous, collective, popular idiom" of Robert Tressell's Ragged-Trousered

Philanthropists [EN, p. 155]). On grounds of complexity and integration, Williams calls for a British emulation of Solzhenitsyn's First Circle (PL, p. 290) and upholds the Soviet cinema of Eisenstein over the cinema of Italian neo-realism (PL, p. 232).

Obversely, Williams may reject a work for its lack of "coheren[ce] in its own terms" (PL, p. 259) or for its demonstrated "gap" between "disparate structures" within its invoked reality. Thus he notes in sentimental tragedy "an evident gap between private sympathy and the public order" (MT, p. 93): the bourgeois tragedians, he explains, "moved by pity and sympathy, and struggling for realism, were in fact betrayed by this gap, where no realism was possible." Sometimes, moreover, Williams may partially reject a work because of an artificial resolution imposed by the author on its real conflicts, as with Austen's attempt to reconcile "property and virtue like a supernatural lawyer" (PL, p. 248). "We read the last chapters of Victorian novels," he comments, "which bring the characters together and settle their future directions, with . . . indifference or even impatience. This kind of reparation is not particularly interesting to us, because not really credible. Indeed it looks much too like a solution, which twentieth-century critics agree is a vulgar and intrusive element in any art." "Yet of course," he adds, "[t]o conclude that there is no solution is also an answer" (MT, p. 55).

The key term there is "credible," for that is Williams' basic criterion of realism. It is on the basis of credibility (or lack thereof) that he criticises Mary Barton's "devastating conclusion" as a "cancelling of the actual difficulties" (CS, p. 103); and it is also on this basis that he criticises the "artificial solutions"

of sentimental comedy (Long R, p. 260). In a more complex discussion, Williams favourably compares Emily Brontë's "human solution" (through "human intensity and connection") to George Eliot's "more critically realist world," in which she "conceives and yet cannot sustain acceptable social solutions; it is . . . a sad resignation on which she finally comes to rest" (CC, p. 215).

On the other hand, quite obviously, Williams is not unaware of the dubious credibility of closed forms in art, precisely because of their rarity in life. Thus, at one point, he accedes to a diagnosis of "exactly what I felt was wrong with Hard Times" as "overtotalisation" (PL, p. 253) and grants that, while the "realist novel needs, obviously, a genuine community," it is also "obviously difficult, in the twentieth century, to find a community of this sort" in real life (Long R, p. 286). In fact, apparently somewhat to his surprise, he finds the characters of George Eliot, too, disappointingly unintegrated in this respect. Discussing Eliot's incomplete empathy with her characters, Williams complains that she "gives her own consciousness, often disguised as a personal dialect, to the characters with whom she really does feel: but the strain of the impersonation is usually evident--in Adam, Daniel, Maggie, or Felix Holt. For the rest she gives out a kind of generalising affection which can be extended to a generalising sharpness (compare the Poyzers with the Gleggs and Dodsons), but which cannot extend to a recognition of lives individually made from a common source . . . ." (CC, pp. 207-08). Thus Williams detects "an evident failure of continuity between the necessary language of the novelist and the recorded language of many of the characters," resulting in "a deeply inauthentic" combination of "idioms" which is "not particularly convincing": such is allegedly the

case, for instance, with the speech of "Adam or Dinah or Hetty . . . when they are acting as individuals."<sup>42</sup>

Now, for the sake of simplicity, let us concede Williams' ability to distinguish between personae in general, regardless of his ability to spot Eliot's particular persona among them. Even so, the discrepancy between his literary expectations and actual literature remains a problematic fact: and it needs to be explained. In a sense, Williams' critique itself goes a long way towards furnishing the explanation. Significantly, however, in doing so, he regrets the alleged break in unity resulting from Eliot's (alleged) recognition of class-conflict: he does not welcome it. To that extent, therefore, he seems to prefer structural and tonal unity, for instance, to the accurate depiction of social reality, if the two become counterposed. Thus, in Politics and Letters (pp. 248-49), he praises "the confidence of Jane Austen's remarkable unity of tone" as "an apparently successful unification of an ideology and a practice within a dominant class," even though he characterises her project as "a very strenuous attempt to unify what was not unifiable--that is to say, the necessary processes and structures of a class to which she was committed, and the universalist values of a moral tradition which were overtly defined as honesty, kindness, responsibility." In contrast, he argues, "[w]hen the early George Eliot applies the same values to a wider admission of actual social relations, for example between landlord and tenant," the Austenite "unity of tone breaks up." In Eliot, he claims, "the very recognition of conflict, of the existence of classes, of divisions and contrasts of feeling and speaking, makes a unity of idiom impossible."<sup>43</sup>

In light of the above, perhaps Williams' own claim that

"[t]he deepest crisis in modern literature is the division of experience into social and personal categories" (MT, p. 121) captures, in the percipient's own terms, something of his general perceptual problem (as Marxists would regard it). That is to say, the deepest characteristic of capitalism is the division of society into two main opposing classes--the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; and one of the consequences of that division is the disorientation of most petit-bourgeois intellectuals trapped between these two classes, their inability to recognise or accept that reality. Such a framework at least begins to account for not only George Eliot's described problems but also for Williams' own perplexed disappointment at their undialectical oppositions (e.g., "individual" versus "society"). To grasp that fact, however, Williams would have to begin by accepting the validity of certain fundamentals of Marxism--for instance, that class-being determines class-consciousness (and also class-illusion). Yet, as we know, he is averse to doing so, at least in any decisive and consistent manner. The defining general contradiction of Williams' axiology, then, seems identical to Caudwell's: an un-Marxist politics (in Williams' case, social democracy) being brought to bear on literary evaluation and value theory allegedly within the framework of Marxism.

The above are some key literary aspects and political ramifications of Williams' criterion of truthfulness. His particular stress on totalities and lived experience bespeaks an empiricist idealism--which, from a Marxist point of view, is not at all a contradiction in terms. Williams' methodology, in its various ways, repeatedly reveals the contradictions stemming from the rival claims of its components: the empiricist side tends to foster extreme observational subjectivism,

impressionism, and parochialism, while the idealist side pushes him to reach for an abstract theoretical wholeness that he can (understandably) never grasp. Missing from Williams' methodology, of course, is any consistent use of the dialectical and materialist criterion of "class," along with the related programme for an organised, revolutionary intervention into the debate over value. This consigns his value-judgments to perpetual oscillation between passively directionless relativism and insistently categorical absolutism--however much he might claim to deplore both.

Underlying the virtual absence of the class-criterion from Williams' axiology is, once more, his opposition to the Marxist categories of base and superstructure; and underlying this broad ideological opposition to Marxism is his political fatigue, expressed in his reformism and his corresponding hostility to organised communist partisanship. While all these positions reveal a mutual consistency, they also externally negate, as a whole, Williams' claim to be a contributor to Marxism. Herein lies the single most influential contradiction of his politics.

One of the starkest implications of Williams' general and specific priorities can be clearly observed in his handling of politically reactionary writers. While he correctly perceives in each of these writers certain contradictions, and while each such "paradoxical writer," as he usually calls them, formally resembles the phenomenon perceived in Balzac by Marx and Engels (or in Tolstoy by Lenin and Trotsky), Williams' actual resolution of those contradictions merely parodies the revolutionaries' method and criteria. Indeed, one might quite simply characterise the difference as that between Marxism and social democracy. For, in a symptomatic reversal of priorities



later acknowledged to be a political skew but never actually corrected, Williams seldom stresses anything positive about the (albeit problematic) pro-socialist literature of the workers' states (for, are they not all homogeneously "Stalinist"? ) and equally firmly refuses to stress anything negative about such classic English reactionaries as Edmund Burke and Thomas Carlyle.

The relevant primary material on this issue is the section in Politics and Letters (pp. 97-132, esp. pp. 103-06, 109, and 120-24) devoted to a discussion of Culture and Society. In that section, Williams simultaneously admits this political disorientation and continues--implicitly, through a myriad "explanations" about the "complexity" of the problem, his "original strategy," and the drawbacks of his "literary training"--to defend it. The gist of his contradiction is cogently presented to him by his interviewers. Briefly, they begin by stating that "certain omissions" from Williams' "Culture and Society" tradition seem "very strange" (PL, p. 98); these omissions include Marx (PL, pp. 115-16); and William Morris, the early English Marxist, is routinely incorporated into the predominantly conservative tradition of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Mallock (PL, pp. 128-29). The interviewers maintain a studied diplomacy, speaking, for instance, of "an inadvertently conservative bias" (PL, p. 103), of "a striking inequity in . . . treatment" (PL, p. 104), of "particular and significant imbalances in it" (PL, p. 106), and of "overgenerous assessments of people on the conservative side of this tradition, or too restrictive judgments of people who were on the other side" (PL p. 107). But they nevertheless feel compelled to remark that "[s]uch absences would appear to risk certain real distortions in your

account . . ." (PL, p. 99).

Criterially, Culture and Society is demonstrated by the interviewers to reveal "a clear contrast . . . between truth which is necessarily social, and politics which is a brittle and ephemeral adjunct separable from it" (PL, p. 101). "At a number of points in the book," they continue, "you seem to be contrasting or counterposing ideas and arguments with what you call 'response' or 'experience'" (PL, p. 120). Quoting Williams on Burke, they note "an opposition between the truth of ideas as usually understood . . . and a deeper or more durable experience that does not necessarily correspond to any kind of ordinary discursive truth" (PL, p. 120). They round off the evidence with further quotations from Williams, on Coleridge and Carlyle, and conclude: "These passages can appear to be devaluing the ordinary criteria of rational judgment--the sense in which we determine whether certain ideas are true or whether they are false" (PL p. 120). By way of specific illustration, the interviewers recall the following evaluations, which are worth citing at length:

Your discussion of Burke contains virtually no limiting phrases at all. It ends by saying that we should be grateful to Burke for what you call his "magnificent affirmation" (CS, p. 39). In the case of Carlyle, you do criticise his later writings briefly, but you still conclude that his "purposes" were "positive and ennobling" and that overall "reverence" was "his essential quality" (CS, pp. 90, 98).

By contrast, at the end of a sympathetic chapter on the Romantics, you write "the last pages of Shelley's Defence of Poetry are painful to read," you repeat the epithet "painful" a few sentences later, and then you remark: "We are not likely, when we remember the lives of any of these men, to be betrayed into the irritability of defence" (CS, pp. 63-64). Likewise,

when you discuss Morris you twice use a phrase which elsewhere you apply to Cobbett. Commenting on a denunciation by Morris of Oxford culture as "cynically contemptuous of knowledge," you say: "This is very typical of Morris's method, which is often no more than a kind of generalised swearing"; or again, "As with Cobbett, we come to accept the impatience and ritualised swearing as the price of vitality, which has its own greatness" (CS, pp. 156, 160). (PL, pp. 103-04)

The interviewers then make the following, telling observations about Williams himself. They note that he praises Burke "without a single reference" to the latter's "constant theme of the need to instil 'the principles of natural subordination' in the people"; after all, they remind Williams, "the purpose of his central text . . . was to prevent an English revolution. . . . Not to speak of Burke's active and fanatical prosecution of the military war against the French Revolution" (PL, p. 104). Indeed, they go on to point out, "Burke's book on the French Revolution was not just a conservative manifesto, it was also an attempt to mobilise patriotic sentiment against a foreign menace, which became part of an extremely successful campaign by the ruling class at the time" (PL, p. 117). As for Carlyle, they continue, "it seems incomprehensible that you could speak so unhesitatingly of 'reverence' as his essential quality. For Carlyle was an unbridled racist and imperialist. His role in the Governor Eyre Controversy is a notorious instance. Even as early as the 1840's he was writing an essay on the 'Nigger Question'" (PL, p. 104). The interviewers then contrast Williams' admiration for the above eminences to his disdain for Shelley and Morris. Of Morris, they ask Williams, "might one not simply say that he tended to call a spade a spade?" (PL, p. 104).

Williams sidesteps this frontal charge--all the while suggesting concurrence. First he downplays his selected "Culture and Society" tradition as merely "incomplete" (PL, p. 99), ignoring the political centrality of its absences as argued by the interviewers. Then he denies retaining the same criteria of value today: "I don't much know the person who wrote it [CS]. . . . It is a work most distant from me" (PL, p. 107). Finally, he reveals the falsity of his disclaimer by placing the radical liberal Godwin and the arch-reactionary Burke on the same political spectrum, merely acknowledging the former to be comparatively "more interesting" and "a much more impressive example [of the reworking of a formula through experience] than Burke" (PL, pp. 123-24). Indeed--no doubt alluding to Eagleton's critique of his work, in Criticism and Ideology--he defiantly states: "Today, when I hear the proposition, delivered as it is in that familiar tone of doctrinaire slander, that the reintroduction of the tradition of Culture and Society was merely a recuperation of reformism, I would say, aggressively if you like, that the failings caused by the elements of distance and confusion are regrettable mainly because they allow some people on the left--some recent ascriptions of Ideology remind me of the worst of the Thirties--to go on evading the real issues it was attempting to reintroduce--the redefinition of what politics should be, and the remobilisation, at every level, of the forces necessary for it" (PL, p. 107). To Marxists, this statement would merely seem to confirm the charge of reformism that Williams dodges by labelling it a "doctrinaire" slander". For, quite apart from the corroboration of that charge provided by his politics, it is of course embarrassingly obvious here that Williams leaves "the"

real issues, the redefinition of exactly "what" politics should be (in his opinion), safely unspecified.

That is not to say, however, that Williams himself does not see the specific political implications of his evaluative method: on the contrary. He even provides, as we shall see, many materialist explanations for it. But he ultimately stands by his decision. Thus we find him first invoking the "true complexity of the tradition" (PL, p. 98; see also p. 110), then appealing to his lack of sufficient knowledge and guidance ("I had to discover for myself. . ." [PL, p. 99]) and to his predominantly literary-("practical") critical training (PL, pp. 112, 121, 127), and then blaming the "mistake" on an ostensibly disembodied "original strategy of the book" (PL, p. 108). He even describes accurately, without political embarrassment, the objective dynamics and effect of his strategy: "The fact is that the origins of the book lie in ideas of either explicitly conservative or contradictory thinkers in the nineteenth century--but conservatives who, at the point of irruption of a qualitatively new social order put many of the right questions to it but of course came out with the wrong answers--or people with whom I shared certain impulses, like Leavis, moving towards explicitly reactionary positions in the twentieth century. All these used as a central term of their development the concept of culture. In the process of seeking to recover that concept and reconstruct the discourse around it, I allowed some degree of abstraction from history. . ." (PL, p. 109; see also p. 110).

Yet all these literary-sociological "explanations" of motive do not alter the political import of his choices. They are merely elaborate

circumstantial rationales (such as his personal reaction against "approved lists" of "progressive" and "reactionary" writers) for his continuing attachment to the "Culture and Society" tradition. For Marxists, those strictly classless and ostensibly purely literary justifications bespeak a deeper political problem. The suggestion that these justifications coincided with political reaction as a merely conjunctural accident at an historical terminus in "The Twentieth century" constructs a myth; "Leavisian" reaction is ideologically and methodologically constitutive of Williamsian evaluation;<sup>44</sup> the two share a thorough-going empathy; and the basis for this complicity is political; it is called, simply, anti-Marxism.

In this regard (Williams' revulsion from that diagnosis notwithstanding), we are obliged to decide how else one might interpret some of his own observations to that effect, if not in the above way. The most general formula that Williams offers for his own overall method is also the most abstract, but it contains a truth: "I think I have always had a stronger sense of the inherent contradictions and confusions within the actual process of somebody's work than another kind of account which summarises its overall product and says that is what the person stood for" (PL, p. 123). Indeed, one might add, Williams has also concerned himself with "the social presence of these writers in the milieux where they were read. It is a paradox," he claims, "that not only Shelley and Byron, but Southey of all people, enjoyed an extraordinary popularity in the working class of the thirties and forties: or that Ruskin should have been of such extreme importance for the late nineteenth-century labour movement. I did not know how to broach these questions" (PL, pp. 111-12).

The key to the "paradox," of course (Marxists would argue), is the anti-capitalist sentiments and rhetoric of parts of the aristocratic Byron and the monarchist Southey, on the one hand, and the general lack of class-consciousness and class self-interest among the early English proletariat, on the other. Lenin, as we know, expressly addressed the latter phenomenon in his own profession and fought for an independent organisation to lead the proletariat out of their limited consciousness. But for Williams, who resists Marxist theory (not to mention Leninist practice) in its most elementary form, such a "paradox" must indeed remain a mystery.

This link between his anti-Marxist method and what he calls a "problem" about a plausible explanation for certain readerships is made clear by Williams himself: "anybody could reel these writers off as the representative figures of a certain social class. Not that the description was necessarily wrong, but I knew that if you started from that kind of abstract delineation you didn't even have to read them--you read from it" (PL, p. 111). But Williams' undialectical alternative, the "concrete" shunning of any class-analysis whatsoever, then produced his demonstrated, politically-defined preference for the likes of Burke and Carlyle over Shelley, Cobbett, and Morris. And his dismissive rationale for praising Carlyle is a telling illustration of where this anti-Marxist logic would lead him: "I had had so much of this marshalling of who were the progressive thinkers and who were the reactionary thinkers in the nineteenth century when I was a student: I too wrote my essay on Carlyle as a fascist when I was an undergraduate. Part of the submerged history of the book is that there were all sorts of positions which came almost too easily to the pen,

which were then precisely what I was drawing back from. I had discovered themes profoundly related to my sense of the social crisis of my time and the socialist way out of it, not in the approved list of progressive thinkers, but in these paradoxical figures. I then overemphasised the place of these values in writers whose eventual development led them in a quite different direction" (PL, pp. 105-106). Even without going into details about the individual authors, surely no Marxist would characterise the maturing of Burkean reaction or of Carlylean pro-imperialism as developments in directions "quite different" from their early tendencies; the seeds of their terminal fanaticism were already embedded in their founding political assumptions. Marx and Engels, as we know, were not fooled by Carlyle. But Williams is not a Marxist; he is, therefore, in the political sense, taken by surprise.

Paradigmatic of Williams' politico-axiological contradictions is the positive value he places on courage, strength, and optimism, on the one hand, and on imagination and incertitude, on the other. These criteria, in their frequent conjunctural opposition and ambiguity, graphically convey the abstractness and contradictoriness of Williams' reformist political programme and its attendant values. Thus, it is not only the Brontë sisters who are praised for breaking "a whole structure of repression in their time . . . with a strength and a courage that puts us all in their debt" (EN, p. 63), or Grassie Gibbon's Sunset Song for depicting "the strength of the living people" (CC, p. 323). Burke, too, is praised, for retaining, "at the height of his prejudices, . . . an always admirable strength" (CS, p. 126). On the one hand, Williams admires in Ibsen's plays the sense that "the experience of defeat does not diminish the value of the fight" (PL, p. 63) and finds Lawrence's



"recovery of energy" in Lady Chatterley's Lover "very moving" and "profoundly encouraging" (EN, p. 184). Obversely, he despises Gissing's "despair born of social and political disillusion" (CS, p. 177) and Orwell's "profoundly offensive" assertion in 1984 "that people will always betray each other," as well as the "defeatist" lament in Animal Farm (PL, pp. 390-91).<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, he states in Politics and Letters (p. 127) that "[t]he only Lawrence I now read is the very late Lawrence, the versions of Lady Chatterley and the autobiographical texts he wrote just before he died. It is the powerful uncertainties there that are impressive." Something of Williams' categoricalness as well as something of his perpetual hesitancy is caught in the above two assessments of value in Lawrence. And, as always, the miner's son Lawrence brings out in him the deepest political contradictions shaping his criteria for literary evaluation, not merely in specific instances but also in general. Thus it is no accident that courage and "creative disturbance," two valued qualities perceived in Lawrence, are also features that Williams praises in our next object of focus, Thomas Hardy.

#### Williams' Evaluation of Hardy

In a sense, Williams' criteria for evaluating all literature,

including the works of Hardy, share the anti-Caudwellian thrust of his general literary theory. Through his negation of the Stalinist, mechanistic criteria readily observable in Caudwell, Williams advances his own, narrowly academic, petit-bourgeois alternatives. However, his specific evaluation of Hardy does offer a concrete and detailed axiological model, from which Marxist evaluation can then choose its own points of concurrence and departure.

The periodisation of English literary history that accompanies Williams' general theory of literature is, more than in the case of Caudwell's, a function of the critic's personal definitions of "relevance" and "tradition." In Culture and Society (pp. 320-22), Williams had defined his conception of a "good community, a living culture," in terms of the "struggle for democracy." His periodisation of English literary history follows that declared criterion, focusing on the post-Shakespearean period, which is then divided into five main stages: The Civil War and Restoration, the Industrial Revolution, Romanticism and Victorianism, an "Interregnum," and the contemporary phase--all tending towards accomplishing the "long revolution" of "democracy" and industrial "culture."<sup>46</sup> The progress of the novel as a genre is traced in parallel form: it is regarded as "the major form in English literature" between the eighteen-forties and the nineteen-twenties,<sup>47</sup> with the "split" between its "social" and "personal" forms marking a crucial conjuncture "between the 1890's and the first war" (EN, pp. 9, 132).

Intersecting this generic split and straddling a socially "split" situation himself (between town and country, bourgeoisie and labour) is Thomas Hardy. Williams, as we shall see, focuses on and values Hardy mainly because the social meaning of "Jude" and

"Christminster" carries "a special importance to a particular generation [i.e., Williams'], who have gone to the university from ordinary families . . ."; but it also expresses, for Williams, the recent historical trend "in Britain generally" (CC, p. 241). Here, personally experienced politics can be clearly observed shaping Williams' perception of the general importance and "relevance" of a particular author. Historical categories parallel the literary, which in turn reflect the political; all of which come together in his discussions of the criteria for literary evaluation.

Looking at Hardy principally as a prose-writer and novelist, Williams places him in a line running through Cobbett, Eliot, and Lawrence, among others, particularly in terms of the author's social situation, dominant subject-matter, and social and philosophical perception. On the other hand, looking at Hardy principally as a "rural" writer, Williams also places him in the tradition of one Joseph Arch, one Joseph Ashby, and one Richard Jeffries (as well as Cobbett), particularly in terms of the author's social attitude and use of literary imagery (CC, p. 238). In other words, Williams views and evaluates Hardy principally as a "rural" novelist registering, analysing, and criticising "industrial capitalism."

Much of Williams' incentive for not only evaluating but valorising Hardy is negative; it stems from his opposition to a certain kind of condescension towards the novelist shown by Leavis (see, e.g., CC, pp. 208, 242).<sup>48</sup> Williams seeks to dispel the sociological simplifications accompanying such patronising attitudes, which reduce Hardy to a mere "regional novelist" and his unsimple situation and vision to "a neo-pastoral convention of the countryman as an age-old figure, or

a vision of a prospering countryside being disintegrated by Corn Law repeal or the railways or agricultural machinery."<sup>49</sup>

In reply to a question from New Left Review about exactly how deliberate The English Novel's obvious "inversion" of Leavis' "great tradition" was, Williams replies at length (PL, pp. 245-46), clarifying the polemical context sketched above. "At certain points [the inversion was] very deliberate," Williams confirms, reminding us that "by this time, . . . if you talked to anyone about the English novel, including people who were hostile to Leavis, they were in fact reproducing his sense of the shape of its history." Addressing Leavis' treatment of Hardy in particular, Williams insists, simply, "he should not have done that to Hardy." Even the "faults" in Leavis' formulations, Williams claims--singling out "his emphasis on Englishness or on particular kinds of rural community"--"should at least have directed his attention towards Hardy, rather than to excluding him from the very tradition in which they were being urged." By the time of The Great Tradition, Williams complains, Leavis "treats him patronisingly, almost as a country yokel."

Nevertheless, of course, much of Williams' basis for valuing Hardy is positive. Williams relates very closely and personally to the social context of an upwardly-mobile petit bourgeoisie, signified (to him) by "Jude" and "Christminster." He also sees in those two names "a much more general importance; for in Britain generally this is what has been happening; a moving out from old ways and places and ideas and feelings; a discovery in the new of certain unlooked for problems, unexpected and very sharp crises, conflicts of desire and possibility"

(CC, p. 241). Williams--following Hardy--would seem to be describing here nothing more nor less than the apparently arbitrary criteria governing bourgeois and petit-bourgeois values. Thus, Williams revealingly argues that Clym's rhetorical poser to his mother, "Mother, what is doing well?" is a "familiar" question and that "still after all these years no question is more relevant or more radical" (CC, pp. 245-46). But not many British coal-miners today, for instance, could be found counting such relatively luxurious subjects among their consuming preoccupations. In other words, proletarian struggle is apparently neither "familiar" nor "relevant" nor "radical" in Williams' scheme of Marxism.

However, the ambivalence informing Williams' above emphasis is also important to Marxists: in noting the familiarity and relevance of Clym's question, Williams shows his suspicion of the bourgeoisie; but in claiming that "no question is more relevant or more radical," he merely betrays his own easy access to the limited bourgeois opportunities for "doing well," his corresponding blindness to the more extensive deprivation historically beleaguering the world proletariat, and his consequent over-generalisation of the relevance and the "radical" power of Clym's rhetorical question. This contradiction also reveals itself in the fact that Hardy is not even mentioned in Culture and Society (Williams' tribute to the right-wing, Burkean tradition) and is then hailed as a "landmark" in the would-be "radical" The Country and the City: "He writes more consistently and more deeply than any of our novelists about something that is still very close to us wherever we may be living: . . . the problem of the relation between customary and educated life; between customary and educated feeling and thought" (CC, p. 240). A Marxist wonders how many

proletarians Williams thinks might enjoy the privilege of even knowing the difference, let alone understanding the said "relation." But, as Williams himself clarifies, to appreciate Hardy's capacity to do both, "we have to get beyond the stereotypes of the autodidact and the countryman and see Hardy in his real identity: both the educated observer and the passionate participant, in a period of general and radical change" (CC, p. 247). And Williams' own standpoint is, of course, precisely that of "the educated observer"--in the service of social democracy.

The "real Hardy country," Williams therefore generalises, with his familiar absolutism,"... is that border country so many of us have been living in: between custom and education, between work and ideas, between love of place and an experience of change" (CC, p. 239). Tending to associate, quite arbitrarily, whatever is "last" and "most contemporary" with the value-terms "major" and "deepest," he furnishes as proof and illustration of his value-assumption the novels Tess and Jude: "[T]he last and deepest novels, Tess and Jude the Obscure, are significantly the most contemporary. . . . Within the major novels, . . . the experiences of change and of the difficulty of choice are central and even decisive" (CC, p. 239). But, as Williams typically neglects to add, the "difficulty of choice" depends on the availability and necessity of choice. And that, in turn, depends on whether or not one is privileged enough to live in Hardy/Williams' "border country" of the petit-bourgeois intelligentsia.

Like Williams' own "border country" in his criticism and fiction, Hardy's fictional "border country" corresponds to--Williams would deny that it could actually be based on--that writer's petit-

bourgeois position in the real world (CC, pp. 242-43). Thus Williams characterises Hardy as "one of the many professional men" who worked within the rural-capitalist structure, "often with uncertainty about where they"--the "actual country people": "landowners, tenant farmers, dealers, craftsmen and labourers"--"really belonged in it." While his father was a small employer himself, Hardy, in becoming "an architect and a friend of the family of a vicar . . . moved to a different point in the social structure, with connections to the educated . . . and . . . to that shifting body of small employers, dealers, craftsmen and cottagers who were themselves never wholly distinct, in family, from the labourers."<sup>50</sup> Hardy's changed, intermediate class-position also resulted in his subjects and his putative audience corresponding to two different social strata. As Williams remarks of Hardy's rural petit-bourgeois subjects and characters, "he was not writing for them, but about them, to a mainly metropolitan and unconnected literary public."

All these contradictions, argues Williams, then found expression within Hardy's fictional world as well: "He is neither owner nor tenant, dealer nor labourer, but an observer and chronicler, often again with uncertainty about his actual relation." Hardy, says Williams, thus attempted "to describe and value a way of life with which he was closely yet uncertainly connected," and "the literary methods . . . follow from the nature of this attempt." However, we might add, two methodological/perceptual consequences accompany Williams' above classification of Hardy and his writings. One is Williams' tendency to reproduce in his own critical theory the described class-disorientation of Hardy, by subordinating all perceived class-factors to the "personal choice" of the novelist's characters. The

other is Williams' inclination towards an axiological functionalism, whereby whatever transpired at the end of Hardy's writing process may be seen as inevitable and therefore valuable. (Of course, this functionalist approval is selectively bestowed: as we have seen, William Morris' style somehow does not qualify for even an equally functionalist acquittal, not to mention praise.) From the standpoint of Marxism, then, the ideologically skewed analytical and evaluative tools of Williams prove to be of somewhat tangential and contradictory use with respect to Hardy's similarly contradictory works.

Williams' own perception of social dynamics is indistinguishable from his reading of Hardy's perception; and Hardy, Williams says, sees a contradiction "between intelligence and fellow-feeling," for "the process which allows him to observe is . . . one which includes in its attachment to class feelings and class separations, a decisive alienation" (CC, p. 250). The most typical Hardyesque conflict, Williams describes as the "historical process in which education is tied to social advancement within a class society, so that it is difficult, except by bizarre personal demonstration, to hold both to education and to social solidarity ('he [Clym] wished to raise the class')" (CC, p. 245). Williams' dominant emphasis, however, is not on the class-framework fleetingly acknowledged above. In fact, that supposed framework becomes subordinated to "personal choice" in Williams' analytical scheme when he explicitly asserts the following: "One of the most immediate effects of mobility, within a structure itself changing, is the difficult nature of the marriage choice. . . . The specific class element, and the effects upon this of an insecure economy, are parts of the personal choice which is after all a choice



primarily of a way to live, of an identity in the identification with this or that other person" (CC, p. 255).

Thus Williams may, on the one hand, correctly inveigh against a Leavisite simplification of Hardy's depicted society, even going so far as to introduce class-characterisations of it: "We cannot suppress . . . [Hardy's actual society] . . . in favour of a seamless abstracted 'country way of life.' . . . There is no simple case of an internal ruralism and an external urbanism. It is not urbanism but the hazard of small-capital farming that changes Gabriel Oak from an independent farmer to a hired labourer and then a bailiff. . . . The social process created in this interaction is one of class and separation, as well as of chronic insecurity, as this capitalist farming and dealing takes its course" (CC, pp. 253-54). Similarly, Tess is "not a peasant girl seduced by the squire" but "the daughter of a lifeholder and a small dealer" seduced by "the son of a retired manufacturer"; Henchard is destroyed not by "a new and alien kind of dealing but by a development of his own trade"; Grace Melbury "is not a country girl 'lured' by the fashionable world but the daughter of a successful timber merchant whose own social expectations, at this point of his success, include a fashionable education for his daughter" (CC, p. 254).

Yet, on the other hand, Williams tends to view objective class-interests as "confusions" (CC, p. 258); he effectively views "custom and education," "work and ideas," "love of place and an experience of change," "intelligence," "fellow-feeling," and "personal choice" as all subsuming "the specific class element."<sup>51</sup> He seldom ventures beyond generalities about "social" "mobility" in one or another "century,"<sup>52</sup> and he abstractly sees their "common pattern"

(in Hardy) as the "relation between the changing nature of country living . . . and one or more characters who have become in some degree separated from it yet who remain by some tie of family inescapably involved" (CC, p. 243).

That is, somewhat metaphysically, Williams perceives in Hardy's work a conjunctural, sectorally valid "modernity," characterised by a "paradoxical separation," a "double movement, of loss and liberation, of exposure and of advantage" (CC, p. 251). Usually, this paradox is embodied in a heroic, torn figure (or two) caught in the socially contradictory attractions of upper-class security and success and radical petit-bourgeois social sympathies. "It is the critical problem of so much of English fiction," claims Williams, "since the actual yet incomplete and ambiguous social mobility of the nineteenth century. . . . It is here that the social values are dramatised in a very complex way and it is here that most of the problems of Hardy's actual writing seem to arise" (CC, p. 243). Tess is cited as one example of such a paradoxical figure, though "Grace in The Woodlanders, Clym in The Return of the Native, represent this experience more completely," and "we need not be tempted . . . to detach Jude the Obscure as a quite separate kind of novel" (CC, pp. 243-44).

At the centre of Hardy's positive value, Williams suggests, is that novelist's (ostensibly) realistic, comprehensive, and humane depiction of the complex (and "organic") "border" conflict between two social systems--pre-industrial (merchant) capitalism and industrial capitalism--overlapping two geographical units--the country and the city. Certain of Williams' familiar general criteria of value recur in this

characterisation and assessment of Hardy's fiction. Prominent among them are, in some form or other, the criteria of complexity, "organic" community, and faithfulness to "lived experience." Of course, in one particular instance, all these features seem to Williams to be typically captured in the "organic relation" that "the limitations of the educated and the affluent" bear to those of "the ignorant and the poor (as in parts of Return of the Native and in Tess and Jude)."

I have in mind the following definitive passage from The Country and the City (pp. 246-47):

The complexity of Hardy's fiction shows in nothing more than this: that he runs the whole gamut from an external observation of customs and quaintness, modulated by a distinctly patronising affection (as in Under the Greenwood Tree), through a very positive identification of intuitions of nature and the values of shared work with human depth and fidelity (as in The Woodlanders), to the much more impressive but also much more difficult humane perception of limitations, which cannot be resolved by nostalgia or charm or the simple mysticism of nature, but which are lived through by all the characters, in the real life to which all belong, the limitations of the educated and the affluent bearing an organic relation to the limitations of the ignorant and the poor (as in parts of Return of the Native and in Tess and Jude).

In keeping with Williams' declared premium on incertitude (recall his comment on the later Lawrence, for instance), that critic, as we note, effectively identifies his own "perception" of the "limitations" depicted by Hardy with that novelist's personal ideological "complexity," lack of resolution, and self-restriction to "lived" experience. That is, while correctly dismissing "nostalgia or charm or the simple mysticism of nature" as real solutions to the Hardy-esque dilemma, Williams

nevertheless abdicates a certain critical responsibility to distinguish his own proposed solution to the situation from Hardy's. And he does so partly because there indeed is very little to distinguish their non-Marxist "solutions," ideologically. But beyond this de facto similarity, Marxists might also perceive the crucial difference that while the fatalistic Hardy had no political pretensions to arguing "within historical materialism," the Williams of this period does project such an image--explicitly in Marxism and Literature (p. 5) and implicitly in The Country and the City, through his choice of terminology (see the extensive discussion on the latter book, on this very question, in Politics and Letters, pp. 303-23, esp. 310-20). Yet, it is precisely the bankruptcy of Williams' politics that disables him at the crucial moment of evaluation. The Hardy-esque combination ("limitations") of petit-bourgeois experience, aspirations, and disillusionment--on the one hand--and programmatic paralysis, on the other, can neither be "solved" nor transcended nor fought with their social-democratic, Williamsian complements. One cannot constructively criticise bourgeois and petit-bourgeois defeatism from a position of political fatigue and academic despair of workers' revolution. But, of course, one must also first feel the need and the urge to criticise; and we have no evidence that Williams feels such a need and urge in the case of Hardy. This again suggests the close compatability of their distinct yet similar bitterness--which, in Williams' case, constitutes a fairly blunt cynicism and does nothing to bolster his projected image as a Marxist.

Judging Hardy from the point of view of his own, similar experience and outlook, Williams values in that novelist mainly his

(perceived) truthfulness to life. This, for Williams, means recognising the continuities and variations in rural "tradition," registering its communal as well as its alienating aspects, and expressing its grimness as well as its humaneness and invigorating spirit. Stylistically--to use that term in a broad, technical sense--it means, for Williams, the adequate matching of the text's form, mood, idioms, and so on, to the needs of its subject and purpose. In all this, needless to say, we may rightly detect Williams' academically sectoralist viewpoint reinforcing his declared preference for a certain existing tradition of nineteenth-century realism, albeit in light of the Brechtian redefinition of that concept.

Williams greatly prizes Hardy's rendering of the quotidian rural panorama. And Hardy's perceived ability to portray the "complex" nature of "country living" at an historically crucial juncture enjoys Williams' special respect. The novelist's "insights of consciously learned history and of the educated understanding of nature and behaviour," says Williams, enable the former to "see tradition in both ways": "the native place and experience but also the education, the conscious enquiry"; this, he claims, is "indeed Hardy's special gift" (CC, p. 249). This historicist double-vision, Williams argues, is matched by Hardy's capacity to situate the individual, at any given time, in a structurally wider social context, as part of "a whole way of life." And it is apparently this qualification that motivates Williams to elect Hardy explicitly to his own "great tradition": "As in all major realist fiction the quality and destiny of persons and the quality and destiny of a whole way of life are seen in the same dimension and not as separable issues" (CC, p. 244). In the

course of discussing Hardy's incipient "fatalism," or negativism, Williams remarks at one point that "the most significant thing about Hardy, in and through these difficulties, is that more than any other major novelist since this difficult [social] mobility began he succeeded, against every pressure, in centering his novels in the ordinary processes of life and work" (CC, p. 255).

The unargued equation here of "major novels" to "the ordinary processes of life and work" is, incidentally, a small indication of the absolutism pervading Williams' axiology. However, more relevantly, it is also a usefully clear indication of one of his dominant general criteria of literary value. And underlying both is his demonstrated programmatic refusal to adopt a class-based critique of any literature, even when he is overtly rejecting critical tendencies that view "persons" as "separable" from their "whole way of life." For, the word "ordinary" can hardly be said to occur in Williams either accidentally or innocently. He shows merely some discomfort with the limitless range of connotations that Leavis attaches to that word, but he openly rejects the Marxist, class-specific alternative to Leavis. Thus, the phrase "ordinary process of life and work" cannot, for Williams, be simply an uncomplicated way of describing an objectively uncomplicated reality. "Ordinary" is Williams' encoded polemical rebuff to Marxism at the same time that it is another of his familiar expressions of empathy with the social interaction in Hardy's rural England. Politically, it is ambiguous at best.

Williams elaborates his criteria by analysing a description of Tess among the ricks, in which he finds a valuable "fulness," "a single dimension" that balances "the long crisis of separation," in

which "individuation . . . yet does not exclude the common condition," and the "tragically isolated catastrophes" are offset by "the strength and the warmth of people living together" (CC, p. 257). "Hardy thus achieves a fulness which is quite new, at this depth, in all country writing," Williams claims: "the love and the work, the aches of labour and of choice, are in a single dimension."

In the communal "strength" perceived in Hardy's novels by Williams, we find the latter's crowning criterion of value-- a courage and endurance verging on an ironically grim but tenacious and real defiance, what he calls "pure affirmation":

The general structure of feeling in Hardy would be much less convincing if there were only the alienation, the frustration, the separation, and isolation, the final catastrophes. What is defeated but not destroyed at the end of The Woodlanders or the end of Tess or the end of Jude is a warmth, a seriousness, an endurance in love and work that are the necessary definition of what Hardy knows and mourns as loss. Vitally--and it is his difference from Lawrence . . .-- Hardy does not celebrate isolation and separation. He mourns them, and yet always with the courage to look them steadily in the face. . . .

It is important enough that Hardy keeps to an ordinary world, as the basis of his major fiction. . . . And it is even more important, as an act of pure affirmation, that he stays centrally, with his central figures [as George Eliot cannot: see CC, p. 211]; indeed moves closer to them in his actual development, so that the affirmation of Tess and of Jude--an affirmation in and through the defeats he traces and mourns--is the strongest in all his work.

. . . [Hardy is] enduring in the community of this impulse, which pushes through and beyond particular separations and defeats. It is the continuity not only of a country but of a history and a people. (CC, p. 258)

With sweeping centripetality, Williams draws the key elements of his ideology into a system of moral priorities; simultaneously generating

criteria of literary value. Alienation, separation, and isolation are final catastrophes that cause frustration; they are defeats. However, Hardy is allegedly able to find cause for "courage" and "affirmation" "in and through the defeats he traces and mourns." And he is able to do so because this "impulse" for endurance and affirmation "pushes through and beyond particular separations and defeats." Yet, it represents "the continuity" not of the urban and rural proletariat but of "a country" and of a classless and "ordinary" "history and a people," embodied in the central characters of Hardy's "major fiction." As Williams remarks in Politics and Letters (p. 222), "Hardy is remarkably contemporary with Ibsen in his presentation of a wholly valid and never questionable desire, which is quite tragically defeated without cancelling the validity of that impulse, and which reaches the point of questioning the social order that has defeated it."

But while such mere "questioning" may have constituted an honourable historical maximum for most writers contemporary with Hardy, Williams' undistanced account of it conceals the fact that for critics of his own, post-Marx/Engels/Lenin/Trotsky generation, such Ibsenite "questioning"--even at its harshest--fails to surpass the ideology of bourgeois dissent. In that light, it merely reflects unfavourably on the politics of Stalinism that, in a period of general fear among intellectuals of associating with the word "communist," it had to be the bourgeois liberal Ibsen who "protected" Williams "from the rapid retreat from the thirties which so many former comrades from the [Communist] party were conducting. . . . In his plays, the experience of defeat does not diminish the value of the fight" (PL, p. 63). That Ibsen, and not Marx (let alone Lenin or Trotsky), is the figure



Williams resorted to in the face of Stalinism, also does little to enhance his own, projected image as a Marxist.

If Williams sees in Hardy's depiction of popular rural "strength" and "affirmation" that novelist's decisive counterbalance to the tragedy of loss and defeat, it is nevertheless apparent that such an attitudinal counterbalance would in itself count for nothing unless it were "convincing" to start with. Credibility--albeit judged by Williams from the standpoint of his own, narrowly academic experience and values--commands from him a decisive respect. In The English Novel (p. 118), Williams commented that "gaining a growing certainty which was a strengthening as well as a darkening of vision," Hardy "ran his course to an exceptional fidelity." Significantly confirming their virtual identity of outlook, Williams repeatedly mounts a spirited defence of "what is sometimes called Hardy's bitterness," claiming that it "in fact is only sober and just observation." The issue therefore clearly becomes posed as one of realism and truthfulness as positive literary values:

What Hardy sees and feels about the educated world of his day . . . is so clearly true that the only surprise is that critics now should still feel sufficiently identified with that world . . . to be willing to perform the literary equivalent of that stalest of political tactics: the transfer of bitterness, of a merely class way of thinking, from those who exclude [The Judes of society] to those who protest. (CC, p. 250)

In other words, Hardy's is a real world, a "characteristic world," observed, recorded, and explained in "fine detail . . . as a whole" as well as in terms of "the internal processes and their complicated effects

on the rural social structure"; "intensity and precision of the observation . . . is Hardy's essential position and attribute"; he writes with "fine insight" and "characteristic accuracy"; he "sees" not only "the realities of labouring work" but also "the harshness of economic processes, in inheritance, capital, rent and trade, within the continuity of the natural processes and persistently cutting across them"; and the "losses are real and heartbreaking because the desires were real, the shared work was real, the unsatisfied impulses were real" (CC, pp. 241, 251, 249, 257, 252, 254, 258).

However, the relatively smooth continuity of Hardy's fictional content--seen from Williams' consistently unitary point of view--is apparently ruptured by formal "disturbances," especially by the idioms employed and registered in the novels. A disjunction is alleged to arise, precluding any "organic" technical complement to their thematic and psychological realism. Yet, here, Williams invokes his functionalist sociology, both to explain and to justify--indeed, to laud--this (apparent) disjunction. The overall effect, then, is to declare Hardy, both ideologically and technically, an almost perfect novelist for his time.

Williams approaches the "problem" of disjunction from three distinct though related angles: the class-differential between Hardy's fictional subjects and his putative audience, the incompatibility of old literary conventions (including idiomatic patterns) with the changing social reality of the time, and "internal disturbances" within those conventions themselves (presumably as a result of the social pressures from without). "Hardy's writing, or . . . style," Williams observes, "is obviously affected by . . . [h]is complex position as an

author, writing about country living to people who almost inevitably saw the country as empty nature or as the working-place of their inferiors" (CC, p. 247). In Politics and Letters (p. 264), Williams lends Hardy's style blanket approval, justifying its various perceived "levels" by their objective functions in a particular historical conjuncture witnessing major social change, including a widened readership. "When people say that Hardy wrote badly," he argues, "the problem is not one of form but of received literary judgment. Why does he write on two or three different levels of discourse, and how does he try to unify them? The diversity," Williams answers, "exactly corresponds to the range of his social address."

Then, Williams has also reminded us of the novelist's task of "communicating" the "life" and "experience" from "a real social history" and has argued, for instance, the inappropriateness of "sentimental" neo-pastoralism for this post-industrial-revolution project. Thus he urges us "to see the source of these differences [between narrative 'ease' and 'disturbance'] in a real social history. . . when we are asked by several kinds of critic to abstract 'construction,' 'organisation,' 'thematic unity,' 'unity of tone' and even 'good writing' and judge novels by those canons." He points out that on "these abstract criteria--and especially those of unity--we should have to find Trollope a better novelist than George Eliot." Wrongly assuming that such a conclusion is self-evidently absurd, however, he arbitrarily suggests that "[w]hat we have to emphasise, on the contrary, is the creative disturbance which is exactly George Eliot's importance; the disturbance we shall see also in Hardy. That is where the life is, in that disturbed and unprecedented time." Justifying a disturbed

style for disturbed times, he asserts that "those who saw most deeply, who saw most, had no unified forms, no unity of tone and language, no controlling conventions, that really answered their purposes. Their novels are the records of struggle and difficulty, as was the life they wrote about" (EN, p. 85). This evaluation is of a piece with Williams' general theoretical "functionalism" noted before.

In discussing the relevance of "the ballad form of narrative" and "the sentimental terms of neo-pastoral" to Hardy's literary purposes, Williams maintains that other forms, other terms are needed to convey the sense of social disturbance. Thus he argues in a general way that the "profound disturbances that Hardy records cannot be seen in the sentimental terms of neo-pastoral; the contrast between country and town." But his elaboration of the alternative avoids any class-characterisation and restricts itself to the familiar generalities of "psychological" terms and the "social" character of the change (CC, p. 254). "What have been seen as his strengths--the ballad form of narrative, the prolonged literary imitation of traditional forms of speech--seem to me mainly weaknesses," says Williams, characterising that form as "a 'tradition' rather than human beings." It is "precisely disturbance rather than continuity which had to be communicated," he maintains, adding, "to communicate Hardy's experience," neither Tess's "consciously educated" language nor her "unconsciously customary" language "would serve": "the educated dumb in intensity and limited in humanity; the customary thwarted by ignorance and complacent in habit." Yet, he concedes, the "marks of a surrender to each mode are certainly present in Hardy," though "the main body of his mature writing is a more difficult and complicated

experiment" (CC, pp. 247-48). We might note in passing how Williams' stylistic criteria actually reproduce his broader literary, cultural, and moral values, for instance in his overt insistence on "intensity" and "humanity" as virtues: his aversion to "ignorance" and "complacency" can also be read, implicitly, as the advocacy of education and rebelliousness. The key criterion for Williams, however, seems to be an intense, insightful, humane, and credible content, matched by a consistently corresponding fictional idiom.

The third disjunction, which is internal to the conventions and linguistic structures deployed by Hardy, Williams views as the consequence of a relatively uneven break from organic self-unity. "The more fully Hardy uses the resources of the whole language, as a precise observer, the more adequate the writing is," he says (CC, p. 248). Precision (truthfulness) and resourcefulness therefore already prepare the ground for stylistic adequacy. But they alone do not suffice. "Hardy's mature style," for instance, according to Williams, is threatened in one direction by a willed 'Latinism' of diction and construction"; but in another direction, it is threatened "by this much less noticed element of artifice which is too easily accepted, within the patronage we have discussed, as the countryman speaking (sometimes indeed it is literally the countryman speaking, in a contrived picturesqueness which is now the novelist's patronage of his rural characters)" (CC, p. 249).

A parallel exists here between Williams' warning against artifice--which in Hardy's case he characterises as an expression of patronage--and Trotsky's warning against certain uses of "revolutionary" "vulgarisms" which in Mayakovsky's case he characterises as an expression of real estrangement from the revolution, as false familiarity. But

the very comparison also serves to emphasise the political gulf separating the Marxist revolutionary's critical methods, principles, criteria, and usual subjects from those of the academic social democrat's. Williams can be easily imagined speaking as Hardy's academic alter ego when he approvingly notes that the novelist's "mature style is unambiguously an educated style, in which the extension of vocabulary and the complication of construction are necessary to the intensity and precision of the observation which is Hardy's essential position and attribute" (CC, p. 249). As he put it in The English Novel (p. 124), "[t]here's a crisis [during the 'interregnum' of the 1870's-1914]. . .: a crisis of language and form, which now comes to a new phase. In effect I'd say, what had been a tension became now a split. Internal disturbances of the sort we saw in George Eliot and in Hardy became too strong, too restless, to be contained any longer within any single writer. . . ." As a self-described descendant of that same "border-country" tradition, Williams clearly considers himself to be not only in a position to know but also in a position to empathise. Once more, his own criteria of value become almost indistinguishable from the values that he attributes to the object of his study (in this case, Hardy). And once more, they are something other than revolutionary, or Marxist.

Williams does not, as we know, speculate to any substantial extent about the criteria of literary value under socialism. However, he does have some ideas for projects in the immediate, politically undefined future, including ideas for so-called "socialist" literature. One thread that runs through them all is "not only the possibility but the necessity of the resumption of the realist project today." Of

course, he presumes, with the historical demystification of all "organic" forms, this new realism "will involve the sharpest distinction from naturalism in the conventional sense in which it has settled down." And, moreover, with the proliferation of various extra-"literary" media, the "future of a new realism" will lie "in the combination of three directions, the more mobile dramatic forms of the camera, direct relationship with more popular audiences, and development of subjunctive actions" (PL, pp. 223-24). It is a credible projection, both "culturally" as well as "logically." Yet, by leaving its exact political context unstated--and therefore, at best, ambiguous--Williams leaves the whole question of the possibility of its ever being realised (and stabilised and developed) open. And all this, besides, is quite apart from the problem of how one might judge such new realist work.

Thus Williams' fundamental political reformism unavoidably etherealises his future "cultural" project, consigning it to the murky region between revolution and reform. This is a logical outcome of the contradiction between his aggressive revision of Marx and his formal claim that his work constitutes "a Marxist theory," "part of . . . the central thinking of Marxism" (ML, p. 5). On the one hand, this political contradiction derives its particular characteristics from Williams' somewhat unique social origin and history; on the other hand, it itself spawns an idiosyncratic axiology, showing a strong anti-Marxist motive. The political paradox (from a Marxist standpoint) encapsulated in "cultural materialism" finds recognisable expression in that other, axiological set of contradictions: between Williams' philosophical idealism, empiricist impressionism, and

categorical absolutism, on the one hand; and, on the other, his tenuous, nominal, and defensive attempts at relativism, accompanied by his radical-sociological terminology and concepts. In this regard, the contradictory effect of Williams' theory of literary value is partially captured by Terry Eagleton, in his characterisation of the former's work as a whole:

"We begin to think where we live": the limits of Williams' thinking have indeed been the limits of his world. For the populism and reformism which marred his work were clearly enough the product of a political moment. The intellectual synthesis which Williams undertook was one forced upon him by the non-availability of a revolutionary tradition and the paucity of working-class ideology. Marooned between Stalinism and reformism, personally and theoretically divorced from a politically becalmed working class, the early New Left movement to which Williams belonged was constrained to piece together its own eclectic theory and strategy in response to an objective political "break" (Hungary, Suez). In that process, Williams' rediscovery of the "Culture and Society" lineage played a central role--a spiritual recuperation of the values of the labour movement which saw itself as a challenge to that movement's political inertia. Yet . . . that challenge in fact reproduced the very ideological causes of the inertia. . . . The absence of mass working-class struggle at that time (an absence vicariously filled by the petit-bourgeois populism of the nuclear disarmament movement), and the upsurge of a literary Left-reformism to replace revolutionary theory, were structurally related moments. In Williams' work, paradigmatically, the one absence nurtured and confirmed the other. (CI, p. 34)

Eagleton here bluntly relates Williams' literary-theoretical peculiarities to the "political moment" informing and shaping them. This is the most immediate quality of value to Marxists, in that passage. Stalinism, populism, reformism are all explicitly named as determinants or characteristics, or both, of Williams' thinking. However, as we shall



see, Eagleton himself is not too distant from the kind of "Left-reformism" for which he implicitly criticises Williams. The passage quoted therefore also has another value. When Eagleton talks about "the non-availability of a revolutionary tradition and the paucity of working-class ideology," one can hardly be blamed for recalling the arguments used by E. P. Thompson, under similar circumstances, to justify Caudwell's literary-political ideas. In my chapter on Caudwell, I have countered those arguments on a number of grounds. That Eagleton should echo Thompson on related political and literary issues is, therefore, I believe, not without significance for Marxist axiology. Indeed, Eagleton's Thompsonian assumptions here are a fairly accurate—if not exhaustive—index of his own inconsistent relationship to Marxism. This relationship, along with its attendant axiology, we shall now examine, below.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Politics and Letters; Interviews with New Left Review (London: New Left Books, 1979), reviewed by Patrick Parrinder in Literature and History, 7, No. 1 (Spring 1981), 124-26. Williams' book is later parenthetically abbreviated as PL.

<sup>2</sup> Cornelia Cook, in her review of Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), in Notes and Queries, NS, 25, No. 4 (August 1978), speaks of "Williams' personal brand of liberal Marxism" (362). Arthur Efron, in "Why Radicals Should Not Be Marxists," The Sphinx, 3(4), No. 12, calls the same book "the best in Marxist thought today" (p. 6) and "the finest of Marxist thinking" (p. 9) before predictably attacking it from the right. And E. F. Timms, in a favourable review of both Politics and Letters and Marxism and Literature in Modern Language Review, 75, Part 4 (October 1980), speaks of "Professor Williams' most explicit contribution to Marxism" (p. 829). These examples are just a sampling of the general image of himself that Williams has succeeded in projecting. Marxism and Literature is later parenthetically abbreviated as ML.

<sup>3</sup> Marxism and Literature, pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> See esp. their questions about Williams' apotheosising of Burke and Carlyle, as opposed to his denigration of Morris (PL, pp. 97-132).

<sup>5</sup> "Two Faces of Modern Marxism," Sewanee Rev., 86, No. 4 (Fall 1978), 588-94.

<sup>6</sup> "Problematical," rev. of Marxism and Literature, in New Statesman, 94, No. 2421 (12 Aug. 1977), 248.

<sup>7</sup> "Jim, Raymond, Jim," rev. of Politics and Letters, in New Statesman, 98, No. 2536 (26 Oct. 1979), 637.

<sup>8</sup> Indications of an (occasionally dubious) understanding of this central Marxist axiom appear in several places. Thus, Williams notes that "in the continuous pressure of living, the free play of the Romantic genius found it increasingly difficult to consort with the free play of the market; and the difficulty was not solved, but cushioned, by an idealization" (Culture and Society: 1780-1950 [1958; Harmondsworth, Md.: Penguin, 1963], p. 63; henceforth, this title is abbreviated as CS). "Capitalism's version of society can only be the market, for its purpose is profit in particular activities rather than any general conception of social use, and its concentration of ownership in sections of the community makes most common decisions, beyond those of the market, limited or impossible" (The Long Revolution [London: Chatto and Windus, 1961], p. 300; henceforth, this title is abbreviated as Long R). "[I]f we are

serious about ending the class system we must clear away the survivals, the irrelevancies, and the confusion of other kinds of distinction, until we see the hard economic centre which finally sustains them" (Long R, p. 335). Between "culture and affluence . . . as alternative aims, . . . the latter will always be the first choice, in any real history" (The Country and the City [Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts.: Paladin, 1975], p. 245; henceforth, this title is abbreviated as CC); "[t]he economics of commercial publishing now impose extraordinary restrictions on writers. The first reaction of a publisher to a novelist these days is: 'Fine, but not more than 80,000 words'" (PL, p. 274); "[t]he publishers are now in a different world, they have standard formats for novels. The price of £4.95 is now a fixed ceiling for a lot of fiction" (PL, p. 300).

9. Culture and Society, pp. 271-72, 273.

10. Culture and Society, p. 273. See also The Long Revolution, p. 115.

11. In the last analysis, for Williams, everything depends on one's way of "seeing." Pages 293 to 355 of The Long Revolution contain the most saturated application of this particular "way of seeing." But while the omnicausality attributed to "interpretation" (p. 345), "discussion" (p. 335), "definitions" (pp. 352, 354), "feeling" (pp. 308, 312, 326, 335), "concepts" (p. 305), "consciousness" (p. 325), and "meanings" (p. 305) is anti-materialist enough philosophically, the suicidal political implications of this quirk become especially clear when he soberly counsels "new creative definitions" as the answer to "destructive expressions" such as "the delinquent gang"--and fascism (Long R, p. 354).

12. Modern Tragedy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), p. 59. This title is parenthetically cited as MT.

13. The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 129; this title is parenthetically abbreviated as EN.

14. The Country and the City, p. 146.

15. On the specific question of "class," Williams remains evasive at best. Thus, in Towards 2000, he mentions "the old Marxist definition of 'productive workers' (those from whom surplus value is extracted within capitalist relations of production)"--then proceeds to conclude: "The point is not so much to choose the 'correct' definition but at first just to be aware of the radical differences according to the category chosen" (p. 158). But only some ten pages or so later, he is already systematically reducing "class" to an anthropologico-sociological question of "bonding" and "rich/poor" contrasts (pp. 162, 166-71).

16. Modern Tragedy, pp. 64-65. On page 73, Williams correctly notes that "our attitude to the revolutionary societies of our time is central and probably decisive in all our thinking." All the more

damning, then, is his continuing tendency to view "the Bolshevik experience" itself as essentially, and at best, "tragic" (PL, p. 399). See also Towards 2000, p. 12.

17 Towards 2000, pp. 251, 172.

18 Williams describes "the German and Scandinavian comrades" as "my kind of people," identifying his own position as "to the left and on the left of the French and Italian communist parties," with "the communist dissidents from the East like Bahro" (PL, p. 296). But the Green Party's Bahro is to the right of even the right-wing French and Italian Communist parties. This barely qualifies Williams as much more than a "left" social democrat. This assessment is, of course, confirmed by his programme as well as his loyal "criticisms" of the "Labour Left" (PL, pp. 367-68). Williams' reformist programme clearly coincides with the Labour Party's role in Britain, despite the fact that he left it in 1966 and decided to write "some sort of a manifesto, stating very clearly that the Labour Party was no longer just an inadequate agency for socialism, it was now an active collaborator in the process of reproducing capitalist society" (PL, p. 373). This belated "discovery"--about three-quarters of a century after Lenin's exposés--does not alter Williams' consummate "culturalist" meliorism one iota.

19 He aptly calls this phenomenon "[t]he 'New Left' cultural intervention," which, he concedes (though rather mildly, it would seem to a Marxist), was "incomplete" and a "weakness which was heavily paid for later" (PL, p. 362).

20 "It was a deficiency of my own generation that the amount of classical Marxism it actually knew was relatively small; . . . there were areas of formed argument which I hadn't previously encountered, which meant that . . . there were certain positions which I ought to have been directly meeting, but had not met" (PL, pp. 316-17). The interviewers ask, "Were you aware of Trotsky's writings at all?" Williams replies, "No. That was a crucial lack. It wasn't till much later that I really learnt of the existence of a socialist opposition in Russia" (PL, pp. 48-49). After the war, he "seized upon Deutscher--the Stalin and the Trotsky books. . . . His interpretation of the Russian Revolution and its development made entire sense to me. . . . I took it as the necessary realignment. But I did not know where it left one on the political spectrum in the present" (PL, p. 90).

21 "First, I think there's no doubt that the rationalising and controlling elements in the received socialist idea have become, in their received terms, residual" (PL, p. 431). "Orthodox communism and orthodox social-democracy . . . indeed showed many features of this [capitalist and imperialist] system in their most powerful forms . . ." (CC, p. 366). "The real tragedy occurs . . . when the revolutionary impetus is so nearly lost, or so heavily threatened, that the revolutionary movement has to impose the harshest discipline on itself

and over relatively innocent people in order not to be broken down and defeated. That kind of hardness, although it shifted around in the complicated politics of the USSR in the twenties, was in different ways taken up by everybody in the Soviet Party. Those who withdrew from the notion of a hard line--hard yet flexible--did stop believing in the revolution" (PL, p. 395). Ergo: Stalinism was a revolutionary Marxist necessity, and Trotskyism, logically, could not then have been revolutionary and Marxist. But Stalinism is bad; therefore, Marxism is bad.

22 Politics and Letters, p. 144; Culture and Society, p. 272.

23 The early Williams' attack on Caudwell (CS, pp. 267-71) focuses most of the former's abiding differences with Marxism. He asserts that Caudwell "has little to say, of actual literature, that is even interesting" and that "for the most part his discussion is not even specific enough to be wrong" (CS, pp. 268-69). Commenting on J.D. Bernal's observation "that the formulations in Caudwell's books 'are those of contemporary bourgeois scientific philosophy . . . and not those of Marxism,'" Williams decides simply that "[t]his is a quarrel which one who is not a Marxist will not attempt to resolve" (CS, p. 269). Two decades after thus dismissing the importance of resolving this "quarrel," however, Williams himself offers his own "solution": "I could at last get free of the model which had been such an obstacle, whether in certainty or in doubt; the model of a fixed and known Marxist position, which in general only had to be applied, and the corresponding dismissal of all other kinds of thinking as non-Marxist, revisionist, neo-Hegelian, or bourgeois" (ML, p. 3). In Politics and Letters, Williams withdraws what he calls his earlier "peremptory" treatment of Illusion and Reality while making no theoretical concessions to Caudwell's argument.

24 Politics and Letters, p. 340. Also see Marxism and Literature, p. 188.

25 Williams remarks that this emphasis, in England dating from the seventeenth century, actually expresses the historical generation of an originally bourgeois, purely consumptive attitude to art (ML, pp. 137, 149-60).

26 The main shifts noted by Williams are the following (listed in chronological order): "fault-finding," "learned" "commentaries," and "conscious exercise of 'taste,' 'sensibility,' and 'discrimination'" (ML, p. 49). He adds that "criticism, taken as a new conscious discipline into the universities, to be practised by what became a new para-national profession, retained these founding class concepts, alongside attempts to establish new abstractly objective criteria. More seriously, criticism was taken to be a natural definition of literary studies, themselves defined by the specialising category (printed works of a certain quality) of literature. Thus these forms of the concepts of literature and criticism are, in the perspective of historical social development, forms of a

class specialisation and control of a general social practice, and of a class limitation of the questions which it might raise" (ML, p. 49).

27 Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (Harmondsworth, Mdx: Penguin, 1964), p. 381. This title is parenthetically abbreviated as DIB.

28 "It is very striking that the classic technique devised in response to the impossibility of understanding contemporary society from experience, the statistical mode of analysis, had its precise origins within the period of . . . [the 1840s]. For without the combination of statistical theory. . . and arrangements for collection of statistical data, symbolised by the foundation of the Manchester Statistical Society, the society that was emerging out of the Industrial Revolution was literally unknowable. . . . After the Industrial Revolution the possibility of understanding an experience in terms of the available articulation of concepts and language was qualitatively altered. . . . New forms had to be devised to penetrate what was rightly perceived to be to a large extent obscure. Dickens is a wonderful example of this, because he is continually trying to find fictional forms for seeing what is not seeable--as in the passages in Dombey and Son where he envisages the roofs of houses being taken off, or a black cloud that is the shape of all the lives that are lived yet otherwise cannot be represented at all. . . . [W]e have become increasingly conscious of the positive power of techniques of analysis, which at their maximum are capable of interpreting, let us say, the movements of an integrated world economy, and of the negative qualities of a naïve observation which can never gain knowledge of realities like these. But at the same time, . . . I see a kind of appalling parody of it beyond me--the claim that all experience is ideology, that the subject is wholly an ideological illusion, which is the last stage of formalism--and I even start to pull back a bit. But I think the correction is right and in a way I should always have known it. . . ." (PL, pp. 170-72).

29 The following quotes may well be regarded as Williams' theoretical manifesto on this criterion: "What we have again to say is that social experience is a whole experience. Its descriptive or analytic features have no priority over its direct realisation in quite physical and specific personal feelings and actions" (EN, pp. 65-66); "while we may, in the study of a past period, separate out particular aspects of life, and treat them as if they were self-contained, it is obvious that this is only how they may be studied, not how they were experienced. We examine each element as a precipitate, but in the living experience of the time every element was in solution, an inseparable part of a complex whole. And it seems to be true from the nature of art, that it is from such a totality that the artist draws; it is in art, primarily, that the effect of a whole lived experience is expressed and embodied. To relate a work of art to any part of that whole may, in varying degrees, be useful; but it is a common experience, in analysis, to realise that when one has measured the work against the separable parts, there yet remains some elements for which there is no external counterpart" (DIB pp. 9-10). "Yes, 'experience' was a term I took over from Scrutiny" (PL, p. 163).

30 The Long Revolution, p. 67; Politics and Letters, pp. 159, 164.

31 See The Long Revolution, pp. 48-71, for an extended discussion of this concept. In Politics and Letters, Williams elaborates his meaning: "The point of the deliberately contradictory phrase, with which I have never been happy, is that it was a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren't otherwise connected--people weren't learning it from each other; yet it was one of feeling much more than of thought--a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones, for which the best evidence was often the actual conventions of literary or dramatic writing. . . . The notion of a structure of feeling was designed to focus a mode of historical and social relations which was yet quite internal to the work, rather than deducible from it or supplied by some external placing or classification. . . . There are cases where the structure of feeling which is tangible in a particular set of works is undoubtedly an articulation of an area of experience which lies beyond them. . . . On the other hand, a dominant set of forms or conventions--and in that sense structures of feeling--can represent a profound blockage for subordinated groups in a society, above all an oppressed class. In these cases, it is very dangerous to presume that an articulate structure of feeling is necessarily equivalent to inarticulate experience" (PL, pp. 159, 164). "Some elements of a structure of feeling are, of course, only traceable through a rather close analysis of language, which will always be a national one" (PL, p. 166). One might well ask if British English and North American English, for example, are both English and if they are, whether they belong to the same nation; of course this particular set does not even include the English dialects of most Commonwealth countries. The "connection between the popular structure of feeling and that used in the literature of the time is of major importance in the analysis of culture. It is here, at a level even more important than that of institutions, that the real relations within the whole culture are made clear. . . ." (Long R, p. 67). In Culture and Society (pp. 99-119), Williams illustrates this concept of structures of feeling with reference to "an unsettled [Victorian] industrial society" and a series of mid-nineteenth century "industrial novels" written by Gaskell, Dickens, Disraeli, Kingsley, and George Eliot.

32 "We do not now read Shakespeare, we read editions of Shakespeare . . . in [the] . . . substantial sense of the reproduction of the text in a quite different culture. . . . Another example would be Horace's famous ode, Beatus Ille, which was reproduced in different forms in various successive phases of the revival of classical culture, characteristically often omitting the last line and therefore the social situation in which it was written, and therefore the whole meaning of the ode. Translations, of course, pose this problem especially acutely. . . . All the forces which keep the text current are among its conditions of production" (PL, pp. 344-45).

33 Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p. 76, more fully quoted in PL, p. 334. On balance, the doubts and reluctance prevail, despite the occasional acknowledgment that "in the end . . . judgment is inevitable" (PL, p. 338). Thus, Williams echoes in Marxism and Literature (p. 146) the same sentiments

he earlier voiced in Keywords: "It is still difficult . . . to prevent any attempt at literary theory from being turned, almost a priori, into critical theory, as if the only major questions about literary production were variations on the question 'how do we judge?'" In Politics and Letters (p. 306), he begins one statement on his evaluative criteria with the clause "If there is still place for evaluation in literature." And in the same set of interviews, he carefully distinguishes his own descriptive-analytical project in Drama from Ibsen to Brecht from those of orthodox "practical criticism"; "Why do people close-analyse within the main practical-critical tradition? In order to clarify their response as evaluation. The verbal analysis of the Ibsen and Strindberg plays I undertook is scarcely concerned with response at all" (PL, p. 193). No doubt Williams' early confrontation with Tillyard, as a young Stalinist, contributed to this evasive "solution." "We maintained," he recalls, "that . . . the problem was not how to judge literature or respond to a poem, it was how to write a different kind of novel or poem. . . . In its positive emphasis, the position was not entirely wrong. . . . But when the productive mood which was our way of replying by not replying faded away after the war, and we had to engage in literary criticism or history proper, we found we were left with nothing. . . . Tillyard told me this was not a tenable procedure; it was a fantasy. How could you judge something that had been written from the perspective of something that hadn't?" (PL, pp. 45-51)

34 "As subjective definitions of apparently objective criteria (which acquire their apparent objectivity from an actively consensual class sense), and at the same time apparently objective definitions of subjective qualities, 'taste' and 'sensitivity' are characteristically bourgeois categories" (ML, pp. 48-49). Other related categories that Williams historicises and problematises in a similar way include "art"/"aesthetic" (ML, p. 50), "culture" (ML, pp. 14-20), and "literature" (ML, pp. 45-54; PL, pp. 326, 328, 329).

35 "George Eliot is the first major novelist in whom this question is active. That is why we speak of her now with a connecting respect, and with a hardness--a sort of family plainness--that we have learned from our own and common experience" (CC, p. 209).

36 Presumably, Lawrence, with his usually controlled "intensity only rarely breaking into hysteria" (MT, p. 138), is as close as any of Williams' favourite mainstream writers to his ideal: "The outstanding value of Lawrence's development is that he was in a position to know the living process as a matter of common rather than of special experience" (CS, p. 203). Lawrence thus represents the golden mean between "the emotional inadequacy" of Shaw (DIB, p. 291) and the "very real hysterical element" in the German dramatist Ernst Toller (DIB, p. 302). Shaw "withered the tangible life of experience in the pursuit of a fantasy of pure intelligence and pure force" (DIB, p. 291), while Toller unsuccessfully attempted "to repress a part of the pattern of his experience,



which had too much vitality to be simply and easily neglected" (DIB, p. 302). Other relevant evaluations include an effectively hierarchical preference of Pasternak's "remarkable intensity and seriousness" to "Eliot's cocktail party, where the sound of human beings was heard as the rubbing of insects' legs" (MT, p. 167), and of Eliot's nevertheless "more intense and more precise" dramatic "emotions," as well as "finer" "language," to Ibsen's prose plays, for instance (DIB, pp. 209-10). Cobbett's "sureness of instinct" is deemed a "vital and impregnable, a genuine embodiment of value," comparable to "Burke's depth of mind" (CS, pp. 31-32), and Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children is felt to create "a substance comparable in intensity with the moral inquiry. To call this action Shakespearean is not to put the praise too high" (MT, p. 198). Wuthering Heights is valued because "[w]hat is created and held to is a kind of human intensity and connection which is the ground of continuing life" (CC, p. 215), and Grassic Gibbon's Sunset Song is praised for embodying "the strength of the living people" (CC, p. 323).

37 In a similar vein, he avers that "Freud's writings should be read . . . as . . . novels. . . . One reads them as one would read the . . . writing of Strindberg or Proust, granting no necessary prior validity because they were based on clinical experience, simply because between the clinical experience and the text there is the process of composition. After all, what is the validity of Strindberg or Proust? Their work articulates another kind of experience, an observation of experience, which preceded and continued into the process of composition. In the same way the work of Lacan today should not be taken as a confirmatory authority . . . but rather as itself a composition which we all believe to be important" (PL, p. 332). Of course, Williams' logic stumbles in that final clause, for the question precisely is whether or not and why "we all" should believe Lacan's composition to be even "important."

38 Perhaps Williams' closest approximations to a theoretical class-analysis of still current individual values are his comments on "evil" (MT, pp. 59-60), "sacrifice" (MT, p. 197), and "lost innocence" (CC, pp. 48-60). Further, although Williams never resorts to a consistent class-analysis of values at an explicitly theoretical level, the very terms of some of his deceptively "arbitrary" case-illustrations suggest a more general class-logic, trapped in the self-defining laconicism of the specific "fact" itself: "Thus the most interesting Marxist position, because of its emphasis on practice, is that which defines the pressing and limiting conditions within which, at any time, specific kinds of writing can be done. . . . [T]he writer within a revolution is necessarily in a different position from the writer under fascism or inside capitalism, or in exile" (ML, p. 204). For classless analyses of certain cultural, thematic, and modal values, see his comments on unprincipled iconoclasm (MT, p. 141), "art-for-art's sake" (CS, p. 171), the absoluteness of death (MT, pp. 56-57, 137), and the illusion of timelessness (CC pp. 249-253).

39 See also Modern Tragedy, p. 196 (on Brecht), and The Country and the City, pp. 196-201 (on Dickens).

40 Modern Tragedy, pp. 126, 313. Also see Politics and Letters, p. 259.

41 Culture and Society, pp. 248-49; The English Novel, p. 127, 169.

42 The English Novel, p. 77; The Country and the City, pp. 207-08.

43 The Country and the City, p. 207, See also his comments on Gaskell, in Culture and Society, pp. 99-104.

44 This point has been convincingly argued by Eagleton, with regard to Williams' literary theory in general: see Criticism and Ideology, pp. 21-42.

45 See also Williams' praise of the following: Synge's "genius of delight" and "brave affirmation" (DIB, p. 152); Dickens' "act of faith" in the existence of "a human spirit . . . ultimately more powerful than even this [inhuman] system" (EN, p. 53); George Eliot's "giving her last strength, her deep warmth, to a hope, a possibility beyond what she had to record in a hardening clearly seen world" (EN, p. 94); and Wells's "sense of possibility: that history could go either way . . ." (CC, p. 279). See also Williams' disapproval of Auden's (and Isherwood's) "real doubt about the truth of . . . [the] objective [or Brechtian-revolutionary] viewpoint" or its negative identification "with a still subjective and anguished consciousness" (DIB, p. 394).

46 The periodisation shows the following pattern: "the transition marked by the Civil War, the Commonwealth, the Restoration and the constitutional settlement of 1688[, which] fundamentally altered the social character of England," also altering literature "in ideology, in mediation and in new creative work" (CC, p. 72); "the lifetime of Blake, 1757 to 1827," which is, "in general, the decisive period" for the Industrial Revolution and its attendant "hunger, suffering, conflict, dislocation; hope, energy, vision, dedication" (CS, p. 49); 1880-1914, which is "a kind of interregnum" between "the period of the Romantic and Victorian masters" and "the period of our contemporaries, of writers who address themselves, in our kind of language, to the common problems that we recognise" (CS, p. 165); and the period of "our contemporaries" themselves, who "appear in effect after the war of 1914-18. D. H. Lawrence is a contemporary, in mood, in a way that Butler and Shaw are clearly not" (CS, p. 165).

47 "[I]t remains true, looking at it from experience, that there are certain feelings, certain relationships, certain fusions and as relevantly certain dislocations, which can only be conceived in the novel, which indeed demand the novel and in just this difficult border country [between 'imaginative' work and those other accounts] where from

Dickens to Lawrence, making its own very varied demands, it has lived and lived with meaning" (EN, p. 190).

48. Williams' evaluation of Hardy in The Country and the City is an updated version of his almost identical chapter in The English Novel. I have followed his latest (CC) version, except where a pertinent remark can be found only in The English Novel, such as the following: "The more I read Hardy the surer I am that he is a major novelist, but also that the problem of describing his work is central to the problem of understanding the whole development of the English novel" (EN, p. 97); "first I am interested in emphasising a more central English tradition [than George Eliot to Henry James]: from George Eliot to Hardy and then on to Lawrence, which is a very clear and in my view decisive sequence" (EN, p. 95); "it's significant that Lawrence, in effect deciding the future direction of his life, should try to get his thoughts and feelings clear in relation and in response to the writer [Hardy] who is obviously (if we can look without prejudice) his direct and most important English predecessor" (EN, p. 170).

49. The Country and the City, p. 234; Politics and Letters, p. 247; The Country and the City, p. 252.

50. Williams takes great pains to emphasise that "Hardy was born into a changing and struggling rural society, rather than the timeless backwater to which he is so often deported," even though he typically attributes and subordinates the "specific class element" to "personal choice" (CC, pp. 239, 253, 255, 258). See Note 51 for fuller quotations.

51. See Note 50. The emphasis, in Williams' analysis of the acknowledged class-factor in Hardy, is on blurring its operations rather than on defining them sharply: "He wrote in a period in which, while there were still local communities, there was also a visible and powerful network of the society as a whole: the law and the economy; the railways, newspapers and the penny post; . . . the real Hardy country, we soon come to see, is that border country so many of us have been living in: between custom and education, between work and ideas, between love of place and experience of change" (CC, p. 239). "The social process created in this interaction is one of class and separation, as well as of chronic insecurity, as this capitalist farming and dealing takes its course. . . . One of the most immediate effects of mobility, within a structure itself changing, is the difficult nature of the marriage choice. . . . The specific class element, and the effects upon this of an insecure economy, are parts of the personal choice which is after all a choice primarily of a way to live, of an identity in the identification with this or that other person" (CC, pp. 254-55; emphasis mine). "People choose wrongly but under terrible pressures; under the confusions of class, under its misunderstandings, under the calculated rejections of a divided separating world" (CC, p. 258).

52. The Country and the City, p. 243; "[Hardy] attempted to describe and value a way of life with which he was closely yet uncertainly connected . . . . As so often when the current social stereotypes are removed the

critical problem becomes clear in a new way. It is the critical problem of so much of English fiction, since the actual yet incomplete and ambiguous social mobility of the nineteenth century. . . . It is here that the social values are dramatised in a very complex way and it is here that most of the problems of Hardy's actual writing seem to arise (CC, p. 243).

Eagleton's Politics and His General Theory of Literature

"Let us review some of the names of the major Marxist aestheticians of the century to date: Lukács, Goldmann, Sartre, Caudwell, Adorno, Marcuse, Della Volpe, Macherey, Jameson, Eagleton": thus begins a paragraph in one of Eagleton's own books, Walter Benjamin (p. 96). He thereby locates his own political credentials emphatically within a framework judged to represent mainstream Marxism.<sup>1</sup> This explicit self-definition, coupled with Eagleton's manifest knowledge of the works and history of Marxism as well as his known passage through certain ostensibly Trotskyist parties in Britain (most recently the centrist Workers Socialist League), should justify a more specifically Trotskyism-centred examination of his views than would have been logical in the case of Caudwell or Williams.

Particularly relevant to our axiological concerns here should be the question of the degree of Eagleton's actual agreement with the programme of the Marxist tradition. For, he has explicitly named Marxism as being virtually ignorant of "a category . . . called 'enjoyment,'"<sup>2</sup> complained of a certain "theoretical prudery . . . in vogue within Marxist aesthetics" that remains "silent on the qualitative distinction between, say, Pushkin and Coventry Patmore" (CI, p. 162), and openly charged that "Marxism, in its day, has operated . . . a philistine reduction on just about everything from race and sex to religion and culture. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The question of Eagleton's degree of agreement with Marxism contains two aspects. One is a perceptible disjunction between his often radical-sounding programme advanced around particular (usually single, cultural) issues and his reluctance consistently to generalise it into an argument for proletarian

revolution. The other, flowing from this first aspect, is his chronic self-distancing (both in his theory and in the specific emphases of his practice) from organised revolutionary politics--an attitude that is increasingly consolidating its scattered manifestations into a theoretical rationale. In an interview with Geoff Dyer on Britain's Channel 5 television (printed in Marxism Today [February 1985] , 30-32), Eagleton describes this trajectory quite clearly:

Over those [last ten] years I've followed a now familiar track on the Left, from a Trotskyist organisation to the Labour Party. One of the reasons for this move could be summarised by saying that the Trotskyist organisation hadn't really taken account of Gramsci. . . . There was no way in which an analysis which locates counter-revolutionary forces primarily at the political level, in the reformist trade union bureaucracy, can displace an understanding of other and perhaps more central forms of hegemony. That is why I think the whole area of cultural discourse is so important. Indeed, until we know more about the way political issues are figured, lived, experienced, in complex and contradictory ways by individual people, I think we can say with some certainty that we won't actually be able to resolve some of the most pressing political problems we're facing. In that sense radical cultural analysis seems to me of paramount importance. (P. 32)

That quotation helps us focus on the two key issues in Eagleton's politics and axiology: (a) the question of reformism versus revolution and (b) the more specific and contingent question of the need for a revolutionary workers' party.

Now Eagleton himself has repeatedly reminded liberals that "the narrative Marxism has to deliver is the story of the struggles of men and women to free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and oppression. There is nothing academic about those struggles, and we forget this at our cost" (MLC, p. viii). "The Marxist tradition is not--and it is lamentable that it needs even to be said at this point--is not a tradition of 'theoreticians,'" he reminds another interviewer. "By the Marxist tradition we mean a tradition that has for one

and a half centuries involved literally millions of men and women in life and death struggles. And whatever we mean by Marxist theory, unless from the beginning we put it in that context, then we are no more than idealists."<sup>4</sup>

"Marxist criticism is not just an alternative technique for interpreting Paradise Lost or Middlemarch," he maintains; "[i]t is part of our liberation from oppression" (MLC, p. 76). Doubtless with this point in mind, Eagleton tellingly ridicules the social democrat Hilferding's implication that "it is possible to be a Marxist without being a revolutionary socialist" (CI, p. 163). For, as he counters against the liberal humanists, "'being human' in the West in 1981 means overthrowing the bourgeois state so as to socialise the means of production."<sup>5</sup> He is thus even (ostensibly) critical of "the residual academicism of Criticism and Ideology. . . . I would say that the task of a Marxist critic was not primarily in the academy, . . . where we are doing a kind of holding operation . . . ." ("Interview," p. 54). "Men and women do not," he lucidly remarks, "live by culture alone, the vast majority of them throughout history have been deprived of the chance of living by it at all, and those few who are fortunate enough to live by it now are able to do so because of the labour of those who do not. Any cultural or critical theory which does not begin from this single most important fact, and hold it steadily in mind in its activities, is in my view unlikely to be worth very much" (LT, p. 214).

Thus, Eagleton's formal grasp of Marxism far exceeds the elementary positions that cause someone like Williams so much trouble. Indeed, it is specific enough to enable him to identify the weaknesses of other theorists on the party question. Over the years, he has variously and acutely criticised Walter Benjamin, Antonio Gramsci, students of English literature, radical book reviewers, and Raymond Williams for failing to understand the "theory of political leadership and role of the revolutionary party."<sup>6</sup> As he exemplarily insists, addressing

anti-vanguardists such as Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess, "only one response is possible; their theories should be opposed and destroyed."<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Eagleton can often be even more specific, addressing the split between Stalinism and Trotskyism. Thus he actually declares at one point that "the hypothesis of Trotsky's Results and Prospects . . . , generalised as the theory of permanent revolution, remains of the utmost importance for socialist strategy today" (WB, p. 178). He maintains that the Bolshevik Revolution is "the most important historical moment in the whole of Marxism, and, indeed, in a sense, in the whole of history to date,"<sup>8</sup> and openly states that "Trotskyist politics seem to me the one living continuity with Bolshevism. . . ."<sup>9</sup> He repeatedly combats the anti-Marxist conflation of Stalinism and communism, as in his polemic against the social democrat Andreas Huyssen; he cites "the steady degeneration of the Bolshevik revolution under Stalinism" and hails Trotsky as "one of the two greatest Marxist revolutionaries of the twentieth century," explicitly crediting him as "the architect of the Red Army and the Fourth International" (WB, pp. 173-74). And all this is not surprising when we recall that Eagleton does have a history of belonging to or supporting, at various times, certain ostensibly Trotskyist parties, although I have only known him to name the specific organisations verbally, and not in print. (However, one can also draw one's own conclusions from the various organs of the British Left in which he has published.)

Now this entire profile clearly provides imaginable grounds for some commentators to label Eagleton a Trotskyist. But such a label--as I will show--would be misplaced. And, not least because anti-Marxists might well opportunistically invoke the un-Trotskyist elements in Eagleton's politics precisely to misrepresent and slander Trotskyism, and also because Eagleton himself makes a political issue out of his critical theory, his positions must be rigorously examined and characterised.



"[W]ith the leftwards movement in the Labour party," writes an English reviewer of a book on criticism, in 1983, "there is the possibility of a Labour government which might take seriously the programmatic proposals which Williams set out [for the Atlee government] twenty years ago in Communications for the social ownership and control of the culture and consciousness industries. These are not the only or necessarily the best proposals, but they would represent a first move towards the 'proletarian public sphere.'" "Socialists," we read in a book on literary theory the same year, "are those who simply wish to draw the full, concrete, practical applications of the abstract notions of freedom and democracy to which liberal humanism subscribes, taking them at their word when they draw attention to the 'vividly particular.'" To such unapologetically reformist politics, which do not even pretend to be Marxist, Eagleton's critique of Williams' politics long ago furnished the apt answer: "When Williams wrote in the May-Day Manifesto of a social democratic government having 'taken our values and changed them,' the tone of affronted moral indignation was a precise function of the unperceived structural complicity between those values and social democracy itself. It is worth adding, too, that the collapse of the 'Manifesto' movement, as the last-ditch strategic 'intervention' . . . of the early New Left, was almost mathematically predictable" (CI, p. 35). Criticising "Williams' political gradualism which rested on a deep-seated trust in the capacity of individuals to create 'new meanings and values' now--meanings and values which will extend (at some infinite point in the future?) to socialism" (CI, p. 27), Eagleton relentlessly exposed the "essentially liberal conception of socialist organisation"

implicit in that programme and declared it "politically sterile from the outset" (CI, p. 35). "Socialism" in the early Williams, Eagleton shrewdly and disapprovingly pointed out, "is merely an extension of bourgeois democracy" (CI, p. 32).

Now, as may not have been immediately apparent, I have just finished quoting the "orthodox Marxist" Eagleton from 1976 against the social-democratised Eagleton himself from 1983.<sup>10</sup> I hope that the contrast has been telling. Of course, even in his 1976 epigraph to his father's memory, he had stated, "What we do best is breed/speech . . ." (CI, p. 9). But what started out as a matter of political dissatisfaction and sense of limitation (however minimal) with discursive radicalism has assumed, over the years, a certain defiant theoretical generalisation and self-justification. "If you like," Eagleton quips to his interviewers, "the slogan will be 'from Marxist aesthetics to revolutionary cultural theory and practice'" ("Interview," p. 63): and he emphatically does not mean "revolutionary" in the sense of "party-oriented." The stress falls on "cultural." This stance is no more than one small step to the ostensible left of what Eagleton himself criticised as Williams' "Left-Leavisism." One might then, quite justifiably, call it "Left-Williamsism," thereby recognising that Eagleton's comparatively greater verbal militancy actually resides within the same framework of political-cultural activities and concerns as Williams'. Indeed, the limits of Eagleton's thinking are turning out to be the "left" limits of Williams' world.

This holds true even where Eagleton details his "revolutionary cultural" projects, as we shall see. And a certain opportunistic complacency informs this developing and consolidating programme. "We

never said the theatre would stop tanks," announces a reconciled Brecht in Eagleton's play Brecht and Company.<sup>11</sup> "We're actors. What else can we use but what we've got—props, words, bits of costume? . . . We haven't won yet. . . . But we did what we could, making all things serviceable, using such scraps as history permitted us." Read in the light of Eagleton's maturing left-apologism for Williams, "Brecht's" established limitations actually represent Eagleton's highest reformist aspirations. Thus, one may well doubt that Eagleton's irony is an entirely disapproving one when he observes of Joyce that, "[u]nable to overcome the contradictions of Ireland in political action, . . . [he] . . . proceeded to lay bare those contradictions in his art": "With love and hate for Ireland at war within his heart/He learned what can't be done in life can still be on in art."<sup>12</sup> Only some nouns need to be changed in that jingle to show how its picture matches that of Eagleton's own political programme today.

But we need not merely through indirection find Eagleton's political direction out. For, on two concrete and fundamentally divisive issues of Marxist politics today, he has either openly denounced Marxism (and, with it, the notion of a vanguard) or openly distanced himself from it, in the process sometimes attributing to it a history that even a reasonably scrupulous non-Marxist analyst would recognise as false. These issues are (1) the nature of the Soviet Union and its East European allies today and (2) the Bolshevik programme for women's liberation. It is on these questions that Eagleton's anti-Marxist politics become most immediately obvious.

Even if we consider only the most recent of Eagleton's various

statements and hinted positions on the first question, we find a consistent solicitousness towards social-democratic, anti-Soviet "public opinion." This is evinced chiefly by his readiness to denounce the (albeit real) evils in the Soviet bloc "even-handedly" with those in the capitalist West, without once defending--or even mentioning--the equally real gains still remaining there, despite the political degeneration.<sup>13</sup> And, for all its correct points, Eagleton's polemic against Andreas Huyssen implicitly accepts the latter's social-democratic telescoping of the Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy with the entirety of "the Soviet Union" itself.<sup>14</sup> All this is decidedly and specifically anti-Trotskyist. However, on this question, Eagleton has not yet equated Marxism with Stalinism in order openly to denounce the former; for that, we have to read him on feminism.

"Marxism is now reaping the whirlwind of its own frequently callous insensitivity to the oppression of women," he maintains in Walter Benjamin (p. 100), "and it is to be hoped that the lesson is deep and enduring. By virtue of its own partially sexist history, Marxism has lowered its moral and political credibility in the eyes of one of the most potentially vital of all mass movements. . . . It is clear at any rate that any attempt now on the part of Marxism cynically to cash in on the sufferings of women will be fiercely and rightly repulsed."

Now, a Marxist could say many things about this passage (and about other similar ones in Eagleton); one obvious point would be that Eagleton offers no evidence to support his charge. Let us merely examine, however, the substance of his claims. First, his remarks

reveal an utter ignorance of Bolshevik history on this question.<sup>15</sup>  
As early as 1899, Lenin insisted that Clause 9 of the first draft programme of his party (RSDLP) contain the words "establishment of complete equality of rights between men and women"; and Bolshevik Russia became the first country in the world in which women won that equality. By the time of the October Revolution, women constituted about ten per cent of the membership of the Bolshevik Party and were represented at every level of the organisation. The Bolsheviks created a special commission of the Central Committee for Work among Women, led by Inessa Armand. It was replaced in 1919 by the governmental Department of Working Women and Peasant Women (Zhenotdel), which went on to organise--among other things--25,000 literacy schools in which the women themselves were often the majority of the students. Women volunteered for the Red Guard units to defeat the counterrevolution, with sixty-three women winning the Order of the Red Banner for military heroism.

The Bolshevik Revolution legally and practically abolished so-called illegitimacy, making fathers co-responsible with the mothers for their offspring; it declared marriage to be a free contract between free and equal individuals, established hundreds of care-institutions for mothers and children, legalised abortions, assured equal pay for equal work, and unlocked vast opportunities for women in industry, the professions, the party, and the government. Culturally, too, one can trace a rising struggle, beginning with the Bolshevik Women's clubs of St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1907, passing through the journalism of Pravda's special column for working women

and the founding of the journal Rabotnitsa (1914-18), and culminating in the re-appearance of a revolutionary women's journal after the Civil War (Kommunistka), edited by Alexandra Kollontai and Armand. It was not Marxism but the Stalinist counterrevolution—with its "Mother Heroine" medals and its abolition of Zhenotdel--that reversed many of the gains of that first Marxist revolution.

I detail this history for a reason. As one anti-Marxist reviewer of Eagleton's Literary Theory, Janet Montefiore, approvingly notes—while berating him, from his ultra-feminist right, for his "incipient vanguardism"—"Eagleton's prime model of . . . a politics of personal experience—or, rather, of analysing experience—is feminism"; and she wryly lauds "the positively chivalrous respect he evinces for it."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, most noticeably since his Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and the Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), the politically petit-bourgeois feminist movement has increasingly become for Eagleton both a social focus for his liberal guilt and awe<sup>17</sup> and a political rallying point for his reformist impulses.

Consequently, feminism—a separatist antithesis to proletarian interests—has increasingly become Eagleton's particular vehicle for launching his more open attacks on Marxism. This vehicle, moreover, carries him across a large cross-section of phenomena, including literary axiology. For, as he remarks (somewhat pointlessly, it might seem at first), "feminism recognises no . . . [false] . . . distinctions between questions of the human subject and questions of political struggle" (LT, p. 215). Apparently, that is, Marxism does.

For, of course, only a political innocent would take that remark to be merely the rebuff to apolitical empiricism that Eagleton explicitly presents it as; behind it, surely, lies his usual warning to "philistine" Marxism to learn a few things from the latest "mass" "movement." For, while he extols the "potential" vitality or importance of feminism (though the ungrateful Janet Montefiores of the world be but mildly amused), it is after all Marxism that he chooses to characterise as cynically opportunist. The fact is that, even though his (all-too-modestly) "incipient vanguardism" makes him distasteful to feminism, Eagleton's own revulsion from the implications of consistent Marxism nevertheless keeps him pushed in a bloc with its petit-bourgeois antithesis. The sectarian political ideology that he thereby feels compelled to capitulate to has nothing in common with the ideology of even some of the merely class-conscious proletarian women of today--such as the militant Women's Auxiliary supporting the 1984 Arizona copper-miners' strike or the wives of the Kent coal-miners who marched in London the same year, under slogans such as "Kent Miners Wives Say Stand by Your Man."<sup>18</sup>

The net critical-theoretical result of Eagleton's current political trajectory has therefore been his rapid falling-in behind that other petit-bourgeois critic, the social-democratic Williams, in their common adoption of "culturalism." That is, both critics have carefully restricted their political efforts to culture, thereby pointedly rejecting any orientation to organised revolutionary commitment in practice. Before formally announcing this programme (which has always been the observable reality), the Eagleton of Literary Theory

briefly tries to pre-empt criticism by assuring us that "[t]hose who work in the field of cultural practices are unlikely to mistake their activity as utterly central" (LT, p. 214); then he takes the plunge, vaguely alluding to "times and places when it suddenly becomes newly relevant, charged with a significance beyond itself" (LT, p. 215). Perhaps Eagleton believes in a different definition of cynical opportunism than do those philistine Marxists he berates.

Be that as it may, the specific form of Eagleton's culturalism is simply a "proletarianised" version of the "community" reformism he himself so acutely criticised in Williams. It names four main areas of special interest: anti-imperialist culture emanating from colonial countries "struggling for their independence from imperialism," the feminist "women's movement," the so-called "culture industry," and the so-called "worker writers' movement" (LT, pp. 215-16). Of these, it is of course the last-named area that is of direct relevance to our discussion here.

Eagleton hails the "worker writers' movement" as "one sign of a significant break from the dominant relations of literary production": for, he asserts, "[c]ommunity and cooperative publishing enterprises . . . interrogate the ruling definitions of literature . . . ." (LT, p. 216). Clearly, Eagleton must believe these days that "interrogating" the ruling "definitions" of "literature"--irrespective of organised proletarian revolution--will significantly contribute to "overthrowing the bourgeois state so as to socialise the means of production." Either Eagleton truly does believe this, or he no longer thinks that the bourgeois state needs to be (in his phrase) "overthrown." In any case, his political perspective stands revealed



as that of mainline Williamsian "culturalist" reformism. For, as Eagleton himself has noted, "Materialism must insist on the irreducibility of the real to discourse" (WB, p. 51). For all those familiar with the Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of the USSR against imperialism, the bathetic logic of Eagleton's reformist trajectory is captured in his parallel rallying cry to "those who have doubts about the ideological implications of . . . departmental organisations such as those of literature . . . to defend them unconditionally against government assaults" (LT, p. 213). Eagleton seems to understand the meaning and importance of principled unconditional defence quite properly when it is the livelihood of academics in capitalist Britain that looks uncertain; but he somehow forgets it when the very existence of entire workers' states are jeopardised by imperialism.

Such is the logic of a politics rapidly retreating from a formal imitation of Trotskyism. The nature of this contradiction is exactly encapsulated in the fact that, after having repeatedly and regretfully noted Walter Benjamin's "negative theology," with its "absence of the revolutionary party" (WB, pp. 148, 177), and after having explicitly argued that "Trotsky was incomparably more significant than Benjamin for the course of socialism" (WB, p. 174), Eagleton squarely opts for . . . Benjamin: "In the imperialist homelands, the conditions against which Benjamin warned are once again in sway.

. . . . In such a situation, it is more than ever necessary to blast Benjamin's work out of its historical continuum, so that it may fertilise the present" (WB, p. 179; emphasis mine). Eagleton's effectively exclusive choice is no accident; and the political contradiction is not resolved by pointing to the obvious fact that the book, after all

is "about" Benjamin, not Trotsky. Eagleton's motivating political programme stands revealed not in his token acknowledgment but in his actual recommendations.

Besides, the very fact of Eagleton's culturalist emphasis codifies, in any case, his political choice; one therefore needs to remain conscious of the overall rightward drift of his politics in order to see through the apparent methodological and verbal "leftism" of much of his cultural-critical theory itself. His categories are deployed to subvert virtually every conventional assumption about culture except one--namely, that even "Marxist" cultural activists need not base their operations on the logic and the demands of organised revolutionary proletarian politics. In formulations that at first seem to constitute a dramatic political broadening of priorities, but which then (less ostentatiously) dispel that impression, Eagleton offers a number of possible projects that he calls "useful" (or "revolutionary") criticism. Two passages from Walter Benjamin contain some detailed explanation of his conception:

It would dismantle the ruling concepts of "literature," reinserting "literary" texts into the whole field of cultural practices. It would strive to relate such "cultural" practices to other forms of social activity, and to transform the cultural apparatuses themselves. It would articulate its "cultural" analyses with a consistent political intervention. It would deconstruct the received hierarchies of "literature" and transvaluate received judgments and assumptions; engage with the language and "unconscious" of literary texts, to reveal their role in the ideological construction of the subject; and mobilise such texts, if necessary by hermeneutic "violence," in a struggle to transform those subjects within a wider political context. (WB, p. 98)

The task of the "revolutionary cultural workers," Eagleton later

summarises, are three:

First, to participate in the production of works and events which, within transformed "cultural" media, so fictionalise the "real" as to intend those effects conducive to the victory of socialism. Second, as "critic," to expose the rhetorical structures by which non-socialist works produce politically undesirable effects, as a way of combatting what it is now unfashionable to call false consciousness. Third, to interpret such works where possible "against the grain," so as to appropriate from them whatever may be valuable for socialism. The practice of the socialist cultural workers, in brief, is projective, polemical and appropriative. (WB, p. 113)

Obviously, Eagleton's combination of violently deconstructionist and appropriative rhetoric--structured by images of diversification and broadening, and concretised by references to "social activity," "political intervention," and "victory of socialism"--seems, by academic standards, startlingly radical. But it also tends to obscure the fact that Eagleton has left remarkably open the specific question of exactly "whatever" he thinks may be "valuable for socialism." This is not a demand on my part for a complete list of specifically unforeseeable "effects" deemed "conducive to the victory of socialism." Rather, it is merely a recognition of the absence, from Eagleton's theory, of any conception of a guiding political vehicle to orient those "effects" and the means of achieving them. And this holds true for his latest book on the subject as well: The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism (London: Verso, 1984).

Ian Birchall is one critic who has come close to identifying the limitations of an argument such as Eagleton's.<sup>19</sup> While partly sharing

Eagleton's academic horizon and orientation (expressed in the ambiguous statement, "Our political tasks clearly begin there [in the academy]" [p. 116]), Birchall also asserts the obvious social truth that "there are other tasks outside of academic institutions. The whole experience of Stalinism and Zhdanovism has distorted the argument about the relationship between cultural practice and political organisation. There are a whole number of questions to be reopened here" (p. 117). Of course, he then goes on to imply that Trotsky's critique of Proletkult was wrong, that Rock Against Racism represents "bringing together political organisation and cultural practice," and that he is probably thinking more about "the relations of party and writer" (my emphasis) than about the relations of party and critic—a distinction I have stressed in my Introduction. Birchall's idea of "political organisation," then, is not exactly a Leninist one; but he at least names the problem.

From a relatively more philosophical standpoint, Cliff Slaughter, too, stresses the crucial importance of what he calls "Marx's revolution in philosophy":

Does not creative literature (like music and the visual arts), besides reflecting the contemporary ideology in particular ways, provide compelling and life-giving images for the inner struggle men must undertake in order to re-engage continually in the struggle to unite with nature, a unity and conflict of opposites? When Trotsky wrote Literature and Revolution, it was from this standpoint, which allowed him to start from the most specific problems facing the writers, readers and critics of the day, problems which together constituted the question of the whole historical meaning of the Russian Revolution as the beginning of the world socialist revolution, and the new way in which the thoughts and feelings aroused by this titantic struggle opened up to mankind the treasure-house of

past literature. . . . None of this is considered by Eagleton [in Criticism and Ideology], restricted as he is to the ideological function of literature and criticism. (P. 207)

I find Slaughter's primary focus ("creative literature"), his theoretical sureness about the nature of creative literature, and his unmediated broadening of perspective into a virtually pointless (and debatable) generalisation about people's struggle to "unite" with nature different from my focus and approach. But his analytical illustration from Trotsky does, nevertheless, valuably remind Marxists of the logical and indispensable connection between literary criticism and theory, on the one hand, and actual participation in political struggle, on the other. On this point, Slaughter has certainly managed to spot a major--and, arguably, the decisive--absence in Eagleton's political makeup, as manifested in the latter's theoretical system. I therefore thoroughly disagree with those social-democratically inclined critics, such as Neil Bolton, who complain of Eagleton's allegedly "serious over-estimation of the achievements of Marxist politics."<sup>20</sup> I also disagree with those Stalinist, popular-frontist critics, such as Arnold Kettle, whose infatuation with "democratic" pragmatism leads them to prefer "liberal errors and petty bourgeois inroads" to Marxism, and for whom even the all-too-accommodating Eagleton becomes a "purist" and a "sectarian Marxist."<sup>21</sup>

In this respect, Eagleton himself merely confirms Slaughter's observation when, in Literary Theory, he emphatically restricts his own conception of the "radical critics'" tasks to "discursive practices": "[the task is] to see 'literature' as a name which people give from time to time for different reasons to certain kinds of writing within a whole field of what Michel Foucault has called

'discursive practices,' and . . . if anything is to be an object of study it is this whole field of practices rather than just those sometimes rather obscurely labelled 'literature'" (LT, p. 205).

For Eagleton, "discursive practices" really do mark the limits of his horizon: organised revolutionary class-struggle seems almost embarrassingly out of place here. Yet, he has named himself on a short list of the "major Marxist aestheticians of the century to date." That, in Marxism, is known as a contradiction--and one should expect to be held accountable for embodying it.

Since Eagleton's main overture to social democracy occurs over a relatively larger question--the very choice of activity--rather than over details--that is, for example, over the methodological superiority (or otherwise) of psychoanalysis to deconstruction--any detailed analysis of his actual internal literary-theoretical system would be somewhat beside the political/axiological point. Of course, as we shall see, this is not to say that the details of his system do not internally share the overall direction and character exhibited by his politics externally; quite the contrary. But, to adopt a Benjaminesque phrase through Eagleton, if reading "against the grain" is the best way of uncovering a writer's suppressed positions, then lending much political credibility or import to Eagleton's left-sounding "literary" theory will not particularly help us in analysing the politics of his axiology.

However, alongside this caveat, I will of course concede that some acquaintance with his literary theory per se is necessary to an understanding of his axiology as well. Briefly, Eagleton argues

that "[t]he guarantor of a scientific criticism is the science of ideological formations," and maintains that "[t]o argue for differential relations between text and ideology . . . is to claim that those relations are historically mutable—as mutable as 'general' and 'aesthetic' ideologies themselves--and therefore demand specific historical definition" (CI, pp. 96, 94). The particular analytical value of literature, Eagleton holds, is that it "is the most revealing mode of experiential access to ideology that we possess. It is in literature, above all, that we observe in a peculiarly complex, coherent, intensive and immediate fashion the workings of ideology in the textures of lived experience of class-societies." Consequently, he argues, clearly deploying the deconstructionist strategy of reading "against the grain," "[t]he function of criticism is to refuse the spontaneous presence of the work--to deny that 'naturalness' in order to make its real determinants appear" (CI, p. 101).

From all this, and particularly from Eagleton's reference to "general" and "aesthetic" ideologies, one can already gather that "ideology," as he conceives it, is both a recognisably distinct and an internally differentiated entity. In fact, ideology in Eagleton's scheme is the body of materially and conceptually signified beliefs and values of particular individuals, groups, and masses of people that define their position and role in the social relations of power.<sup>22</sup> These beliefs, he points out, usually contain some truth about objective reality, as well as some elements of misperception; and in the literary realm, as in all others, these beliefs and values are intricately linked to their individual possessor's economic and cultural role in society.

Leaf 329 missed in numbering



The literary sector itself includes what Eagleton calls "a number of 'levels': theories of literature, critical practices, literary traditions, genres, conventions, devices and discourses" (CI, p. 60); and the specifically "aesthetic" aspect of it includes "an 'ideology of the aesthetic'--a signification of the function, meaning and value of the aesthetic itself within a particular social formation, which is in turn part of an 'ideology of culture' included within . . . [the general ideology]" (CI, p. 60). As for the text itself, it is "not the 'expression' of ideology" but "a certain production of ideology" (CI, p. 64); its "relation to ideology so constitutes that ideology as to reveal something of its relations to history" (CI, pp. 68-69). This can happen both negatively as well as positively: "in deformatively 'producing' the real, it nevertheless carries elements of reality within itself" (CI, p. 69).

Now, though some texts "seem to approach the real more closely than others," it is the literary text's "lack of a real direct referent [that] constitutes the most salient fact about it": "fictiveness . . . is the most general constituent of the literary text, and this refers not at all to the literal fictiveness of the text's events and responses (for they may happen to be historically true), but to certain modes of producing those materials" (CI, pp. 77-78). According to Eagleton, then--given the nature of bourgeois ideological dominance, the ideological make-up of literary texts, and the analytical power of counter-ideological criticism--the critic's task should be to reveal, analyse, and judge "the relation between textual signification (which is both 'form' and 'content') and those more pervasive significants we name ideology" (CI, p. 79).

To illustrate his conception of the ideologically contradictory

properties of literature, Eagleton cites the work of Balzac:

Balzac was indeed able to achieve partial insight into the movement of real history, but it is mistaken to image such insight as a transcendence of ideology into history. No such displacement of realms occurs: it is rather that Balzac's insights are the effect of a specific conjuncture of his mode of authorial insertion into ideology, the relations of the ideological region he inhabited to real history, the character of that stage of capitalist development, and the "truth-effect" of the particular aesthetic form (realism) he worked. It is by force of this conjuncture that he was able to be at once exceedingly deluded and extraordinarily percipient. There is no more question of Balzac's text having "by-passed" the ideological and established a direct relation to history than there is of Shakespeare's drama having launched its critique of bourgeois individualism from outside a highly particular ideological standpoint. (CI, pp. 69-70)

This fairly balanced explanation of both the perceptiveness and the deludedness of Balzac, however, is rather unique in the general scheme of Eagleton's critical theory. As more than one commentator has observed, the overall emphasis in Eagleton's theory usually tends to fall on the omissions or delusions, understressing the elements of direct, positive truth in a text.<sup>23</sup> And this general imbalance, as we shall see, bears direct implications for his axiology, while at the same time bespeaking a more fundamental problem with his political relationship to Marxism.

#### Eagleton's Principles of Literary Evaluation

To a greater extent than either Caudwell or Williams, Eagleton views specific empirical criteria of literary value as algebraic

functions of their larger, methodological principles. He abstracts--and, therefore, in one sense radically "simplifies"--the entire axiological problematic as it has historically been defined by most theorists before him. On the other hand, viewed from a specifically Trotskyist standpoint, this simplification produces certain un-Marxist contradictions, some of whose practical results violate the requirements of even simple logic. And the contradictions, I will argue, are chiefly defined by two inadequacies: one is Eagleton's inconsistent class-definition and class-differentiation of his discussed authors, readers/critics, and (his own and their) motivating political programme(s); the other, related to this occasional practical class-blindness, is an insufficiently consistent integration of his evaluative principles with a revolutionary standpoint that recognises the centrality of the party question in Marxist axiology today.

Eagleton maintains that it would seem absurd for Marxist criticism "to be silent on the qualitative distinction between, say, Pushkin and Coventry Patmore. Yet such a theoretical prudery is in vogue within Marxist aesthetics . . .: how patrician to prefer Blake to Betjeman" (CI, p. 162). Arguing that "Marxist criticism should indeed decisively intervene in the 'value-problem,'" he correctly points out that "nothing is to be gained by that form of literary ultra-leftism which dismisses received evaluations merely because they are the product of bourgeois criticism" (CI, p. 162). In this negative stance towards "literary ultra-leftism," I find myself at one with Eagleton. The difference arises when he formulates the positive tasks of Marxist criticism as he sees them:

The task of Marxist criticism is to provide a materialist explanation of the bases of literary value—a task which Raymond Williams, in his discussion of the English novel, seems to me to have left largely unachieved. It should not, then, be a matter of embarrassment that the literary texts selected for examination by Marxist criticism will inevitably overlap with those works which literary idealism has consecrated as 'great'; it is a question of challenging the inability of such idealism to render more than subjective accounts of the criteria of value. (CI, p. 162)

Since this statement, in Eagleton's chapter on "Marxism and Aesthetic Value" (CI, pp. 162-87), constitutes part of the first specialised axiological discussion within ostensible Marxism in recent years, it rewards diagnostic scrutiny. Of course, I should mention at once that elements of the argument are subsequently revised or refined by him in books such as Literary Theory.

In light of our preceding observations about Eagleton's politics and his general theory of literature, several theoretical questions might immediately be raised regarding the above-quoted sections: why the gratuitous self-restriction to "received evaluations" merely because, manifestly, not all products of bourgeois criticism are unmitigatedly reactionary? Are Marxists expected to conclude that all bourgeois evaluations are therefore politically the opposite, only ineptly "explained" by the class-enemy? What is meant by "the" "bases" of "literary value"? Are we supposed to think that "received" bourgeois evaluations rest on Marxist motivational "bases"? Is there only a fixed number of "bases"? Are they classless? Whose "literary value" is being proposed, in whose interests, and in what specific historical and class context? Or does Eagleton indeed believe--contrary to subsequent indications--that times change, but

values don't ("as though we still believed in killing off infirm infants or putting the mentally ill on public show" [LT. p. 11])?

Are Marxist axiologists the kept literary lawyers of bourgeois ideologues that they should not so much question the very terms of the selection and the consecration of those ideologues' "great tradition" as content themselves with merely "explaining" why the "tradition" must stand undisturbed and why the assumption about its "greatness" must remain universally conceded, if not unchallenged?

Of course, I am exaggerating here the contradictions in Eagleton's early axiological arguments. But I am doing that for a reason--precisely because, in his later work, they tend to become misleadingly subdued or blurred or partially "corrected" without really getting resolved. The assumptions of universal consensus, intrinsic value, and non-revolutionary, non-party contexts linger on, highlighting Eagleton's chief philosophico-political poles of contradiction: absolutism and relativism, idealism and materialism, discursive culturalism and a formal notion of organised political commitment, reformism and revolutionism, centrism and Trotskyism.

"The value of a text, then," Eagleton decides in the above-cited chapter from Criticism and Ideology, "is determined by its double mode of insertion into an ideological formation and into the available lineages of literary discourse. It is in this way that the text enters into relation with an always partial range of the historically determined values, interests, needs, powers and capacities which surround it . . ." (CI, p. 186). Here, typically, Eagleton speaks more radically than many ostensible Marxists about "interests, needs, powers and capacities," calling for the "double-refusal" of historicism and

formalism, in favour of re-enacting "the founding gesture of Marxist political economy and re-consider[ing] the question of value on the site of literary production" (CI, p. 166). Yet, his parameters do not decisively surpass "ideological practices" as such. And he accordingly (falsely) transfers the notion of economic production as a whole to one restricted "site"—the "literary"—within it.<sup>24</sup>

In Literary Theory, Eagleton attempts to overcome this discursive parochialism at a stroke. "'Value,'" he remarks correctly, "is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes" (LT, p. 11). Thus, "what distinguishes one kind of discourse from another . . . is neither ontological [n]or methodological but strategic," he points out. "This means asking first not what the object is or how we should approach it, but why we should want to engage with it in the first place. . . . It is not a matter of starting from certain theoretical or methodological problems: it is a matter of what we want to do, and then seeing which methods and theories will best help us achieve these ends" (LT, pp. 209-10).

In an abstract way, this orientational "corrective" certainly throws some useful light on the general logic of evaluation. It healthily insists on emphasising the practical motives of value judgment. At the same time, this argument logically reminds one of Eagleton's own, declared practical-political motive--a left-Williamsian culturalism. Moreover, it leads one to ask why he himself should have wanted to "engage" with "received" bourgeois evaluations principally in the role of a mere explicator, stubbornly unquestioning of their evaluations

themselves: "The Brontës, Dickens, Eliot, Hardy: it is with them, rather than with Thackeray, Trollope, Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton, that the finest achievements of nineteenth-century realism are to be found" (CI, p. 125). The relevant questions here are in the first place methodological: "finest" for whom? in what historical context? for what literary, cultural and political purposes? The answers to these questions are not inscribed in the judgment itself; and this has remained the overall symptomatic problem with Eagleton's empirical assessments of authors and their works. One is therefore inclined to suspect that, in such a sophisticated ostensible Trotskyist as Eagleton, this abiding neglect of the axiological importance of his imagined audience's class-character must be a direct function of his political centrism in general. It is not an accident.

If one can agree, at least provisionally, to distinguish between two aspects of Eagleton's axiology--its formal statements of principles and its revealed positions centred on particular evaluations--one might recognise a rough correspondence between those statements and Eagleton's relativistic consciousness, on the one hand, and between those revealed positions and his absolutist assumptions, on the other. This can enable us, further, to see how the relativist and the absolutist in Eagleton combine in a specific way in practice, sanctioning the valorisation of politically reactionary writers in the name of both contextually historical relative situations and intrinsically absolute particular values. And this can vividly demonstrate for us one implication of the marriage between political centrism and literary axiology.

Thus, on the one hand, Eagleton is clearly enamoured of his "shock"-technique of using the allegedly "agreed" value of, say, Homer or Shakespeare to argue their conceivable future worthlessness: "Given a profound enough historical shift, there is no reason in principle why Shakespeare should not fall into the ranks of the unemployed."<sup>25</sup> Criteria for literary evaluation, he reminds us, are inevitably pre-constituted at a number of levels in any given society and culture, and they are applied in conscious or subeonscious accordance with the ultimately practical political interests of the judge, and of his or her class:

Another reason why literary criticism cannot justify its self-limiting to certain works by an appeal to their "value" is that criticism is part of a literary institution which constitutes these works as valuable in the first place. . . . Literary criticism selects, processes, corrects and rewrites texts in accordance with certain institutionalised norms of the "literary" --norms which are at any given time arguable and always historically variable. . . . [T]here are certainly a great many ways of talking about literature that it excludes and a great many discursive moves and strategies which it disqualifies as invalid, illicit, non-critical nonsense. . . . Regional dialects of the discourse, so to speak, are acknowledged and sometimes tolerated, but you must not sound as though you are speaking another language altogether. . . . It is the power of "policing" language-- . . . of policing writing itself. . . . Finally, it is a question of the power-relations between the literary-academic institution, where all of this occurs, and the ruling power-interests of society at large, whose ideological needs will be served and whose personnel will be reproduced by the preservation and controlled extension of the discourse in question. (LT pp. 202-03)

"Literary value," Eagleton warns, even in Criticism and Ideology, ". . . is always relational value: 'exchange-value.' The histories of 'value' are a sub-sector of the histories of literary-



ideological receptive practices" (CI, pp. 166-67). In this sense, the text can generate only a finite number of possible readings "within the conjuncture of the reader's ideological matrix and its own" (CI, p. 167). Thus, since value is the determinate product of a particular interaction under particular circumstances, Eagleton believes that we must "refuse a 'moralism' of literary value" and "rewrite the question of a work's quality with the question of its conditions of possibility" (CI, p. 187). Hence, taking a cue from the Marxist (especially the Trotskyist) prognosis of culture in the distant future, Eagleton speculates at one point that "if Marxism has maintained a certain silence about aesthetic value, it may well be because the material conditions which would make such discourse fully possible do not as yet exist" (CI, p. 187).

This element of relativism and sense of historical context enables Eagleton to expose the ideological bias of such fundamental categories as "Literature" and "Criticism," to link their significance at crucial points to the history of "Realism" as a convention, and to reveal certain axiological implications of such "conjuncturalisation." On the other hand, as we shall see, this literary-historical relativism can easily translate, in Eagleton, into an acceptance of political pluralism--which can then be used to accommodate downright reaction and to "justify" the political passivity and defeatism implicit in his "culturalism". Moreover, Eagleton remains attached to the term and the concept of "the value" of a text; it is an attachment which groundlessly posits an intrinsic, permanent, and universally recognisable element. He makes no decisive, and more logical, shift to the term and the concept

of "evaluation," which would necessarily suggest flux, interaction, and interdependence. This then bespeaks his inconsistency in extending his own literary-historical relativism to the realm of axiology. And the contradictory effects of his limited methodological relativism and his residual methodological and empirical absolutism show in many of his specific literary judgments, as does their concomitant political centrism.

It is important to note the force of Eagleton's arguments for relativism, not only because they offer a positive analytical guide but also because they provide a gauge against which to measure his own contrasting, absolutist statements. Thus, for instance, destroying the myth of the isolable and permanent "value" of something called "Literature," Eagleton exposes the implicit mutual valorisations of reader and text as they operate in established "Criticism" today:

Criticism becomes a mutually supportive dialogue between two highly valorised subjects: the valuable text and the valuable reader. . . . The valuable reader is constituted as valuable by the texts which he constitutes as such; ideological value is projected into the Tradition to re-enter the present as metaphysical confirmation or critique. The name of this tautology is Literature. . . . (CI, p. 164)

As Eagleton goes on to elaborate in Literary Theory (using small "l" instead of capital "L" for "Literature"), "by and large people term 'literature' writing which they think is good":

Value judgments would certainly seem to have a lot to do with what is judged literature and what isn't--not necessarily in the sense that writing has to be "fine" to be literary, but that it has to be of the kind that is judged fine: it may

be an inferior example of a generally valued mode. . . . Anything can be literature, and anything which is regarded as unalterably and unquestionably literature--Shakespeare, for example--can cease to be literature. . . . Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist. . . . [People] may even change their minds about the grounds they use for judging what is valuable and what is not. . . . There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable in itself, regardless of what anyone might have said or come to say about it. (LT, pp. 10-11)

It is on these grounds that Eagleton specifically criticises, for instance, Lukács' pro-"realism" aesthetics, for "they play upon some quite unexamined shift from 'fact' to 'value'. . . . It just is the case that art which gives us the 'real' is superior art" (WB, pp. 84-85).

And yet, Eagleton routinely and uncritically upholds the "received" ranking by "conventional estimation as 'major'" of authors such as Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and Lawrence, and of works such as Tristram Shandy.<sup>26</sup> Of late, Eagleton has modified the absolutism of his specific evaluative formulations; nevertheless, he has not expressly come to terms with and rejected the methodology that led him into absolutism in the first place. Thus, he actually often reproduces his absolutism at other levels, within the framework of the new formulations. For instance, he suggests that psychoanalytical theory can tell us "more about why most people prefer John Keats to Leigh Hunt" (LT, p. 193). The homely simplicity and mischievously self-conscious bias of that statement leaves unquestioned certain assumptions that nevertheless bear serious examination: where did Eagleton find his statistics on the said preference? What bias did that

survey itself start out with? Has Eagleton checked to see if the relative productions and professional prescriptions of works by Keats and Hunt affect their respective popularity? Of course, Eagleton is entirely aware of all these axiological factors in a general way: but if that general awareness does not show any impact on his specific formulations, then we are entitled to question at least his consistency, and perhaps even to suspect the rigour of his general understanding.

In a discussion with Peter Fuller in New Left Review, Eagleton himself makes clear some of the implications of my questions: "Nobody I know is prepared to argue that Lem is unquestionably inferior to Thomas Love Beddoes, but because Lem happens to write in what is currently ranked as a subordinate genre, he doesn't make it into the canon and Beddoes, who writes in a currently consecrated genre, does."<sup>27</sup> Dramatically demonstrating the existence and the nature of differences in evaluation (and in evaluative motivation), Eagleton attacks Fuller's contention that the "relative constancy of biological activity" universally constitutes the dominant measure of perceived value: "there is a danger of concluding," he wryly points out, "that the greatness of King Lear, for example, lies in the fact that it is about suffering and death and the break-up of the family. That certainly wasn't true for Samuel Johnson. Although Johnson himself suffered and died, sharing definite biological structures with Shakespeare and those characters in Lear, this didn't figure at all in his response. For him the end of the play was morally disgusting--a response which arose purely from his own ideological situation" ("Discussion," p. 82).

Simultaneously, Eagleton warns against ego-centric impressionism:

- 342 -

"often the principal uses of the argument [of the kind advanced by Fuller] lead to the 'You like it and I don't--on to the next artifact' type of position" ("Discussion," p. 82). But "the problem of aesthetic judgment lies somewhere at the juncture of three dimensions: linguistics, psychoanalysis and the study of ideology" ("Discussion," pp. 82-83), and not merely in the individual critic's mind. For, Eagleton correctly perceives a direct link "between certain forms of psychic intuition and authoritarianism. . . . You are saying that it's a matter of pulses. If you are reduced to silence when you try to identify or define that force in the classic which is taken to be indescribable, then you simply insist, take an authoritarian stand" ("Discussion," p. 89).

Yet note, even here, phrases that indicate a tendency to accept conventional value-judgments without question: "the greatness" of King Lear, that force in "the classic." Nor are these phrases merely coincidental concessions in rhetoric; they are part of a pattern, one of whose most extreme examples is Eagleton's unqualified and provocative assertion that "it is surely true that Shakespeare is more enjoyable than Martin Webster."<sup>28</sup> Again, the issue here in the first place is not one of empirical truth or untruth--for Eagleton is arguing theory--but one of methodological consistency or inconsistency. If Eagleton could rightly criticise Lukács for simply assuming that "[i]t just is the case that art which gives us the 'real' is superior art" (WB, p. 85), we can criticise Eagleton himself for presenting his own perception of the alleged superiority of Shakespeare to Webster as self-evident throughout society, irrespective of--among other factors--classes and the class-interests of the posited readership(s). The last-named considerations, incidentally, also distinguish the contextless pronouncement of Eagleton from the challenge of Trotsky to Libedinsky on the specific impacts

of Shakespeare and Byron on a specific group of revolutionary readers in a specific revolutionary context.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, while Eagleton has become formally less absolute-sounding over the years, the absolutist methodological inclinations persist. And, from this point of view, Criticism and Ideology seems retrospectively to furnish the greatest number of "pure" and "typical" examples of Eagleton's axiological vacillation between relativism and absolutism. Thus, after repeatedly spurning evaluative categories such as "authentic," "valid," and "great" on principle (CI, pp. 82-83, 174), Eagleton himself proceeds to employ terms qualitatively no different from the ones he rejects, such as "major" (CI, pp. 104, 125, 162, ff.) and "powerful" (CI, p. 104). And after repeatedly insisting that all value is historically relative (e.g., CI, p. 186), Eagleton declares with finality that the "work of a Landor or a Lamb . . . relegates itself to irretrievably minor status" (CI, p. 187).

One of the predictable consequences of his incomplete and contradictory relativism is the absolute valorisation of certain alternative, marginally unconventional criteria as the measures of literary "value." Two of the less frequently mentioned criteria are a text's capacity to be aggressively provocative and its ability to stimulate thought. "What is fascinating about Paradise Lost," asserts Eagleton, as though there could be no doubt about that poem's fascinating character or no second feature of fascination to someone else, "is precisely its necessary lack of self-identity-- . . . that provocative offensiveness which Benjamin discerns in the baroque. . ." (WB, p. 12). And with equal self-confidence, Eagleton seconds Brecht's opinion on aesthetic value as well:

Leaf 344 missed in numbering.

On the question of aesthetic value, one must surely agree with Brecht: . . . . When Shakespeare's texts cease to make us think, when we get nothing out of them, they will cease to have value. But why they "make us think," why we "get something out of them" (if only for the present) is a question which must be referred at once to the ideological matrix of our reading and the ideological matrix of their production. It is in the articulation of these distinct moments that the question of value resides. (CI, p. 169)

Not for a moment here does Eagleton doubt that "we" are a class-homogeneous body who invariably "get something out of" Shakespeare's works, even "if only for the present." The thoroughly un-Marxist methodology behind those absolute assumptions should not have to be laboured at this late stage in my argument.

But there is one absolute criterion of value in Eagleton's axiology that dominates his approach to evaluation, and whose political implications regress far beyond mere "un-Marxist" neutrality, embracing actual political reaction itself.<sup>30</sup> This is the negative criterion of "fissured" form, already intimated in formulations such as "necessary lack of self-identity" above (WB, p. 12). "That the fissuring of organic form is a progressive act has not been a received position within a Marxist tradition heavily dominated by the work of George Lukács," he complains (CI, p. 161). "The destruction of corporate and organicist ideologies in the political sphere has always been a central task for revolutionaries; the destruction of such ideologies in the aesthetic region is essential not only for a scientific knowledge of the literary past, but for laying the foundation on which the materialist aesthetic and artistic practices of the future can be built." On this point, it is worth quoting J. R. Harvey's



observations: "On some occasions, Eagleton allows for unity with no depreciatory suggestion, while on others 'disunity,' along with 'fissuring' and 'splitting,' are acclaimed as though they were direct indices of value. He allows that there is a degree of disunity, fissuring and splitting which is collapse and artistic failure, but has no means from within his logic of determining where that point comes-- . . . no means of verifying fine valuations, and has large areas where, even for crucial modernist works (such as Finnegan's Wake, [CI,] p. 157), it is incapable of decision" (emphasis mine).<sup>31</sup>

Eagleton's process of arriving at this criterion as an absolute may even--superficially--appear to be Marxist. For instance, in Criticism and Ideology itself, he presents a rationale ostensibly based on dialectical materialism:

To argue [supposedly like Trotsky] that The Divine Comedy survives its historical moment because of its "aesthetic" effect is finally tautological: it is to claim, in effect, that a work of art survives because it is a work of art. . . . "Survivability," as Brecht saw, is in any case a profoundly suspect criterion of literary value. . . . But even so, the question of why we still respond to Beowulf or Villon seems in principle no more perplexing than the question of why we still respond to the Lollards or the Luddites. Literary works "transcend" their contemporary history, not by rising to the "universal," but by virtue of the character of their concrete relations to it. . . . And even an historically alien work may "speak" to us in the present, for human animals . . . share a biological structure even where they do not share a direct cultural heritage. Birth, nourishment, labour, kinship, sexuality, death are common to all social formations and to all literature; and it is no rebuttal of this to insert the correct but commonplace caveat that this biological "infrastructure" is always historically mediated. . . . (CI, pp. 178-79)

Yet, once again, we observe the typically absolute and unquestioning assumption that "we" still "respond" (positively, one presumes) to Beowulf or Villón. As Bennett has accurately observed, "Eagleton's comments on the problem of literary value . . . are curious in themselves. On the one hand, Eagleton argues that there is no such thing as intrinsic value. . . . Yet, on the other hand--and he will brook no argument--the works of the 'great tradition' are indisputably of aesthetic value. . . . Quixotic in the extreme, Eagleton avoids fetishising literary value as an immanent quality of the text only to present it as an effect of the work's origins."<sup>32</sup> In other words, Eagleton sometimes forgets the implications of his own insight that, "[g]iven a profound enough historical shift, there is no reason in principle why Shakespeare should not fall into the ranks of the unemployed."

This absolutism regarding specific texts or authors finds generalised expression in Eagleton's explicit assertion that "valuable art comes into being not despite its historical limitations . . . but by virtue of them" (CI, p. 179). This curious identification of the negative "limitations" of a text as the basis of positive "value" might at first seem too paradoxical to be credible. In fact, it is partially contradicted by Eagleton himself later when, in Walter Benjamin, he admits that the fact "that a text may embarrass a dominant ideology is by no means the criterion of its aesthetic effectivity, though it may be a component of it" (p. 129). And it certainly possesses nothing in common with the criterion that Eagleton falsely invokes from Marx to lend an air of authority to his own logic: "It is precisely this negative attitude which Marx adopts in his discussion of ancient Greek

art. in the Grundrisse" (CI, p. 179). But there is in fact a logic to Eagleton's perversion of Marx's logic (the contrast being most vivid if one recalls the latter's remarks on Goethe): he requires a political rationale for his unaltered, left-Williamsite acceptance of the alleged "greatness" of the "tradition" of Austen, James, Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Lawrence. As Eagleton himself seeks to explain, "It is not difficult to see in English literature how the value of, say, Jane Austen's fiction is indissociable from the dominative, drastically constricted class-practices and class-ethics which provide its problematic. The literary achievement of an Austen or a James is based on its reactionary conditions of class-formation, not a miracle which escapes them" (CI, p. 179; emphasis mine).<sup>33</sup>

Even if we ignore for a moment the familiar recrudescence of "the value" and "the" literary "achievement," we need not declare Eagleton's above statement to be entirely logical. For, in fact, he has executed a subtle shift from "indissociable from" (which is logically unexceptionable) to "based on" (which is passed off as carrying the same, valid logical meaning). But a phenomenon that is "indissociable from" its historical conditions in their contradictory totality (including their negative aspects) (a) does not thereby have to become universally valued and (b) cannot logically have the "basis" of its perceived positive value rooted precisely in those features classified by the evaluator himself as negative ("Dominative, drastically constricted class-practices and class-ethics" and "reactionary conditions of class-formation"). The most plausible Marxist explanation for this strange paradox, therefore, would seem to be that Eagleton's residually left-Williamsite "taste" in literature overwhelms his already unsure and

nominal sense of the demands of Marxist methodological consistency. As in the majority of such cases, appetite defeats logic and generates a new theoretical rationale. The methods of Eagleton's political centrism penetrate the methods and conclusions of his literary axiology, definitively compromising his claim to Marxism.

Thus it transpires that Eagleton can launch on his project of "embarrassing" other "'materialist' criticism" and merely "explain" how Yeats may rightly be judged "'great.'" (Note the double inverted commas: Eagleton is always carefully self-ironic—and therefore difficult to pin.) "[W]hat is meant by the claim that Yeats is a 'great' poet?" he asks, implicitly merging his own opinion with that of the other admirers, through the significant use of the passive form "is meant." Whether or not all readers agree with Eagleton's perceived consensus is a question that clearly does not bother him; he is too anxious to explain why they (supposedly) do. "Bourgeois criticism," he confidently continues, "has, characteristically, no convincing answer to this question beyond intuitionist rhetoric. Nor does a certain style of 'materialist' criticism feel wholly unembarrassed by the celebration of an extreme right-wing, sporadically fascist writer." Not so the "Marxist" Eagleton, however; for, he argues, "it is precisely Yeats's ideological limitations which lay the basis for the value of his aesthetic achievement" (CI, p. 179). "In twentieth-century English literature," he declares, "given the absence of a revolutionary tradition, it was only from the 'radical right' that such a critique could be launched . . . " (CI, p. 180). This, then, is the suicidal—and explicitly political—logic motivating Eagleton's axiological considerations. "The value" of Yeats' "aesthetic achievement" is

just as much in dispute, with Eagleton, as is "the absence of a revolutionary tradition" and the inevitability of such a "critique" from the "'radical right'": that is, there is no dispute; a classless consensus is simply assumed. And this "aesthetic" value is actually supposed to owe its allegedly indisputable positive nature precisely to the politically reactionary conditions of its emergence.

But since when did Marxism teach that only literary (discursive) "tradition" determines the political character of a subsequent literature? And since when have Marxists become obligated to offer political amnesty to ~~the~~ reactionary values merely because they are perceived (rightly or wrongly) to have contributed to "aesthetic value" and to have been historically inevitable anyway? Marx and Engels, when they praised Balzac, praised him only "aesthetically," especially for his social insights, but never for his Loyalist political programme. They selected only certain specific, observational and tonal, features in his works for praise; and Engels was explicitly and intransigently critical of the novelist's reactionary political values. Moreover, one would expect that a Balzac--limited in his alternatives by the absence of any sizeable proletarian force at the time--should be regarded by historical materialists in quite a different light from a Yeats writing in the context of rising class struggle.

Again, contrast Eagleton's telescopic "logic" to Trotsky's clear-sighted distinction between the author's role as "observer" and "artist" and his or her role as a political being ("revolutionist"). Viewing André Malraux's reactionary politics in The Conquerors through the lens of genuine and simple dialectics, Trotsky says that the novel "does honour to the author as an observer and an artist, but

not as a revolutionist."<sup>34</sup> Nor does Trotsky leave the matter there, so that liberals may rush to insist that Malraux should therefore be judged only as an "observer and an artist." For, as a conscious and responsible Marxist, Trotsky categorically adds: "However, we have the right to evaluate Malraux too from this [political] point of view; . . . the author does not hesitate with his judgments on the revolution" ("The Strangled Revolution," Trotsky, p. 180). Whereas Trotsky always mobilized against reaction--be it literary or political, residual or nascent, ideological or practical--Eagleton seeks to do the opposite. He aggressively tries to provide an alibi for even "extreme right-wing, sporadically fascist" poets politically. In one sense, it is the difference between Marxism and one kind of centrism. Cliff Slaughter indeed understates the case when he remarks that "[t]he measure of truth in this argument [for attributing positive authorial insights to the author's reactionary politics] is extremely limited, and if pushed beyond its narrow limits becomes an untruth."<sup>35</sup>

The obverse of the earlier Eagleton's defiant political amnesty and even admiration for reactionary writers is what we might call the evasive "ultimatism" of the more recent Eagleton. Both aspects revolve around an axis of pseudo-Marxist methodology, characterised by a complete blindness to any need or opportunity for organised revolutionary intervention into the present class struggle, which is what could lend concrete substance, form, and direction to the Marxist evaluative criteria for the given conjuncture. Thus, echoing the apocalyptic Benjamin in an ultimatistic way, Eagleton postpones any definite speculation about the "poetry of the future" to "Judgment Day";

in one classic instance of absolutism, he speaks of a "true evaluation" and locates it firmly beyond the "final confrontation" of socialist revolution. But this is an attitude of passive waiting, not of aggressive intervention:

"Much of the greatness of [Proust's] work," writes Benjamin, "will remain inaccessible or undiscovered until the [bourgeois] class has revealed its most pronounced features in the final struggle." For Benjamin, we are not yet capable of reading Proust; only the final political combat will produce the conditions for his significant reception. It is the proletariat who will render Proust readable, even if they may later find no use for him. . . . It is neither the case that Sophocles will inevitably be valuable for socialism, nor that he will inevitably not be. . . . Sophocles must be collected, because he may always come in handy when you least expect it. But he always may not . . . Only on Judgment Day will Sophocles and Sholokov be narratable within a single text; until then, which is to say forever, a proletarian criticism will reject, rewrite, forget and retrieve. And the Proust whose texts socialism shall recompose will not be the Proust consumed in the salons: no value is extended to the masses without being thereby transformed. (WB, p. 130)

And again: "Walter Benjamin once wrote that we would only be able to read Proust properly when the class he represented had disclosed something of its true substance in the final confrontation. We will only be able to read Proust retrospectively; for a true evaluation of him we must wait upon history" ("Discussion," p. 77).

First, the talk in the former passage about how "a proletarian criticism" will "forever" "reject, rewrite, forget and retrieve," typically leaves unexplained the exact (or even approximate) criteria for that rejection and rewriting. Eagleton's earlier description of some of the tasks of a revolutionary criticism might at first seem

to provide the answer: deconstruct and politicise the concepts and histories of "Literature" and "Criticism"; "transvaluate received judgments and assumptions"; explore the sub-surface of the text; create cultural effects "conducive to the victory of socialism"; combat non-socialist ideology and rhetoric; project, polemicise, and appropriate (WB, pp. 98, 113). But the old problem with those formulations does not disappear; they remain politically bound to the culturalist (centrist) road to "socialism."

Thus, from correctly arguing at one point in Criticism and Ideology for a generally dialectical appropriation of the "aesthetic," Eagleton goes on in Literary Theory to articulate an explicitly and primarily cultural-academic-discursive vision of the "liberation of Shakespeare and Proust." "The 'aesthetic,'" he points out in the former book, "is too valuable to be surrendered without a struggle to the bourgeois aestheticians, and too contaminated by that ideology to be appropriated as it is" (CI, p. 187). But Literary Theory reveals the specific politics of the struggle envisaged by Eagleton:

If the study of such writers [as Shakespeare and Proust] could become as charged with energy, urgency and enthusiasm as the activities I have just reviewed [feminism, colonial and proletarian writing, and the "culture industry"], the literary institution ought to rejoice. . . . But it is doubtful that this will happen when such texts are "hermetically sealed from history, subjected to a sterile critical formalism, piously swaddled with eternal verities and used to confirm prejudices which any moderately enlightened student can perceive to be objectionable. The liberation of Shakespeare and Proust from such controls may well entail the death of literature, but it may also be their redemption.

I shall end with an allegory. We know that the lion is stronger than the lion-tamer, and so does the



lion-tamer. The problem is that the lion does not know it. It is not out of the question that the death of literature may help the lion to awaken.  
(LT, pp. 216-17)

Note, incidentally, how Eagleton views the (proletarian) "lion" as being decisively separate from the contemplative (revolutionary-critical) observer "we." With all allegorical proportions guarded, this still indicates the socio-political distance from which the centrist Eagleton tends to calculate the fortunes of "socialist" literary evaluation. It therefore provides little Marxist clarity about his general guidelines for a "revolutionary" criticism discussed above.

Furthermore, Eagleton's reluctance even to sketch a certain broad but concrete spectrum of evaluative criteria is entirely inimical to the method of Trotsky--or, for that matter, to that of even the non-Marxist Barbara Herrnstein Smith. Though Trotsky insisted that most post-revolutionary values are specifically unforeseeable and most currently-held values provisional, he never adduced these material truths to claim that any valid judgments prior to the socialist phase are theoretically absolutely impossible. Likewise, Smith deliberately desisted from offering her own evaluation of Shakespeare's Sonnets not because she believed that such evaluation was theoretically absurd and practically impossible; rather, she desisted because she wished to stress her point about the inevitability of differential assessments between different kinds of critics. That is, neither Trotsky nor Smith denied the possibility of (and the need for) actual value judgments, however provisional and conjunctural they might turn out to be. But Eagleton's un-Marxist ultimatism (a form of absolutism) leads

him to do precisely that. He thus misses the very character, significance, and purpose of revolutions, which demand real choices even as the selectional criteria themselves are undergoing change. And at bottom it is an attitude that defines itself in terms of distance rather than in terms of any desire to crystallise an orientation through organised class-struggle involvement and leadership.

As Slaughter has observed, Eagleton "proceeds with a relativist view of the nature of truth which leaves a gap to be filled by some inevitably religious notion of ultimate reality."<sup>36</sup> We have, of course, already noted Eagleton's unwitting confirmation of Slaughter's shrewd calculation: he postpones all "true evaluation" to the time following Benjamin's apocalyptically envisioned "Judgment Day." Thus philosophical absolutism--in the absence of a consistent dialectical materialism--ultimately claims Eagleton and limits his ability to extend and generalise the implications of his many real relativist insights. And the overall trajectory of his "philosophy" clearly answers to the larger needs of his political centrism--a "radical" life and programme individualistically divorced from any centralised struggle for socialist revolution.

#### Eagleton's Evaluation of Hardy

If the effect of Eagleton's political centrism on his literary axiology cannot be accurately gauged chiefly on the basis of his specific theoretical criteria of value, even less can it be gauged primarily on the basis of his empirical assessment of one particular author and his work. That political effect shows itself

first and foremost in the place he accords to literary discourse as a whole, within his overall scheme of values; and from that derives the political significance of the value he attaches to individual authors, texts, and textual properties.

In its historical development, the pattern of Eagleton's evaluation of Hardy shows four different polemical targets, what he calls "four distinct stages" of Hardy criticism. Without arguing about the empirical merits of such a distinction, we may simply observe that these targets usefully demarcate certain negative positions against which at least Eagleton himself defines his own assessment of Hardy. He names these "stages," or trends, as (a) the contemporaneous, Victorian view of Hardy as "anthropologist of Wessex," (b) G. K. Chesterton's view of that novelist as "'the nihilistic village atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot,'" (c) the post-1940s' "'sociological' reading of Hardy," and (d) the "stealthy recuperation of his texts by formalist criticism" in the sixties and seventies (WB, pp. 127-28).<sup>37</sup> However, neither these "stages" nor the actual evaluations of Hardy will yield much political significance if we forget the overall political framework in which they materialise.

As might be expected, Eagleton approaches, analyses, and judges Hardy primarily as the embodiment of certain historically crucial contradictions. He traces and evaluates these contradictions from Hardy's social origins, through his social vision and adopted generic and narrative modes, to his narrational and dramatised language. Through them all, he identifies a dilemma historically corresponding to that of advanced petit-bourgeois ideologues trapped between rejection of liberalism

and unawareness of Marxism. In an early article on Hardy's fiction, Eagleton explains the link between Hardy's allegedly contradictory vision and his petit-bourgeois social location:

[T]here is no individual artistic biography which is not determined by a wider history. The fact is that Thomas Hardy's situation as a literary producer was ridden with contradictions. As a provincial petit bourgeois (son of a Dorsetshire stone-mason) who wrote for a middle-class metropolitan audience, he was simultaneously on the "inside" and "outside" of both his own local community and English society at large. He belonged sufficiently to "Wessex" to explore its living, inward totality with the penetrating, all-commanding eye of the great realists; yet he was alienated enough from it by social class and education to view it through the uneasily distancing, immobilising perspective of myth. His sharp sense of Wessex as a region of socio-economic devastation and decline could release the generally imaginative sympathies of the major realist novel; it could also throw him at times, provisionally and uncertainly, into the arms of those fin-de-siècle naturalistic ideologies which registered their own helpless estrangement from social experience in the "scientific" impassivity of their authorial viewpoint.<sup>38</sup>

In most respects, this description is identical in substance to Williams' characterisation of Hardy in The Country and the City (pp. 239-58). But even here, the beginnings of Eagleton's limited "left" differentiation from Williams are recognisable. Thus, for instance, whereas Williams stops at calling Hardy "one of the many professional men" (CC, p. 242), Eagleton explicitly terms him "a provincial petit bourgeois." Yet, his points of unqualified consensus with Williams, with all their methodological and political implications, are also apparent here: hence, for instance, the continuing use of "community," "society," and "social experience" in a style suspiciously similar to Williams', as well as the latent absolutism of "the great

realists" and "the major realist novel." But this is merely incidental to our main concern in this passage. Also incidental to our concern is whether Eagleton's claim about Hardy's "sharp sense of Wessex as a region of socio-economic devastation and decline" is empirically well-founded or not. More important is the manner in which Eagleton draws the links between perceived textual, authorial, and historical "contradictions": for, this actually sets the stage for his eventual absolute valorisation of Hardy's contradictory language itself, thereby deploying a particular mode of historical functionalism to reverse the negative verdict of most preceding critics on that question.

Eagleton offers an analysis of the precise manner in which Hardy's contradictory social situation (including his fraught relationship to his audience) determines the latter's mixed choice of framing devices, characterisation, and language (in the sense of diction, idiom, and so on):

His use of myth and pastoral reflects, very occasionally, an anxious pact with their [i.e., his audience's] own flat patronage of the "bucolic"; but he also deploys the universalising frames of myth, melodrama, fable and tragedy to combat such patronage--to confer status on fiction liable to be dismissed as of merely provincial import. The problem of how to reconcile these conflictual forms--is Alec D'Urberville bourgeois arriviste, pantomine devil, melodramatic villain, symbol of Satanic evil?--enacts a set of ideological and historical contradictions. With Hardy, indeed, . . . it is quite literally a problem of how to write--how to stay verbally faithful to his own marvellously immediate experience while projecting it into the sorts of "literary" language consumed in the metropolis.<sup>39</sup>

Eagleton discerns in this tension--and in Hardy's flouting of bourgeois-realist conventions in Jude--an objective irony of history:

By the time of Jude the Obscure, Hardy has turned on [the technical expectations of--K.D.G.] his own audience; that novel is less an offering to them than a calculated assault. Its refusal to confine itself to commonly received categories of 'realism' is also a partial refusal to become a commodity. . . . It is one of the most exciting and moving ironies of literary history that, having struggled his painful way through to his major achievement, . . . there was nowhere else to go. Having arrived, Hardy had to disembark.<sup>40</sup>

Eagleton's revised version of the above article, in his Criticism and Ideology, makes it clear that he is speaking here primarily about the implicit conjunctural politics of Hardy's literary techniques, not about the overt politics of Hardy's literary content. This has implications for our analysis of Eagleton's evaluative criteria (as at least transitionally exemplified in Criticism and Ideology). Thus, Eagleton mentions but does not dwell on Hardy's "first, abrasively radical work" (CI, p. 131); rather, in keeping with his pronouncement in that book that "the fissuring of organic form is a progressive act," Eagleton focuses on the formal features in Hardy's works in general, and on the dissonances within those features in particular. He believes that "though Hardy inherits an ideology of social evolution . . . [in the manner of George Eliot]. . . , his fiction is essentially pre-occupied with those structural conflicts and tragic contradictions in rural society which Eliot's novels evade" (CI, p. 131). But it is not in the main the depicted social contradictions that occupy Eagleton at this point: "it is the peculiar impurity of his literary forms . . . which is most striking" (CI, p. 131; second emphasis mine). Citing criticism of Jude's inconsistent realism, Eagleton frontally defends, and actually justifies and lauds, Hardy's approach: "What have been

read as its 'crudities' are less the consequences of some artistic incapacity than of an astonishing raw boldness on Hardy's part, a defiant flouting of 'verisimilitude' which mounts theatrical gesture upon gesture in a driving back of the bounds of realism" (CI, p. 131).<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, Eagleton typically seems to view these technical disjunctions as the product first and foremost of certain resultant "forces" of discursive "production": "crammed with lengthy quotations from other texts, thematically obsessed with the violence of literary culture, laced with typological devices, Jude contrasts the murderous inertia of the letter with that alternative image of artistic production which is material craftsmanship. The models, forms, moulds and productive practices over which the text broods are themselves images of its own construction . . ." (CI, pp. 131-32). But the apparent object and stance of Hardy's formalist "brooding" is shared by Eagleton himself. Hence, even when he does recognise (one of) the social tensions animating Hardy's novel, Eagleton still remains fixated on their "form"; and, in an objectively appropriate conclusion to this formalist and discursive bent in analysis, he actually completes his logic by gainsaying Hardy himself and attributing that novelist's abandonment of novel-writing to a formal crisis alone:

Within the radical provisionality of Hardy's productive practice is inscribed a second, more fundamental provisionality--the desired un-closure of social forms themselves (epitomised in sexuality), forms which in their received shape the novel "explodes" in the act of "exploding" the letter of its own text. Throughout the novel, hallowed manuscripts--the Nicean creed, the Book of Job--are violently transformed by Jude into angry oral assaults on an unresponsive audience--assaults through which the novel mimes its own displaced position

within the literary social relations of its time. Hardy claimed that the bigoted public response to Jude cured him of novel-writing forever; but whether a producer of Hardy's status stops writing merely on account of bad reviews is surely questionable. The truth is that after Jude, there was nowhere for Hardy to go; having "exploded" the organic forms of fiction, he was forced to disembark. (CI, p. 132)

Nor, as I said, does Eagleton rest with a mere description of Hardy's alleged formal crisis; he traces the crisis through Hardy's imagery as well as his language and valorises their contradictory properties as a whole. Thus, in an early article on Hardy's language, Eagleton notes "a mode of imagery in some of Thomas Hardy's novels . . . which depicts a peculiar tension, and occasionally an outright contradiction, between 'subjective' and 'objective' forms of existence or perception."<sup>42</sup> He claims that this tension "has a clear significance; it acts, even if only in local ways, as a paradigm of creative and possible relations between the spirit and the flesh . . . ." ("Nature as Language," p. 162; the perceived polarities—"the spirit" and "the flesh"—reflect the vestiges of Eagleton's religious training, in his phenomenological phase). And as late as Walter Benjamin, he reiterates that "the significance of Hardy's writing lies precisely in the contradictory constitution of his linguistic practice"; "that a text may embarrass a dominant ideology is by no means the criterion of its aesthetic effectivity, though it may be a component of it. But in Hardy's case, these two issues were imbricated with a peculiar closeness" (pp. 128-29). I have addressed Eagleton's inserted caveat (about the criterion of "aesthetic effectivity") earlier; here, it should be sufficient to remark that Eagleton nevertheless reiterates his general premium on formal disjunction, albeit this time by self-



consciously conceding the theoretical possibility of exceptions.

Eagleton's ill-concealed absolutism of method affects not only his assumptions about "the value" of formal textual fissures but, obversely, also his assumptions about Hardy's (and his own) readers and their responses to the novelist's mode of characterisation. This is obvious in its purest form in Eagleton's full-scale analysis of Jude, in his Introduction to the 1974 Macmillan edition of that novel.<sup>43</sup> In that Introduction, Eagleton reveals a plethora of assumptions about a politically undefined but monolithic readership, positing a universal "We" whose reception of the novel is simply presumed to match his own, detail for detail. Thus, Sue simply is asserted to be "Hardy's most masterly exploration of the limits of liberation in Victorian society--more masterly by far than Angel Clare, who is an earlier experiment in the same mode" (Furbank, p. 14); "Hardy retains some of our sympathy for Sue against all odds"; "We come to feel that Sue is [Eagleton's emphasis] more than just a perverse hussy, full of petty stratagems and provocative pouts"; "we feel that she is more than this. . . because she is so deeply loved by Jude" (Furbank, p. 16; emphases mine). Similarly, "[w]hat we remember about Arabella isn't her sensuality but her calculating acquisitiveness, her sharp, devious opportunism" (Furbank, p. 17; emphasis mine); yet "authentic" desire simply is "rather better" than "empty convention," and to that extent, so is the "candid authenticity" of Arabella "better" than Sue's "evasions" (Furbank, p. 18). Finally, Father Time's pessimism simply "is not, in fact, Hardy's way" (Furbank, p. 20).

One important distinction must be reiterated here. My personal, inconsistently examined impression of Jude happens, empirically,

to correspond to Eagleton's assessment. But this coincidence (not necessarily an accident, and therefore at least partly related to the text's properties) by no means validates Eagleton's method of assuming the scope of the consensus; his method remains unscientific. Nevertheless, in a critic less concerned with theory and methodology than is Eagleton, this would have mattered less than his apparently valid empirical judgment and assumptions. But even in his "practical criticism" (including in his Introduction to Jude), Eagleton remains primarily a theoretician, a metacritic;<sup>44</sup> and his motivation in the Introduction remains primarily political/theoretical. Thus, in this context, it is crucial that his evaluation of Hardy's characterisation in Jude fails methodologically (in violating the laws of social relativism) at the same time that it appears to some to succeed empirically. It is bad Marxist methodology implicitly to assume a homogeneous, pre-converted readership, even if the empirical results produced despite it appear reasonably accurate to some; this is different from explicitly selecting and then addressing a homogeneous, pre-converted readership, which might well exist (or at least thereby come into being). Eagleton's approach simply constitutes one more instance of his methodological absolutism.

Lastly, Eagleton's postponement of a final, "true evaluation" of today's literature to a stage after the socialist revolution affects his attempt to foresee "the" future "value" of Hardy in a predictably absolutist and ultimativistic way. "Whether Thomas Hardy can be wrested from history and inserted into tradition--whether it is worth doing so--is not a question that can be historically preempted. It remains to be seen" (WB, p. 130). Eagleton's use of the term

"tradition" as something capable of being "wrested from history" reveals his complicity in the same anti-historicism evident in his predecessors' ostensibly classless, static models.

Furthermore, the apparent provisionality of "It remains to be seen," coming from the centrist Eagleton, is not a concession to theoretical relativism but merely the logical extension of his political defeatism and passivity. Since "we" Brechtian/Eagletonian culturalists and historical bystanders can only wait upon history, upon the death of literature, and upon an eventually awakened though estranged proletarian "lion," to oust the bourgeoisie—so the logic runs--the most we can do actively in the meantime is invoke our alleged helplessness and "breed speech." This negative abstentionism in Eagleton clearly represents not so much axiological common sense as political opportunism, as at least one reviewer seems (in his own way) to have come close to recognising.<sup>45</sup> It is from Eagleton's lack of an organised, interventionist political perspective, in the first place, that his ostensible "openness" about the future flows. Such "openness" has nothing to do with the kind of axiological algebra of the future that Trotsky, for instance, was led to recognise as a result of his participation in the Bolshevik's organised revolutionary struggle.

One's sense of limits varies according to who or what sets them--that is, according to whether they are set by oneself or by the objective contingency of struggle. Eagleton sets his own political limits; and in so doing, he weakens his claim to being a Marxist. His politics reveal themselves in his axiological generalisations and methodology, his specific evaluative criteria, as well as in his practical assessments of particular authors and texts: they all bespeak what I have called centrism.

Thus does one particular kind of politics--vacillation between revolution and reformism, with an attraction towards the latter--adversely affect the axiology of one of "the major Marxist aestheticians of the century to date."

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Notice that Raymond Williams is omitted from the list. The reasons for this can be gathered from the critique in Criticism and Ideology, p. 34 (quoted towards the end of my previous chapter). The omission marks a decisive shift in Eagleton's vacillating assessment of Williams over the previous decade or so. However, even as late as 1977, Eagleton defined the "most dominant European tradition of Marxist criticism" as "the neo-Hegelian lineage of George Lukács, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Lucien Goldmann, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Raymond Williams," going on to explain in a note that "I include Williams because his work clearly belongs with this tradition, although he is not a Marxist" ("Marxist Literary Criticism," in Contemporary Approaches to English Studies, ed. Hilda Schiff [London: Heinemann, 1977], pp. 95-96). In another article the same year he remarked, "One might formulate the problem paradoxically by saying that our best Marxist critic--Raymond Williams--is not in fact a Marxist" (Routh and Wolff, p. 90).

<sup>2</sup> "The End of Criticism," p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> "Marxism, Nationalism and Poetry," Poetry Wales, 15, No. 3 (Winter 1979), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> James H. Kavanagh and Thomas E. Lewis, "Interview: Terry Eagleton," Diacritics, 12 (Spring 1982), 57.

<sup>5</sup> "The End of Criticism," p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> See Walter Benjamin, pp. 148, 177; Makers of Modern Marxism, pp. 1-2; "Four Critics," The English Magazine, No. 4 (Summer 1980), 10; "Radical Orthodoxies," rev. of Language and Materialism by Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, in The Oxford Literary Review, 3, No. 3 (Spring 1979), 101; and, for the criticism of Williams, Criticism and Ideology, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> Makers of Modern Marxism, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Routh and Wolff, p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> "Terry Eagleton Replies," reply to Andreas Huyssen's rev. of Marxism and Literary Criticism in Clio, 7, No. 2 (1978), 326.

<sup>10</sup> See, for the first quote, "The Institution of Criticism," rev. of Peter Uwe Hohendahl's The Institution of Criticism in Literature and History, 9, No. 1 (Spring 1983), 101; for the second quote, see Literary Theory, p. 208.

<sup>11</sup> TS (1979), pp. 34-38.

<sup>12</sup> "Joyce: 'The Finest Irish Genius That No One Can Read,'" Socialist Challenge (11 Feb. 1982), n.p. and "The Ballad of James Joyce," ibid., n.p.

<sup>13</sup> One of the most egregious instances of this occurs in Literary Theory (p. 208), where he effectively accuses the already anti-Soviet Western "liberal humanists" of not being hard enough on "the tyrannies" of Eastern Europe: "Many Western socialists are restless with the liberal humanist opinion of the tyrannies in Eastern Europe, feeling that these opinions simply do not go far enough: what would be necessary to bring down such tyrannies would not be just more free speech, but a workers' revolution against the state." Since Eagleton leaves unspecified any programme for that "revolution" other than "to draw the full, concrete, practical applications of the abstract notions of freedom and democracy to which liberal humanism subscribes" (LT, p. 208; emphasis mine), his argument--which presumably coincides with that of those "Western socialists" he so uncritically cites--simply amounts to a call for capitalist counterrevolution in the workers' states. See also pp. 18, 36, 40, 110, and 208, on Poland.

<sup>14</sup> "Terry Eagleton Replies," p. 327: "the national and international priorities of the Soviet Union have contributed to the repression of Western liberation from capitalism"; "nothing suits the Stalinist Soviet Union better than that Western Marxists should be good reformists. . . ."

<sup>15</sup> All my following information comes from five anonymous articles in Women and Revolution (abbreviated as WR): "How the Bolsheviks Organised Working Women: History of the Journal Rabotnitsa," WR, No. 4 (Fall, 1973), 4-5, 14-16; "Feminism versus Marxism: Origins of the Conflict," WR, No. 5 (Spring 1974), 7-14; "Early Communist Work among Women: The Bolsheviks," Part 1, WR, No. 10 (Winter 1975-76), 7-14; Part 2, WR, No. 11 (Spring 1976), 18-22; and "Early Bolshevik Work among Women of the Soviet East," WR, No. 12 (Summer 1976), 14-19.

<sup>16</sup> Janet Montefiore, "The Rhetoric of Experience," New Left Review, No. 145 (May-June 1984), 127.

<sup>17</sup> Along with Samuel Richardson and the modern, petit bourgeois feminists, Eagleton asserts that "the so-called 'woman question' is nothing of the kind--that the root of the sexual problem is men" (The Rape of Clarissa, p. 96). I must, however, qualify this by noting

that the above quote in its full context actually purports to describe only what Richardson had (apparently) "grasped": yet, in the very use of such a word to describe, unironically, Richardson's ostensible feat, Eagleton registers his own ideological agreement.

18 See "Labour Must Smash Phelps Dodge Union-Busting! Class War in Arizona Copper Mines," Workers Vanguard, No. 357, 22 June 1984, p. 7 and "Women Organise for Strike Victory," Spartacist Britain, No. 56, April 1984, p. 4.

19 Ian H. Birchall, "In Defence of Reductionism," The Politics of Theory: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1982, ed. Francis Barker et al (Colchester: Univ. of Essex, 1983), pp. 107-20.

20 Neil Bolton, "Towards a Marxist Literary Culture," rev. of Criticism and Ideology in International, 3, No. 3 (Spring 1977), 61; for full article, see pp. 61-63.

21 Arnold Kettle, "Literature and Ideology," rev. of Eagleton's "Ideology and Literary Form" and Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës in Red Letter, No. 1 (n.d.), 4; see pp. 3-5 for complete review. These accusations seem especially absurd in view of Eagleton's manifest urge to make liberal humanists (along with Western "socialists") better anti-Soviets (see his Literary Theory, p. 208, quoted in Note 12).

22 See esp. Literary Theory, p. 14.

23 See esp. Slaughter (p. 201): "Undoubtedly the scientific historical analysis of literary schools and literary works will contribute to a Marxist understanding of the formation of ideology. But if criticism is directed as Eagleton does, following Macherey, at the omissions from the text (as part of the specific means by which the work creates . . . 'self-oblivion'), will it not ignore the possibility that the dramatist or novelist or poet might penetrate, in some way and in some measure, to the source of this ideological structure and thus be able to expose its contradictions (not merely be expressing these contradictions as their victim, something which can only be discovered afterwards, by what Eagleton calls a 'science of criticism')?"

24 Slaughter has lucidly pin-pointed and criticised this un-Marxist revision in Eagleton, in Marxism, Ideology and Literature, pp. 202-05.

25 "Literature and Politics Now," p. 65; see, also, Literary Theory, pp. 10-12, Marxism, and Literary Criticism, pp. 10-13, and Walter Benjamin, pp. 123-24, 130.

26 See Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970) pp. 9, 14-15, 17. Also see Criticism and Ideology, pp. 162-180; Marxism and Literary Criticism, p. 8; Schiff, p. 103, and Walter Benjamin, p. 16.

27 "The Question of Value: A Discussion," New Left Review, No. 142 (Nov.-Dec. 1983), 76; see pp. 76-90 for full interview.

28 "The End of Criticism," p. 100. I have been unable to find any information on "Martin Webster." It is just possible that that is precisely the point Eagleton wants to make. . . .

29 Class and Art, p. 10.

30 Huyssen (p. 3) overtly praises Eagleton for "his attempt to take reactionary writers seriously." Coming from that social democrat and anti-communist, this praise hardly amounts to even a neutral plea for dispassionate and impartial scholarship--the ideal of liberal-humanist academia; it is positively sinister.

31 J. R. Harvey, "Criticism, Ideology, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton," rev. of Marxism and Literature, Keywords, Criticism and Ideology, and Marxism and Literary Criticism in The Cambridge Quarterly, No. 8 (1978), 60-61.

32 Bennett, p. 153.

33 For other similar valorisations of negative criteria, see Criticism and Ideology, p. 180, n. and p. 181; Literary Theory, p. 12; Schiff, p. 103. For Eagleton's own devastating critique of this very aspect of Derrida's deconstructionist theory, see, for example, Literary Theory, pp. 127-50; Walter Benjamin, pp. 129, 131-42; and the articles "Derrida--From Plato to NATO," Literary Review, 2, No. 41, (Oct. 1981), 35 and "Text, Ideology, Realism," Literature, Language and Society: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1978, ed. Edward Said, NS, 3 (London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 149-73.

34 "The Strangled Revolution," Trotsky, p. 180.

35 Marxism, Ideology and Literature, p. 207.

36 Marxism, Ideology and Literature, p. 204.

37 See also his "Liberality and Order: The Criticism of John Bayley," New Left Review, No. 110 (July-Aug. 1978), 34-38 and Walter Benjamin, p. 129.

38 "The Form of His Fiction," New Blackfriars, 55, No. 653 (Oct. 1974), 480; see pp. 477-81 for full article.



39 "The Form of His Fiction," pp. 480-81.

40 "The Form of His Fiction," p. 481.

41 For a sense of the array of critics and criticisms against which Eagleton defends and praises the alleged stylistic "crudities," see again, Walter Benjamin, p. 128.

42 "Thomas Hardy: Nature as Language," Crit. Q., 13, No. 2 (Summer 1971), p. 155.

43 Ed. P. N. Furbank, Jude the Obscure (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 9-20; this edition is henceforth cited as Furbank.

44 Harvey (p. 63) comes close to remarking upon the same point: "For Eagleton value is, militantly, value in theory: to be determined at a fit scientific remove from the text, in accordance with his extraordinary inaugural axiom, 'the function of criticism is to refuse the spontaneous presence of the work'" (emphasis mine).

45 Again, Harvey (p. 65) seems to sense the same connection, from a different angle: "in the current ideological situation, reductive (but talismanic) categorisation cooperates with the necessary epidemic anti-realism in legalising the mind's escape from experience."

## Conclusion

The problem of a Marxist axiology, to extend one positive element in Eagleton's logic, is above all the problem of a Marxist politics. Specifically, in the cases of Caudwell, Williams, and Eagleton, this means that their principles of literary evaluation are decisively shaped by their attitudes towards proletarian revolution. The central questions involved here are (1) their acceptance or rejection of--or deflection from--revolution and (2) their corresponding view of the revolutionary party's role in literary evaluation. Of course, running as a thread through all axiological issues is the question of their attitude towards and use (if any) of Marxist analytical methodology--namely, of consistent dialectical-historical materialism.

As I have tried to show, the three main critics under discussion vary in all the key respects described above. Caudwell formally and openly desires proletarian revolution. Moreover, he is the only one of the three who not only recognises but actually insists on the centrality of an organised revolutionary practice to all cultural evaluation. Yet, certain details in his actual political programme correspond to the class-collaborationist programme of Stalinism rather than to the class-struggle programme of Marxism; and the fact that his particular, official models for a revolutionary party turn out to be the Stalinist Communist parties of the Soviet Union and Great Britain is, therefore, hardly a coincidence.

Caudwell's resultant misunderstanding of the class-axis of the socialist revolution and of the degree of democracy permissible and

essential within a revolutionary workers' party consequently places a question-mark over his axiology. And this question-mark is confirmed by his inconsistently dialectical and materialist theory of literary value, specifically illustrated in his evaluation of Hardy. Here, he shows frequent lapses into idealist and absolutist assumptions, which politically translate into bourgeois and reformist values. Neither his formal programme nor his official choice of party continues the politics of Lenin and Trotsky, and his methodology in general remains only unevenly Marxist at best.

Williams' politics, however, are marked by an explicit and defiant rejection of some of the elementary analytical categories of Marxism, such as "base-superstructure" and "class." Consequently, his formal claim to being a contributor to the "central thinking of Marxism" seems false from the outset. This suspicion is vindicated by his acknowledged organisational sympathies, which lie with the social democracies of Europe--the British Labour Party and the Eurocommunists. And, indeed, he inserts their overtly reformist values quite directly into his literary-evaluative method.

The normally concomitant question of his attitude to the concept of a revolutionary vanguard is therefore rendered somewhat moot. Nevertheless, if one harbours any doubts about Williams' hostility to that concept--let alone to the notion of such a party "telling" anyone what to do--one can always refer to his autobiographical account of his student days in the CPGB before World War II. Like most social democrats and liberals, Williams chronically equates Stalinism (embodied in the CPGB, for instance) with Marxism, and, therefore, in rejecting the former, "logically" rejects the

latter as well.

The objective effect of Williams' negative relationship to Marxism is his positive identification with elements of pure reaction. One instance of this phenomenon--which is recognised as a law by Marxists--can be seen in his defiant rationale for consecrating Burke and Carlyle, as well as in his ideological rationale for valuing the "Culture and Society" tradition as a whole. His evaluation of Hardy also reveals the social class with which he identifies most clearly--one self-admittedly narrow section of the British petty bourgeoisie, ensconced within the Oxford and Cambridge academic milieu as its "left" face. Terry Eagleton has rightly described this whole posture as mere "left-Leavisism."

Eagleton himself, on the other hand, displays substantial historical knowledge and theoretical grasp of Marxism--up to and including Trotskyism. But, for all that, his own actual political trajectory has increasingly converged on Williams' left-Leavisite culturalism, from its centrist left. Thus, while Eagleton volunteers all the formal Marxist arguments, advocating organised international proletarian revolution in short order, these arguments remain inconsistent and superficial, frequently leaving his actual methods, assumptions, and values untouched.

One logical effect of his inconsistency and political superficiality shows in his evaluation of a writer such as Yeats. Determined to combat what he calls a certain "theoretical prudery" and "moralism" within Marxist aesthetics, Eagleton actually attributes the perceived virtues of the eventually fascistic Yeats directly to that writer's apparently inevitable reactionary politics. The discourse-restricted,

non-interventionist, and ultimately reformist politics of Eagleton draws him into a passively contemplative sanctioning of "what is" (or "was"); no consistent will to oppose acknowledged political reaction (in literature or elsewhere) through organised revolution is evident. This is not Marx's historical materialism and dialectics but liberalism's anti-historical objectivism, or functionalism. If our present inability to alter the past is obvious, our obligation therefore to justify that past politically/axiologically is not. Eagleton's impulse is to extrapolate the latter programme from the former fact, which then must necessarily affect not just evaluations of past writers but those of present and future ones. Herein lies the anti-Marxist extreme of Eagleton's centrist political logic.

Another result of Eagleton's insufficient assimilation of Marxism is his abiding presupposition of a socio-politically homogeneous readership as well as of innate--if changeable--literary "value." These presuppositions indicate a fundamental absolutism. Unlike Trotsky or Lenin, who repeatedly made it quite clear that they were addressing organised revolutionaries sharing the same political programme and social orientation, Eagleton uses "We" and "Us" without either arguing for such a clearly-defined audience or explicitly taking the real heterogeneity of his readership into account. Moreover, as Bennett has remarked, the Eagleton of Criticism and Ideology will brook no argument against his assertion that a given text or author simply is valuable. The later Eagleton's attempt (as in Walter Benjamin) to introduce a semblance of relativism into his evaluative method merely consolidates his absolutism from a different angle: instead of insisting on the positive innate value of a given text, he now

abdicates all responsibility for any evaluation whatsoever, postponing an ultimatic "true evaluation" to the socialist "Judgment Day." Once more, the absolutism of his axiological conception reveals itself as one more form of his abiding political absentism: he simply does not evince any perspective for organised revolutionary intervention into the current class-struggle; his attitude to such intervention remains negative and passive; and the real possibility of Marxists' actively shaping their present and future values therefore remains a notion largely foreign to his axiology.

While the debate between proponents and overt opponents of proletarian revolution, in my view, can no longer be considered directly relevant to the internal concerns of ostensible Marxist axiology, the question of the role of the vanguard still can. Therefore, particularly for those who have followed the development of Marxism into its Trotskyist phase, it is useful to recall Trotsky's urgent warning that, "[w]ithout a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. It is now the turn of the proletariat, i.e., chiefly of its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."<sup>1</sup> The "whole culture of mankind," it goes without saying, includes one's ability to evaluate literature meaningfully. That specific ability cannot somehow transcend one's general ability to survive; and that latter ability, as Trotsky forcefully reminded revolutionaries in 1923--after a series of crushing defeats in Bulgaria and Germany--cannot be separated from one's understanding of the central importance of the revolutionary party today:

[E]vents have proved that without a party capable of directing the proletarian revolution, the revolution itself is rendered impossible. The proletariat cannot seize power by a spontaneous uprising.

. . . . .

Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with the substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, this does not mean--and should not be taken to mean--that mere membership in a revolutionary party guarantees one's survival and, concomitantly, one's ability to produce Marxist evaluations of literature. Of course, restricting one's activity to non-axiological party-work will not miraculously transform one into a Marxist axiologist. But my contention is that no ostensible Marxist who does not understand the central, orientational importance of working in a revolutionary organisation (and who does not act in accordance with that understanding) can logically be expected to produce much more than a pseudo-Marxist axiology at best. For, the irreplaceable experiential core that makes Marxism something more than just another philosophy will be missing. And that experience, if it is to stay on par with the demands of modern class-struggle, cannot afford to remain stubbornly whimsical, dilettantish, and individualistic: it must be streamlined, organised, and centralised. In other words, it cannot be gained anywhere except through the mechanism of the vanguard party, the systematically organised repository of the proletariat's history and political programme.

Obviously, however, for a full-fledged, professional Marxist axiology to appear, the organised political orientation must intersect--among actual critics--a range of literary knowledge and motivation.

corresponding to the demands of the revolutionary moment. This intersection is something that can neither be artificially manufactured nor mathematically predicted. Yet, aspiring Marxist axiologists can surely increase the chances of its occurrence by consciously and actively cultivating that aspect of their capacity which they deem the weaker--the political or the literary. The problem lies with critics who reject the very conception of a Marxist axiologist outlined above, not with the nature of its requirements, which--I would maintain--are merely necessitated by the struggle for socialist revolution today. Whether or not a given axiologist is indeed Marxist may take us some time to judge; but politically, non-Marxists are not difficult to spot, and meanwhile, critics wishing to correct others' errors can certainly begin their work any time they wish. Only history can "judge" whether one is or was producing Marxist axiology; but, in the interim, subjective Marxists can act. All they need to remember is that there are two main components of Marxist literary evaluation--a knowledge of literature (and of its accompanying history) and an intimate personal understanding of the practical vicissitudes of organising proletarian revolution.

To list specific criteria for literary evaluation now would be, then, to miss the entire point of my argument about the prerequisites. The validity of that argument, I believe, is independent of whether or not such a list is provided here itself. The central lesson that I have sought to draw and establish as a consistent guideline is a politico-methodological, not a literary-empirical, one. It is aimed at a social stratum already steeped in literature but not correspondingly conscious of or rigorous about the political issues from a Marxist



standpoint. As such, I consider it appropriate to stress the importance of political systematisation over the already-granted importance of literary knowledge. The late historic American Trotskyist James P. Cannon provided some useful insights in this regard:

The question at issue is the attitude of proletarian revolutionists to educated members of the petty-bourgeois class who come over to the proletarian movement. . . .

Our movement . . . judges things and people from a class point of view. Our aim is the organisation of a vanguard party to lead the proletarian struggle for power, and the reconstitution of society on socialist foundations. . . . We judge all people coming to us from another class by the extent of their real identification with our class, and the contributions they can make which aid the proletariat in its struggle against the capitalist class. That is the framework within which we objectively consider the problem of intellectuals in the movement. If at least 99 out of every 100 intellectuals . . . who approach the revolutionary movement turn out to be more of a problem than an asset it is not at all because of our prejudices against them, or because we do not treat them with proper consideration, but because they do not comply with the requirements which alone can make them useful to us in our struggle.

. . . . .  
Lenin, Trotsky, Plekhanov, Luxemburg--none of them were proletarians in their social origin, but they came over to the proletariat and became the greatest of proletarian leaders. In order to do that, however, they had to desert their own class and join "the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands." They made this transfer of class allegiance unconditionally and without any reservations. . . . There was and could be no "problem" in their case.

The conflict between the proletarian revolutionists and the petty-bourgeois intellectuals . . . arises from the fact that they neither "cut themselves adrift" from the alien classes, . . . nor do they "join the revolutionary class," in the full sense of the word. . . .

The function of the Marxist intellectual is to aid the workers in their struggle. He can do it constructively only by turning his back on the bourgeois world and joining the proletarian revolutionary camp, that is, by ceasing to be a petty bourgeois. On that basis the worker Bolsheviks and the Marxist intellectuals will get along very well together.<sup>3</sup>

Little needs to be added to that lucid statement. Marxist politics demand seriousness and consistency no less than professional literary criticism does. Hence axiologists claiming to be Marxists should, logically, be able to meet this requirement. For, although such an orientation towards organised revolutionary practice may well produce the actual communisation of world society before the first piece of genuinely Marxist axiology has been written, or, alternatively, although the whole project may well be rendered moot by thermonuclear holocaust, one negative implication of my argument remains valid. And that is, without such an orientation on the axiologist's part, no piece of literary evaluation or value theory can logically be considered strictly Marxist. This is not a legal or moral imperative but merely an acknowledgment of the induplicable nature of first-hand experience--in this case, of the experience of being a complete Marxist.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leon Trotsky, The Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution, introd. Joseph Hansen and George Novack, ed. George Breitman and Fred Stanton, 3rd edn. (1938; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977), pp. 111-12.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Trotsky, The Essential Trotsky, trans. J. G. Wright (1925; rpt. London: Unwin, 1963), pp. 117, 170.

<sup>3</sup> James P. Cannon, The Struggle for a Proletarian Party, ed. John G. Wright, new introd. George Novack, 2nd edn. (1943; New York: Pathfinder, 1977), pp. 18-22.

## Bibliography

Note: I have standardised all of Lenin's pseudonyms to "V. I. Lenin."

Addison, Joseph. "The Pleasures of the Imagination." 1712, Rpt. in Criticism: the Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 184-87.

Adereth, Max. "What is Littérature Engagée?" Commitment in Modern French Literature. [London]: Victor Gollancz, 1967. Rpt. in Marxists on Literature: An Anthology. Ed. David Craig. Harmondsworth, Mdx.: Penguin, 1975, pp. 445-85.

[Adorno, Theodor W. et al.] Aesthetics and Politics. Afterword Fredric Jameson. London: New Left Books, 1978.

Aristotle. Poetics. Tr. S. H. Butcher. Rev. 1911. Rpt. in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 19-39.

Arnold, Matthew. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." 1864; Rpt. in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 452-66.

-----, "Sweetness and Light." From Culture and Anarchy. 1869. Excerpted in Criticism: the Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 466-72.

Arvon, Henri. Marxist Aesthetics. Tr. Helen R. Lane. Introd. Fredric Jameson. 1970; rpt. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973.

Aveling, Edward and Eleanor Marx-Aveling. "Shelley as Socialist." Die Neue Zeit. VI. Jg., 1888, S. 541 Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 320-21.

Barker, Francis. "Some Problems in Trotsky's Literary Criticism." In Literature, Society and the Sociology of Literature: Proceedings of the Conference Held at the University of Essex, July 1976. Ed. Francis Barker et al. [Colchester]: Univ. of Essex, 1977, pp. 174-79.

Bate, Walter Jackson, ed. Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. New York: Harcourt, 1970.

Bennett, Tony. Formalism and Marxism. London: Methuen, 1979.

Bernstein, Eduard. Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation. Tr. Edith C. Harvey. 1899. Rpt. New York: Schocken, 1961.

Birchall, Ian. "In Defence of Reductionism." The Politics of Theory: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1982. Ed. Francis Barker et al. [Colchester]: Univ. of Essex, 1983, pp. 107-20.

- . "The Total Marx and the Marxist Theory of Literature." In Situating Marx: Evaluations and Departures. Ed. Paul Walton and Stuart Hall. London: Human Context Books, 1972, pp. 118-45.
- Black, Robert. Stalinism in Britain. London: New Park, 1970.
- Bolton, Neil. "Towards a Marxist Literary Culture." Rev. of Criticism and Ideology, by Terry Eagleton. International, 3, No. 3 (Spring 1977), 61-63.
- Breton, André. "Speech to the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture." Excerpted in Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Ed. and introd. Maynard Solomon. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979, pp. 511-13.
- Bullock, Chris and David Peck. A Guide to Marxist Literary Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981.
- Burke, Kenneth. "Literature as Equipment for Living." The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action. 2nd ed. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1967, pp. 293-304.
- Cannon, James P. The Struggle for a Proletarian Party. Ed. John G. Wright. New introd. George Novack. 2nd ed. 1943; New York: Pathfinder, 1977.
- Carver, Vida. "The Measurement and Comparison of Value Systems." Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Aesthetics. Ed. Rudolf Zeitler. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Figura Nova Ser. X. Uppsala: n.p., 1972, pp. 457-61.
- Caudwell, Christopher. Further Studies in a Dying Culture. Ed. and Pref. Edgell Rickword. In Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture. Introd. Sol Yurick. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- . Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry. Biog. note by G[eorge] T[homson]. 1937; Rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1977.
- . Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature. Ed. and introd. Samuel Hynes. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970.
- . Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture. Introd. Sol Yurick. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- . Studies in a Dying Culture. Introd. John Strachey. In Studies and Further Studies in a Dying Culture. Introd. Sol Yurick. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Cavell, Marcia. "Taste and the Moral Sense." JAAC, 34 (1975), 29-33.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "On the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts." 1814. Rpt. in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 364-75.

- Cook, Cornelia. Rev. of Marxism and Literature, by Raymond Williams. Notes and Queries, NS, 25, No. 4 (August 1978), 362-64.
- Cornforth, Maurice. "Caudwell and Marxism." The Modern Quarterly, NS, 6, No. 1 (Winter 1950-51), 16-33.
- Craig, David, ed. Marxists on Literature: An Anthology. Harmondsworth, Mdx.: Penguin, 1975.
- . "Towards Laws of Literary Development." Marxists on Literature: An Anthology. Ed. David Craig. Harmondsworth, Mdx.: Penguin, 1975, pp. 134-60.
- Debray, Régis. Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America. France, 1967; New York: Grove, 1968.
- Delany, Sheila. "Up against the Great Tradition." The Politics of Literature: Dissenting Essays on the Teaching of English. Ed. Louis Kampf. 1970; rpt. New York: Pantheon, 1972, pp. 308-21.
- Demetz, Peter. Marx, Engels, and the Poets: Origins of Marxist Literary Criticism. Rev. and enl. Peter Demetz. Tr. Jeffrey L. Sammons. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959.
- Deutscher, Isaac. The Prophet Armed: Trotsky: 1879-1921. New York: Random House, 1965, pp. 46-56.
- . The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky: 1921-29. New York: Random House, 1959, pp. 164-200.
- Doyle, Brian. "The Necessity of Illusion: The Writings of Christopher Caudwell." Literature and History, 6, No. 2 (Autumn 1980), 240-47.
- Draper, Michael. "Christopher Caudwell's Illusions." In The 1930's: A Challenge to Orthodoxy. Ed. John Lucas. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978, pp. 78-102.
- Eagleton, Terry. "The Ballad of James Joyce." Photocopy from Socialist Challenge, 11 Feb. 1982, n.p.
- . Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory. 1975; rpt. London: Verso, 1978.
- . "Derrida--From Plato to NATO." Literary Review, 2, No. 41 (Oct. 1981), 35.
- . "The End of Criticism." Southern Review, 14, No. 2 (July 1981), 99-106.
- . Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature. London: Chatto and Windus, 1970.

- . "The Form of His Fiction." New Blackfriars, 55, No. 653 (Oct. 1974), 477-81.
- . "Four Critics." The English Magazine, No. 4 (Summer 1980), 4, 8-10.
- . The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism. London: Verso, 1984.
- . "The Institution of Criticism." Rev. of The Institution of Criticism, by Peter Uwe Hohendahl. Literature and History, 9, No. 1 (Spring, 1983), 97-101.
- . Introduction. Jude the Obscure. By Thomas Hardy, Ed. P. N. Furbank. London: Macmillan, 1974, pp. 9-20.
- . "Joyce: 'The Finest Irish Genius That No One Can Read.'" Photocopy from Socialist Challenge, 11 Feb. 1982, n.p.
- . "Liberality and Order: The Criticism of John Bayley." New Left Review, No. 110 (July-Aug. 1978), pp. 29-40.
- . Literary Theory: An Introduction. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.
- . "Literature and Politics Now." Critical Quarterly, 20, No. 3 (Aug. 1978), pp. 65-69.
- . Makers of Modern Marxism, London: Socialist Press, c. 1980.
- . Marxism and Literary Criticism. London: Methuen, 1976.
- . "Marxism, Nationalism and Poetry." Poetry Wales, 15, No. 3 (Winter 1979), 30-38.
- . "Marxist Literary Criticism." Contemporary Approaches to English Studies. Ed. Hilda Schiff. London: Heinemann, 1977, pp. 94-103.
- . "Marxist Literary Criticism." The Sociology of Literature: Theoretical Approaches. Ed. Jane Routh and Janet Wolff. Sociological Review Monograph 25. Keele: Univ. of Keele, 1977, pp. 85-91.
- . "Radical Orthodoxies." Rev. of Language and Materialism, by Rosalind Coward and John Ellis. The Oxford Literary Review, 3, No. 3 (Spring 1979), 99-103.
- . The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.
- . "Terry Eagleton Replies." Reply to Andreas Huyssen's rev. of Marxism and Literary Criticism, by Terry Eagleton. Clio, 7, No. 2 (1978), 322-27.

- . "Text, Ideology, Realism." Literature, Language and Society: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1978. Ed. Edward Said. NS 3. London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980, pp. 149-73.
- . "Thomas Hardy: Nature as Language." Critical Quarterly, 13, No. 2 (Summer 1971), 155-62.
- . Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism. London: Verso, 1981.
- , and Peter Fuller. "The Question of Value: A Discussion." New Left Review, No. 142 (Nov. - Dec. 1983), pp. 76-90.
- "Early Bolshevik Work among Women of the Soviet East." Women and Revolution, No. 12 (Summer 1976), 14-19.
- "Early Communist Work among Women: The Bolsheviks." Part 1. Women and Revolution, No. 10 (Winter 1975-76), 7-14.
- "Early Communist Work among Women: The Bolsheviks." Part 2. Women and Revolution, No. 11 (Spring 1976), 18-22.
- Efron, Arthur. "Why Radicals Should Not Be Marxists." The Sphinx, 3 (4), No. 12, 1-18.
- Elkins, Charles Le Roy. "The Development of British Marxist Literary Theory: Toward a Genetic-Functional Approach to Literary Criticism." DAI, 33. (1973), 5119 A (So. Ill.).
- Ellis, John M. "Evaluation." The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis. Berkley, Ca.: Univ. of California Press, 1974, pp. 72-103.
- Engels, Friedrich. "Communism in Germany." New Moral World. 13 Dec. 1844. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 375-76.
- . The Condition of the Working Class in England. From Marx and Engels. Collected Works. Vol. IV. Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 527-28. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 164-65.
- . "Karl Grün, Über Göthe vom Menschlichen Standpunkte. Darmstadt 1846." From his German Socialism in Verse and Prose. In Marx and Engels. Collected Works. Vol. VI. Moscow: Progress, 1976, pp. 249, 256-73. Rpt. in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 351-74.



- Letter to Conrad Schmidt. 27 Oct. 1890. From Marx and Engels. Selected Correspondence. Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 400-01. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 58-60.
- Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle. 18 May 1859. From Marx/Engels. Werke. Bd. 29, 1967, S. 600-05. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 101-07.
- Letter to Joseph Bloch. 21-22. Sep. 1890. From Marx and Engels. Selected Correspondence. Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 394-95. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 57.
- Letter to Karl Kautsky. 4 Sep. 1882. From Marx and Engels. Selected Correspondence. Moscow: Progress, 1975, p. 422. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 340.
- Letter to Laura Lafargue. 23 Nov. 1884. From Frederick Engels, Paul and Laura Lafargue. Correspondence. Vol. I. Moscow: Progress, 1959, pp. 245-46. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 341-42.
- Letter to Margaret Harkness. April 1888. From Marx and Engels. Selected Correspondence. Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 379-81.
- Letter to Minna Kautsky. 26 Nov. 1885. From Marx/Engels. Werke. Bd. 36, 1967, S. 393-94. Rpt. in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 87-89.
- Letter to W. Borgius. 25 Jan. 1894. From Marx and Engels. Selected Works. Vol. III. Moscow: Progress, 1973, pp. 502-03. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 58.
- Ludwig Fierbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy. From Marx and Engels. Selected Works. Vol. III. Moscow: Progress, 1973, p. 337. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 374-75.
- The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. From Marx and Engels. Selected Works. Vol. III. Moscow: Progress, 1973, pp. 296-97. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 321.

- . Preface. Capital. By Karl Marx. Vol. III. [c. 1896;]  
rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1974, p. 19. Excerpted in Marx/Engels  
on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B.  
Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 247-48.
- . Socialism: Utopian and Scientific. Tr. Edward Aveling. France,  
1880; Eng. tr. London, 1892; 7th rev. ed. Moscow: Progress, 1970.
- . "'Song of the Apprentices' by Georg Weerth." From Marx/  
Engels. Werke. Bd. 21. 1962, S. 5-8. Rpt. in Marx/Engels on  
Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref.  
B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 402-05.
- . "To the Italian Reader." Pref. to Ital. ed. of the  
Manifesto of the Communist Party. 1893; rpt. in Marx and Engels.  
Selected Works. Vol. I. Moscow: Progress, 1973, p. 107.  
Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and  
[Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress,  
1978, pp. 248-49.
- Epstein, E. L. "The Self-Reflexive Artifact: The Function of Mimesis in  
an Approach to a Theory of Value for Literature." Style and  
Structure in Literature: Essays in the New Stylistics. Ed. Roger  
Fowler. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975, pp. 40-78.
- Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. Tr. Constance Farrington.  
France, 1961; rpt. New York: Grove, 1966.
- "Feminism versus Marxism: Origins of the Conflict." Women and Revolution,  
No. 5. (Spring 1974), 7-14.
- Fischer, Michael. "The Literary Importance of E. P. Thompson's Marxism."  
English Literary History, 50, No. 4 (Winter 1983), pp. 818-19.
- Fisher, John J. "Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Evaluation."  
Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Aesthetics.  
Ed. Rudolf Zeitler. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Figura Nova  
Ser. X. Uppsala: n.p., 1972, pp. 531-32.
- Fokkema, D. W. and Elrud Kunne-Ibsch. Theories of Literature in the  
Twentieth Century: Structuralism, Marxism, Aesthetics of Reception,  
Semiotics. London: C. Hurst, 1977, pp. 81-193.
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton, N.J.:  
Princeton Univ. Press, 1957.
- . "The Archetypes of Literature." The Kenyon Rev., 13 (1951).  
Rpt. in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson  
Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 601-09.
- . The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society.  
Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970.

- Geras, Norman. "Classical Marxism and Proletarian Representation." New Left Review, No. 125 (Jan.-Feb. 1981), 75-89.
- Godelier, Maurice. "Infrastructures, Societies and History." New Left Review, No. 112 (Nov.-Dec. 1978), pp. 84-96.
- Goodheart, Eugene. "Art Criticism and the Anatomy of Aesthetic Values." Salmagundi, 35 (1976), 56-64.
- Gottner, Heide. "Analysis of the Problem of Relevance in the Study of Literature." Poetics, 5 (1976), 35-56.
- Harty, E. R. "Value Judgments in Criticism." Unisa English Studies, 11, No. 3 (Sep. 1973), 30-37.
- Harvey, J. R. "Criticism, Ideology, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton." Rev. of Marxism and Literature and Keywords, by Raymond Williams, and of Criticism and Ideology and Marxism and Literary Criticism, by Terry Eagleton. The Cambridge Quarterly, 8 (1978), pp. 56-65.
- Hawthorn, Jeremy. Identity and Relationship: A Contribution to Marxist Theory of Criticism. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973.
- Hazlitt, William. "Why the Arts Are Not Progressive." 1814. Rpt. in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 292-95.
- Hein, Hilde. "Aesthetic Consciousness: The Ground of Political Experience." JAAC, 35 (1976), 143-52.
- Hess, Hans. "Is There a Theory of Art in Marx?" Marxism Today (Oct. 1973), 306-14.
- Hoaglund, John. "Originality and Aesthetic Value." BJA, 16 (1976), 46-55.
- Holland, Norman N. "Evaluation." The Dynamics of Literary Response. New York, N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968, pp. 193-224.
- [Horace.] Q. Horatius Flaccus. Art of Poetry. Rome [?], c.1st century B.C. Tr. Walter Jackson Bate. Rpt. in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 51-58.
- "How the Bolsheviks Organised Working Women: History of the Journal Rabotnitsa." Women and Revolution, No. 4 (Fall 1973), 4-5, 14-16.
- Hyman, Stanley Edgar. "Christopher Caudwell and Marxist Criticism." The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism. New York: Knopf. 1952, pp. 173-207.

Hynes, Samuel. The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s. London: Bodley Head, 1976.

----- . Introduction. Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature. By Christopher Caudwell. Ed. Samuel Hynes. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970, pp. 3-28.

Irvine, Elizabeth E. "The Clayhangers: Father and Son: The Value of Creative Literature in Giving Body to Abstractions of Psychology." British Journal of Social Work, 12 (Feb. 1982), 77-89.

Jameson, Fredric. Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature. 1971: rpt. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974.

----- . The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. 1981; rpt. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983.

Jauss, Hans Robert. "The Idealist Embarrassment: Observations on Marxist Aesthetics." NLH, 7, No. 1 (Autumn 1975), 191-208.

Kavanagh, James H. and Thomas E. Lewis. "Interview: Terry Eagleton." Diacritics, 12 (Spring 1982), 39-43.

Kettle, Arnold. "Literature and Ideology." Rev. of "Ideology and Literary Form" and Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës, by Terry Eagleton. Red Letter, No. 1 (n.d.), pp. 3-5.

Kivy, Peter. "What Makes 'Aesthetic' Terms Aesthetic?" Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 36 (1975), 197-211.

Kugelman, Franzisca. "Small Traits of Marx's Great Character." From Marx and Engels through the Eyes of Their Contemporaries. Moscow: Progress: 1972, pp. 184-86. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 442-43.

"Labour Must Smash Phelps Dodge Union-Busting! Class War in Arizona Copper Mines." Workers Vanguard. No. 357, 22 June 1984, pp. 1, 6-8.

Lafargue, Paul. "Reminiscences of Marx." From Marx and Engels through the Eyes of Their Contemporaries. Moscow: Progress, 1972, pp. 25, 26, 33. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 438-40.

Lamorte, Pat. "The Ancient Rules--A Vanishing Species?" Georgia Review, 27 (1973), 489-502.

Lang, Berel and Forrest Williams, ed. and introd. Marxism and Art: Writings in Aesthetics and Criticism. New York, N.Y.: David McKay, 1972, pp. 1-17.

Leavis, F. R. "Literature and Society." The Common Pursuit. London: Chatto and Windus, 1958, pp. 182-94.

- . "Prefatory: Marxism and Cultural Continuity." For Continuity. 1933; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968, pp. 1-12.
- . "Sociology and Literature." The Common Pursuit. London: Chatto and Windus, 1958, pp. 195-203.
- . "Under Which King, Bezonian?" For Continuity. 1933; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968, pp. 160-75.
- Lenin, V. I. "The Achievements and Difficulties of the Soviet Government." Petrograd: Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Red Army Deputies, 1919. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXIX. Moscow: Progress, pp. 69-71, 71-75. Excerpted in Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 132-38.
- . Against Revisionism. Moscow: Progress, 1966.
- . The April Theses. 1917; 3rd rev. ed. Moscow: Progress, 1970.
- . "A Capably Written Little Book." Rev. of A Dozen Knives in the Back of the Revolution, by Arkady Averchenko. Pravda, No. 263, 22 Nov. 1921. Rpt. in Collected Works. V. I. Lenin. Vol. XXXIII. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 125-26. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 170-71.
- . Introduction. Ten Days That Shook the World. By John Reed. In John Reed. 10 dnei, kotoriye potryasli mir. Moscow: Krasnaya Nov, 1923. Rpt. in Collected Works. V. I. Lenin. Vol. XXXVI. Moscow: Progress, n.d., p. 519. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art, [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 147.
- . Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978.
- . "Leo Tolstoy and His Epoch." Zvezda, No. 6. 22 Jan. 1911. Rpt. in Collected Works. V. I. Lenin. Vol. XVII. Moscow: Progress, pp. 49-53. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 64-68.
- . "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution." Unsigned. Proletary, No. 35, 11 Sep. 1908. From Collected Works. Vol. XV, Moscow: Progress, [1963], pp. 202-09. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 30-35.
- . Letter to Maxim Gorky. 7 Feb. 1908. Lenin Miscellany. Vol. XXVI. 1934. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXXIV. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 379-82. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 184-87.
- . Letter to Maxim Gorky. 13 Feb. 1908. From Lenin Miscellany. Vol. I. 1924. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXXIV. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 385-86. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 190-91.

- . Letter to Maxim Gorky. 25 Feb. 1908. Lenin Miscellany. Vol. I. 1924. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XIII. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 448-54. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 192-97.
- . Letter to Maxim Gorky. 16 Nov. 1909. Krasnaya Gazeta. No. 236, 15 Oct. 1924. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXXIV. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 403-04. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 198-200.
- . Letter to Maxim Gorky. 22 Nov. 1910. Lenin Miscellany. Vol. I. 1924. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXXIV. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 434-35. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 201-03.
- . Letters from Afar. Most of them pub. 1917; Moscow: Progress, 1971.
- . "A Little Picture in Illustration of Big Problems." Rev. of A Year with Rifle and Plough. By Alexander Todorsky. Pravda. No. 258, 7 Nov. 1926. Rpt. in Collected Works. V. I. Lenin. Vol. XXVIII. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 386-89. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 127-31.
- . "L.N. Tolstoy." Unsigned. Sotsial-Demokrat, No. 18, 16 Nov. 1910. Rpt. in Collected Works. V. I. Lenin. Vol. XVI. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 323-27. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 52-57.
- . "L. N. Tolstoy and the Modern Labour Movement." Nash Put, No. 7, 28, Nov. 1910. Rpt. in Collected Works. V. I. Lenin. Vol. XVI. Moscow: Progress, [1963,] pp. 330-32. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 58-61.
- . "Party Organisation and Party Literature." Novaya Zhizn. No. 12. 13 Nov. 1905. From Collected Works. Vol. X. [Moscow: Progress, 1962,] pp. 44-49. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 24-29.
- . "On Proletarian Culture." Krasnaya Nov. No. 3 (1926). Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXXI. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 316-17. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 167-69.
- . "On the Significance of Militant Materialism." Pod Znamenem Marksizma. No. 3, March 1922. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXXIII. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 229-32. Excerpted in Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 174-77.
- . The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution. 1917; 2nd rev. ed. Moscow: Progress, 1965.

- . "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues: Speech Delivered at the Third All-Russia Young Communist League, Oct. 2, 1920." Pravda, Nos. 221, 222 and 223, 5, 6, and 7 Oct. 1920. Rpt. in Collected Works. Vol. XXXI. Moscow: Progress, n.d., pp. 283-99. Rpt. in Lenin on Literature and Art. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 148-66.
- . What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement. 1902; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978.
- Lifshitz, Mikhail. The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx. Tr. Ralph B. Winn. Pref. (unsigned) Terry Eagleton. 1933; tr. 1938; rpt. London: Pluto Press, 1973.
- Lipman, Matthew. "Can Non-Aesthetic Consequences Justify Aesthetic Values?" JAAC, 34 (1975), 117-23.
- Longinus. On the Sublime. Tr. W. Rhys Roberts. 1899. Excerpted in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 62-75.
- Lorenzo, Anselmo. "Reminiscences of the First International." From Reminiscences of Marx and Engels. Moscow: Progress, 1956, pp. 289-90. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 444.
- Lunacharsky, Anatoly V. "Theses on the Problems of Marxist Criticism." 1928. In Anatoly V. Lunacharsky on Literature and Art. Comp. A. Lebedev. Ed. K. M. Cook. Tr. Avril Pyman and Fainna Glagoleva. 2nd rev. ed. Moscow: Progress, 1973, pp. 9-21.
- Luxemburg, Rosa. "Stagnation and Progress of Marxism." Karl Marx: A Symposium. Ed. D. Ryazanoff. London: n.p., 1929, pp. 105-14. Excerpted in Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Ed. Maynard Solomon. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979, pp. 155-59.
- Marcuse, Herbert. One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society. Boston: Beacon, 1964.
- Margolies, David. N. The Function of Literature: A Study of Christopher Caudwell's Aesthetics. New York: International Publishers, 1969.
- Marx, Karl. "Affairs in Prussia." From New York Daily Tribune, 15 Oct. 1860. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 248.
- . Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production. Vol. I. 1889. Rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1974, p. 86. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 265.

- . Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Vol. I. Ed. Frederick Engels. Tr. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. Hamburg, 1867; tr. London, 1887; ed. corrections by Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1967.
- . "Confessions." From Reminiscences of Marx and Engels. Moscow: Progress, 1956, p. 266. Rpt. in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, p. 436.
- . "Critique of the Gotha Programme." Neue Zeit, 1891. Moscow tr. rpt. in The Marx-Engels Reader. 2nd ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978, pp. 525-41.
- . Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Excerpted in Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1979, pp. 55-56.
- . "The English Middle Class." From Marx and Engels. Articles on Britain. Moscow: Progress, 1971, p. 218. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 339-40.
- . The German Ideology: Part I. 1932. Tr. and ed. S. Ryazanskaya. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1964. Rpt. in The Marx-Engels Reader. 2nd ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978, pp. 147-200.
- . Introduction. Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. 1857. Moscow: Progress, 1970, pp. 215-17. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 82-84.
- . "Layard's Inquiry: Fight over the Ten-Hour Working Day." From New York Daily Tribune, 22 July 1853. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 321-23.
- . "The Leading Article in Kölnische Zeitung, No. 179." Marx and Engels. Collected Works. Vol. I. Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 189-90. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 205-06.
- . Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle. 19 April 1859. From Marx/Engels. Werke. Bd. 29. 1967, S. 590-93. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 98-101.
- . "Man is the Aim of Production." From Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations. Extract from Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie. London, 1971, pp. 84-85. Excerpted in Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Ed. and introd. Maynard Solomon. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1979, pp. 56-57.



- . Preface. A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.  
From Marx and Engels. Selected Works. Vol. I. Moscow: Progress,  
1973, pp. 503-04. Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art.  
[Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt.  
Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 41-42.
- , and Friedrich Engels. "Address of the Central Committee to  
the Communist League." [1850.] Moscow tr. rpt. in The Marx-Engels  
Reader. 2nd ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978,  
pp. 501-11.
- . "Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, and Others."  
The Marx-Engels Reader. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1978, pp. 549-55.
- . "Critical Analysis of Sue's Mystères de Paris." From  
The Holy Family. In Marx and Engels. Collected Works. Vol. IV.  
Moscow: Progress, 1975, pp. 57, 163-65, 168-76. Excerpted in  
Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels.  
Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 298-313.
- . "The Illusion of the Epoch, I." From The German Ideology.  
1932. Rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1964, pp. 49-51. Excerpted in  
Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Ed. and introd.  
Maynard Solomon. Brighton: Sussex: Harvester, 1979, pp. 42-43.
- . "Latter-Day Pamphlets, Edited by Thomas Carlyle."  
Rev. rpt. in Marx/Engels. Werke. Bd. 7, 1969, S. 255-65. Rpt.  
in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich]  
Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978,  
pp. 326-39.
- . The Manifesto of the Communist Party. From Marx and Engels.  
Collected Works. Vol. VI. Moscow: Progress, 1976, pp. 503-04.  
Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and  
[Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress,  
1978, pp. 73-74.
- . Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976;  
rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978.
- Marx-Aveling, Eleanor. "Karl Marx." From Marx and Engels through the  
Eyes of Their Contemporaries. Moscow: Progress, 1972, pp. 155-56.  
Excerpted in Marx/Engels on Literature and Art. [Karl] Marx and  
[Friedrich] Engels. Pref. B. Krylov. 1976; rpt. Moscow: Progress,  
1978, pp. 440-42.
- McKeon, Michael. "The Origins of Aesthetic Value." Telos, No. 57  
(Fall 1983), 63-82.
- Montefiore, Janet. "The Rhetoric of Experience." New Left Review,  
No. 145 (May-June 1984), pp. 122-28.
- Morawski, Stefan. Introduction. Marx and Engels on Literature and Art:  
A Selection of Writings. Ed. Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski.  
St. Louis, Milwaukee: Telos Press, 1973, pp. 3-47.

- . "Lenin as a Literary Theorist." Science and Society, 29, No. 1 (Winter 1965), 3-25.
- Morrison, Blake. "Jim, Raymond, Jim." Rev. of Politics and Letters, by Raymond Williams. New Statesman, 98, No. 2536 (26 Oct. 1979), 637.
- Morrow, Felix. "The May Days: Barricades in Barcelona." Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain. 1938; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1974.
- Mukařovský, Jan. Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts. Tr. Mark E. Suino. Prague, 1936; tr. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan, 1970.
- Mulhern, Francis. "The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell." New Left Review, No. 85 (May-June 1974), 37-58.
- Naumann, Manfred. "Literary Production and Reception." NLH, 8 (Autumn 1976), 107-26.
- Olson, Elder. "On Value Judgment in the Arts." Critical Inquiry, 1 (1974), 71-90.
- Osborne, Harold. "Aesthetics and Value." Revue Internationale de Philosophie. 28 (1974), 280-92.
- Parrinder, Patrick. Rev. of Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review, by Raymond Williams. Literature and History, 7, No. 1 (Spring 1981), 124-26.
- Pope, Alexander. An Essay on Criticism. 1711. Rpt. in Criticism: The Major Texts. Enl. ed. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New York: Harcourt, 1970, pp. 174-82.
- Praver, S. S. Karl Marx and World Literature. Oxford: Clarendon, 1976.
- Rader, Melvin. "Marx's Interpretation of Art and Aesthetic Value." BJA, 7 (Jul. 1967), 237-49.
- Raphael, Max. "Art, Opiate, Transcendence." Excerpted from The Demands of Art. Tr. Norbert Guterman. Princeton, N.J.: n.p., 1968, pp. 131-34. In Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1979, pp. 450-53.
- Reply to the Guardian: The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited. New York: Spartacist Publishing, 1976.
- Richards, Bernard. "Memorability as a Critical Criterion." Essays in Criticism, 26 (1976), 42-49.
- Robel, Gerald. "The Concept of Unity and Its Normative Tendency." Recovering Literature, 1, No. 1 (1972), 42-53.

- Roberts, Mark. The Fundamentals of Literary Criticism. Oxford: Blackwell, 1974.
- Rollin, Roger B. "Against Evaluation: The Role of the Critic of Popular Culture." Journal of Popular Culture, 9 (1975), 355-65.
- Ruthven, K. K. Critical Assumptions. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979.
- Savile, Anthony. "On Passing the Test of Time." BJA, 17 (1978), 195-209.
- Schwartz, Elias. "On Literary Evaluation." College English, 39 (1978), 326-32.
- Seymour, Joseph. "Marxism and the Jacobin Communist Tradition." Ser. in Young Spartacus, No. 40, Feb. 1976, pp. 6-7, 10; No. 41, Mar. 1976, pp. 6-8; No. 42, Apr. 1976, pp. 6-7; No. 45, Jul.-Aug. 1976, pp. 6-7; No. 46, Sep. 1976, pp. 8-10; No. 48, Nov. 1976, pp. 6-7; No. 49, Dec. 1976, pp. 6-8; No. 50, Jan. 1977, pp. 6-8; No. 57, Sep. 1977, pp. 6-8; No. 59, Nov. 1977, pp. 6-7, 11; No. 61, Feb. 1978, pp. 6-8; No. 64, May 1978, pp. 6-8, 11; No. 65, Summer 1978, pp. 8-10, 15; No. 68, Nov. 1978, pp. 6-8; No. 69, Dec. 1978/Jan. 1979, pp. 6-7, 10; No. 70, Feb. 1979, pp. 6-7, 11.
- Shell, Marc. The Economy of Literature. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978.
- Shipley, Peter. Revolutionaries in Modern Britain. London: Bodley Head, 1976.
- Siegel, Paul N. Introduction. Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. By Leon Trotsky. Ed. Paul N. Siegel. 2nd ed. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 7-26.
- Slaughter, Cliff. Marxism, Ideology and Literature. London: Macmillan, 1980.
- Smith, Barbara Herrnstein. "Fixed Marks and Variable Constancies: A Parable of Literary Value." Poetics Today, 1, Nos. 1-2 (Autumn 1979), 7-22.
- Solomon, Maynard. "General Introduction: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels." Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Ed. Maynard Solomon. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1979, pp. 3-21.
- , ed. and introd. Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979.
- Sousa, Daniel de. A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary "New Left" Sociology. Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1979, pp. 245-49.

Staden, Heinrich von. "Nietzsche and Marx on Greek Art and Literature: Case Studies in Reception." Daedalus, 105 (Winter 1976), 79-96.

Stampf, Kenneth M., Jr. "Unity as a Virtue." JAAC, 34 (1975), 191-97.

Steiner, George. Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman. New York: Atheneum, 1967, pp. 305-24.

Stewart, Susan. "Some Riddles and Proverbs of Textuality: An Essay in Literary Value and Evaluation." Criticism, 21, No. 2 (Spring 1979), 93-105.

Sutherland, John. "Problematical." Rev. of Marxism and Literature, by Raymond Williams. New Statesman, 94, No. 2421 (12 Aug. 1977), 248-49.

Therborn, Göran. "The Frankfurt School." New Left Review, No. 63 (Sep.-Oct. 1970), pp. 65-96.

Thompson, E. P. "Caudwell." The Socialist Register: 1977. Ed. Ralph Miliband and John Saville. London: Merlin, 1977, pp. 228-76.

----- . The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978.

T[hompson], G[eorge]. Biographical Note. Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry. By Christopher Caudwell. 1937; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1977, pp. 9-11.

----- . "In Defence of Poetry." The Modern Quarterly, NS, 6, No. 2 (Spring 1951), 107-34.

Timms, E. F. Rev. of Marxism and Literature and Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review, by Raymond Williams. Modern Language Review, 75, Part 4 (Oct. 1980), 826-30.

Trotsky, Leon. "Art and Politics in Our Epoch." Partisan Review, Aug. 1938. Rpt. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 104-14.

----- . "Céline and Poincaré: Novelist and Politician." Atlantic Monthly, Oct. 1935. Rpt. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 191-203.

----- . Class and Art: Problems of Culture under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Moscow [?], 1925. Tr. Brian Pearce, 1967; rpt. London: New Park, 1968.

----- . "Critical Jottings." From Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935. Leon Trotsky. Tr. Elena Zarudnaya. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958. Excerpted in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 207-16.

- . "Culture and Socialism." Krasnaya Nov., No. 6 (1926).  
Tr. Brian Pearce, 1962. Excerpted in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 83-91.
- . "Culture and the Soviet Bureaucracy." From The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going? 1937.  
Excerpted in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 94-100.
- . The Essential Trotsky. Tr. J. G. Wright. 1925; rpt. London: Unwin, 1963.
- . "The Independence of the Artist: A Letter to André Breton." Bulletin of the Opposition, No. 74, Feb. 1939. Rpt. Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 122-24.
- . Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 2nd ed. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977.
- . Literature and Revolution. Moscow, 1924. Tr. Rose Strunsky. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960.
- . "A Masterly First Novel: Jean Malaquais's Les Javanais." Tr. Charles Malamuth. Fourth International. New York (January 1941). Rpt. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 2nd ed. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 225-34.
- . "Maxim Gorky." Bulletin of the Opposition. No. 51 (July-Aug. 1936), Rpt. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 2nd ed. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 217-20.
- . Results and Prospects. St. Petersburg, 1906. Rpt. in The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects. 3rd ed. Tr. Brian Pearce. Introd. Peter Camejo. New York: Pathfinder, 1969, pp. 29-122.
- . The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going? 1937; New York: Pathfinder, 1972.
- . "The Strangled Revolution: André Malraux's The Conquerors." Bulletin of the Opposition, No. 21-22 (May-June 1931). Rpt. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 2nd ed. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, pp. 179-90.
- . "The Suicide of Vladimir Mayakovsky." Bulletin of the Opposition, No. 11, May 1930. Rpt. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 174-78.

- . "Tolstoy: Poet and Rebel." Neue Zeit, 15 Sep. 1908.  
Rpt. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 2nd ed. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, pp. 127-41.
- . "On Tolstoy's Death." Pravda, No. 17. 20 Nov. 1910. Tr. Frank Manning and George Saunders. Rpt. Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art. Ed. and introd. Paul N. Siegel. 1972; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977, pp. 143-47.
- . The Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution.  
Introd. Joseph Hansen and George Novack. Ed. George Breitman and Fred Stanton. 3rd ed. 1938; rpt. New York: Pathfinder, 1977.
- Tucker, Robert C., ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1978.
- Vermazen, Bruce. "Comparing Evaluations of Works of Art." JAAC, 34 (1975), 7-14.
- Weimann, Robert. "'Reception Aesthetics' and the Crisis in Literary History." Clio, 5 No. 1 (1975), 3-35.
- Wellek, René. "Criticism as Evaluation." The Attack on Literature and Other Essays. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1982, pp. 48-63.
- . "Marx and Engels." A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950. Vol. III. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1965, pp. 232-39.
- Werckmeister, O.K. "Marx on Ideology and Art." NLH, 4 (1973), pp. 501-19.
- West, Alick. "The Relativity of Literary Value." Crisis and Criticism and Selected Literary Essays. Foreword Arnold Kettle. Introd. Elisabeth West. 1937; rpt. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975, pp. 135-40.
- Widdowson, Peter. "Hardy in History: A Case Study in the Sociology of Literature." Literature and History, 9, No. 1 (Spring 1983), 3-16.
- . "'Literary Value' and the Reconstruction of Criticism." Literature and History, 6, No. 2 (Autumn 1980), 138-50.
- Williams, Raymond. The Country and the City. Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts.: Paladin, 1975.
- . Culture and Society: 1780-1950. 1958; Harmondsworth, Mdx.: Penguin, 1963.
- . Drama from Ibsen to Brecht. Harmondsworth, Mdx.: Penguin, 1964.

- . The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence. London: Chatto and Windus, 1970.
- . Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976.
- . The Long Revolution. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961.
- . Marxism and Literature. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977.
- . "Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis." New Left Review, No. 129 (Sep.-Oct. 1981), 51-66.
- . Modern Tragedy. London: Chatto and Windus, 1966.
- . Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review. London: New Left Books, 1979.
- . Towards 2000. London: Chatto and Windus, 1983.
- Wilson, Edmund. "Marxism and Literature." The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948, pp. 197-212.
- "Women Organise for Strike Victory." Spartacist Britain. No. 56, April 1984, p. 4.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. "The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism." New Left Review, No. 127 (May-June 1981), 66-95.
- Woodcock, George. "Two Faces of Modern Marxism." Rev. of Marxism and Literature, by Raymond Williams. Sewanee Review, 86, No. 4 (Fall 1978), 588-94.
- Zetkin, Clara. My Recollections of Lenin. Moscow: [Progress?], 1956, pp. 17-23, 90-91. Excerpted in Lenin on Literature and Art. [V. I.] Lenin. 1967; rpt. Moscow: Progress, 1978, pp. 273-80.
- Zhdanov, A. A. "Report on the Journals Zvezda and Leningrad, 1947." From On Literature, Music and Philosophy. A. A. Zhdanov. London: Lawrence and Wishart, n.d. Excerpted in Marxists on Literature: An Anthology. Ed. David Craig. Harmondsworth, Mdx.: Penguin, 1975, pp. 514-26.

## Appendix A

1. According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining factor in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Neither Marx nor I have ever asserted more than this. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic factor is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure--political forms of the class struggle and its results, such as constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and especially the reflection of all these real struggles in the brains of the participants, political, legal, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas--also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases determine their form in particular. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent and neglect it), the economic movement is finally bound to assert itself. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree. (Letter to Joseph Bloch [21-22 Sep. 1890], Marx/Engels, p. 57)

2. Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc. development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic basis. It is not that the economic situation is cause, solely active, while everything else is only passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of economic necessity, which ultimately always asserts itself. The state, for instance, exercises an influence by protective tariffs, free trade, good or bad fiscal system; and even the deadly inanition and impotence of the German philistine, arising from the miserable economic condition of Germany from 1648 to 1830 and expressing themselves at first in pietism, then in sentimentality and cringing servility to princes and nobles, were not without economic effect. That was one of the greatest hindrances to recovery and was not shaken until the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars made the chronic misery an acute one. So it is not, as people try here and there conveniently to imagine, that the economic situation produces an automatic effect. No. Men make their history themselves, only they do so in a given environment, which conditions them, and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by the other--the political and ideological relations--are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the keynote which runs through everything and alone leads to understanding. (Letter to W. Borgius [25 Jan. 1894], Marx/Engels, p. 58)

3 As to the realms of ideology which soar still higher in the air--religion, philosophy, etc.--these have a prehistoric



stock, found already in existence and taken over by the historical period, of what we should today call nonsense. These various false conceptions of nature, of man's own being, of spirits, magic forces, etc., have for the most part only a negative economic factor as their basis; the low economic development of the prehistoric period is supplemented and also partially conditioned and even caused by the false conceptions of nature. And even though economic necessity was the main driving force of the increasing knowledge of nature and has become ever more so, yet it would be pedantic to try and find economic causes for all this primitive nonsense. The history of science is the history of the gradual clearing away of this nonsense or rather of its replacement by fresh but less absurd nonsense. The people who attend to this belong in their turn to special spheres in the division of labour and they think that they form an independent group within the social division of labour; their output, including their errors, exerts in its turn an effect upon the whole development of society, and even on its economic development. But all the same they themselves are in turn under the predominant influence of economic development. In philosophy, for instance, this can be most readily proved true for the bourgeois period. Hobbes was the first modern materialist (in the sense of the eighteenth century) but he was an absolutist at a time when absolute monarchy was in its heyday throughout Europe and began the battle against the people in England. Locke was in religion and in politics the child of the class compromise of 1688. The English deists and their more consistent followers, the French materialists, were the true philosophers of the bourgeoisie, the French even the philosophers of the bourgeois revolution. The German philistinism runs through German philosophy from Kant to Hegel, sometimes in a positive and sometimes a negative way. But the precondition of the philosophy of each epoch regarded as a distinct sphere in the division of labour, is a definite thought material which is handed down to it by its predecessors, and which is also its starting point. And that is why economically backward countries can still play first fiddle in philosophy: France in the eighteenth century as compared with England, on whose philosophy the French based themselves, and later Germany as compared with both. But both in France and in Germany philosophy and the general blossoming of literature at that time were also the result of an economic revival. The ultimate supremacy of economic development is for me an established fact in these spheres too, but it operates within the terms laid down by the particular sphere itself: in philosophy, for instance, by the action of economic influences (which in their turn generally operate only in their political, etc., make-up) upon the existing philosophic material which has been handed down by predecessors. Here economy creates nothing anew, but it determines the way in which the thought material found in existence is altered and further developed, and that too for the most part indirectly, for it is the political, legal and moral reflexes which exert the greatest direct influence on philosophy. (Letter to Conrad Schmidt [27 Oct. 1890], Marx/Engels, pp. 58-60)

## Appendix B

I am now coming to Franz von Sickingen. First of all, I must praise the composition and action, and that is more than can be said of any other modern German drama. In the second instance, leaving aside the purely critical attitude to this work, it greatly excited me on first reading and it will therefore produce this effect in a still higher degree on readers who are governed more by their feelings. And this is a second and very important aspect.

Now the other side of the medal: First--this is a purely formal matter--since you have written it in verse, you might have polished up your iambs with a bit more artistry. But however much professional poets may be shocked by such carelessness I consider it on the whole as an advantage, since our brood of epigonous poets have nothing left but formal polish. Second: The intended conflict is not simply tragic but is really the tragic conflict that spelled the doom, and with reason, of the revolutionary party of 1848-49. I can therefore only most heartily welcome the idea of making it the pivotal point of a modern tragedy. But then I ask myself whether the theme you took is suitable for a presentation of this conflict. Balthasar may really imagine that if Sickingen had set up the banner of opposition to imperial power and open war against the princes instead of concealing his revolt behind a knightly feud, he would have been victorious. But can we subscribe to this illusion? Sickingen (and with him Hutten, more or less) did not go under because of his cunning. He went under because it was as a knight and a representative of a moribund class that he revolted against the existing order of things or rather against the new form of it. Strip Sickingen of his individual traits and his particular culture, natural ability, etc., and what is left is--Götz von Berlichingen. Götz, that miserable fellow, embodies in adequate form the tragic opposition of the knights to the Emperor and princes; and that is why Goethe has rightly made him the hero. In so far as Sickingen--and even Hutten to a certain extent, although with regard to him and all ideologists of a class, statements of this kind ought to be considerably modified--fights against the princes (for the conflict with the Emperor arises only because the Emperor of the knights turns into an Emperor of the princes), he is indeed only a Don Quixote, although one historically justified. The fact that he began the revolt in the guise of a knightly feud means simply that he began it in a knightly fashion. Had he begun it otherwise he would have had to appeal directly and from the outset to the cities and peasants, i.e., precisely to the classes whose development was tantamount to the negation of the knights.

Hence, if you did not want to reduce the collision to that presented in Götz von Berlichingen--and that was not your plan--then Sickingen and Hutten had to succumb because they imagined they were revolutionaries (the latter cannot be said of Götz) and, just like the educated Polish nobility of 1830, on the one hand,

made themselves exponents of modern ideas, while, on the other, they actually represented the interests of a reactionary class. The aristocratic representatives of the revolution--behind whose watchwords of unity and liberty there still lurked the dream of the old empire and of club-law--should, in that case, not have absorbed all interest, as they do in your play, but the representatives of the peasants (particularly these) and of the revolutionary elements in the cities ought to have formed a quite significant active background. In that case you could to a much greater extent have allowed them to voice the most modern ideas in their most naïve form, whereas now, besides religious freedom, civil unity actually remains the main idea. You would then have been automatically compelled to write more in Shakespeare's manner whereas I regard as your gravest shortcoming the fact that à la Schiller you transform individuals into mere mouthpieces of the spirit of the time. Did you not yourself to a certain extent fall into the diplomatic error, like your Franz von Sickingen, of placing the Lutheran-knightly opposition above the plebeian Münzer opposition?

Further, the characters are lacking in character. I exclude Charles V, Balthasar and Richard of Trier. Was there ever a time of more impressive characters than the 16th century? Hutten, I think, is too much just a representative of "inspiration" and this is boring. Was he not at the same time an ingenious person of devilish wit, and have you not therefore done him a great injustice?

The extent to which even your Sickingen, who incidentally is also much too abstractly depicted, is a victim of a collision independent of all his personal calculations is seen, on the one hand, in the way he must preach to his knights friendship with the cities, etc., and, on the other, in the pleasure with which he metes out fist-law justice to the cities.

As far as details are concerned, I must here and there censure the exaggerated introspections of the individuals--something which stems from your partiality for Schiller, e.g. p. 121. As Hutten tells Marie his life story, it would be absolutely natural to let Marie say:

"The whole gamut of feelings"

etc. up to

"And it is heavier than the weight of years."

The preceding verses from "It is said" up to "grown old," could then follow, but the reflection "The maid becomes a woman in one night" (although it shows that Marie knows more than the mere abstraction of love), was quite unnecessary; but least of all should Marie begin with the reflection on her own "age." After she had said all that she related in the "one" hour, she could give her feeling general expression in the sentence on her age. Further, in the following lines I was shocked by: "I considered it my right" (namely happiness). Why give the lie to the naïve view of the world which Marie maintains to have had hitherto by converting it

into a doctrine of right? Perhaps I shall set forth my view in greater detail for you another time.

I regard the scene between Sickingen and Charles V as particularly successful, although the dialogue becomes a little too defensive on both sides; further also the scenes in Trier. Hutten's sentences on the sword are very fine.

Enough for this time.

You have won a particular adherent for your drama in my wife. Marie is the only character with whom she is not satisfied.

Salut.

Yours, K.M.

(Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle [19 April 1859], Marx/Engels, pp. 98-101)

## Appendix C

6. The unequal development of material production and, e.g. that of art. The concept of progress is on the whole not to be understood in the usual abstract form. Modern art, etc. This disproportion is not as important and difficult to grasp as within concrete social relations, e.g. in education. Relations of the United States to Europe. However, the really difficult point to be discussed here is how the relations of production as legal relations take part in this uneven development. For example the relation of Roman civil law (this applies in smaller measure to criminal and constitutional law) to modern production.

7. This conception appears to be an inevitable development. But vindication of chance. How? (Freedom, etc., as well.) (Influence of the means of communication? World history did not always exist; history as world history is a result.)

8. The starting point is of course the naturally determined factors; both subjective and objective. Tribes, races, etc.

As regards art, it is well known that some of its peaks by no means correspond to the general development of society; nor do they therefore to the material substructure, the skeleton as it were of its organisation. For example the Greeks compared with modern nations, or else Shakespeare. It is even acknowledged that certain branches of art, e.g., the epos can no longer be produced in their epoch-making classic form after artistic production as such has begun; in other words, that certain important creations within the compass of art are only possible at an early stage in the development of art. If this is the case with regard to different branches of art within the sphere of art itself, it is not so remarkable that this should also be the case with regard to the entire sphere of art and its relation to the general development of society. The difficulty lies only in the general formulation of these contradictions. As soon as they are reduced to specific questions they are already explained.

Let us take, for example, the relation of Greek art, and that of Shakespeare, to the present time. We know that Greek mythology is not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also its basis. Is the conception of nature and of social relations which underlies Greek imagination and therefore Greek art possible when there are self-acting mules, railways, locomotives and electric telegraphs? What is a Vulcan compared with Roberts and Co., Jupiter compared with the lightning conductor, and Hermes compared with the Credit mobilier? All mythology subdues, controls and fashions the forces of nature in the imagination and through imagination; it disappears therefore when real control over these forces is established. What becomes of Fama side by side with Printing House Square? Greek art presupposes Greek mythology, in other words that

natural and social phenomena are already assimilated in an unintentionally artistic manner by the imagination of the people. This is the material of Greek art, not just any mythology, i.e. not every unconsciously artistic assimilation of nature (here the term comprises all physical phenomena, including society); Egyptian mythology could never become the basis of or give rise to Greek art. But at any rate it presupposes a mythology; on no account however a social development which precludes a mythological attitude towards nature, i.e. any attitude to nature which might give rise to myth; a society therefore demanding from the artist an imagination independent of mythology.

Regarded from another aspect: is Achilles possible when powder and shot have been invented? And is the Iliad, possible at all when the printing press and even printing machines exist? Is it not inevitable that with the emergence of the press bar the singing and the telling and the muse cease, that is the conditions necessary for epic poetry disappear?

The difficulty we are confronted with is not, however, that of understanding how Greek art and epic poetry are associated with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still give us aesthetic pleasure and are in certain respects regarded as a standard and unattainable ideal.

An adult cannot become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does the naïveté of the child not give him pleasure, and does not he himself endeavour to reproduce the child's veracity on a higher level? Does not the child in every epoch represent the character of the period in its natural veracity? Why should not the historical childhood of humanity, where it attained its most beautiful form, exert an eternal charm because it is a stage that will never recur? There are rude children and precocious children. Many of the ancient peoples belong to this category. The Greeks were normal children. The charm their art has for us does not conflict with the immature stage of the society in which it originated. On the contrary its charm is a consequence of this and is inseparably linked with the fact that the immature social conditions which gave rise, and which alone could give rise, to this art cannot recur. (Introduction to Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58, rpt. in Marx/Engels, pp. 81-84. All parenthetical insertions are original to the above edition.)