Christopher Caudwell: A Critical Evaluation

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To my mother, Hilda MacDonald and to the
memory of my father, Ken MacDonald.
The people who made this possible.

Christopher Caudwell: A Critical Evaluation

To have become a dialectical materialist is to have been subject to exploitation, want, war, anxiety, insecurity; to have one's barest human needs denied or one's loved ones tormented and killed in the name of bourgeois liberty, and to have found that one's 'free-will' alone can do nothing at all, because one is more bound and crippled in bourgeois economy than a prisoner in a dungeon - and to have found that in this condition the only thing that can secure alleviation is co-operation with one's fellow men in the same dungeon; the world's exploited proletariat. This co-operation itself imposes on one's actions laws deriving from the nature of society and of the aims one has in common with those others. Then one has ceased to be a bourgeois philosopher: one has become a dialectical materialist. One has seen how men can leave the realm of necessity for that of freedom, not by becoming blind to necessity, or by denying its existence, but by becoming conscious of it.

Christopher Caudwell.

Further Studies in a Dying Culture: 'Reality'.

Christopher Caudwell: A Critical Evaluation. Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to offer a detailed account and evaluation of Christopher Caudwell's critical writings.

I aim to demonstrate that, while Caudwell had certain failings such as an occasional ultra-leftism, his works possess a relevance not only to his own era - the 1930s - but also to our own time. Indeed it might well be argued that, given the situation in the world at the beginning of the 21st century, his works are as worthy of attention as they ever were. I shall also demonstrate that his works and reputation were dealt a near-death blow in the early 1950s due, in good part, to Cold War politics and the cultural attack promulgated by the USSR under the auspices of A. A. Zhdanov in the latter's attack on Bourgeois culture in 1948 combined with the Soviet Union's official acceptance of Lysenkoism as the model of biological science.

Caudwell wrote on a wide range of subjects in his short life, including physics, literature (in particular poetry) psychology, economics and politics. It should be noted that, with regard to the last, there is very little in the way of direct political commentary in any of Caudwell's works and this may be a reason for the accusations of non-Marxist or politically heterodox thinking from a wide range of critics, both of the left and of the right.

In this thesis I have concentrated on certain aspects of Caudwell's work. Restrictions of length have forced me to leave some of Caudwell's works virtually untouched, mainly his novels, published and unpublished; his works on engineering and aviation have also been omitted for this reason, although these works do bear witness to Caudwell's enthusiasm for all things new.

Therefore this thesis is an appraisal of Caudwell as a revolutionary thinker, a Marxist aesthetician and dialectical materialist; a man deeply influenced by the great theorists of Marxism, especially Engels and Lenin, but also Freud, Jung and Jane Harrison and F. M. Cornford of the 'Cambridge School' of Anthropology and others not within the Marxist canon. His works may, superficially, be said to lack coherence and a sense of organised purpose when compared with other theorists; however this is scarcely surprising, given both the circumstances of Caudwell's life and the pressures under which he worked during that period of extraordinary intellectual creativity, and that, before his tragic, untimely death in the Spanish Civil War, these deficits were in the process of being rectified.

Acknowledgements

This work, like most works of its kind, is not the product of a single effort. Many, many people helped either academically, emotionally, financially or all three at various times and they're listed below. I have had a great deal of assistance with regard to proof-reading and, no doubt, exasperated a good number of people with far better things to do with their time.

My thanks to you all, individually and collectively in alphabetical order. Any remaining mistakes are due to my own carelessness but the good parts are all yours (and, of course, Caudwell's).

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Christopher Caudwell: A critical Evaluation.
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1: Introduction

i - The Background of Christopher Caudwell

> Well, because we were too lazy, too selfish, too frightened to see to it that our country played its part in preventing the world from becoming the playground of fascist aggressors, Caudwell has been killed; and many another such, who might have lived to bless the world will be killed. Let us, at least, use the words which Caudwell did have the opportunity to leave us, to make all those who are becoming men and women in the blood-stained nineteen-thirties, understand for what it was he died.(1)

John Strachey's heartfelt indignation at the death of Christopher Caudwell (Christopher St. John Sprigg) is obvious and it is revealing: Strachey sees British Government culpability in Caudwell's death. But it was more than the British Government's cowardice and venality in the face of fascism that caused Caudwell's death. It was Caudwell's own brilliance, along with his Marxist principles,[1] that brought him to his tragically premature end at the Battle of Jarama[2] in 1937. Wherein lies the importance of Christopher Caudwell and his works? Can we at least try to understand him, as Strachey demands? In this thesis I will demonstrate that not only was Caudwell relevant

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[1] The *Punch* magazine noted that 'The author of *Illusion and Reality* was recently killed in action in Spain, supporting at the crux those principles of popular government in which in his writing he has declared his intellectual faith. Under the pen-name of "Christopher Caudwell" he has written a book which cannot be read with understanding except in the light of his death.' Obituary Notices. Caudwell Archives. Box 9, Folder 4. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA. *Punch.* 12th May, 1937. See, also, 12. 'Appendix: Caudwell Obituaries'. This thesis, p. 369.

[2] Caudwell was killed on the 12th of February, covering a retreat with a machine gun. His body was never found. In a letter dated 9th of December, 1936 to his brother Theodore, Caudwell wrote: 'Dear Theo I expect this will be a surprise but I am leaving for Spain on Friday. I did not know there was any chance of this until yesterday afternoon. They are badly in need of drivers who are in the Party or close to it, I have a passport & I therefore volunteered.' Caudwell Archives. Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA.

to his own period, but that he is relevant now, to our era. Considering these questions, Caudwell's critics and those who see him in a more favourable light will be reviewed. Particularly apposite to this thesis will be the 'Caudwell Controversy' which took place in 1950-1951. During this period, at the ideological prompting of the Soviet Union's A. A. Zhdanov, leading theoreticians, amongst them Maurice Cornforth, Margot Heinemann, J. D. Bernal, Alick West, George Thomson and others either attacked or defended Caudwell on the question as to whether his works were, or were not, of orthodox Marxist character. The Caudwell debate has been ongoing since the early 1950s. E. P. Thompson, in 1977, maintains that while there is some truth in the accusations made not only by Cornforth but also Francis Mulhern on the question of Caudwell's binary oppositions of 'Man/Nature', 'Art/Science', 'Instincts (Or genotype)/Society'[3],[Thompson's parenthesis.] although he says the accusations of idealism against Caudwell have less foundation.(2) We shall see, throughout this thesis that the last, especially, in agreement with Thompson, is untenable. Caudwell is often regarded as something of an *enfant terrible*, who didn't quite 'play by the rules'; a maverick who seemed to appear from nowhere and, tragically, vanished in much the same way on the battlefield of Jarama.[4] There are some dismissive and, to be frank, totally unjustified criticisms of Caudwell, the most common being that he was an impetuous, scatter-brained autodidact not to be trusted with the serious business of literary criticism, psychology or political or scientific analysis and that his was a haphazard and idealistic approach to extremely important matters. This is a view espoused by critics as diverse as Terry Eagleton and H. A. Mason, the *Scrutineer* who thought Caudwell not even worth the reading, although comment he did, extensively and vituperatively,(3) as well as the ideological chiefs of the Communist Party of Great

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[3] 'The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell.' *New Left Review.* London 1974. p. 53. See, also, Christopher Pawling's comments on this subject (49) Thesis chapter 3, 'Lawrence, Wells and Shaw'. p.85

[4] This is patently false. See Chapter 12. 'Appendix: Caudwell Obituaries' this thesis. p. 373.

Britain. However there is an alternative view of Caudwell: Neal Wood, in 1959, called him 'amazing.'(4) Neither was Wood the only person who commented favourably on Caudwell. Writers and critics as diverse as Douglas Garman,[5] J. B. S. Haldane, George Thomson, Helena Sheehan,[6] Peter Fuller, Christopher Pawling,[7] Leonard Goldstein,[8] Edgell Rickword, John Strachey and Stanley Edgar Hyman found Caudwell more than merely rewarding; they have found him to be, in many cases, *the* English Marxist critic of his era.[9] Samuel Hynes, in *The Auden Generation*, saw *Illusion and Reality* as '[a] less orthodox. less polemical and far more original book than *The Novel and the People*[10], and it was immediately recognised as an important book.'(5) George Thomson found his ideas highly influential in the field of poetry and Greek tragedy[11] and art as does Peter Fuller who said, upon the subject of the timelessness of great art, its relative constancy and constant potentiality, that:

> [L]ate modernism and its left apologists deny this: but the best Marxists have long recognised it. I have learned much from Christopher Caudwell, a brilliant British writer who died in 1937, aged 29, fighting with the International Brigade in Spain. Caudwell

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[5] 'It is impossible, however, in a few short pages to do justice to the scope and brilliance of the argument, or to follow out its application to modern, i. e. post-feudal, or capitalist poetry.' 'Testament of a Revolutionary. (Christopher St. John Sprigg.)'. *Left Review*. London. p .353.

[6] Sheehan's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science*, contains an in-depth exploration of Caudwell's rôle as a scientific synthesiser, a critic who attempted to develop an all-encompassing *weltanschauung*. Humanities Press. New Jersey, N. J.: 1993.

[7] His work, *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature*. London: Macmillan. 1989, is concerned mostly with an analysis of Caudwell *via* an aesthetic reading. Pawling's view is that *Romance and Realism* has been overshadowed by the emphasis placed upon *Illusion and Reality*.

[8] Goldstein's work, *The Social and Cultural Roots of Linear Perspective*. uses Caudwell's *The Crisis in Physics* extensively, including a whole section under Caudwell's name in the chapter 'Social Nature and Abstraction'. Interestingly, there are also a number of references to George Thomson. Minneapolis, Minn.: MEP. 1988.

[9] George Moberg's thesis, *Christopher Caudwell an Introduction to his Life and Work* (Columbia University. 1968.) is, regrettably, unobtainable according to the British Library. [e-mail received 23-11-2004.]

[10] Ralph Fox. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977.

[11] His works *Æschylus and Athens, Marxism and Poetry* and *Studies in Ancient Greek Society* all make reference to Caudwell.

> saw that 'great art - art which performs a wide and deep feat of integration - has something universal, something timeless and enduring from age to age.'[12][Fuller's quotation.](6)

Edgell Rickword, in particular, has a deep appreciation of Caudwell's style and enthusiasm. He writes:

> [C]audwell's writing is like an exciting discussion for he is always conscious of an invisible interlocutor, [a] keen-witted opponent[13] of his own thesis. He had not merely grasped Marxism intellectually or emotionally; it had entered into the fabric of his life so that he thought in it, as one can think in a new language, not merely translate it into one's own. But the warmth of emotion, too, glows through the argument so that at times it becomes at times true eloquence.(7)

Rickword's enthusiasm is unfeigned and, I would suggest, justified, as are the words of John Strachey in his *Introduction* to *Studies in a Dying Culture*. As early as 1939, J. B. S. Haldane said of *Illusion and Reality* that it proved Caudwell to be one of the ablest men of his generation(8) and that his book '[w]ill be a quarry of ideas for philosophers for generations to come'.(9) That said it should be noted that the quarry metaphor is a rather double-edged compliment, as it presupposes a great deal of detritus along with the worthwhile discoveries. Indeed, Haldane comments that Caudwell did make mistakes, but that we should pardon him such statements as 'the whole consciousness of society gathers at the pole of the owning class'[14] since Caudwell would no doubt have deleted it

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12 Cf. *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 225.

13 E. P. Thompson, no doubt under Rickword's influence, makes a similar observation upon Caudwell in 1977. 'He studied thought, less in its products than in its process. He watched himself as he thought. He watched himself as he loved. He even watched love as he loved.' 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register*. (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin Press. 1977. p. 238. Thompson obviously sees Caudwell as an intensely aware individual, always attempting to take the objective view even in the most personal matters.

14 'It was the rôle of class society to gather at one pole all consciousness and so enrich the development of

had he returned from Spain.(10) Haldane states that he had '[h]eard a better discussion of the problems of pure science in the trenches above the Jarama than any which I can remember among officers mainly drawn from the owning classes in 1914-1918.'(11) However he also says that he finds chapter 7 of *Illusion and Reality* in its present form reminiscent of '[H]egel at his worst.'(12) Clearly, Caudwell is not above criticism: he lived in a very trying time for him, personally; in a time when an acute crisis was in evidence, not only in politics and economics but in the arts[15], physics, psychology and other related disciplines. However, Caudwell's answer to these crises is clear. In the foreword to *Studies in a Dying Culture*, he asks:

> What is the explanation? Either the Devil has come amongst us with great power or there is a causal explanation for a disease common to economics, science and art. Why then have all the psychoanalysts, Eddingtons, Keynes, Spenglers and bishops who have surveyed the scene, been unable to locate the source of infection to all modern culture, and, therefore, surely obvious enough? For answer these people must take to themselves the words of Herzen: 'We are not the doctors, we are the disease.'[Caudwell's quotation.](13)

As we shall see throughout this thesis, the 'Devil' can be disregarded. Caudwell's position is that the disease is not metaphysical in its source and he relentlessly tried to identify and expose the origin of the contagion. This was the task that he set himself, not without difficulties, as we shall see. After all, it is true that Caudwell was an autodidact and I believe he was a genius, but neither was he a dilettante. His letter to his older

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science and art.' Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 309.

[15] For example, it must be stressed that Caudwell's views of various writers and philosophers are not grounded upon a literary but a *political* critique. For example, his analyses of Shaw, Lawrence and Wells concern not, primarily, their abilities as writers but as thinkers and social theorists and their concomitant successes and failures in this field.

brother, Theodore, from Cornwall where he was drafting *Illusion and Reality* (then known under its working title, *Verse and Mathematics.*), reveals Sprigg/Caudwell's commitment to his chosen path.

> Now about myself. The Muse has been working all right, in fact believe me boys she's taking some holding down! The Serious Work has been progressing at a dizzy pace and will shortly astonish the world. It is a super-technical copper-bottomed piece of literary criticism, too frightfully fundamental, very revolutionary and disgustingly erudite (3 cheers for Chiswick and London Libraries). I have had bits of it in my mind for a long time. It incorporates all the biological, psychological, etc. etc., theories I have formed in the course of my reading during the last few years (Who shouted Eno's? Please leave the hall, Sir!) I shall publish it (if any feeble-minded publishers can be found) under a pen-name. The author of such a volume could not, of course, bear the same name of a writer of low brow detective tales.[Capitalisation, parentheses, etc., Caudwell's.](14)

The letter, aside from revealing Caudwell's obvious commitment to his work, shows his very well-developed sense of humour,[16] modesty, self-mocking irony and deprecation. We can see Caudwell as an extremely intelligent, totally committed, extraordinarily driven young man. Any notion that he was infallible (especially in his own eyes) is wrong and to imply that he was is to do him the injustice of assuming that he was something

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[16] Caudwell's well-developed sense of humour is revealed throughout his works. He says in relation to the 'mock ego', that '[t]hat this Mock Ego is not taken seriously by scientists. He is appreciated as an abstraction. There is no interest in his home life or hobbies.'[Caudwell's capitalisation.] *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 172. In a letter of 1934 to Paul and Elizabeth Beard he post scripts with the line: 'Causes beyond my control may force me to meet you in a bowler. I apologise to Elizabeth in advance.' Caudwell Archives. Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA. Further, in November 1935 Caudwell comments when writing to the Beards from his address in Poplar that '[Y]es, I suppose this is a proletarian stage of my life "From bowler to cap.".[Quotation, Caudwell's.] Source as above.

other than human. Caudwell was a real man in a real time and I hope to demonstrate that he was not a dialectical materialist *deus ex machina* that suddenly appeared at a crucial time to 'rescue' English Marxist criticism from ignominy, but very much a product of his background, his era and education. This, I would argue, is Caudwell's real strength; not as an isolated hermit, working away into the early hours of the morning in his 'ivory tower' but as a man very much involved with life and all its attendant problems. There is, still, the received opinion that Caudwell was isolated from Communist politics, in that he took little interest beyond his studies. This is completely untenable. Caudwell was deeply involved with his branch at Poplar. He addressed a meeting there in 1936 on the question of the division of wealth in London.[17] He said:

> On behalf of the local branch of the Communist Party, I want to draw your attention to matters of special interest to all who live in the borough of Poplar.[...] In the West End you can see fur coats priced at 200 guineas, cars costing £2000 and hotels where a square meal for two sets you back a fiver.[...]
>
> This is evidence of London's wealth but it seems to us that it is wealth that is in the wrong place. The fur coat was probably made in the East End. East End Dockers unloaded the furs. East End tailors brought them here.[...] Here in the East End we have the Means Test, overcrowding and sweated labour. Many of us have only 4s. a head for food when the rest of our tumble-down, bug-ridden rooms have been paid for.[...] I want to remind East London workers of the two Londons - east and west - one of the rich and idle, the other of the poor and

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[17] This, surely, is a refutation of Terry Eagleton's, Robert Sullivan's and E. P. Thompson's views on Caudwell's insularity. Thompson says of Caudwell that 'He appears to have had few friends and to have developed his thought in isolation.' E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register*. (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin Press. 1977. p. 228. Sullivan's view was that his main contribution to Party meetings was, generally, to put away the chairs and sweep the floor after the meeting had finished. *Christopher Caudwell*. London: Croom Helm. 1987. Although, no doubt, Caudwell, being a good Party comrade would do such supposedly insignificant tasks this, of course, was not his sole contribution to the movement. Further, had Caudwell been the 'studious recluse' he was purported to be, it is doubtful that he would have made the ultimate sacrifice in Spain.

> laborious - because next month there is a trial of strength between us. In the March municipal elections, the rich reactionaries hope to turn out our representatives on the L.C.C.[18](15)

Whatever else Caudwell was, he most definitely was not a studious, reclusive book-worm.

As to Caudwell's unorthodox leanings in psychology, psychoanalysis and the arts, along with his (to some) questionable style, E. P. Thompson comments: '[t]his is not the style of 'a Marxist', in the conventions sanctioned as 'correct' in Communist publications of 1946-56 (but very much less in the Thirties): it is Caudwell's own style. He has thrown away the crutches of authorised texts, and is walking on his own. Everything that he writes is thought through afresh and is expressed in his own way.'[Thompson's quotation, parenthesis.](16) We shall see throughout this thesis that Thompson's observation is more or less accurate; Caudwell was, indeed, very much 'his own man' where it came to textual analysis, critical sources and observations, etc. This, however, I do not consider to be a fault but something that strengthens, rather than weakens, his Marxist perspective. Others thought otherwise as we shall see in chapter 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'.

Isaiah Berlin's observations on Leo Tolstoy might be applicable to Caudwell.(17) Berlin, quoting the Archaic Greek poet, Archilochus, says that many of the great writers and thinkers of the world were either Foxes, in that they knew many things, or Hedgehogs, in that they knew one big thing. Berlin himself says the notion is over-simplistic and shouldn't be taken too far; but neither should it be dismissed. He says, for example, that, Plato, Nietzsche and Hegel are hedgehogs, while Shakespeare, Aristotle and Joyce are foxes. What of Caudwell? Although he may be seen, from his numerous forays into psychology, literature, physics, politics and poetry, to be a fox, I

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[18] London County Council.

would argue that he is, in fact, a hedgehog. As we shall see, all these strands and themes were to be tied into one great, unified and *unifying* theory; a Marxist-Materialist-Historical analysis of the human condition.

Caudwell, as we have seen above, was quite clear about his aims in this matter and of the underlying foundation for his thesis:

> The essential feature of society is economic production. Man, the individual, cannot do what he wants alone. He is unfree alone. Therefore he attains freedom by co-operation with his fellows. Science, by which he becomes conscious of outer reality is social. Art, by which he becomes conscious of his feelings, is social. Economic production, by which he makes outer reality conform to his feeling, is social, and generates in its interstices science and art. It is economic production that gives man freedom. It is because of economic production that man is free, and beasts are not.(18)

But what brought Caudwell to this conclusion? Marxists are not born but made. What made him thus? Some account should be taken of the times in which Caudwell lived. Born in 1907, he was probably too young to remember the First World War[19] in any great detail apart from its closing years, but he grew up with people who did and who had fought in that conflict. It was a period - for these younger men - of economic and political insecurity, one, Valentine Cunningham comments, that was:

> [c]ontrolled by memories, fantasies, the language of the War,[20] the '30s is commanded obsessively by

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[19] David N. Margolies and Jean Duparc note that Caudwell's uncle was killed in 1916. *Scenes and Actions: Unpublished Writings.* (Editors.): David N. Margolies, Jean Duparc. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1986. p. 3.

[20] An intriguing omission in Caudwell's criticism of poetry is his complete disregard of the War Poets such

> violence - its images, its tone its horrors, its pleasures - that one wants to keep tracing back to the First World War. Or at least to the syndrome of pain and savagery within modernism's extended theatricals of cruelty of which the First World War is a central act.(19)

Cunningham's view is particularly apt when considered in relation to Christopher Caudwell's life and works. This was the period of the Bolshevik Revolution's consolidation and stabilisation under J. V. Stalin's leadership after Lenin's death in 1924. It was also the era which saw the rise of fascism in Italy, nazism in Germany and quasi-fascistic governments in other parts of Europe such as Spain, Hungary, Romania and, of course, farther afield in South America and Asia. As Cunningham says of the socio-psychological malaise that seemed to grip much of the world at the time: '[a]bove all, as the First World War and its *attendant revolutionary upheavals* had schooled the world to expect, Death would come with *violence.*'(20)[Emphases added, Cunningham's capitalisation.] This violence, real or imagined, seems very much to have permeated the 1920s and 1930s to the point where W. H. Auden could write of 'the conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder'[21] in the poem *Spain.*(21) This period of

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as Gurney, Brooke, Sassoon and Owen, (Apart from Brooke being dismissively bracketed along with the 'Georgian Poets' in *Illusion and Reality.* p. 126. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977.) although a good deal of his early poetry shows their influence. For example:

> Returns the day; and I return
> My mind looks back anxious for truth,
> And reminiscently to burn
> With the raw suffering of its youth.

Christopher Caudwell. *November the Eleventh. Collected Poems.* Lines. 1-4 p. 40. Manchester: Carcanet. 1986. See, also, Christopher Caudwell. *Collected Poems.* Manchester: Carcanet. 1986. *Passim.* See, further, Alan Young's comments in the next chapter, 2, 'Caudwell, Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic', p. 34.

[21] The reference to murder was subsequently withdrawn by Auden after George Orwell, who had fought in Spain with the POUM, strenuously objected to it. 'To me murder is something to be avoided. Mr Auden's brand of amoralism is only possible if you are the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled.' Quoted in *Writers of the Thirties.* Valentine Cunningham. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988. p. 423. It should be noted that while Auden went to Spain, unlike Orwell, Caudwell, Fox, Cornford, and others, he, like Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice, went as a non-combatant.

uncertainty, of violence, revolution and counter-revolution formed the backdrop for Caudwell's early life, his formative years. As Neal Wood has pointed out, though, Socialism and Communism had more appeal to young intellectuals brought up in a liberal, reasoning environment, while Fascism promises '[n]othing but more nihilism and greater activism until the world is consumed by hell fire.'(22) By comparison to this negativism and commitment to a brutal and brutalising reaction, Communism promises - theoretically at least - a rational, morally progressive and scientific[22] future, a future that would appeal to intelligent young men of the calibre of Caudwell, as he had renounced his Roman Catholicism and may well have been looking for a new way forward, a secular rather than a theological Millennium, so to speak. Not only had he renounced spiritual hell fire,[23] but the 'worldly hell fire' of fascism. When one considers that fascism, to a greater or lesser degree, relies upon mysticism, the hero-cult and, particularly in countries such as Spain, the support of the established Church it is no great surprise to find that with the rejection of capitalist values goes the rejection of religion. Such was the case with Caudwell. Edgell Rickword said of Caudwell and many of his generation that: '[t]he philosopher, the lover of knowledge, could not but turn

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[22] David M. Walker enters the debate as to whether Marxism is scientific or not with his work, *Marx, Methodology and Science*. Aldershot: Ashgate. 2001. Understandably, he fights shy of declaring whether it actually is or not, but he says of Marxism that the methodology in itself is, essentially, scientific and that the claims by Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and others, are not unfounded. Caudwell, as we shall see throughout this thesis, is in no doubt of the scientific credentials of Marxism and Leninism.

[23] Consider the first verse of Caudwell's poem *The Kingdom of Heaven*, hardly the sentiments of a man in religious rapture. A good number of his later poems are in the same anti-religious, militantly materialist vein:

> I walked down a long, tiled corridor
> There were notices on the walls.
> WHITE TIES PLEASE. NO NIGGERS. PLAY THE GAME.
> DO NOT SPIT.
> [Caudwell's capitals.]

Christopher Caudwell. *Collected Poems*. Lines. 1-4. p. 86. Manchester: Carcanet. 1986.

soldier in a struggle in which the forces of enlightenment and of obscurantism were so starkly opposed.'(23) It is against this backdrop that we must view Caudwell's politics.

ii - The Marxist Awakening of Christopher Caudwell

'[C]ommunism was my waking time.'(24)

Although these words were written by John Cornford in Spain not long before his death in 1936, they are as readily applicable to Caudwell. According to Robert Sullivan, Caudwell (Christopher St. John Sprigg) became interested in Marxism[24] in 1934.(25) Caudwell, at the time was writing pot-boiler detective novels to earn a living.[25] He later came to criticise this whole *genre* and the people who wrote them including, no doubt, himself.[26] Rather in the manner in which he wrote to his elder brother Theodore,[27] he

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[24] The influence of Engels and Lenin, in particular, upon his writings are considerable. Engels' *Anti-Dühring* and *The Origins of the family Private Property and the State*, along with *Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* are works that form part of the central core to his works. Lenin, especially, is highly influential in the area of physics and the philosophy of positivism.

[25] Interestingly, Caudwell, unlike most writers, used his real name, Christopher St. John Sprigg, when publishing his more 'frivolous' books, while using his pseudonym (from his mother's maiden name) for the serious, scholarly works such as *Illusion and Reality*, *Studies* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* and *The Crisis in Physics*. Caudwell, when writing to Paul and Elizabeth Beard in December 1936, prior to his departure to join the International Brigades, said that 'there is always a possibility that I may not come back from Spain' and he said of his manuscripts that the plays and novels were: '[a]ll completely worthless.' Caudwell Archives, Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA. We should note Maynard Solomon's opinion of Caudwell's name change. He sees it - along with the pseudonyms of other Marxists such as Lenin and Stalin - as a '[f]light from the father'. Solomon, Maynard. (Editor.): *Marxism and Art*. Brighton: Harvester Press. 1979. P. 316. *n*34. This Freudian aspect of Sprigg/Caudwell's life is questionable but, even if true, it is also certainly true that Caudwell had completely broken from the Freudian by the end of his short life.

[26] Compare this attitude to that of György Lukács who, when writing in the midst of the Cold War in the early 1950s says of American culture in relation to that of the French that '[T]he progressive French literature must, to survive, in spite of the mass distribution of horror, detective and digest stories, safeguard itself through a mass movement. While American Cold War propaganda professes to rescue true European culture from the 'totalitarianism of the East', true European culture is fighting an all-out battle against the agencies of the 'American Century.'' [Lukács's quotations.] *The Destruction of Reason*. London: Merlin. 1980. p. 825. There is little doubt that had Caudwell lived he would have been in full agreement with Lukács

wrote to Paul and Elizabeth Beard from Cornwall, September 1935 commenting upon the early draft of *Illusion and Reality*:

> I am gradually becoming an inhabitant of Porthleven, and getting through a certain amount of work. I shall stay on here until mid-October if I don't perish from alcoholic poisoning before then. Wrote a book last fortnight, but have not revised it yet - a pot boiler.[...]
> Personally I think 'Illusion and Reality' is good.(26)

Caudwell's wry, ironic comment on the 'pot boiler' should not be lost upon the reader of any of Caudwell's serious works. *Illusion and Reality, Studies, Further Studies* and *Romance and Realism* are anything but pot-boilers.

In Caudwell's writings there is very little direct political commentary; that is lengthy quotations from Marx and Lenin, agitprop and shrill polemics against the enemy, be that enemy Trotskyites, fascists or the bourgeoisie. Caudwell, of course, is vehemently anti-fascist, but his view comes across more as a well-ordered critique of the very real problem of fascism rather than shrill rhetoric culled directly from the latest pronouncement of the Third International. However, Caudwell did not exclude himself from physical confrontation with fascism. In a letter to his brother dated the 9th of June, 1936, he tells of his experiences at the hands of both the fascists *and* the police.

> I am still sizzling with indignation from my experience on Sunday when I went to listen to Moseley in our local park (Victoria Park), was attacked by about twenty Blackshirts, picked up from the field of battle more or less woozy, arrested by the police who picked me up, beaten up again in

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on this matter. It is worth noting, also, the similarity of the American 'defence of culture against the Eastern totalitarians' to the Nazis' 'Crusade against Bolshevism.'

[27] See above (14)

> the police van, and charged at Old Street with assaulting the police. This last is particularly rich, I think.
> [Parenthesis, underlining, etc. Caudwell's.](27)

We should never make the mistake that Caudwell was 'uninvolved' in the wider affairs of the world be they political, cultural or economic.

On the whole, then, Caudwell's politics are far more considered and thoughtful than those of many of his contemporaries and this may be one of the reasons why his works have shown far greater resilience. The only quotations of any length are from *The Communist Manifesto*[28](28) the section where Marx and Engels analyse the rôle of the bourgeoisie in revolutionising production, and from Karl Marx's *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*, in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* on the question of religion.(29) Aside from this there is very little 'direct Marxism' in Caudwell's works. His critiques of Trotskyism and Anarchism are lucid enough, however. Of Anarchists he says of them that a good part of modern art is based on anarchism, i.e., surrealism where the artist turns away from the external world, as does the anarchist politically into the internal world of subjectivism, putting the illusion *above* the reality.(30) As we shall see in this thesis, Caudwell is quite clear that positivism is, in a good part, to blame for this state of affairs. It is hardly surprising that Caudwell held such views, considering the political milieu in which he moved. It was very heavily influenced by Joseph Stalin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Third International. Both Trotskyism and anarchism were anathema to them, and also to Caudwell, though as noted above he is far less strident than many of his contemporaries, such as R. P. Dutt, John Cornford and even, to a lesser extent, Ralph Fox. This thesis is not the place to go into the often bitter rivalry between Marxists of the Leninist and Stalinist persuasion and those of

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[28] 'The bourgeoisie has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations...' etc. *Selected Writings*. (Editor:) David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 223.

Trotskyism, save that each faction saw their opponents as treacherous distorters of the True Principles of the Movement. Given this mutual animosity between the Trotskyites and the adherents of the Third International is it any wonder that Caudwell viewed Trotsky, Kamanev and Zinoviev as traitors?[29](31) However, it was not merely political influence and affiliation that drove Caudwell on. He was intensely concerned with the rôle of human consciousness in art. Eight years after Caudwell's death, Jean-Paul Sartre said at the *Club Maintainent* in Paris that '[W]e never speak of art as irresponsible.'(32) Who the 'we' actually are isn't made clear by Sartre: whether it is the people assembled at the lecture, the existentialists, or the Marxists. If he did mean Marxists then he was, for all his great erudition, incorrect because Caudwell, and others, very often saw certain forms of art as irresponsible if not downright dangerous. As a Marxist he would have to for if art is the product of a given class and that class is decadent and degenerating, in this case the imperialist bourgeoisie, then its art will, too, be degenerate and decadent. Sartre was obviously in an existentialist, not Marxist, frame of mind when he made these rather high-handed and unwarranted comments.

David N. Margolies has noted the influence that Bukharin's speech 'Poetry, Poetics, and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR' had upon Caudwell.[30](33) The speech, made at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, is full of fire and optimism, not only from Bukharin, but the other speakers including Zhdanov and Gorky. Bukharin said:

> Without such an analysis,[31] literary criticism at the present time is not of full value. In the days when we

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[29] G. E. Zinoviev, L. B. Kamanyev, G. E. Evdokimov, amongst others were sentenced to death for treason and sabotage in Moscow on 23rd of August 1936. L. D. Trotsky and his son, L. L. Sedov (Trotsky), were ordered to be placed under arrest and put on trial if found on Soviet territory. From: *Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre. August 1936.* Moscow: People's Commissariat of Justice of the USSR. 1936. p. 179-180. Also worth considering in this particular field is *The Great Conspiracy* by Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn. London: Red Star Press. 1975.

[30] See the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977.

[31] Socio-economic and socio-political.

> were vanquishing bourgeois society, our criticism was a battering ram which smashed the enemy. We picked out the main thing the sharpest point, *viz.*, the socio-political factor, and this, in our hands, was a shaft which we shot against the bourgeois antagonist.(34)

Caudwell himself attempted to 'shoot shafts at the bourgeois antagonist' *via* his theoretical works and one can see the same burning enthusiasm in his works as one sees in the speakers at the Congress where Zhdanov opened the proceedings by giving '[f]laming Bolshevik Greetings' to the delegates,(35) and further when Bukharin demanded 'Culture, culture and yet again culture.'(36)

We shall see throughout this thesis that Caudwell was never the isolated, parochial figure that some[32] make him out to be, and it should be noted that he has been compared very favourably to the Hungarian Marxist György Lukács. Béla Kiralyfalvi said of the latter:

> Without abandoning his theory that both science and art reflect the same objective reality (for man is part of objective reality) Lukács concludes that science is mankind's awareness while *art is mankind's self-awareness.*
> [Kiralyfalvi's parentheses, emphasis.](37)

If we consider Caudwell's views, written less than twenty years earlier, on this subject we can see that the Caudwell-Lukács comparison is fully justified.

> [b]ut if my social ego conflicts with my consciousness in life, I can actively and really change myself. I can want different things - satisfy

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[32] Terry Eagleton is probably the most notorious proponent of this highly inaccurate view. See thesis chapter 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'. Section 'iv'.

> my instincts in other ways open to me in existing life
> - *by art works* for example.[Emphasis added.](38)

In 1920 Lukács stressed not only the need for an economic transformation of the proletariat concerning their outward, objective manifestations as a class, but their subjective, internal manifestations as well, which is definitely a Caudwellian thesis, in that he stresses the internal, subjective needs of the proletariat, which both he and Caudwell saw as essential.(39) This, of course, is the early Humanist-Marxist Lukács, written about the time of Béla Kun's short-lived Hungarian Soviet Government and his style and attitude is similar to Caudwell's, granted at a later date, but written in another period of social and political upheaval, the 1930s. When Lukács writes: '[T]hus we must never overlook the distance that separates the consciousness of the most revolutionary worker, from the authentic class consciousness of the proletariat',(40) he is presaging Caudwell's 'collective address' of the proletariat to fellow travellers and vacillators such as W. H. Auden and C. Day Lewis in the ranks of the revolutionary movement.(41) However, there are areas in which Caudwell and Lukács are not particularly in harmony, especially on the question of European art and aesthetics. József Szili in 1989 said:

> Caudwell's central idea,[33] that art is not a collection of things but a *process*, is decisive in this respect. Owing to this, Caudwell's philosophy of art is far less European-centred than that of György Lukács.[34] [Emphasis Szili's.](42)

Caudwell, by contrast to Lukács, does make reference to Chinese, Indian, South American, African and of course Australian Aboriginal culture in his works. True,

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[33] Caudwell's attempt to formulate a universal system of art analysis based on dialectical and historical materialism is explored throughout this thesis.

[34] Lukács's *Integrated Civilisations*: *The Lukács Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1995, while insightful, dwells almost exclusively upon the contributions made by Greek culture to the world.

Caudwell's works still focus mainly upon European, Egyptian and other Middle Eastern civilisations, but his recognition of the value in less technically-developed cultures gives, I feel, a wider scope to his work than that of other Marxist critics, in this case Lukács. Essentially we will see Caudwell as a committed Marxist-Leninist, but with some early Freudian influences and (occasionally) a very rare streak of ultra-Leftism at times, although, thankfully, this last trait is very rarely in evidence. The most important aspect of the Caudwellian critique is that he was a great synthesiser of the various strands of human society, scientific, social and aesthetic. Of this last David N. Margolies has said that he was the first to attempt a fully Marxist analysis of literature and that this was due to Caudwell being a '[b]etter materialist and a better dialectician than the other members of his generation.'(43) I agree with this, but I must also agree with Helena Sheehan who says that this analysis, while appreciative, does not focus on the main thrust of Caudwell's work, that is his *Weltanschauung*,(44) and that his interest in literature was auxiliary to this. Caudwell himself, when writing to his friends, the Beards, said: 'I'm afraid I've been writing nonsense. Seriously, I think my weakness has been the lack of an integrated *Weltanschauung*, I mean one that includes my emotional, scientific and artistic needs.'(45) This 'lack' so noted by Caudwell was rectified in both *Studies* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*.[35] Of course he had failings and many of these were realised by Caudwell himself, but his failings were the failings of a real man in a real time, and these last qualities make him the stronger for it.

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[35] In his wholehearted rejection of Freudian thought of which there are still some elements in *Illusion and Reality*.

Chapter End Notes

1. John Strachey. *Introduction* to: Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. xvi.

2. E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin Press. 1977. p. 235.

3. H. A. Mason. 'The Illusion of Cogency': *Scrutiny.* Cambridge: Deighton and Bell. 1938. p. 429.

4. Neal Wood. *Communism and British Intellectuals.* London: Gollancz. 1959. p. 109.

5. Samuel Hynes. *The Auden Generation.* London: Bodley Head. 1976. p. 257.

6. Peter Fuller. *Beyond the Crisis in Art.* London: Writers and Readers Co-operative, Ltd. 1980. p. 32.

7. Edgell Rickword. *Preface* to: Christopher Caudwell. *Further Studies in a Dying Culture.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1949. p. 11.

8. J. B. S. Haldane. 'Marxism and Science'. *The Labour Monthly. Part 2 (8)09:* London. 1939. p. 508.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. xix.

14. Christopher Caudwell. *Letter to Theodore Sprigg. September, 1935.* Caudwell Archives. Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA.

15. Christopher St. John Sprigg. *Address to Meeting at Poplar, February 1936.* Caudwell Archives. Box 1, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA.

16. E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin Press. 1977. p. 237.

17. Isaiah Berlin. *The Hedgehog and the Fox.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 1953. p. 2.

18. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'Liberty'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. pp. 211-212.

19. Valentine Cunningham. *British Writers of the Thirties.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988. pp. 55-56.

20. Ibid. p. 57.

21. W. H. Auden. *Selected Poems.* (Editor.): Edward Mendelson. London: Faber and Faber. 1979. p. 54.

22. Neal Wood. *Communism and British Intellectuals.* London: Gollancz. 1959. p. 111.

23. Edgell Rickword. *Preface* to: *Further Studies in a Dying Culture.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1949. p.7.

24. John Cornford. *Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesca.* Line. 36. *Understand the Weapon, Understand the Wound.* London: Carcanet. 1976. p. 39.

25. Robert Sullivan. *Christopher Caudwell.* London: Croom Helm. 1987. p. 33.

26. Christopher Caudwell. *Letter to Paul and Elizabeth Beard. September, 1936.* Caudwell Archives. Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA.

27. Ibid.

28. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. pp. 66-67.

29. Christopher Caudwell. *Further Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'The Breath of Discontent'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1949. pp. 13-17.(In full on pp. 75-76.)

30. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 127. *ff.*

31. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 319.

32. Jean-Paul Sartre. (Transl.): Philip Mairet. *Existentialism and Humanism.* London: Methuen. 1973. p. 49.

33. David N. Margolies. *The Function of Literature.* New York, N. Y.: International Publishers. 1969. p. 86.

34. N. Bukharin. 'Poetry, Poetics, and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR'. *Problems of Soviet Literature. Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress.* Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. p. 210.

35. A. A. Zhdanov. 'Soviet Literature - The Richest in Ideas. The Most Advanced Literature'. Ibid. p. 15.

36. N. Bukharin. 'Poetry, Poetics, and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR'. Ibid. p. 257.

37. Béla Kiralyfalvi. *The Aesthetics of György Lukács.* pp. 36-37. [Quotations are from *Á Mufevészet Mint Felepitmény - Art as Superstructure.*] Budapest: Special Publication by Hungarian Ministry of Culture. 1955.

38. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 261.

39. György Lukács. *Class Consciousness: A György Lukács Reader.* London: Blackwell. 1995. p. 242.

40. Ibid. p. 243.

41. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. *op. cit.*

42. József Szili. 'Caudwell and European Thought'. *Paper Delivered at Goldsmith's College London. Christopher Caudwell: Marxism and Culture.* David N., Margolies, Linden Peach. (Editors): London: Goldsmith's College. 1989. p. 48.

43. David N. Margolies. *The Function of Literature.* New York, N. Y.: International Publishers. 1969. p. 124.

44. Helena Sheehan. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science.* Humanities Press. New Jersey, N. J.: 1993. p. 381.

45. Christopher Caudwell. *Letter to Paul and Elizabeth Beard. September, 1936.* Caudwell Archives. Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA.

2: Caudwell, Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic

Here I will attempt to analyse Caudwell's theories of poetry. In the first part I will review the economic, socio-political and psychological aspects of his theories; in the second I will deal with the technical characteristics of Caudwellian poetic analysis, although this will be of much shorter length as Caudwell paid far more attention to the economic foundation of poetry than to its technical aspects. It should also be noted that while this chapter deals mainly (though not exclusively) with *Illusion and Reality* I find myself in agreement with E. P. Thompson's view that this is by no means Caudwell's major work(1) and that his other analyses found in *Romance and Realism, Studies* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* are far better ordered and more apposite to the Caudwellian thesis.[1] That said, most of his work on poetry is found in *Illusion and Reality.*

[1] As Samuel Hynes says when discussing Caudwell's view that H. G. Wells had no world-view, 'He intended his *Studies* to compose such a world view, the "whole inheritance of human knowledge" worked over by one Marxist consciousness.' [Hynes' quotation.] *Introduction* to: *Romance and Realism*. Princeton, N. J..: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 14.

PART ONE

i - Poetry and the Economic Hypostasis (Clotted Sweat)

> As regards to this study of poetry, we reject from the outset any limitation to purely aesthetic categories. If anyone wishes to remain entirely in the province of aesthetics, then he should remain either a creator or an appreciator of art works. Only in this limited field is aesthetics "pure".[Caudwell's quotation.](2)

We should not make the mistake of considering aesthetics central to Caudwell's thesis; as noted in the 'Introduction', his literary studies were based around the central theme of the *Weltanschauung*. However, poetry for Caudwell was the *acme* of literature, for all else followed on from it, not only in the anthropological sense, it being the earliest organised body of intellectual work in human culture, civilised and, for that matter, pre-civilised. In Caudwell's own words, 'Poetry is clotted social history, the emotional sweat of man's struggle with nature.'(3) Is it possible to argue that Caudwell was attempting to construct a full-scale Marxist aesthetic? Francis Mulhern and David N. Margolies would have us believe so,[2] even though, Margolies maintains, Caudwell did not go far enough.(4) Mulhern notes the 'two poles of language' of Caudwell's thesis, i.e. Science and Art,(5) that is, a binary opposition between the two disciplines. But, Mulhern says, this is impossible, and that such a notion would be at the expense of social reality.(6) Caudwell himself says of the nature of poetry and mathematics that:

> [s]omething was born which music, poetry, science and mathematics in one which would with time fly apart and generate all the dynamism of language and

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[2] So, too, would W. H. Auden. '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.' 'Illusion and Reality'. *New Verse*: London: May. 1937. p. 20.

> phantasy[sic] between the poles of music and mathematics, as the economical operation which was its basis also developed.(7)

Is this a vindication of Mulhern's views? At first glance it would seem to be so, but we should consider, very carefully, the general thrust of Caudwell's works, in this case his studies of poetry. It is, plainly, the study of the fissuring within human society - its essential *bipolarity* - ever since classes came into being. Mulhern's critique - that this view will be to the detriment of social reality - is, in my view, reversing the analyses of Caudwell who is saying that this bipolarity is precisely *why* we have this idealistic schism, this useless duality, amongst the arts and sciences. Mulhern's view is that any aesthetic that Caudwell might have attempted to construct will be fatally flawed, though I must strenuously repeat that Caudwell's intention seems *not* have been to construct a full-fledged Marxist aesthetic, although of course aesthetics play no small part in his various analyses. Douglas Garman, as early as 1937, says: 'Clearly, then, this book,[3] is not just another essay in aesthetic appreciation. It is an attempt to give a scientific account of the origins of poetry, to trace its gradual modification and then to state the problems it must solve if it is to survive.'(8)

On the question of aesthetics, Caudwell makes the observation that

> [T]he primitive does not see seas, but the river Oceanus; he does not see mammals but edible beasts, he does not see, in the night sky, blazing worlds in the limitless void but a roof inlaid with patines of bright gold. Hence all natural things are artificial.(9)

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[3] *Illusion and Reality.*

Caudwell asks, 'Therefore can we make no distinction between nature and art?'(9) His answer? 'On the contrary, we can clearly distinguish the two opposites although we must recognise their interpenetration.'(11) Caudwell sees beauty not as an unchanging thing in itself but as a dialectic process. Mulhern notes that Caudwell's ''expressive totality' finds its expressive metaphor: 'Elizabethan insurgence, the voice of primitive accumulation, thus turns into its opposite, Augustan propriety, the voice of manufacture.''[4][Mulhern's quotations.](11) However, Mulhern's view is, essentially, dismissive of this notion and by placing the onus upon 'economic categories' Caudwell's theory is under a serious empirical strain.(12) We shall analyse this in due course, but doing so we should consider Caudwell's 'table' in the development of poetry[5] from the *Era of Primitive Accumulation* through to the *Final Capitalist Collapse* of his, and, it must be said, our own period.

As Mulhern has focused upon the Augustan Era we should consider Caudwell's views on the subject. It was, relatively, a period of political, military and economic stability (However see below on the South Sea Bubble). Even the Wars of the Spanish Succession did not produce the upheavals comparable to the French Revolution and Bonapartist Expansionism a century later. Caudwell's views on the Augustan Age are clear. He calls it *The Era of Mercantilism and Manufacture, 1688-1750.*(13) In his analysis of the Restoration Period, Caudwell says of poetry that it forgets its noble sentiments and becomes cynical, measured, rational.(14) Thus we have Dryden's *Prologue to Circe*:

> Were you but half so wise as you're severe
> Our youthful Poet should need not fear(15)

Which is, as Caudwell points out with regard to the poetic style of this period, cynical and conversational.(16) It is almost a nudge in the ribs, an aside from one worldly

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[4] Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 97.

[5] E. P. Thompson calls this table 'notorious' and considers it (along with the four chapters on the subject) to have '[b]een a source of embarrassment to Marxist critics.' 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin Press. 1977. p. 235.

confidant to another, steeped in the ways of society, especially when one considers Dryden's rôle as a turncoat after the Commonwealth and during the Restoration. The speed with which Dryden switched from writing *Heroic Stanzas Consecrated To The Memory Of Oliver Cromwell*, to *Astraea Redux, On The Happy Restoration Of His Majesty Charles II* is breathtaking in its bare-faced pragmatism, and also gives credence to the Caudwellian-Marxist argument that poetry is specific to the socio-economic system that produces it. Very generously, Caudwell says that:

> Dryden marks the end of the revolution and the beginning of transition. His religious and political coat-turning can be condemned only by those who suppose it was in his era easy to see which was the right God and party to serve.(17)

Which is as good an admonition as any against critical smugness with the benefit of hindsight. Caudwell assigns the style, the poetical and, indeed, other literary and artistic tastes of that and any other given period to its particular method of manufacture, economics, religious outlook etc. He applies the Marxist theory of the 'superstructure on the economic base' perhaps a little too harshly and didactically at times. He says in *Illusion and Reality*:

> *The Eighteenth Century - Pope.*
> The shortage of labour makes the bourgeois continue to ally himself with the agricultural capitalist (the Whig "aristocrat") in order to maintain the laws and restrictions which will keep down the price of labour and enable it to maintain the laws and restrictions which keep down the price of labour and enable it to develop through the stage of manufacture. Poetry reflects a belief in rightness and permanence of forms and restrictions, good taste and an upper class 'tone'. The outward 'rules' are now accepted, not as a compromise[6] but as obvious and rational ingredients of style. Poetry becomes Augustan, idealises style, measure, polish and the antithesis

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[6] See Caudwell's comments on Dryden above and also the relation between the economics of this era and Newtonian physics. Thesis chapter 10, 'The Philosophy of Reality' p. 320. (9)

> which restrains natural luxuriance. Vocabulary becomes formalised and elegantly fashionable. [Caudwell's parentheses, quotations, etc.](18)

However, it should not be thought that there is a 'clean break' in Caudwell's dating system. It is, admittedly, rather arbitrary and this might leave him open to the criticism of being Procrustean and over-schematic in his analyses, but it had to be done for the sake of order and systematisation. It should also be pointed out that Caudwell was not the originator of this method of historical analysis. It had already been attempted by the 19th Century German literary historian Hermann Klüger and while Caudwell gives no direct reference to him, Klüger's works on this subject are quoted in G. V. Plekhanov's *History of Materialism*, which is in the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*. It has to be said, however, that Caudwell's analyses are of far greater depth and sophistication than Klüger's brief, crude attempt.

For an example of a poet who might be regarded as 'transitional' between the Age of Mercantilism, to the Romantic Era, we should consider the works of Edward Young, his best-known poem being *Night Thoughts*. The diction is plainly Augustan, but the subject matter and tone is definitely moving towards a more Romantic and subjectively emotional disposition. For example:

> Another vintage? strain a flatter year
> Thro' loaded Vessels, and a laxer Tone?
> Crazy Machines to grind Earth's wasted Fruits!
> Ill-ground, and worse concocted; Load not Life!
> The *rational* foul kennels of Excess!
> [Young's spelling, emphasis, capitalisation, etc.](19)

This passage from *Night III*, written in 1742 is, when compared to the earlier Pope and Dryden, very much more Romantic (in the literary sense) in its subject matter and hyperbole, although the diction is still distinctly Augustan. But it can be suggested that Young's perspicacity let him see that there was something wrong with the system, although he was speaking entirely from an orthodox Christian perspective

unlike the later Romantics who were often Deists or outright atheists such as Shelley. The capitalist system was starting to show serious signs of strain by then, what with the ruinous collapse of the South Sea Bubble,[7] a little over twenty years before. Add to this the enclosure of the land, which was driving people out of the rural areas, away from cottage industry and labour-intensive agriculture and into the new expanding industrial cities.[8] The refined, worldly tone has gone and has been replaced by something more shrill, darker and far less polite, a dawning era of 'crazy machines'.[9]

To return to the Elizabethan and Jacobean Era, Caudwell traces a distinct change in the poetic diction, style and attitudes to the poet's recognition that the Court is a place of corruption and decadence. As a result the poet rejects the Court in disgust, either as Webster[10] did with his incisive observations upon the decadence of court life and the venality[11] of the law or in Shakespeare's retirement from London. Like Prospero in *The Tempest*, [1610] Shakespeare withdrew from court, though as Caudwell says this jaded, world-weary view was already foreshadowed in *King Lear*. [1608](20) It can be argued with some force that there is an abundance of corruption

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[7] See John Carswell's *The South Sea Bubble*. London: The Cresset Press. 1959. *Passim*. Carswell maintains that the financial collapse of the South Sea Bubble resulted in a subsequently over-cautionary attitude to new developments, both technical and economic, which lasted for some decades, only starting to ease about the mid-18th Century onwards.

[8] Carswell points out that in the first half of the 18th Century the annual death rate in London was 40 *per* thousand while in his time [1959] it was only 10 *per* thousand. The high death rate, he says, was due in part to the high consumption of gin, but this excessiveness is only symptomatic of, in Carswell's words, '[a] frustrated and demoralised urban population.' *The South Sea Bubble*. pp. 270-271.

[9] Caudwell says that it was only industrialisation and centuries of labour taming the wilderness that made it safe enough for the Romantics to go there an appreciate it and, at the same time, idealistically, reject the society that ensured their safety and income. *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p.106. This same 'taming of the wilderness' benefiting the British Romantic Movement can also be seen in Germany at the same time, in the works of Schiller, Hölderlin, Goethe, etc. In a similar vein to Caudwell Max Horkheimer says, of the dichotomy of the relation between the city and the 'wilderness', that: '[T]he city dweller is the individual *par excellence*. The great individualists who were critical of city life, such as Rousseau and Tolstoy, had their intellectual roots in urban traditions; Thoreau's escape to the woods was conceived by a student of the Greek Polis rather than by a peasant.' *Eclipse of Reason*. New York, NY.: Continuum. 1974. p. 131.

[10] 'Blank verse (Webster) portrays the decline of princeliness and loses its noble undertone.' [Caudwell's parenthesis.] *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 134. *Cf.* especially *The Duchess of Malfi*. 1612.

[11] A cogent argument might also be made for the works of Christopher Marlowe, especially *Doctor Faustus*, to be considered in this light.

and murder within the Courts and societies of Shakespeare's other, earlier plays: *Hamlet*,[12] *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *The Merchant of Venice*, spring readily to mind. True, but unlike *Lear* and *The Tempest*, the protagonists sought power, either to wrest it from a legitimate king, reclaim it from an illegitimate one, exact vengeance for a slight or acquire worldly goods. In the latter plays the theme is to turn *away* from power and reject it. In Prospero Caudwell sees a paradigm of Shakespeare. He writes: 'In *The Tempest* Prospero withdraws from corrupt court life to the peace of an island study[13] like a Herbert or a Milton,[14] Shakespeare did the same in life when he retired to Stratford on Avon.'(21) But, as Caudwell points out, he could not write there. His magic wand was a collective one, and he broke it by breaking with the connections at Court. Of a slightly later period, Caudwell says of Milton's poetry that:

> '[t]here is no precedent for Miltonic blank verse. It is entirely different from Elizabethan and has no affinity with the tortuous poetry of the metaphysicals. It is Latinist, sonorous, full of studied inversions. This does 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,[15] and to be Roman

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[12] Theodor W. Adorno says of Hamlet that he is '[t]he first wholly self-aware and despondently self-reflecting individual, experiencing his essence as something absolutely transitory.' *Metaphysics. Lecture Seventeen.* Oxford: Polity/Blackwell. 2000. p. 136.

[13] But a peace not realised until the very end of the play.

[14] This is untenable. Milton was not a studious recluse. For a good part of his life he was a Republican pamphleteer and political activist, narrowly escaping condemnation as a regicide at the Restoration of Charles II. Christopher Hill says of Milton that '[H]e is the greatest English revolutionary who is also a poet and the greatest English poet who is also a revolutionary.' *Milton and the English Revolution.* p. 4. London: Faber and Faber. 1977. For further on this subject see Barbara K. Lewalski who points out that '[His] political disappointments did not lead him, as is sometimes supposed, to retreat to a spiritual realm, a "paradise within." His epic [*Paradise Lost.* k. m.] is in fact a more daring political gesture than we often realise, even as it is also a poem for the ages by a prophet-poet who placed himself with, or above, Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso and the rest.'[Lewalski's quotation.] *John Milton: A Critical Biography.* Oxford: Blackwell's. 2000. p. 442.

[15] On the revolutionary nature of Milton's poetry Caudwell says: 'One does not have to be a Marxist to see in Milton's God the foolish, arbitrary Stuart and in Satan the noble and reasonable bourgeois revolutionary.' *Romance and Realism.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 48.

> and classical is to be republican and a contemner of new-fangled luxury. To be noble in style is to be petty bourgeois.(22)

Class-conscious revolutionaries such as Lenin have maintained quite openly that it is not merely a matter of reflection of the age, but of the *will* and the ability to change that very age itself, in the manner of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, particularly *Thesis XI*. 'The Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.'(23)

As Lenin very clearly puts it: 'Literature must become a component of organised, planned and integrated Party work.'(24) We must acknowledge that this view agrees with Caudwell's insistence on an alliance of the bourgeois ideologist or "craftsman" with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.(25) The 'craftsmen' here included W. H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, Spender, Isherwood, MacNeice, etc., who would, in an 'uneasy alliance' give, not leadership, but support and inspiration to the working classes in the coming final, revolutionary crisis. He says that the movement is more advanced in France than in Britain: '[w]ith Gide, Rolland, Malraux and Aragon wearing the uniform at which all once sneered. Here it has only begun.'(26) Here Caudwell is clearly under the influence of Bukharin's and Radek's[16] speeches in 1934 at the Soviet Writers' Congress, in regard to writers who had 'gone over' to the ranks of the proletariat.(27) Radek notes that:

> Literature is splitting up into open fascist literature and into literature which, while trying to defend bourgeois democracy, is unconsciously lapsing into fascism; and at the same time a number of bourgeois writers are opening coming over to our side. The last includes various groups; some who are coming to us

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Further, in the poem *Samson Agonistes*, we might see it as an example of the failed, blinded revolutionary, hounded as a regicide, his hopes dashed. As Caudwell says of the poem it is '[s]ad, sonorous, full of senatorial dignity.' p. 50. I would suggest that is very much how Milton might have seen himself in his last years, a fallen Parliamentary Samson amongst the Stuart Philistines.

16 'We must tell proletarian writers: "Masters of the language are coming over to you. Learn from them, so that you yourselves may soon become masters."' [Radek's quotation.] 'Fascism and Literature'. *Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress*. Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. p. 173.

> are halting ten paces off, but they are already ten
> miles from bourgeois fascist literature.(28)

For an example of poets who had actually done this we should take note of Bukharin's view of Alexander Blok and Valery Bryusov. Of the former he says of that '[w]e do not know how far Blok's work would have developed farther. It is clear he took the revolution *tragically*, but it is a big question whether this tragedy was revealed to him as an optimistic one.'[Bukharin's emphasis.](29) However, he reserves his full praise for Bryusov, once 'King of the Symbolists'.[Bukharin's quotation.] He acknowledges that Bryusov was crowned with the laurels and chrysanthemums of fame.(30) But, Bukharin asks, '[w]hy was it he, and no other who, at a time of devastating social crisis, broke away from his class and came over to the camp of the triumphant "rabble"?[Bukharin's quotation.](31) Bukharin explains this by saying that Bryusov had a profound intellect and was a colossus of culture.(32) And maintains that '[T]he poet's purely socialist glimpses of the future are scattered with a lavish hand over the pages of his works. His *Central Palace of Machines* is tremendous:'

> From gloom, from chasms of other ages,
> Like Titan rises from those scenes,
> Majestic in the unquivering æther
> The Central Palace of Machines.(33)

I agree with Bukharin; the condensed affects of this fragment are, indeed, tremendous and conjure up a world almost Keatsian in its Romantic intensity. It would seem that Caudwell's view that certain poets would, to a greater or lesser degree, break away from the bourgeois is justified and very much influenced by Bukharin's pronouncements at the *First Soviet Writers' Congress* in 1934 and so noted by Maynard Solomon in his work, *Marxism and Art*.(34)

ii. Caudwell the Poet

But what of Caudwell's own poetry? It is very much the poetry written by a man of his age and *of* his era.[17] *In Memoriam to T. E. Shaw*, shows that Caudwell, in spite of having his own rather surrealistic style,[18] was a very good mimic of the styles of others, in this case the Augustan.

> So Socrates facing his Martyr's death
> Might have proved dialectic wasted breath
> Or with some apt dilemma of a lyre
> Shown Phaedo's souls were transient as fire.(35)

Caudwell's verse show him to be a humorous and quick-witted poet. For example his Augustan epigram *On a Tory M. P.*

> This man so truly loved the populace
> He hardly ever let them see his face.(36)

Or *On a Wicked Man:*

> When P- at last to Hades came
> All gave a welcome shout
> He rushed in through the doors of flame
> The Devil staggered out.(37)

Brevity is, in the case of Caudwell's poetry, the soul of wit.

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[17] When writing to Paul and Elizabeth Beard in December 1936 before his departure for Spain, he said of his own poetry that there were '[p]arts worth publishing. All belong to my dishonest sentimental past.' *Letters.* The Caudwell Archive. Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA. I feel that Caudwell here is being more than a little unjust to himself but this is typical of his modest and self-effacing attitude.

[18] Consider Caudwell's poem *The Progress of Poetry.*

> I saw a Gardener with a watering can
> Sprinkling dejectedly the heads of men
> Buried up to their necks in the wet clay... etc.

Lines 1-3. *Collected Poems of Christopher Caudwell.* p. 126. Manchester: Carcanet. 1986.

Alan Young in his *Introduction* to Caudwell's *Collected Poems* notes that there is much of the autodidact evident in Caudwell's poetry and that it is clear that Caudwell shunned literary cliques. However, unlike other autodidacts - Thomas Hardy and Dylan Thomas - Caudwell never had the sort of education, which can be transmitted from a revered older person steeped in literature.(38) Again, we can recognise the autodidactical dimension to much of Caudwell's endeavours; however, Young, unlike others,[19] does not use this as a term of abuse. Young also notes the influences on Caudwell, including Hardy, Graves, Brooke and Owen; Shakespeare and Skelton but that no single writer '[m]odified his technique.'(39)

Young comments that:

> A longer formal education in literature might have produced greater consistency of style, but his intellectual restlessness would have resisted any concentration of that kind.(40)

I think this is a reasonably fair assessment: Caudwell's prodigious intellect was, indeed, relentless in its quest for the answers to the problem of the human condition. Further, Desmond Maxwell observes that Caudwell's poetry did not, generally, collapse into the strident rhetoric of the Third International.

> Marxism, as it impinged on Caudwell's consciousness, did not obstruct his poetry with idealised comrades, ranting calls to solidarity and action, diatribes against the horrors of capitalism. Gradually a point of view emerges, compatible with Marxism but not overtly announced.(41)

Once again, I am in agreement here, with the possible exception of Caudwell's *Heil Baldwin* which is, in my opinion, a disaster very much in the style of *Proletkult* and

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[19] H. A. Mason, Maurice Cornforth, J. D. Bernal, Terry Eagleton amongst others.

RAPP.[20] That said Caudwell's poetry has a refreshing humanism about it, very much, I would argue, like his other works, and remarkably free of tendentiousness.

To conclude this section, Caudwell said that poetry, relating it to the genotypical foundation for much of his work:

> [e]xpresses 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; it speaks of death, love, hope, sorrow and despair as all men experience them.(42)

iii - Psychoanalysis and Poetry

Caudwell's credentials as a critic and revolutionary have often been questioned. Caudwell was, by profession, a Marxist and a loyal, active member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. He gave his life in Spain fighting for the democratically-elected Republican government against Fascist insurgents; therefore his political qualifications can hardly be called to account. However, it has also been suggested that he wasn't a Marxist at all and that his analysis was profoundly Jungian.(43) There are no real grounds for this rather singular view which is dealt with in greater depth elsewhere in this thesis.[21] It must be noted that Caudwell did use such phraseology, that is, there is a common ground for 'all men' in their feelings, their hopes and fears and this is found - intuited - within the 'timeless genotype', terminology that roused the ire of the leading intellectuals of the CPGB in 1950-1951. He says:

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> [N]o apt Mons angels wait, with starry eyes
> To save you, captives, from your agonies
> Though many a tender vegetarian soul
> May drop a tear for you - still the heads roll... etc.

Christopher Caudwell. *Collected Poems*. Manchester: Carcanet Press. 1986. Lines. 99-116.

21 See chapters 4, 'Caudwell his Critics and the Caudwell Debate' and 7, 'The Necessity of the Dream'.

> Yet all art is subjective. All art is emotional and therefore concerned with the instincts whose adaptation to social life produces emotional consciousness. Hence art cannot escape its close relation with the genotype whose secret desires link in one endless series all human culture.(44)

By this we might see that poetry and art, therefore, are still based in the material world, that of the desires and needs of human beings.[22] Caudwell, of course, does not invoke the Holy Trinity, the Spirits or Brahma, even in an archetypal sense as a Jungian psychologist might, but he still has occasion to fall back upon such words as 'secret', 'endless', 'eternal', 'desires' etc. However, it can be argued that these are figures of speech. After all, Lenin uses the terms 'endless' and 'eternal' in relation to cognition in his *Philosophical Notebooks*(45) and we cannot seriously challenge Lenin's credentials as a Marxist. Caudwell, although some of his analyses could be considered to be a somewhat less than orthodox, holds that Jung is, essentially, wrong. He says of him (and Freud) with regard to their views on psychology:

> If we owe no vital part of our consciousness to our environment it is of no value to change it. 'New skies' said Horace, 'The exile finds but the same heart' - if we regard the categories of the present as final, and the present is full of despair and neurosis, of slumps and wars, we can never pass beyond them to a successful issue. At the best like a neurotic we can only return to a former successful solution at an infantile level - to feudalism, barbarian group-leadership, *unanisme*, Fascism. Indeed Jung invokes as our only salvation this very regression, appealing to the old barbarous mythologies to come

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[22] It would be a gross mistake to assume that because Marxism is based on dialectical and historical materialism it counts this the *sole* driving force in historical development. Friedrich Engels says that there is the '[f]atuous notion of the ideologists that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history we also deny them any *effect on history*. The basis of this is the common antidialectical conception of cause and effect as rigidly opposite poles, the total disregarding of interaction. These gentlemen often almost deliberately forget that once an historical element has been brought into the world by other, ultimately economic causes, it reacts, can react on its environment and even on the causes that have given rise to it.'[Engels' emphasis.] Letter to Franz Mehring. 14th July 1893. *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels*. p. 542. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House. 1955.

> to our aid. Freud at least has the courage to spurn this way of escape, and so, like a Roman stoic, in decaying classical civilisation he treads the die-hard path and drinks the cup of poison to its dregs.
>
> This conception, apparently refined, of the last fatal battle of the gods, is really barbarous and the first step in the path to Hindu resignation and vegetable sanctity.
>
> [Caudwell's quotations, italics.](46)

Caudwell's view is clear: no matter how Jungian or Freudian he might *seem* to be he is *Marxist* in his analyses. For if we accept the Marxist view then we *do* owe a vital part of our consciousness to our surroundings and, in the long run, if we want things to change we have to change them ourselves and not leave them in the hands of some mythical Fate, Ananke or Moira. Leaving aside the question of psychology, this point of view could just as easily be applied to poetry. If poetry is essentially an 'economic product' then the economic basis has to be the definitive, shaping force in any artistic endeavour. However, neither is it right to accept a crude analysis which holds that it is the 'only' force that dictates and shapes the art of any given era. Engels, writing to J. Bloch on the subject in September 1890, said:

> According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is *ultimately* production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx or I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase.[Engels' emphasis.](47)

Caudwell never fell into this particular mechanistic trap. He was confident that economics was the basis of all human society, but not its *sole* foundation, merely the primary. Of economic production he says that it is a question of interaction with nature that is in turn enriched by economic production, which in turn requires men to associate and work together, which *then* in turn requires a common perceptual world,

but that this world has to be changeable and, as he says, '[c]hangeable by their *actions*.'[Emphasis added.](48)

Although he is not actually referring to poetry in this particular passage I find it readily applicable as it requires the acknowledgement of a changing perceptual world. Which leaves us still with the quandary of 'the eternal', 'the secret', 'the timeless' etc. themes which feature so often in many of Caudwell's works. It must be pointed out that some found this quite unacceptable.

In 1950 Maurice Cornforth, setting in motion 'The Caudwell Controversy',[23] said of Caudwell that '[y]ou cannot use Marxism to "impose coherence on the mishmash." If you try that then "the mishmash" imposes "its incoherence on dialectical materialism."[Cornforth's quotations throughout this passage.](49) As we will see further in this thesis, Cornforth found what he (erroneously) saw as Caudwell's blend of Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism applied to poetry and other fields intolerable.(50) When Caudwell writes that:

> [p]oetry is internal - a bundle of "I" perspectives of the world taken from one point, the poet. The story is external - a bundle of perspectives of one "I" (the character) from different parts of the world. [Caudwell's quotations.](51)

He is revealing a great deal about how he sees not only the poet and poetry, but the society that produces it. He writes of Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne and Arnold that they are, we might say, symptomatic of the decay of bourgeois culture, that the poetry of the period was declining into 'commodity fetishism, art for art's sake,'(52) and that Alfred Tennyson's retreat into the idealised past of *Morte D'Arthur*(53) and, equally, Robert Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi*[24](54) are very much in the same

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[23] And dealt with in greater depth in thesis chapter 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'.
[24] Browning's pseudo-mediaeval diction is tortuous in this poem. It really is, as Caudwell has pointed out, a Victorian gentleman's poetic appraisal of a long-past era. For example:

> I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
> You need not clap your torches to my face.
> Zooks, what's to blame? You think you see a monk!

style as the pre-Raphaelite movement's refusal to look at the present and hence their focus on an unrealistic, idealised past.

There is, also, the proto-existentialist *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold:

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the World, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love nor light.(55)

Which is, I would suggest, a presage of the uncertain future that was to come in the early 20th century. We must mistrust the world; all we can rely upon is ourselves.[25] Caudwell says of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* which he describes (and I concur here) as one of the most pessimistic in the English language[26] that:

> [i]ts peculiar quality of elegiac despair is quite new to English poetry and is Hellenistic. The poem shows how rapidly the industrial petty bourgeois class has started to decay.(56)

The poem, throughout, is a depressing paean to the grief of bereavement, the death of Arthur Hallam. Maynard Solomon has identified a problem in this particular aspect of Caudwell's analysis.

> What, past midnight, and you go the rounds,
> And here you catch me at an alley's end
> Where sportive ladies leave the door ajar. etc.

Lines 1-6. *Men and Women and Other Poems.* (Editor).: J. W. Harper. London: J. M. Dent and Sons. 1984. p. 13.

[25] As with Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, we may here, in the following century, be able to discern a poem of the 'transitional' type, in this case one from a more to a less secure economic, social and military era as imperialism begins to disintegrate and thus the poetry will begin to become more involved with the 'I' in the manner of a neurotic.

[26] For Example:

> Dark House by which once more I stand
> Here in the long unlovely street
> Doors, where my heart was used to beat
> So quickly waiting for a hand.

In Memoriam. Lines 17-20. *The Penguin Book of English Verse.* (Editor): London: Penguin. 1978. p. 320.

> Caudwell's greatest weakness as a poetic theorist is precisely in his inability to deal with man as an individual. But class man does not write poetry: Shakespeare does; Donne does; Wordsworth does. It is he who withdraws into Caudwell's mock ego world in order to obtain rejuvenation, in order to dream, in order to gain energy and create models for the transformation of his own life and the lives of other human beings.(57)

Solomon, a resolute anti-Zhdanovite, seems to be accusing Caudwell of a form of Zhdanovianism here. True, Caudwell does seem, on occasion, to lose himself in the 'binary oppositions' of 'Man/Nature', 'Art/Science', 'Instincts[Or Genotype]/Society,[27] but it is also ironic that Caudwell fell foul of the CPGB for the very reason of his analyses relying up the 'genotype' and the 'inner energy of man',[28] and so on, the very thing Solomon upbraids Caudwell for playing down occasionally in his critique, most notably in *Romance and Realism.* There is then, perhaps, some truth in Solomon's view, but he is hardly dismissive of Caudwell and, although he sees Caudwell's works in Haldane's 'quarry of ideas' terms, he nevertheless sees him as giving rise to '[t]he most stunning insights.'(58)

Another important aspect of Caudwell's originality is his analysis of poetry in relation to dream. He says of dream that while it is blind and unconscious, an integral product of the body's oldest functions, poetry is not.

> Dreams ascend from the unconscious upwards and are therefore blind and uncreative. Poems descend from consciousness downwards and are therefore aware and creative.(59)

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[27] See E. P. Thompson's comments with regard to Francis Mulhern's analysis, this thesis chapter, 'Introduction'. (2) p. 2.
[28] See thesis chapter 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'.

Dream, for Caudwell, is a foundation of poetry. He maintains that dream[29] had a far greater sociological function in the past than it does in the modern era and, once again falling back upon the theory of the genotype, maintains that dream has a biological function in that it rids the non-specialised human body of specialised characteristics acquired throughout the day. For example, a human can ride a bike, drive a car, write a book, use a computer, etc. Insects, while they may do one or two things extremely well, do not have the capacity for anything beyond these functions as it is programmed in with the DNA. In humans, our less specialised bodies and minds have the capacity for a wider variation of abilities, but these are *learned* techniques which are purged through dreaming. Poetry, being conscious, has the greater social function but even this, in the modern era, has begun to lose its relevance, atrophy and decay, which he recognises as a fatal cleavage in society through class stratification and polarisation.

iv - The Dreamer of the Revolution

> We need not be surprised, therefore, that poetry is public and dream private, for consciousness is a social construction. The conscious psychic contents which the ego holds together are socially given contents.(60)

Because dream is instinctive and blind then, for Caudwell it can never fulfil the higher rôle that can be fulfilled by poetry; it is the *private* versus the *public*, the *instinctive* versus the *conscious*, and as such can only be subsidiary at best in relation to modern society. The poet revolts because he or she feels trapped in an intolerable system and can see no way out of it within that framework, so therefore the poet projects his or her desires into a private world of personal references. As Jean-Paul Sartre says of Baudelaire:

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[29] This is dealt with in greater detail in this thesis chapter 7, 'The Necessity of the Dream'.

> Baudelaire asserts his singularity against the background of a stable world. He asserted it first of all against his mother and stepfather in a mood of rage and revolt. It was in fact a revolt and not a revolutionary act. The revolutionary wants to change the world; he transcends it and moves towards an order of values which he himself invents. *The rebel is careful to preserve the abuses from which he suffers so that he can go on rebelling against them.* [Emphasis added.](61)

Caudwell's critique of poetry as 'economic product' can be seen quite clearly for, he says, as poetry decays and its social function wanes, then it becomes more dreamlike, more private and neurotic, pointlessly rebellious. This is the poetry of what Caudwell terms *The Epoch of Imperialism - 1900-1930.*

> [t]he poet revolts by extreme individualism, commodity fetishism and loss of control in social relations. The poem passes, by a series of stages, from the social world to the completely private world, This revolt against bourgeois conditions finally expresses in extreme purity the categories of bourgeois production. It thus negates itself in anarchy, and must necessarily move outside the bourgeois illusion.(62)

Once again we see the influence of Freud and Jung but, most importantly, Marx in this analysis. Key words such as 'commodity fetishism', 'bourgeois production' etc. are all indicative that here Caudwell has grounded his analysis primarily within the Marxist, historical and dialectical-materialist framework. The final collapse of bourgeois society in his own period brought forth the most self-obsessed poetry imaginable. For example:

> Captain busted Busby frowned hard at a passing ceiling and
> fixed his eye upon a pair of stationary taxis. Suddenly
> he went up to one of them and addressed himself
> to the driver. He discharged his socks and continued

> whistling. The taxi saluted but he put up with it, and
> Puckered a resigned mouth and knitted a pair of
> thoughtful eyebrows.(63)
> [Line order, punctuation and capitals - or lack of them
> - as in the original.]

Philip O'Connor's *Number 6* of *Poems*, written in 1937, the year Caudwell died in Spain, is Modernist *á la* Joycian 'stream of consciousness' in that it fails to have any real structure. It is full of absurd conceits, intensely personal and - to anyone but the poet - pointless observations. It isn't difficult to see why this sort of poetry alienated and, indeed, infuriated Marxists, not only Caudwell. They could see the world collapsing about them in flames. Not only was there a major capitalist crisis, there was the Spanish Civil War, the ominous expansion of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in Europe and Africa, the Japanese assault on China; all of them harbingers of the greater war to come. Poets, ideally, would, as Caudwell put it, be the singers of the revolution, though not the leaders. As Valentine Cunningham has said:

> Most Marxists preferred linguistic ordinariness. They held more or less conventional and commonsensical views of language, and so of texts, as being simply mirrors of reality.[30] The world was antecedent to, and more important than, the word, and words had better not stand too much in the light. (64)

That there was good political poetry during this period (allowing for the present writer's own personal tastes and preferences, of course) is nevertheless evident, a Marxist mirror-image of the surrealistic styles of O'Connor, Roger Roughton, Ruthven Todd, David Gascoyne, etc. who, to use Cunningham's words, 'let their words stand too much in the light.' The poems of Auden, Spender, Isherwood, C. Day Lewis and John Cornford are examples of the possibility of writing good, political poetry.[31] Cornford's Audenesque *Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of*

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[30] Caudwell was a notable exception to this, an exception that was, in part, the cause of his anathematising by the leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

[31] It should be pointed out that not every critic on the Left saw Auden in such a favourable light. We

Huesca; Auden's *Spain*, and Day Lewis's *Newsreel* with its ominous (and deeply Freudian) final verses:

> See the big guns, rising groping erected
> To plant death in your world's soft womb.
> Fire-buds, smoke-blossom, iron seed projected
> Are these exotics? They will grow nearer home:
>
> Grow nearer home - and out of the dream house stumbling
> One night into the strangling air and flung
> Rags of children and thunder of stone Niagaras tumbling
> You'll know you slept too long.(65)

People who lived in that period and watched on the newsreels the Nazi-Fascist bombing of Spain and the Japanese atrocities in China, never realising fully - although many suspected it - that their own world would soon be enveloped in the 'Niagaras of stone' of the Blitz.

It can be argued that the 'Left' and 'Republican' poetry of that period can easily stand up to the critique of style, format, content, etc. The surreal, being wholly private, has much less to offer as it is, perforce, dedicated to the individual poet's whims. Because of this it can never have the impact of the more overtly political poetry of the period.

The poetry of Caudwell, Cornford and Day Lewis will stand the Shelleyan 'legislative test' far better than the work of the surrealists, even though the poet can in no way be anything but a fellow traveller; an inspirer, rather than an actual law maker in the realm of politics.[32] Caudwell's argument was that the progressive poets such as those named above and others, would 'go over' in the coming crisis, as in the words of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*:

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should consider George Orwell's words in this regard when he said of Auden that he was '[a] sort of a gutless Kipling.' *The Road to Wigan Pier. The Complete Works of George Orwell. Vol. V.* London: Secker and Warburg. 1998. p. 170.

[32] 'In England, which boasts the greatest poet of the Christian world and more first-class writers than one could perhaps find in the literature of the rest of Europe taken together - in England the fate of the nation has never depended on literature but has been determined by religious, political and economic relations, parliamentary debates and newspaper polemics.' G. V. Plekhanov. *Selected Philosophical Works. Vol. V.* Moscow: Progress. 1980. p. 318.

> Finally in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, *that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class,* the class that holds the future in its hands. [Emphasis added.](66)

Caudwell, being himself from a middle-class, rather than an aristocratic or bourgeois background, probably never saw himself in such a light but the Audens, Cornfords, Spenders etc., *were* fair game for such a critique and many of them did 'cut themselves adrift' in various degrees. From the cerebral caution of Stephen Spender right up to and including the ultimate sacrifice made by Ralph Fox, Julian Bell and, of course, John Cornford. These bourgeois who had sided with the proletariat lived, to varying degrees, the life that their chosen political outlook demanded of them, even in their poems, though Cornford's poignant and powerful *Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesca* is a striking example of the Caudwellian thesis that 'poetry is internal - a bundle of "I" perspectives of the world taken from one point, the poet'. However, even in this (arguably) superior political poem that conjures up the fighting spirit of Spain, the solidarity of the proletariat and the ghastly wreckage of capitalist exploitation, we still feel Cornford's loneliness and fear in the eighth stanza:

> Though Communism was my waking time,
> Always before the lights of home
> Shone clear and steady and full in view -
> Here, if you fall, there's help for you -
> Now, with my Party, I stand quite alone.
> (67)

The cruel paradox of being 'with the Party' yet being 'quite alone' shows that these poets and writers and many others conquered their fears for what they believed in - and often died for that they saw as - to use one of Caudwell's most treasured words,

very often capitalised - Necessity. Caudwell was realistic enough as a critic to understand that, even after a revolution, there would be those who would be unwilling or unable to give their talents wholeheartedly to the revolutionary movement. '[T]he lives and work of Yessenin, Mayakovsky, Pilnyak and Yuri Olesha are examples of the conflict involved in this inability to recast creatively the categories of art after the Revolution.'(68) We can see, then, that these last-quoted artists are what Auden, Spender, Day Lewis etc., might have become after a successful British Revolution in the 1930s.[33] Certainly Lenin had an ambivalent attitude towards Mayakovsky. He wrote in 1919 that:

> Yesterday I happened to read in *Izvestia* a political poem by Mayakovsky. I am not an admirer of his poetical talent, although I admit that I am not a competent judge. But I have not for a long time read anything on politics and administration as I read this.[...] I am not sure about the poetry; but as to the politics I vouch for their absolute correctness.(69)

However in 1921, Lenin wrote M. N. Pokrovsky:

> Again and again, I request you to help us fight futurism, etc.
> 1) Lunacharsky has, (alas!) got through the collegium the printing of Mayakovsky's "150,000,000".
> Can we stop this? It must be stopped. Let's agree that these futurists are to be published not more than twice a year *and not more than 1,500 copies.*
> 2) They say that Lunacharsky has once again driven out Kiselis, who is reputed to be a "*realist*" artist, while directly and *indirectly* promoting a futurist.
> Could you find some reliable *anti*-futurists? [Lenin's quotations, parentheses, emphases, etc.](70)

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[33] See above for Bukharin's views of Valery Bryusov. *ff.* (29)

Caudwell saw positivism as a cause of surrealism and futurism as it was an *a*social phenomenon, shorn of any social content and critique and therefore subject only to the values of the individual observer.[34]

v. Reaction, fascism and the primordial

Of course, if we are to consider this problem in any depth, then we must also review the poets who, although they might not have gone down the road of surrealism, were avowedly anti-Marxist, retrograde, racist and anti-Semitic in their views and attitudes. Although this accusation can be - and often is - laid at the door of T. S. Eliot, and with some justification, the most notorious of these poets is, of course, Ezra Pound. His anti-Semitism is far cruder than that of Eliot as is his élitism and scatological lambasting of people.

He writes in *Canto XIV*:

> Io Venni in luogo d'ogni luce mutto;
> The stench of wet coal, politicians
> .....e and .....n, their wrists bound to
> Their ankles,
> Standing bare bum,
> Faces[sic] smeared on their rumps...
> [Pound's Italian, punctuation, etc.](71)

In 1945 after the fall of Mussolini he wrote:

> [t]he enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent
> Shoulders
> Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,
> Thus Ben and la Clara *a milano*
> By the Heels at Milano...
> [Pound's Italian, punctuation, capitalisation, etc.](72)

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[34] For further on this subject see thesis chapter 10, 'The Philosophy of Reality'; also Caudwell's *Studies in a Dying Culture*. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948 and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1949. *Passim*.

This was written in the U. S. Army prison compound at Pisa and is part of the group of his Cantos known, appropriately enough, as the *Pisan Cantos*. Pound's dream of being Virgil to Mussolini's Augustus had been shattered by what he termed, contemptuously, the 'Tovarisches', that is, people of a sceptical, materialist nature, although Pound coined the derogatory term after the Bolshevik Revolution.[35]

> These are the labours of tovarisch,
> That tovarisch wrecked the house of the tyrants,
> And rose, and talked folly on folly,
> And walked forth and lay on the earth
> And the Xarites bent over tovarisch.(73)

As Eugene Paul Nassar has said of the Tovarisch question in Pound '[a]rt can seem meaningless to the Tovarisch.'(74) But what *meaning* does Ezra Pound give to art? Perhaps only the 'meaning' of art for its own sake, which is something Caudwell and many others militated against. It might well be argued that Caudwell was one of Pound's 'Tovarisches' in that he was a Marxist, and a dialectical materialist, the complete opposite of Pound. The Tovarisches, both in the Soviet Union and the Allied West, defeated Nazism and Fascism and Pound, the Italian Lord Haw Haw, ended up in a prison stockade, narrowly escaping execution for treason. This is the poet who broadcast in 1942:

> If there is anyone capable of serious thought anywhere in range of this broadcast, let him at least try to think what I mean by the following statements. Let him start trying to study the two revolutions, the Fascist and Nazi revolutions.(75)

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[35] Tovarisch. Russian for 'Comrade'. Given Pound's implacable hatred of Communism it is an apt usage of the word from his standpoint.

Another thinker who, although he might not have used the word 'tovarisch' himself, would certainly have understood Pound's views is Martin Heidegger.[36] His notion of *Dasein*[37] - is tied in with a Romantic 'Primordiality' and it is notable that the Romantic Movement, after its first revolutionary flush had died away became, in many cases, conservative[38] in its outlook, and it is this conservative strain of thought that follows through to outright fascism a century later. Pierre Bourdieu makes the point that one of the reasons for Heidegger's enthusiasm for the poet Hölderlin was that in him he saw a 'spiritual Führership' and a 'Germanic riposte' to Baudelaire[39](76) who symbolised decadence and corruption. Hölderlin was a poet very much of the Romantic style, similar to, it might be said, Shelley and the earlier Wordsworth. As to his 'spiritual Führership' recognised by Heidegger[40] the poet's own words, written in a letter to his half-brother Karl should, perhaps, be an answer to such a notion.

> The object of my love is the human race, not indeed its corruption, servility and sloth, as we find only too often even within the most limited experience. But I love the grand, beautiful outline even in corrupted men. *I love the race of the coming centuries.*[Emphasis added.](77)

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[36] Heidegger says of America and Russia that they are bounded by sameness and that quality and quantity are the same in these nations. He calls this aspect of these societies 'demonic'. This is reminiscent of the Nazis 'denunciation' of 'US and British Jewish Ultra-Plutocracy' and 'Soviet-Jewish Bolshevism.' Martin Heidegger. *Introduction to Metaphysics.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. 1959. p. 47.

[37] *Dasein* = Being.

[38] For a British example of how this reaction manifested itself see Samuel Taylor Coleridge's work *On the Constitution of the Church and State According to the Ideas of Each.* London: Dent. 1972. With its concept of the 'Laws of Balance' and a State-appointed 'Clerisy', this work was highly influential on the later John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold. It gives a strong sense of compromise, equivocation and counter-revolution and a refutation of the Romantic Ideals that were so enthusiastically espoused by Coleridge, Shelley and Wordsworth, during an earlier period. The date of its publication, 1830, places it within the period of anti-socialist reaction and the repression of the working classes sweeping Europe at the time.

[39] See above (61)

[40] Of Hölderlin Heidegger says that he '[i]s the precursor of poets in a destitute time. This is why no poet of this world era can overtake him. The precursor, however, does not go off into a future; rather, he arrives out of that future, in such a way that the future is present only in the arrival of his words.' *Poetry, Language, Thought.* New York. NY.: Harper and Row. 1971. p. 142. (Transl. Albert Hoffstadter.)

However, Paul de Man makes the point that Hölderlin has been used for questionable purposes. He says:

> [o]ne can be attracted to Hölderlin for the wrong reasons, use him as an external pattern on which to transfer personal frustrations or anxieties, or attempt identifications which his own statement and poetic code would never allow. *This is more dangerous still when it happens on a collective, national scale and when Hölderlin is seen as an individual incarnation of the destiny of Germany.* He has written a poem called "Germanien" and used words such as "väterlandish" and "nationell" - terms which acquire highly disturbing connotations when they are used by some, in Germany, around 1940.[de Man's quotations, emphasis added.](78)

Heidegger said at Tübingen in 1933 that '[b]eing primitive means having the élan and interior forces just where things really start; to be primitive means to be impelled by inner forces.'(79) Yet again, we see a reaction against reason, rationality and enlightenment. How, we must ask, is it possible to be 'primitive' in this complex, modern world? Heidegger may have wished to emulate the Greeks, indeed he thought that there were only two languages in which philosophy could be properly discussed: Greek and German. Heidegger says: 'For along with German[41] the Greek language is (in regard to the possibilities of thought) at once the most powerful and most spiritual of languages.' [Heidegger's parenthesis.](80)

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[41] The translator of this work, Ralph Mannheim, says in a note that '[i]t is perfectly true that no other language has been moulded in the same degree as German by idealistic philosophy.' *An Introduction to Metaphysics.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. 1958. vii. In support of this thesis are the comments of Wilhelm Halbfass in the introduction to his work, *On Being and What There Is: Classical Vaisesika and the History of Indian Ontology.* He says: 'Among the European vernaculars, German is conspicuous by its numerous additions to the classical ontological terminology; such as *Wirklichkeit, Wesen, Dasein,* as well as by the ease with which it employs both the nominalised infinitive ("Sein") and the participle ("Seiend," "Seiendes"); this suggestive distinction, which is also available in Greek and Latin, has no equivalent in French and English. Meister Eckhardt (ca. 1260-1327) and Christian Wolff (1679-1754) are among the most important contributors to the German ontological vocabulary.' Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. 1992. pp. 4-5.

Fascist 'art' has an unrealistic epistemology and ontology. It is at odds with itself for, if it wishes to give up the present and the future for an unrealisable past then it is caught upon the horns of its own dilemma; it cannot go back, that is impossible and the way forward is closed by its own reactionary doctrines.[42]

Other poets of the early to mid 20th century who did not cut themselves adrift in the manner of *The Communist Manifesto*, according to Caudwell were the Sitwells, Robert Graves, W. H. Davies, A. E. Housman and Walter de la Mare.[43] Caudwell says of such poets that 'All contemporary poets, therefore, who do not dissolve into complete obscurity or vanish into the private world with no public, save themselves from this dissolution only by a desperate attempt to salvage a world-view from the wreck of culture.'(81) True, these writers did not become proletarian writers but neither did they go over to the fascists. Consider the Sitwells. Caudwell calls the Sitwells' works 'Keatsian' and 'brightly sensual, glittering and dreamlike.'(82) Is this accurate? We should compare Edith Sitwell's poetry with that of Keats. The latter wrote:

> [A]s when upon a tranced summer night,
> Those green rob'd senators of mighty woods,
> Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
> Dream, and so dream all night without a stir...
> [Keats' spelling.](83)

Which is from *Hyperion*. Somewhat over a century later Edith Sitwell wrote, in *Façade*:

> Where the satyrs are chattering, nymphs with their flattering
> Glimpse of the forest enhance
> All the beauty of marrow and cucumber narrow
> And Ceres will join in the dance.(84)

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[42] And see this thesis chapter 3 on D. H. Lawrence. 'Lawrence, Shaw and Wells'. *Passim.*

[43] *Cf.* these poets with Roughton, O'Connor, Todd and others. Though 'reactionary' their works are not, in the case of the leading surrealists, 'nonsensical' or inwardly private to the total exclusion of the external.

The striking similarities of this poem, written in 1922, to Keats' *Hyperion*, rather gives strength to Caudwell's point that these poets are harking back in time, in this case to the Romantic Era. In Edith Sitwell's poetry, although reactionary, there is a Christian compassion, rather lacking in the works of Eliot, and which is entirely absent in the poetry of Pound or the philosophical works of Heidegger.

Compare Pound's position with Sitwell's *Still Falls the Rain. The Raids, 1940. Night and Dawn*:

> Still falls the Rain -
> Dark as the world of man, black as our loss -
> Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails
> Upon the Cross.(85)

Consider also *Dirge for the New Sunrise (Fifteen Minutes Past Eight O'clock on the Morning of Monday the 6th of August 1945)* one of three works collectively titled *Three Poems of the Atomic Age*:

> Bound to my heart as Ixion to the wheel,
> Nailed to my heart as the thief upon the Cross,
> I hang between our Christ and the gap where the world
> Was lost.(86)

Certainly it is based on Classical mythology and Christianity, but at least it responds passionately, in its own way, to the horrors of the Luftwaffe's mass bombing of Britain in the early years of the war, as does the latter example, with regard to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. 'Reactionary', in this case, does not mean 'uncaring', although this particular poetry is totally at odds with a Marxist, historical-materialist framework.

PART TWO

i - Poetry and Words

'[P]oetry is rhythmical, not translatable, irrational, non-symbolic, concrete and characterised by condensed aesthetic affects.'(87) Thus Caudwell summarises his chapter, *The Characteristics of Poetry*, where he attempts a Modernist technical analysis of poetry rather in the manner of I. A. Richards. Some of his comments will seem to be commonplaces, as when he says, 'poetry is composed of words.'(88) It is, for most, very clear that poetry is, indeed, composed of words. But, Caudwell cautions, nothing is commonplace if it is forgotten by people who should know it.(89) Caudwell's thesis is that, although the prime mover for poetry is ideas, ideas alone are not in themselves poetry. He is critical, particularly, of Shelley's Romantic concept of the poet being '[t]he unacknowledged legislator of the world.'(90) Caudwell accuses Shelley of using loose terminology when the latter says that Bacon and Plato were poets, which Caudwell denies emphatically. Shelley might be answered not by Caudwell, but by an earlier defender of poetry, Sir Philip Sidney. While Sidney was defending the art of poetry against the Platonic notion that all poets are, essentially, liars, it is worth comparing his views on poetry to Shelley's.

> Now for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth. For as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false; so as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirms many things, can, in the cloudy knowledge of mankind, barely escape from many lies.(91)

If we are to agree with Sidney, how might it be that poets can be legislators, unacknowledged or otherwise? If the poet 'affirmeth not' then how can any meaningful legislation come from the poet? In this instance, Shelley is a Platonic Idealist, though of course he was defending poetry whereas Plato was in opposition

to poetry and the poet.[44] Caudwell points out that if poetry was 'only' ideas then it would be easily translatable, and this is certainly not the case. The technical foundation of poetry is words. This is not to say that being so composed this will render poetry ineffective or meaningless. Far from it. By the use of words, the aesthetic effects are rendered intelligible and concrete, which would not be the case if they were be rendered into mathematical symbols (see below). As C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards pointed out in *The Meaning of Meaning*:

> Words or arrangements of words evoke attitudes both directly as sounds, and less directly in several different ways through what are loosely called 'associations.'[Ogden and Richards' quotation.](92)

Which would be impossible if poetry were entirely of a symbolic nature. This is part of the reason why poetry is non-symbolic and, by that token, non-translatable. The notion of poetic connotation, of feeling-tone, is also noted by Caudwell. He says 'Just as the word refers to a portion of objective reality, i.e. is the stimulus for the idea of it, so it is the stimulus for a portion of feeling-tone.'(93) By this we can understand that any word can have a multiplicity of poetic meanings given the context in which it is used.[45]

ii - Poetic Symbolism

'[P]oetry is non-symbolic.'(94) Here, as Caudwell points out, we shall not be accused of a commonplace, for it is a customary idealistic conception that poetry is somehow

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[44] See Plato's *Republic.* esp. *Book III. Complete Works.* Editor: John. M. Cooper. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett. 1997.

[45] Caudwell makes a footnote to this section with 'The distinction between the affective and rational significance is of course an old one. Hindu philosophy recognises the 'Dhvana' or hidden meaning of words as characteristic of poetry.' *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 168*n.* Also worth noting are Bukharin's words in his report to the First Soviet Writers' Congress. 'Such is the doctrine of the '*dhvana*' of the poetic innuendo.' p. 188. Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934.[Bukharin's emphasis.] This report, notes Maynard Solomon, was highly influential on Caudwell [See above (34)] and, as we have seen, incorporated in this instance, to the point of virtual paraphrase.

vaguely symbolic.[46](95) It is not. Caudwell compares the symbolism of mathematics to the non-symbolic nature of words in *Illusion and Reality* and says of it that while it may seem to be that poetry is symbolic, because it is composed of words it is the very opposite.(96) He says of mathematics that when a mathematician writes eight plus nine equals seventeen the words themselves are of no interest to the mathematician but an ordering of the classes of empirical reality.(97) The words, if we are to agree with Caudwell, are bearers of information that is in itself symbolic. To give an example of this we should refer to an attempt in the 1930s at Oxford University to write a poem collectively but the result, I would argue, was a failure not only because collective poetry is problematical at best - although the origins of poetry might be collective - but *The Poem* seems to strive too much for symbolism. (But see footnote.)

> Believe the iron saints who stride the floods,
> Lying in red and labouring for the dawn;[47]
> Steeples repeat their warnings; along the roads
> Memorials stand, of children force has slain;
> Expostulating with the winds they hear
> Stone kings resolute on a marble stair.
>
> The tongues of torn boots flapping on the cobbles,
> Their epitaphs, clack to the crawling hour
> The clock grows old inside the hollow tower;
> It ticks and stops, and waits for me to tick.
> And on the edges of the town redoubles
> Thunder announcing war's climacteric.
>
> The hill has its death like us; the ravens gather;
> Trees with their corpses lean towards the sky.

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[46] Of course, there is a marked difference in the sense of 'symbol', symbolic' and 'symbolism' and the terms are used rather loosely and innacurately. There is a distance between, say, poetic 'symbolism' and mathematical symbology.

[47] The 'Iron Saints who stride the floods, lying in red... etc.' might possibly be Lenin and Stalin. *Cf.* Stalin = Man of Steel. Whatever one may think of Stalin now he was certainly admired, revered even, by many in the 1930s and this may have been influential on the creation of this poem.

Christ's corn is mildewed and the wine gives out.
Smoke rises from the pipes whose smokers die.
And on our heads the crimes of our buried fathers
Burst in a hurricane and the rebels shout.(98)

Charles Madge said of it that it was 'more a collective account of Oxford than any single person of the group.'(99) Given the period in which it was written there should be little surprise that it is Audenesque and more than a little surreal and this, perhaps, is another implication of Caudwell's argument; that the poetry of a period is subordinate, ultimately, to that period. The poem is composed, as are all poems, of words but in this case the words seem to have outstripped the meaningfulness of poetry because it is cobbled together and does not have that Caudwellian prerequisite of being founded upon the perspective of the 'I'.

iii - Conclusions

What conclusions may be drawn from the Caudwellian analysis of poetry? Caudwell's view of poetry, then, is that it is entirely bound within the economic world-view of any given era, a consequence of economic struggle with nature and with and *against* our fellow human beings, this being combined with the most ancient rhythmic biological processes in the human metabolism, processes that were at work even before we became fully human. In the words of Karl Marx, it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.(100) Poetry, if we are to agree with Caudwell and other Marxist critics, cannot be exempt from this rigorous analysis. We should say that art is not meaningless to the Marxist: it has a function, that is it must serve - but not dominate - the people; even the gaudy, decadent art of the Sitwells can be seem to have its redeeming features. The Sitwells, at least saw the potential horrors of warfare and the dawning nuclear age and, had there been a successful British Revolution in the 1930s, might have taken much the same position as Bryusov or Blok. Functionality in poetry is not - or should not be - a dirty word but, as can be seen, there are no clear-cut answers to the problems inherent within the progress of poetry, and - in the Caudwellian analysis - for every Auden and Spender 'who will cut themselves adrift' there will be a Pound and an Eliot who will remain firmly moored to the shore of the past. Evidence enough, I would suggest, that Caudwell got it right but that Caudwell, never made aesthetics the core of his work, although this, of course, does not deny the possibility of a fully-developed Marxist aesthetic.

Chapter End Notes

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3. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 147.

4. David N. Margolies. *The Function of Literature.* New York, N. Y.: International Publishers. 1969. p.122.

5. Francis Mulhern. 'The Marxist Aesthetic of Christopher Caudwell'. *New Left Review.* London. 1974. p. 45.

6. Ibid.

7. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality. Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 275.

8. Douglas Garman. 'Testament of a Revolutionary. (Christopher St. John Sprigg.)'. *Left Review.* London: Left Review. p. 352.

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10. Ibid.

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14. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 135.

15. Ibid. p. 96.

16. John Dryden. *Works. Prologue to Circe.* Lines 1-2. Ware: Wordsworth. 1995. p. 228.

17. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 96.

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20. Edward Young. *Night Thoughts. Night III.* Lines 340-344. (Editor): Stephen Cornford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989.

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22. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 95.

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24. Karl Marx. *Theses on Feuerbach. Selected Writings.* (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 158.

25. V. I. Lenin. *Party Organisation and Party Literature. Collected Works Vol. IX.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1978. p. 45.

26. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 138.

27. Ibid. p. 133.

28. Karl Radek. 'Fascism and Literature'. *Problems of Soviet Literature. Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress.* Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. p. 134.

29. N. Bukharin. 'Poetry, Poetics, and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR'. Ibid. p. 171.

30. Ibid. pp. 213-214.

31. Ibid. pp. 215-216.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Maynard Solomon. (Editor): *Marxism and Art.* 'Christopher Caudwell'. Brighton: Harvester Press. 1979. pp. 303-341.

35. Christopher Caudwell. *In Memoriam to T. E. Shaw. Collected Poems.* Lines 11-14. Manchester: Carcanet. 1986. p. 98.

36. Christopher Caudwell. *Collected Poems.* Manchester: Carcanet. 1986. p. 91.

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38. Alan Young *Introduction* to: Christopher Caudwell. *Collected Poems.* Manchester: Carcanet. 1986. p. 15.

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40. Ibid. p. 16.

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42. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 326.

43. Robert Currie. 'Christopher Caudwell. Marxist Illusion. Jungian Reality'. *British Journal of Aesthetics. Vol. XVII.* 1978.

44. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 228.

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48. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 162.

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51. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 228.

52. Ibid. p. 116.

53. Alfred Tennyson. *Morte D'Arthur. The Penguin Book of English Verse.* (Editor): John Hayward. London: Penguin. 1978. p. 319.

54. Robert Browning. *Fra Lippo Lippi. Men and Women and other Poems.* London: Dent. 1984. p. 13.

55. Matthew Arnold. *Dover Beach. The Penguin Book of English Verse.* (Editor): John Hayward. London: Penguin. 1978. p. 344.

56. Christopher Caudwell. *Romance and Realism.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 318.

57. Maynard Solomon. (Editor): *Marxism and Art.* 'Christopher Caudwell'. Brighton: Harvester Press. 1979. p . 320.

58. Ibid. p. 318.

59. Christopher Caudwell. *Romance and Realism.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 72.

60. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 244.

61. Jean-Paul Sartre. *Baudelaire.* London: New Directions, 1967. pp. 51-52.

62. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. 137.

63. Philip O'Connor. *Poems. Poetry of the Thirties.* (Editor:) Robin Skelton. London: Penguin. 1964. p. 242.

64. Valentine Cunningham. *Writers of the Thirties.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988. p. 5.

65. C. Day. Lewis. *Poetry of the Thirties.* (Editor:) Robin Skelton. London: Penguin. 1964. p. 70.

66. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto. Selected Writings.* (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 223.

67. John Cornford. *Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesca. Know the Weapon. Know the Wound.* Manchester: Carcanet. 1976. p. 39.

68. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 319.

69. V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works. Vol. XXXIII. The International and Domestic Situation.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1977. p. 223.

70. V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works. Vol. XXXXV. Letter to N. Pokrovsky.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1977. p. 139.

71. Ezra Pound. *The Cantos. XIV.* London. Faber and Faber. 1975. p. 61.

72. Ibid. *The Cantos. LXXIV.* London. Faber and Faber. 1975. p. 425.

73. Ibid. *The Cantos. XXVII.* London. Faber and Faber. 1975. p. 131.

74. Eugene Paul Nassar. *The Cantos of Ezra Pound.* Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins. 1975.p. 80.

75. Ezra Pound. *Broadcast 28/5/1942. Ezra Pound Speaking.* (Editor): Leonard W. Doob. New York, N.Y.: Greenwood Press. 1978. p. 150.

76. Pierre Bourdieu. *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger.* Stanford, Conn.: Stanford University Press. 1991. p. 100.

77. Friedrich Hölderlin. *Selected poems.* (Trans. and Editor:) J. B. Leishman. p. 14. London: Hogarth: 1944.

78. Paul de Man. 'Hölderlin and the Romantic Tradition: Romantic and Contemporary Criticism.' *The Gauss Seminar and Other Papers.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press. 1993. p. 129.

79. Martin Heidegger. *The Speech at Tübingen. 30/11/1933.* Quoted in Victor Farias. *Heidegger and Nazism.* Philadelphia, PA.: Temple University Press. 1989. p. 145.

80. Martin Heidegger. *An Introduction to Metaphysics.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. p. 57.

81. Christopher Caudwell. *Romance and Realism.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 126.

82. Ibid.

83. John Keats. *Hyperion. The Penguin Book of English Verse.* (Editor): John Hayward. London: Penguin. 1978. p. 300.

84. Edith Sitwell. *Tarantella. façade.* London: Duckworth. 1987. p. 52.

85. Edith Sitwell. *Still Falls the Rain. The Raids, 1940. Night and Dawn. Collected poems.* London: Macmillan. 1965. p. 272.

86. Edith Sitwell. *Three Poems for the Atomic Age. Dirge for the New Sunrise (Fifteen Minutes Past Eight O'clock on the Morning of Monday the 6th of August 1945) Collected Poems.* London: Macmillan. 1965.p. 368.

87. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 152.

88. Ibid. p.144.

89. Ibid.

90. Percy Bysshe Shelley. *A Defence of Poetry. Shelley's Political Writings.* (Editor): Roland A. Duerksen. New York, NY.: Appleton-Century-Crafts. 1970. p. 197.

91. Sir Philip Sidney. *An Apology for Poetry.* (Editor): Geoffrey Shepherd. Manchester: Manchester. University Press, 1984. pp. 123-124.

92. C. K. Ogden, I. A. Richards. *The Meaning of Meaning.* London: Routledge. 1923. p. 236.

93. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 168.

94. Ibid. p. 145.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid. p. 146.

97. Ibid.

98. Samuel Hynes. *The Auden Generation.* London: Faber and Faber. 1976. p. 287.

99. Ibid.

100. Karl Marx. *Preface to a Critique of Political Economy. Selected Writings.* (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 389.

4: Lawrence, Shaw and Wells

> What is the function of the artist? Any artist such as Lawrence, who aims to be 'more than' an artist, necessarily raises this question. It is supposed to be the teaching of Marxism that art for art's sake is an illusion and that art must be propaganda. This is, however, making the usual bourgeois simplification of a complex matter.
> Art is a social function. This is not a Marxist demand, but arises from the very way in which art forms are defined. Only those things are recognised as art forms which have a conscious social function. The fantasies of a dreamer are not art.[Caudwell's quotation.](1)

Thus Caudwell opens his discussion on D. H. Lawrence. He saw Lawrence - along with H. G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw - as emblematic of his era - the era of the imperialist bourgeoisie - and saw that the art produced by them was also emblematic of their age; sterile, decadent, pointless and, in the case of D. H. Lawrence, utterly reactionary, harking back to a more barbaric and less conscious era. Is this valid? Can they all be seen in the same condemnatory light or is there some mitigation to this very harsh critique? As Samuel Hynes said of Caudwell's views on these writers, he aimed to show their failures as thinkers and political theorists, not their achievements as artists.(2)

The validity - or otherwise - of Caudwell's analyses of these three writers will be established in the following chapter, beginning with D. H. Lawrence.

i - The Serpent, the Darkness and the Blood

D. H. Lawrence has often been called a reactionary and a racist. His later novels, such as *The Plumed Serpent*, are replete with racism. For example:

> [A]nd this is Mexico. The Mexicans of mixed blood are hopeless. Well then! There are only two things to be done. All the foreigners and the Mexicans clear out and leave the country to the Indians, the pure-blooded Indians.(3)

It might be argued that the words of the character Julio Toussaint are not those of Lawrence, that is, he uses such offensive terminology to illustrate a problem, but this is untenable. As we will see, Toussaint's words are clearly the words of the author. Lawrence's racism, however, is not merely the standard 'White Supremacist' view espoused by more 'conventional' racists such as the Nazis. His racism was also predicated on the 'dark races', the people who, in his view, are closer to the deep beating of the blood, the warmth and the darkness. Nor did Lawrence mean this to be only the Mexican Indians, the African peoples or South Sea islanders. He also found this 'darkness and warmth' in the Cornish people. In his novel, *Kangaroo*, Lawrence's views on this subject are explicit.

> Over the border, in that twilight, awesome world of the previous Celts, the spirit of the ancient, pre-Christian world, which lingers still in the Celtic places, he could feel it invade him in the savage dusk, making him savage too, and at the same time strangely sensitive and subtle, understanding the mystery of blood-sacrifice: to sacrifice one's victim and let the blood run into the fire, there beyond the

> gorse upon the old grey granite: and at the same time to understand most sensitively the dark flicker of animal life about him, even in a bat, even in the writhing of a maggot in a dead rabbit. Writhe, then, life, he seemed to say to the things - and he no longer saw its sickeningness.(4)

Leaving aside the usual criticisms of repetitiveness and mediocre writing which are often levelled at Lawrence, and the above passage is a fairly typical example of this, we can see that the question of blood and darkness was something very important to Lawrence. But as Caudwell points out above, the personal fantasy of the dreamer is not art, however beautiful.(5) This is only the raw material of art and Lawrence, I would argue from a Caudwellian standpoint, is allowing his own reactionary fantasies to get the better of him. John R. Harrison points out that Lawrence had some unpleasant characteristics, including his '[h]omicidal tendencies and his belief in "blood" [which are] reminiscent of the worst aspects of German fascism.'[Harrison's quotation.](6) Harrison is in agreement with Caudwell here but what caused this in Lawrence? What is the root of this unpleasant fascination with unsavoury politics, misogyny, racism and the dark and bloody unconscious? Caudwell's views are based on a socio-political foundation. His argument is that Lawrence is self-contradictory and, that while he may have had pronounced fascistic tendencies, it is impossible for an artist to be a consistent fascist as fascism entails the destruction of culture[1] and the burning of books.(7) I suggest that this epistemic dilemma is a major part of the problem for Lawrence. As Caudwell points out, he can only advocate unconsciousness *via* the medium of consciousness. This can be seen in Lawrence's advocacy of hero-worship, as in *The Plumed Serpent* and the new religion (merely the old Aztec religion revived) set up by Ramon and Cipriano. It is a

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[1] See Karl Radek's view on fascism and literature: 'Fascism means the end of great literature; by the logic of its own inner laws it means the decay of literature.' 'Fascism and Literature'. *Problems of Soviet Literature. Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress.* Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. p. 125.

faith of blood and darkness, a reaction to the modern world and all its obvious ills. Lawrence saw that the only answer was to turn away from the modern, the rational and the material. However, it is precisely these aspects of capitalist society that allowed Lawrence to develop his views and, through the process of 20th century mass-media, disseminate them. He may reject the society he lives in with all sincerity, but that sincerity should surely make him question his own motives.

As Caudwell says: 'There is a confusion here due to equating consciousness with thinking and unconsciousness with feeling. This is wrong. Both are conscious. No one has ever had or could have an unconscious affect or emotion.'(8) Lawrence's problem is compounded here by the fact that he is conscious; he has to be, otherwise he could never have written his books which promote *anti*-consciousness. This, in combination with the necessity of industrialised mass publishing, has produced for him a profound epistemological problem. How can he have a theory of knowledge, even of the unconscious, without having knowledge - consciousness - in the first place? If he rejects the conscious then his theories must also be rejected by him as part of that self-same consciousness. This is why, in Caudwell's view, the writer can only be, at most, a half-hearted fascist.[2]

In a letter to Paul and Elizabeth Beard, dated 21st of November, 1935, Caudwell, discussing aesthetics, says that:

> I haven't room for a full discussion of Lawrence which would be long and would of course concentrate on his weaknesses, not his strengths. His faults, like those of the other Lawrence,[3] all seem to spring from a selfishness - not greediness, but egoismus, but he fancied that it was not the ego but

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[2] See, on this subject, *Problems of Soviet Literature Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress*. A. A. Zhdanov, M. Gorky, N. Bukharin, K. Radek, A. Stretsky. Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934.

[3] T. E. Lawrence.

> the intellectualising reason; certainly they are closely associated.(9)

That Lawrence was an anti-capitalist is evident throughout his writings but, again, his viewpoint is in stark contrast to that of a Marxist. As Caudwell says of the fascists:

> They use the revolt against ineffectual democracy to establish a dictatorship, and this dictatorship which seizes power with the cry 'down with capitalism', in fact establishes capitalism still more violently as in Fascist Italy and Germany. The brutal oppression and cynical violence of Fascism is the summit of bourgeois decline. The violence at the heart of the bourgeois illusion emerges inside as well as outside the State.[Caudwell's quotation.](10)

Lawrence also displays another common aspect of fascism: that of anti-Semitism. He incorporated this trait into his more general dislike of humanity, however. In a reply to a letter from Waldo Frank he writes:

> So Judas was a Super-Christian! And Jews are Super-Christian lovers of mankind! No doubt it is true. *It makes me dislike Judas and Jews very much.* To learn to hate mankind, to detest the spawning human being, that is the only cleanliness now.[Emphasis added.](11)

This burning, Nietzschean, hatred of mankind is central to the problem of consciousness for D. H. Lawrence. He hated consciousness, not so that he might become insensate, but to become *more* sensual. This of course, as Caudwell has pointed out is untenable.[4] Caudwell sees this as a problem of perception, in that the artist - in this case Lawrence - perceived his own 'freedom' to be compromised by the system under which he suffers,

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[4] See (8) above.

be it capitalist or socialist. The artist must stand above all of this in some godlike sense and reject all that will offend this sense of 'freedom'. As Caudwell says: 'The value of art to the artist then is this, that it makes him free.'(12)

Caudwell would maintain that ultimate freedom, in this sense, is impossible because even humans are bound by the laws of physics, society, culture, etc. Freedom can only come, eventually, from a recognition and understanding of these laws and Lawrence, for all his efforts, is no more 'free' of society than anybody else. However this is not to say, either, that the artist is a helpless puppet. Caudwell sees that art is, essentially, adaptive and that art is a way of making more sense of the world, and by doing so allowing humans to get a firmer grip on reality and the natural laws that control us.

As Caudwell says:

> In synthesising his experience with society's, in pressing his inner self into the mould of social relations, he[5] not only creates a new mould, a socially valuable product, but he also moulds and creates his own self.(13)

Caudwell sees that art, being part of reality and by being changed by conscious human endeavour, also changes reality itself. Something that Lawrence could not - or would not - do. Lawrence's reaction to modern European culture inevitably led him away from it, geographically, to Mexico, Sicily, Etruria, Malta; places where he saw that life and social relationships were more 'meaningful,' rather in the manner of T. E. Lawrence's rejection of Europe and embracing of the Bedouins, but T. E. Lawrence fought for the freedom of a people from Ottoman bondage, whatever other shortcomings. No such thing can be said of D. H. Lawrence.

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[5] The Artist.

Caudwell's analysis of the Lawrence problem hinges, ultimately, upon his own political view, his Marxism. He saw modern, bourgeois society as one that was fragmented, shattered and still being shattered by its own inherent contradictions. He saw that consciousness was polarised towards the bourgeoisie and that as a result it was contracting and stiffening.(14) This will inevitably lead to disintegration as the inflexibility sets in and becomes endemic within a culture. He says in *Illusion and Reality* that '[a]rtistic consciousness cannot survive this fission,'(15) and as a result:

> [t]his unendurable tension is shown in the chaotic and intoxicated confusion of all *sincere* modern bourgeois art, decomposing and whirling about in a flux of perplexed agony. It is expressed by the cries of the Lawrences and their followers, demanding a release from the torments of modern intellectual consciousness.[Caudwell's emphasis.](16)

It is clear to Caudwell that Lawrence, no matter where he looked, or how hard he tried, could find no release from these torments and as a result turned away, became more and more misanthropic, bitter, misogynistic and reactionary, because for him this was the only way out of his personal and political crises.

ii - Shaw the Superman

> He was the world's foremost playwright of ideas,[6]
> and no one took his ideas seriously.(17)

Such were Colin Wilson's words in 1969, but they could just as easily be ascribed to Christopher Caudwell. Shaw was, as Wilson has said, the leading 'ideas man' of his time in the literary sense but, as Caudwell has observed, he sugared the pill of social comment so much that the pill became ineffectual.(18) Shaw's appeal is to the intellect and the intellectual. Caudwell is justified in his condemnation of Shaw's portrayal of the proletariat as mere caricatures who may only be 'saved' even in a secular manner by their elevation to the intelligentsia by education. Consider Liza Dolittle, Professor Higgins' *protégé* in *Pygmalion*, the Chauffeur Straker in *Man and Superman*, and Joan of Arc in *Saint Joan* with her bluff, forthright manner. We should note Shaw's description of her in *Scene 1*:

> She comes eagerly to the table, delighted at having penetrated to Baudricourt's presence at last, and full of hope at the result. His scowl does not check or frighten her in the least. Her voice is normally a hearty coaxing voice, very confident, very appealing, very hard to resist.(19)

This gives a good impression of a lower-class, bourgeois girl who won't take no for an answer. However, Shaw has a patronising - some might say excruciating - way of dealing

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[6] Very much the 'Fox' who knows many things if we are to agree with the notions of Isaiah Berlin. *The Hedgehog and the Fox.* London: Weidenfield and Nicolson. 1953. See this thesis chapter 1 'Introduction'. p. 17.

with the proletariat in his other works. Consider the tortuous and embarrassing language of the down-and-out Bill Walker in *Major Barbara.*

> It's nao good; and you cawnt get rahnd me nah. Aw downt blieve in it; and Awve seen today that Aw was rawt.[Shaw's spelling, punctuation, etc.](20)

All are, by various means, 'rescued' from their backgrounds of intellectual mediocrity either by education or the Word of God, who can, in spite of the Shavian rejection of religion, be considered to be Shaw as much as Shaw might be seen in Professor Higgins.

What has brought Shaw to this conclusion? Caudwell's answer is that Shaw places intellect above all else, which is the reverse side of the coin represented by Lawrence. For the latter, intellect and the intellectual had to be shunned at all costs. For Shaw nothing mattered *more* than intellect. As Caudwell wrote in *Studies in a Dying Culture*:

> Thus Shaw, whom a belief in the primacy of intellectual consciousness prevented from becoming an artist, was by the same belief prevented from becoming a serious thinker or a real force in contemporary consciousness. He became the world's buffoon.(21)

Caudwell compares Shaw very unfavourably to Karl Marx.

> Marx by contrast did not attempt to make *Das Kapital* appealing to the tired brains of the British bourgeoisie. He did not attempt to become a best-seller or veil his views in West End successes. He did not give humorous interviews to the contemporary press. His name was known only to a few Englishmen of his time, while that of Shaw is known to millions. But because he gave his message seriously, treating the race of men as his equals, his message was received seriously and well.(22)

This may seem extreme until one reads Colin Wilson's comparative views on Shaw and Marx. In his 1980 postscript to *Bernard Shaw: A reassessment*, he says that '[S]haw's argument for socialism had convinced me. Marx always struck me as dangerous confused nonsense: but Shaw's arguments for nationalisation of major resources seemed common sense.'(23) The Fabian appeal to the bourgeois intellectual[7] has succeeded in this instance over Marxism. Though further on Wilson says that he now regards Shaw's views on nationalisation and socialism as 'fallacious' it does bear out Caudwell's argument that Shaw was an intellectual who wrote for the intelligentsia such as Colin Wilson and the bourgeoisie as we have just seen. The result of this difference between Marx and Shaw is that the latter, according to Caudwell, is much read and little noted.

However, Shaw had read and - to a point - understood Marx and Marxism and had a great deal of respect for both. '[I] have picked Marx's mistakes to pieces as meticulously as anybody; but I am always very careful to reserve the fact that he was an Epoch Maker.'(24) Shaw also understood and was repelled by the horrors of poverty. He says in the preface to *Major Barbara*:

> Security, the chief pretence of civilisation, cannot exist where the worst of dangers, the danger of poverty over everyone's head, and where the alleged protection of our persons from violence is only an accidental result of the existence of a police force whose real business is to force the poor man to see his children starve whilst idle people overfeed pet dogs with the money that might feed and clothe them.[8](25)

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[7] Wilson was, of course, one of the 1950s 'Angry Young Men' along with John Osborne and John Braine. However, we might see that by the time he made these comments in 1969 the anger had largely died away as it had with both Braine and Osborne. Their 'anger' is, perhaps, in the same vein as that of Baudelaire so noted by Jean Paul Sartre in his work of the same name. See p. 42. (61) this thesis, chapter 2, 'Caudwell, Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic'.

[8] Commenting on Shaw, Karl Radek asks 'What writer who is not devoid of all conscience, of all feeling, of all capacity to speak the truth can defend a system which renders tens of millions of people unemployed, a system which ruins and pauperises peasants...' etc., etc. 'Fascism and Literature'. *Problems of Soviet Literature. Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress.* Moscow: Publishing Society of

This is obviously not a writer indifferent to the conditions of his fellow humans. His indignation is genuine and he is in agreement with Caudwell on this matter. The latter says: '[t]he law forbidding one bourgeois to seize another's property by force arose as the result of the need to prevent the have-nots seizing property by force.'(26) Shaw's anti-capitalism and anti-clericalism are evident throughout his works. But, from a Caudwellian standpoint, Shaw seems to be making all the wrong assumptions about priorities such as the root of the complaint as well as its outcome. Shaw's Fabianism[9] is crucial here. He wanted change but through the ballot box, through peaceful reform and without violent revolutionary struggle. This was a constant theme throughout his works. As Gareth Griffith has pointed out:

> In a sense the Fabians were a microcosm of what is often perceived to be the true Shavian audience: cultured, caring, concerned to bring the values of civic humanism to bear on socialist practice, yet still sufficiently at ease to enjoy the luxuries of style and humour.(27)

Griffith's view would not be disputed by Caudwell. This is the quintessence of Fabianism. It is also a very good reason why Caudwell, a political revolutionary, would reject Shaw's gradualist philosophy of socialism and social change. For Caudwell no change could come without struggle, revolution and, quite probably, civil war. Caudwell was perfectly clear on the subject of pacifism and the rôle of violence and how it was not a sickness that infected human beings, or a madness that periodically descended from on high, but a phenomenon bound up with class society and its irreconcilable schisms.[10] He also saw the 'Liberal' thinker as a central part of the problem of bourgeois violence.

Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. Caudwell is far harder on Shaw than Radek.

9 'A good man fallen amongst Fabians, and a good deal further left than his company [The Labour Party.].' V. I. Lenin to Arthur Ransome. *Six Weeks in Russia. 1919.* London: Redwords. 1992. p. 118.

10 For further on this subject, see thesis chapter 6, 'The Leninist Concept of War'.

Although in his work on pacifism he does not mention Shaw directly, I feel that Caudwell's analysis is applicable to Shaw and his motives.

> This 'revolutionary' liberal. this hater of coercion and violence, this lover of free competition, this friend of liberty and human rights is therefore the very man damned by history not merely to be powerless to stop these things, but to be forced by his own efforts to produce coercion and violence and unfair competition. He does not merely refrain from opposing bourgeois violence, he generates it, by helping on the development of bourgeois economy.[Caudwell's quotation.](28)

That Caudwell had little time for pacifism is obvious but his reasoning, it can be argued, is sound. Shaw - for all his anti-militarist views - is extremely candid in a letter to Augustin Hamon on the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). He writes:

> [b]ut in the face of the scalp hunting North American Indian, the head hunting Dyak, the cannibal Maori, and the testicle hunting Danakil,[11] European civilisation must stand solid. Capitalism versus Socialism, clericalism, versus anti-clericalism, Fascism versus Sovietism do not come into the question at all. To take the side of the Danakil out of hostility to Mussolini would be an act of opportunist scoundrelism which would make the European situation very much worse than it already is. And do no good in the long run to the Danakils.(29)

Shaw doesn't make clear what exactly *would* help the Danakil and the other peoples of Abyssinia. He reserves for himself the right to be on the side of the 'civilised' Italian. against the 'savage' Danakil. Leaving aside the accusations of scalp-hunting[12] and

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[11] The Afar people of North Eastern Ethiopia, predominantly Muslim.
[12] It was 'civilised' European settlers who introduced scalping by bounty-hunters into North America.

cannibalism, the only defence of Shaw is that at the time of writing[13] he was ignorant of the horrors of fascism that were being perpetrated, not only on the Abyssinians but also on the Italian and German people themselves. This is no real defence as others, Caudwell included, were very well aware of what was being done in the name of 'civilisation', Nazi-Fascist style, which included tank attacks, dive bombing and the use of lethal gas. Surely a man of Shaw's enormous erudition would also see it? Not so. Shaw, it would seem, was always able to stand aloof from any argument once the *intellectual* question had been settled. Hence his dismissal of the Danakil genocide by Italian troops. This is not to say that Shaw could not feel for them, but 'intellectually' he had to take a side, and that side was civilisation. In this he is - yet again - the complete opposite of D. H. Lawrence for whom the 'dark and coloured races' represented the sole possible salvation of humanity from its own sterile coldness. While Lawrence rejected the intellect for 'blood and warmth,' - as might be found amongst the Danakil and other 'dark' peoples - Shaw rejected everything *but* the intellectual solution.[14] However, as Caudwell would argue, this is not a solution at all. I must concur with Caudwell when he says that this is the root of the problem with Shaw's plays. Shaw, for all his knowledge of the conditions of the working classes, sides with the bourgeoisie, not because they are intrinsically better people but because they are *educated.* The Marxist Caudwell maintains that this is the wrong choice. Historical materialism is not in agreement with Shaw here.

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[13] Early 1936. It might be argued that Karl Marx, living in the mid-19th century, would have agreed with Shaw on this particular issue. Marx said on the subject of India and British Imperialism that 'England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating - the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western Society in Asia.' *Selected Writings.* (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p 332. However, I feel that neither Lenin or Caudwell, living in the Era of Imperialism and Monopoly Capital, would have agreed in the least with Shaw. Further, it should be remembered that while Marx wrote this passage in 1853, Shaw's views were put forward a little over eighty years later, precisely in that same Imperialist, Monopoly Capitalist Era of which both Lenin, Caudwell *and* Shaw were part, which rather brings us to the conclusion that Shaw was seriously out of step with many of his contemporaries.

[14] It should be pointed out, however, that Shaw and Lawrence are in agreement on the concept of the 'Life Force.'

> From this choice springs the unreality of the plays, their lack of dramatic resolutions, the substitution of debate for dialectic, the belief in life forces and thought Utopias, the bungling treatment of human beings in love, the lack of scientific knowledge, and the queer strain of mountebank[15] in all Shaw says, as of a man who is mocking others but also himself because he despises himself but despises others more.(30)

For Caudwell, Shaw's real value was that he exposes the weaknesses of the bourgeoisie, a class that Caudwell says is shamefaced and losing its confidence in itself.(31) But that is where Caudwell's respect for Shaw ends. As Lucretius puts it so aptly in *De Rerum Naturæ*:

> Thus each man tries to flee from himself, but to that self from which of course there is no escape, he clings against his will, and hates it, because he is a sick man that does not know the cause of his complaint.(32)

The same might well be said of Shaw. Throughout the various critiques and analyses of Christopher Caudwell we see this recurring theme; that the system is rotten and moribund and must be replaced by something better. The others who see the rottenness (Lawrence, Shaw, Freud, Jung etc.), are putting the wrong emphasis on change and its necessity. Either they want to regress to a past era (Jung and Lawrence) or they want to rely entirely upon the application of the intellect to the individual (Freud and Shaw). For Caudwell both approaches were destined to fail, as both relied on a doomed, disintegrating class. It was a choice between two forms of reaction; unconscious fascism,

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15 An accusation which, in fairness to Shaw, he admits. Shaw says in the preface to *Three Plays for Puritans* that '[I] am a natural-born mountebank. I am well aware that the ordinary British citizen requires a profession of shame from all mountebanks by way of homage to the sanctity of the ignoble private life to which he is condemned by his incapacity for public life.' But as we can see, Caudwell's view, as quoted above, (and no doubt taken from Shaw's own words) is vindicated as Shaw is still using his own admission of theatrical tawdriness to take a backhanded swipe at the British public. London: Penguin. 1949. xxxiii.

or what Caudwell saw as intellectual élitism, even a form of 'New Deal' liberal fascism. Neither took the proletariat into account as an active revolutionary force. They either had to be considered dumb brutes to be educated or turned loose to free their 'animal' instincts.[16] As we shall see, the same can be said of the social and political theories of H. G. Wells.

iii - Ου–Τοπος (Utopia) No Place

> Why have all the spiritual forces of mankind united in the struggle against Fascism? H. G. Wells' world-outlook is not identical with our own. But this is where we are one[17] with Wells, Maritain, Hemingway, Langevin, Einstein *and with all thinking humanity*.[Emphasis added.](33)

These words, written by the Soviet journalist Ilya Ehrenburg in 'The Black Summer' of 1942, at the height of the Nazi threat to the Soviet Union, are generous and embody the best spirit of the United Front against fascism. There might well be a certain amount of self-interest in them but the words are genuine enough. However, these were sentiments that were emphatically not espoused by Christopher Caudwell only a few years earlier, when discussing the works of H. G. Wells. He says: 'Wells is in the unhappy position of a tailor whose yard-rule alters capriciously in length overnight.'(34) Caudwell was making an unfavourable comparison between Engels' view of socialism and that of

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16 The fascination with the 'animal' side of the human condition is not, apparently, confined to reactionary politics. In *1984* George Orwell writes of the Proles, the subjugated masses of Oceania (and no doubt Eurasia and Eastasia.) that: '[L]eft to themselves, like cattle turned loose on the plains of Argentina they had reverted to a style of life that suited them, *a sort of ancestral pattern*.' [Emphasis added.] p. 74. And that they were '[p]eople who had never learned to think.' p. 229. *Complete Works. Vol. IX.* London: Secker and Warburg. 1997. Whether this is Orwell's own view of the working classes or merely Winston Smith's jaundiced observations *via* his hatred of the Party and Ingsoc is not made clear but it should be remembered that Orwell was an Old Etonian and his background seems to show in this and other works. I would suggest that Caudwell, with his work in Poplar, and involvement with the Communist Party, although middle class, had a more realistic appraisal of the proletariat than Orwell.

17 Love for the future.

Wells. Engels says of Utopian Idealism that it is founded upon Absolutes independent of time, space and historical development and that it takes no account of the dialectically changing circumstances of the real world,(35) which, I would argue, is a particular hallmark of utopian ideology. Any doctrine which springs from idealism is bound to run foul of materialist and historical dialectics.

Caudwell points out that in Engels' era, bourgeois values were relatively stable; by the time of H. G. Wells, they were becoming increasingly frayed and beginning to falter, turning into their opposites almost overnight.(36) This is not to say that Wells was anti-socialist. He was, in his early years, pro-Soviet and had met Lenin and Stalin. He said of the latter: '[y]et I had to recognise that under him Russia was not being merely tyrannised and held down; it was being governed and getting on.'(37) Given that at the time far more people admired Stalin than now and that Caudwell was one of these admirers why should he feel so antipathetic towards Wells? It is because Wells saw no further than the State, or if he did, it was in some ahistorical future, such as that found in *The Time Machine*, where the world was divided into the illiterate, hedonistic Eloi and the Faustian, mechanised Morlocks. This will be discussed below but for Wells the State (capitalised) was the ultimate form of government for any civilised, thoughtful and informed human being in the early 20th century. It was impossible to look further than this. Wells - up to a point - understood Marxism. However, Engels' message on the transitory nature of the state had gone unheeded, if it had ever been heard at all.

Caudwell had read Wells' *Experiment in Autobiography*. Therefore he would have understood (from a Marxist point of view) Wells' problems about the nature of the state and the state's leadership. Although full of praise for J. V. Stalin, Wells has made the fundamental mistake of assuming that Stalin was the equivalent of Roosevelt with his capitalist New Deal. Wells seems unable to make the distinction between a Marxist-Leninist and a progressive bourgeois. He cannot see beyond a socialist world-state. He says:

> In the spring of 1934 I took it into my head to see and compare President Franklin Roosevelt and Mr. Stalin. I wanted to form an opinion of just how much these two brains were working in the direction of this socialist world-state that I believe to be the only lasting destiny for mankind.(38)

But if we are to agree with Marx and Engels, there can be no 'socialist world-state' which will be our 'lasting destiny.' If we have a destiny at all, according to Marxism, it is in a future *without* a state. Engels writes:

> The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which necessarily involved the split of society into classes, the state became a necessity because of this split. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes has not only ceased to be a necessity but becomes a positive hindrance to production.(39)

Caudwell - as a Marxist - saw the necessity of the dissolution of the state; Wells saw it as the apotheosis of humanity, albeit in a benevolent, idealistic way. Paul Ricoeur said of the Utopian concept and its protagonists such as Wells and Huxley, that:

> In a sense all founders of philosophies, religions and cultures say that they are bringing forth something that already existed.(40)

That is, they are not going forward but harking back to a mythical Golden Age when all humans were 'free', perhaps, in the Rousseaunian sense of the word.[18] Ricoeur's analysis is correct here, particularly of Huxley and Wells, although Huxley's *Brave New World* is more of a *dystopian* rather than utopian system with its élitist,

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[18] And even earlier than Rousseau as a cursory reading of Hesiod, Homer and Virgil will show.

genetically-graded class structure. This literary, historical theme stretches back as far as the originator of the term 'Utopia,' Sir Thomas More. Indeed, there are distinct similarities between More's Platonic State and Wells' 'future', be it in *The Time Machine*, with its carefree but - ultimately - doomed Eloi, or *The Shape of Things to Come.* Both writers foresee an age quite different in many ways from their own, an age when most problems have been solved or are being solved. However, even though the Eloi are - up to a point - free, they have only the freedom of cattle as the Morlocks use them for that very purpose. The Wellsian Ideal State is essentially a Platonic one. As George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams have pointed out in their introduction to More's *Utopia,* this society requires the experts of law and economics found in Plato's Stranger in *Statesman* or the Athenian in *Laws.*(41)

Wells himself wrote an essay upon the Platonic nature of *Utopia* in 1908. He says of it that it is written in the spirit of a humane, public-spirited and limited practical English gentleman who takes the inferiority of his inferiors for granted, dislikes friars, tramps and loafers and all undisciplined and unproductive people.(42) Is this not, ironically, the very man that Wells would liked to have been himself? The down-to-earth but cultured, humane Bourgeois, rather than the down-trodden and increasingly frustrated petty bourgeois that he actually was? Caudwell would have us believe so. He says of Wells' ambitions and experiences that '[t]hese experiences of his in his escape into wealth necessarily taught him all the difficulties and all the frustrations of his class in their acutest form.'(43)

Erasmus gives a succinct answer to Wells and all Platonic Utopians in *The Praise of Folly.* He asks '[w]hat state has ever accepted the Laws of Plato or Aristotle or the teachings of Socrates?'(44) A good question and the answer, of course, is none. The Platonic State and its Philosopher King,[19] while held in high esteem as an Ideal, has

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[19] Even the Stoic Emperor Marcus Antoninus Aurelius, 121-180 CE, could not live up to the ideals of the Philosopher King in the Platonic sense of the concept. He spent the latter part of his life defending the

been nothing but that; an Ideal. So too the Benevolent World-State of H. G. Wells. It is the product of a literary, agile mind which would sooner see things as it wishes, rather than as they are, rather in the manner of George Bernard Shaw.

Wells presents to the world a contrasting personality. A writer passionate about the concept of personal freedom, and the notion that the '[i]magination cannot be locked up.'(45), he is also in favour of a never-ending State which - if we are to agree with Caudwell and the Marxists - will do more than merely lock up the imagination but lock up whole strata of society in the future. Caudwell's view of the Morlocks is highly original and relates it to Wells' anxieties and misapprehension of class struggle. He maintains that the Morlocks, preying on the idyllic, innocent Eloi, are in fact the proletariat themselves, forever the underground threat to the lower sections of the bourgeoisie, that is, people like Wells himself.[20] Caudwell says that due to Wells' background[21] his knowledge of the working class is practically non-existent and he does not understand them. All he has of them are childhood memories of the proletarian abyss below the petit bourgeois, the dreadful Morlocks whom one must kill blindly when revolting they come up to the light of day.(46)

This ingenious mental leap is typically Caudwellian and holds a truth that Caudwell saw clearly but Wells saw not at all. For all his knowledge, Wells was blind to the laws of causality driving the world, the universe and human society. Without even the most rudimentary knowledge of these laws it was impossible for Wells to see any further than a sanitised, anodyne, futuristic version of his own world or, if that world were to disappear, then it would be replaced by illiterate, stagnant decadence. For Wells

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Roman Empire against Quadi and Marcommanic incursions. His ideals were outstripped by the political-economic and military exigencies of his era, right up to his death on the front line in Noricum from illness and exhaustion.

[20] We could, perhaps, view J. R. R. Tolkien's *Ring Trilogy* in such a light. The organic, utopian Hobbits threatened by the warped servants of the Dark Lord Sauron, the forger of the rings. To be sure, this is speculation, but it might give strength to the Caudwellian argument.

[21] His father was an unsuccessful grocer.

there could be no place for the proletariat. He simply 'wished them away' - so to speak - in his time-travelling fantasies.

Caudwell says of the Wellsian Utopian view:

> In all these Utopias thought reveals its solitary poverty. Thought 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. These bourgeois dream-Utopias with their standardisations, their extinction of national distinctions so dear to the heart of human beings, their characterless, commercialised, hygienic, eugenic, Aryan-Fascist uniformity, not only do not allure us - they revolt our minds. If the future holds no more than this, we think, let civilisation die.(47)

Which is precisely the vision of Wells in *The Time Machine* and *The Shape of Things to Come.* Both futures are unpalatable: hedonistic, illiterate barbarism or clinical Modernistic uniformity. Do the criticisms levelled by Caudwell at the above writers have any foundation? With some reservations, particularly as regards Wells and to a lesser extent Shaw, the answer must be 'yes'. The critique of Lawrence is especially apt in the way Caudwell points out the hopeless dilemma of the writer with fascist or reactionary tendencies and much the same may be said of the characteristics of Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. The problem with such an across-the-board condemnation comes out in his comments on Wells and Shaw and I feel that it weakens and perhaps even trivialises the very valid arguments against D. H. Lawrence. Their works are riddled with wild inconsistencies, but it may be argued that the cause of this is the same for them as for Caudwell. Caudwell, Wells and Shaw, for very different reasons, tried to analyse the world as they saw it. Some might say they failed, as Caudwell says of Wells and Shaw, but they were extraordinarily erudite. If they had a fault - and this is a charge that has quite often been levelled at Caudwell - it is that they perhaps tried to do too much.

Wells would have us ruled by intellectual Samurai in a world-encompassing benevolent superstate in the style of Saint-Simon's common class of scientists and industrialists;(48) so, too, would Shaw but they both wanted something better for humanity, whatever the weaknesses of their methodology. Caudwell, the Marxist, wanted the state to wither away, also for the best of reasons. The misanthrope D. H. Lawrence wanted to destroy anything progressive within humanity.

I therefore feel that, in this instance, Caudwell's critique is generally rather rigid, and although he makes some very valid criticisms of Lawrence, Shaw and Wells his binary oppositions of bourgeois *against* proletarian; subjectivity *against* objectivity, etc., cause him some quite serious problems on occasion with these particular writers. As Christopher Pawling has remarked in his work *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature*:

> Caudwell is not a crude Stalinist by any means, but at times he does tend to adopt a mode of analysis in which, to quote E. P. Thompson [...] 'the passage from economy to ideology is swift and compulsive.'[22] This is particularly true of those *Studies* in which Caudwell deals with individual literary figures such as Wells, Shaw and D. H. Lawrence, seeing their writings as expressions of particular class affiliations, or representations of the 'bourgeois illusion' as a whole.[Pawling's quotations.](49)

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22 E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin. 1977. p. 237.

Chapter End Notes

1. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'D. H. Lawrence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 44.

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3. D. H. Lawrence. *The Plumed Serpent.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1979. p. 64.

4. D. H. Lawrence. *Kangaroo.* London: Heinemann. 1923. p. 242

5. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'D. H. Lawrence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 49.

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13. Ibid.

14. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 310.

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17. Colin Wilson. *Bernard Shaw: A reassessment.* London: MacMillan. 1969. p. 171.

18. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'George Bernard Shaw'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 12.

19. George Bernard Shaw. *Saint Joan. Act 1.* London: Penguin. 1977. p. 52.

20. George Bernard Shaw. *Major Barbara. Act II.* London: Penguin. 1977. p. 112.

21. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'George Bernard Shaw'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 12.

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23. Colin Wilson. *Bernard Shaw: A Reassessment.* London: MacMillan. 1969. p. 301.

24. George Bernard Shaw. *Letter to John Maynard Keynes. 30/11/1934. Collected Letters Vol. II. 1926-1950.* London: Reinhardt. 1988. p. 390.

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26. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'Pacifism and Violence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 104.

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30. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'George Bernard Shaw'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 18.

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32. Titus Lucretius Carus. *De Rerum Naturæ. Book III.* 436-439. (Transl.): W. H. D. Rouse. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1924. p. 273. Lines 1066-1070.

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35. Friedrich Engels. *Socialism - Utopian and Scientific.* New York, N.Y.: Greenwood. 1963. p. 36.

36. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'H. G. Wells'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 75.

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40. Friedrich Engels. *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State.* Beijing: Foreign Languages Press. p. 210.

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41. George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams. *Introduction to Thomas More's Utopia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1975. p. xx.

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45. H. G. Wells. *Experiment in Autobiography.* London: Gollancz. 1966. p. 811.

46. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'H. G. Wells'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 82.

47. Ibid. pp. 88-89.

48. Ghita Ionescu. *The Political Thought of Saint-Simon.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1976. *Passim.*

49. Christopher Pawling. *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature.* London: Macmillan. 1989. p. 124.

4: Caudwell, his Critics and the *Caudwell Debate.*

i - The 'Scrutiny' of H. A. Mason

> [i]t would be difficult to do justice to the unreadability of this book and most of the subject matter.(1)

The *Scrutineer* H. A. Mason leaves us in no doubt of his opinion of Christopher Caudwell's abilities in his review of *Illusion and Reality*. It would be very easy - and wrong - to dismiss Mason's view as merely a right-wing gut-reaction to Caudwell's Marxism. As we shall see later in this chapter Caudwell attracted criticism from the Left[1] as well as the Right. Mason opens his critique of *Illusion and Reality* with a generalisation about Marxist literary criticism. He says that it is stale and tame and that the approach of Marxists to such matters is, essentially, an amateur one.(2) The last is a justifiable criticism in the case of Caudwell as he was, for all his great erudition, in the strictest sense, an amateur. As we have seen, he was a Grammar school-educated autodidact, who never went to University due to financial constraints in his family. There is, in Mason's condemnation, the suspicion in the Anglo-Saxon world amongst intellectual circles of the autodidact. They are seen to have somehow bypassed the 'rule system' of University education and entry into the Establishment and are therefore not to be trusted as they haven't quite played the game.

Certainly *Illusion and Reality* has problems. Caudwell, it should be remembered, died in Spain not long after completing this work and it is, essentially, a first draft. Many

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[1] E. P. Thompson, certainly sympathetic to Caudwell, described *Illusion and Reality* as a '[b]ad book', but he also sees a great promise in Caudwell which is more than can be said for Mason. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register*. (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin. 1977. p. 235.

passages would have been edited, removed and reworked before it had been published had there been time. Time was not on Caudwell's side. For example, Caudwell might well have removed such inconsistencies as:

> Bourgeois poetry is individual[2] because it expresses the collective emotion of its era.(3)

Or the tortuous:

> Art and science play contradictory and intermingling roles in the sphere of theory. Science in cognition gives art a projected selection from external reality which art organises and makes affectively appealing, so that the energy of the genotype is directed towards imposing its desires on external reality.(4)

But this is hardly indicative of tameness and a stale approach. If anything it is the work of a writer, who in Karl Marx's words on the Paris Commune in 1871, wanted to 'Storm the Gates of Heaven'.(5) Hardly stale though perhaps over-enthusiastic.

Another of Mason's criticisms is that Caudwell makes wild, improbable claims,[3] particularly in the area of sociology and psychology.(6) Mason's attack here, I would argue, is particularly characteristic of a right-wing approach to sociology; that is, one of deep and abiding suspicion as he says that Caudwell considers the subject to be a proven science. Mason says that it will take at least half a century to make such claims concrete.

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[2] However, Max Horkheimer says that the bourgeois individual is not averse to collectivism but only on the basis of individual competition. 'The bourgeois individual did not necessarily see himself as opposed to the collectivity, but believed or was prevailed upon to believe himself to be member of a society that could achieve the highest degree of harmony only through the unrestricted competition of individual interests.' *Eclipse of Reason*. New York, N. Y.: Oxford University Press. 1974. p. 139.

[3] Mason's view seems, unconsciously, to accuse Caudwell of the Thales Mistake. The pre-Socratic philosopher, Thales of Miletus, while gazing up at the stars fell down a well, being too preoccupied with the 'out there' to consider 'the here and now' right before him. *Theaetetus*. 174a. Plato. *Complete Works*. (Editor:) John. M. Cooper. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett. 1997. A cursory reading of Caudwell's works and even a superficial appraisal of his life will show that this is not the case, even though the greatest philosophers, writers and activists make mistakes as, of course, did Caudwell.

Mason doesn't actually say where he gets this figure from but we may assume, perhaps, that fifty years is a distant enough time away from his own for him to avoid consideration of any problems. Mason's views - notwithstanding his 'generosity' towards Marxism in that he defends it against the 'mediocrity' of the likes of Caudwell - are rooted in his political background. He says that '[t]he failure of these books cannot be laid upon the 'dialectic' itself' and that the doctrines of Marx, Engels and Lenin are at least theoretically tenable. The stumbling block as Mason sees it, is that this is precisely what paralyses authors such as Caudwell,(7) due to the 'theoretical perfection' of the dialectic.[4] This is an idealistic and theoretical approach to Marxism, which denies idealism, absolutism and perfection. Dialectical and historical materialism are, in themselves, a refutation of this analysis.

Mason's argument is that it is impossible for one man to attempt such an - as he calls it - Herculean task. This may be so; it is a truly enormous undertaking, a socio-economic analysis of society, physics, art and literature and perhaps even somebody of Caudwell's ability and breadth of knowledge would eventually be defeated by such a project. However, Mason compares Caudwell to the early Karl Marx, but he maintains that the works quoted by Caudwell are of more value in their original contexts.(8) Mason also accuses Caudwell of being eclectic, not a bad thing in itself, but one understands by this criticism that he sees Caudwell as a magpie picking over bits and pieces looking for the brightest, gaudiest idea without any real feeling for its intrinsic worth.

> Where it is convenient, Jung, for example, or Ogden and Richards are adduced to prove *something.* [Mason's emphasis.](9)

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[4] By this I take to mean that Mason sees Marxism as a subject that can only be dealt with in a 'pure' rather than an 'applied' manner. Theoretically possible but unworkable in the 'real' world.

There is no real basis for this criticism. A cursory reading of *Illusion and Reality*'s bibliography shows how widely read Caudwell was. It is indicative of Caudwell's approach that the only direct quotation he gives from Shakespeare is the 'Gold Speech'(10) from *Timon of Athens*[5] and it is precisely the same speech quoted by Karl Marx in *The German Ideology*.(11) This accords with Mason's view that Caudwell is very much like the early Karl Marx, considering that *The German Ideology* was written in 1845-1846. That Caudwell's sources were wide-ranging is, I would argue, a great strength, not a weakness, in his attempt to construct a coherent world-view. Francis Mulhern calls him the last great Marxist encyclopaedist in the English tradition.(12) I agree with him. Caudwell was a scrupulous and honest researcher.

Mason is most vehement in his rejection of the idea of the purely economic basis for poetry and the analysis of it, in this case by Caudwell. Something, Mason says, that is 'most damaging and least excusable'(13) He maintains that Caudwell is totally unaware of any other possibilities. This is where Mason's credentials as a right-winger can most directly be challenged. An anti-Marxist, which Mason is, will often attack a Marxist on this basis. For the anti-Marxists the economic mode of analysis is the most reprehensible of all faults. However, Mason doesn't actually give any counter-argument, save that when discussing cultural matters in relation to the bourgeoisie and proletariat, the terminology must be given a different meaning.[6] This is merely a thinly-disguised

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[5] Thus much of this will make black, white; foul, fair
wrong, right; base, noble; old, young; coward, valiant
This yellow slave...
Will make the hoar leprosy adored. etc., etc.
William Shakespeare. *Timon of Athens. Act IV. Scene iii. The Complete Works.* (Editors.): Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1994.

[6] 'He [Caudwell. k. m.] fails to realise that whether or not the terms 'bourgeois' or 'proletarian' have a precise meaning in economics, they must be given a different meaning when used to describe society in cultural terms.' H. A. Mason. 'The Illusion of Cogency'. Cambridge: Deighton and Bell. 1938. p. 432. By this we may take to mean that Mason, unlike the Marxists, sees no connection between economics and society and that, as such, the discussion of art from an economic perspective is impermissible.

argument for art for art's sake; one that insists that Art (with a capital A) can somehow stand outside the society which produces it. True, the Marxist argument is, ultimately an economic one, but it is not the *sole* argument. The foundation is economic, to be sure, but other concepts grow out and develop from it. As Engels said in his letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890, 'ultimate' does not mean *sole* arbiter in social matters.[7](14)

Mason's strident attack is continued when he says that the proletarian art so derided by Caudwell is enjoyed more by the well to do than the poor.(15) He says this fact is surely evident but he gives no specific examples. It only goes to strengthen Caudwell's argument, not Mason's, that the immiseration of society under capitalism is so all-pervading that no class may escape it. Mason does himself no favours by these sweeping ill-considered statements, the very thing that he accuses Caudwell of doing. His final barb is that the whole of *Illusion and Reality* might well be reduced to pamphlet size without suffering a loss of cogency, even though he admits that the bibliography is wide-ranging. I disagree: the depth and breadth of this undertaking deserve more than sniping commentary.

Mason does offer some (occasionally) valid criticisms of *Illusion and Reality*, particularly with regard to the matter of style and structure. However, *Illusion and Reality* is not unreadable. In any case it is a first draft and Caudwell's other works, *Romance and Realism*, *Studies* and *Further studies in a Dying Culture* are far better laid out and any faint hint of Freudianism or Jungism has been completely eradicated. I have to agree with Stanley Hyman on the question of Mason's critique. The former's view is that it was '[a] bitter, categorical attack and completely imperceptive.'(16) Hyman's view is, essentially, correct. Mason's polemic against Caudwell is ill-thought out and crudely reductionist but he is not alone: others, too, as we shall see below have

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[7] For full text see 'Caudwell the Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic', thesis chapter 2. p. 37. (57)

made the same essential *faux pas* in regard to Caudwell's intellectual and political credentials.

Francis Mulhern in his work *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* says that Mason's ideal was to relate the classics to the modern world.(17) This is rather in the manner of T. S. Eliot's attempted revival of Elizabethan-style Tragedy for the modern stage in his plays and clearly reveals Mason's right-wing Classicist sentiments. He was not, however, the only critic who took Caudwell to task, and neither were the criticisms exclusively from the Right.

ii - The Caudwell Debate 1950-1951

We should consider the background of the controversy over Caudwell in the early 1950s. It was promulgated - indirectly - by A. A. Zhdanov, a leading member of the Communist Party of The Soviet Union in Leningrad; he was instrumental in the defence of that city during the siege of 1941-1944. He gained notoriety in 1947 for his attack, at a Philosophical Workers' Conference, on Professor Georgiy Feodorovich Alexandrov's work, *A History of Western Philosophy*. Zhdanov said:

> A considerable share of responsibility for the fact that the philosophical front does not stand in the first ranks of our ideological work rests, unfortunately, upon Comrade Alexandrov. He does not possess, unfortunately, the ability for sharply critical disclosure of the weaknesses of his own work.(18)

Later in the Conference, Zhdanov launched a bitter attack on '[T]he corrupt Ideology of the Bourgeoisie' naming 'The Vatican and racists, obscurantists and clericalism' in general and Jean-Paul Sartre[8] and Jean Genet in particular. 'Pimps and depraved

[8] While disagreeing with the Zhdanovian critical method, I must point out that Sartre was hardly consistent

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criminals as philosophers - this is indeed the limit of decay and ruin.'(19) This attack led, in Britain, to a sustained debate in the pages of the Communist Party of Great Britain's theoretical journal, *The Modern Quarterly*, on the merits of Caudwell and his works. As we shall see below the polemic both for and against Caudwell was sustained, often quite bitter and partisan. We should begin with the views of Maurice Cornforth.

(a) - Maurice Cornforth: 'Caudwell and Marxism'

Cornforth wrote a lengthy critique of Caudwell, questioning the latter's Marxist credentials. At the very beginning of the article he uses Caudwell's own words against him, citing Caudwell's insistence on Marxism being 'imposed on the mishmash of the strands of culture' but ends up with Caudwell's attempted synthesis becoming - itself - a mishmash.(20) According to Cornforth, Caudwell has not made that essential, clean break that must be achieved by the intellectual who comes to Marxism.[9] He accuses Caudwell of being an idealistic, Freudian sheep in Marxist wolf's clothing and claims that, in essence, Caudwell's view is reactionary and metaphysical as it relies upon a basic changelessness in the human genotype as the foundation of society. He also accuses Caudwell of introducing a Freudian foundation into his poetic analyses. He says of the purported Freudian aspects of the Caudwellian thesis that:

> [T]o show how the Freudian libido is harnessed to an agricultural economy is certainly neither good economics, good sociology, nor good aesthetics. But if you believe that there is a basic and eternal contradiction 'between individual or natural man

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as a Marxist. See, for example, his comments at the Club Maintenant in 1945 on the rôle of art and that '[w]e never speak of art as irresponsible'. This thesis 'Introduction'. (32) p. 15. Caudwell, let alone Zhdanov, would never have agreed with Sartre on this matter.

[9] Ironically an accusation made in Caudwell's 'address of the proletariat to the wavering artists' in *Illusion and Reality*. p. 317-321. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. See below (57)

> and associated and civilised man' then you are faced with the problem of finding some means to make 'the natural man' carry out the work of society. Caudwell thought he had here found the function of poetry. This, he declared 'is what makes poetry necessary and gives it its meaning and truth.'
>
> Caudwell's theory of poetry follows from his Freudian, idealist premisses. If, as materialists, we reject these premisses, then we realise that the problem he posed was a false one and that he is led further and further into the wilderness as a result of his attempted solution of it.
> [Cornforth's quotations.](21)

This is as forthright a condemnation as any we will find arraigned against Caudwell but, as we shall see below, through the analysis provided by George Thomson on this question, it is not Caudwell who has based his thesis on a false premise but Cornforth. Another perceived aspect of Caudwell's 'heresy' is his notion that poetry is 'irrational'. Cornforth says 'So poetry does not, as Marxists had hitherto supposed, portray in poetic images the reality of the world and our own life in it.'(22) I feel, along with other critics, that Cornforth has seriously misinterpreted Caudwell on this issue. Caudwell is *not* saying that poetry is somehow 'unhinged' or 'insane'; far from it.[10] He is stating that

> [p]oetry is in fact just the expression of one aspect of the contradiction between man's emotions and his environment, which takes the very real and concrete form of man's struggle with Nature. Because it is a product of this struggle, poetry at every stage of its historical development reflects in its own province man's active relation to his environment.(23)

In this struggle with our environment not only external forces are at work, but internal ones, too. Caudwell insists that we have to consider the internal along with the external

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10 'This is *not* to say that poetry is incoherent or meaningless.' [Emphasis added.] Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 143.

when analysing this struggle. If we were to take Cornforth's word on the subject literally we would never have had *any* poetry. After all, if it is a mere reflection of our external, objective existence then what, ultimately, would be the point of poetry? Why, indeed, bother with literature or art at all?[11] Surely these forms are not only generated externally by objective forces but also by our internal desires,[12] although of course Caudwell would be the first to deny that the internal and subjective is the ultimate arbiter in human consciousness. He said in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* that:

> History is an evolution, a change; and we can no more expect to derive the real pressure and being of a civilisation from its language and material surroundings at any stage than we would expect [a] naked man, put into a deserted London to become a modern Londoner. All social qualities derive from society in movement, inheriting capital and transforming it, and we cannot understand the congealed products of each stage - its records - without understanding the metabolism of the society that produced them.(24)

In *Illusion and Reality* Caudwell makes a clear distinction between dreaming and poetry. He says of this dichotomy that: '[I]n poetic illusion the process is inverted. Dreams ascend from the unconscious upwards and are therefore blind and uncreative. Poems descend from the consciousness downwards and are therefore aware and creative. Dream fearfully avoids the dynamic of the emotions, so as not to wake the sleeper to action; poetry explores it courageously, so as to change the inner world.'(25) Thus Caudwell

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[11] As E. P. Thompson says when rejecting Cornforth's criticism that Caudwell was an idealist relying on the 'eternal genotype' for his answer to human aesthetics and society: 'This is, exactly, what he does *not* do, for if he could have explained social development in this way, then no function would have been left for the arts.'[Thompson's emphasis.] 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin. 1977. p. 237.

[12] As Bukharin notes, '[t]here is nothing mystic in phenomena themselves. The process of life, taken as "experience," has its ineffectual *emotional* and volitional sides.'[Bukharin's quotation, emphasis added.] 'Poetry, Poetics, and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR'. *Problems of Soviet Literature.* Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. p. 191.

draws a very clear and sharp distinction between the conscious and the unconscious, relegating the latter to an inferior position, something that Cornforth (and Margot Heinemann) either disregarded or failed to notice.

Caudwell is even criticised for a purportedly 'non-Marxist' style. Cornforth says of it: 'Caudwell's very style, which is often praised, and which has at times a spellbinding quality, is not yet the style of a Marxist. In the classics of Marxism there has been developed a style which is clear, forceful and simple. Not so with Caudwell, who still employs many of the tricks and mannerisms of the bourgeois intellectual.'(26) We shall see Cornforth answered, forcefully, by George Thomson later in this chapter with regard to the 'un-Marxist character' of Caudwell's style, although I would argue here that style should never be subordinate to content.

Cornforth's main argument is that Caudwell is profoundly anti-Marxist, even though he sees Caudwell trying to avoid this throughout *Illusion and Reality*.(27) We should consider Caudwell's own views on this subject. In *Studies in a Dying Culture*, he stresses that while the genotype is the natural foundation for our existence as human beings, it is not the sole arbiter for our higher consciousness. He asks: '[w]hy do social relations change and why do psyches alter from age to age?'(28) These are hardly the words of a Freudian or an idealist. Caudwell sees Freud as a failure, albeit a magnificent one.

> Freud, like all modern psychologists who base themselves on the unchanging instincts of the genotype,[13] is powerless to explain the only thing that interests psychology, the thing that *constitutes* psychology, the perpetual variation and development of the mental phenotype. [Caudwell's emphasis.](29)

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[13] This criticism is not properly applicable to Freud, although it *does* apply to Jung.

On the basis of these words alone, it is not possible to dismiss Cornforth's critique in its entirety but it does undermine his accusations of reactionary idealism. Cornforth does acknowledge that Caudwell criticises Freud.(30) This is clear enough when Caudwell accuses Freud of idealism and mysticism throughout the chapter on bourgeois psychology,(31) although he is far harsher on Jung as we shall see later in this chapter when considering the critique of Robert Currie. Cornforth, however, is still adamant that Caudwell is idealistic in his approach to society. He says of this supposed idealism that it drives Caudwell further and further away from Marxism.(32) How is this? Because, says Cornforth, the idealistic view maintains that society, fundamentally, is always the same beneath the superficially changing cultural veneer(33) and that Marxism does not explain society in the terms of instincts and the genotype.

Caudwell, discussing the development of language in *Illusion and Reality*, says:

> Some animals are dumb. But for the animal engaged in production in association - the animal called man - the cry becomes the word. Its "value" is now no longer instinctive - resulting from the relation of genotype to habitual environment - it becomes "arbitrary" - resulting from the relation of modified genotype to artificial environment in economic production.[Caudwell's quotations.](34)

The key word in this passage is 'modified'. The genotype is modified by economic production, according to Caudwell. Where does this leave Cornforth's argument that, according to Caudwell, we are under the control of the 'unchanging genotype'? Further, in the same work, Caudwell says that although in the genotype there is a substratum of likeness in humans, nevertheless:

> [m]an does not change from Athenian to ancient Briton and then to Londoner by innate differences stamped in by natural selection, *but by acquired*

> *changes derived from social evolution.*[Emphasis added.](35)

Caudwell is not committing any Freudian or Jungian *faux pas.* Any close reading of Caudwell will reveal that while there are copious references and derivations from diverse non-Marxist writers, Caudwell's argument is basically a Marxist one. His view is that social change is the deciding factor, not the genotype. He points out in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture,* when discussing the rôle of the cortex in human consciousness, that there is a major difference between humans and the lower animals.

> The cortex consists of fold upon fold of only slightly differentiated neurones. Its hypertrophy in man is generally correlated with the plasticity of man's behaviour. He comes into the world a *tabula rasa* for habits.[sic] Unlike the fixed instinctive reactions of the insects, his behaviour is mainly acquired. It is assumed therefore that the staggeringly complex nerve mesh of the cortex, with its hundreds of millions of cells, is the blank page on which life writes its message.(36)

Cornforth's view(37) that Caudwell's 'idealism' allows the latter to think that the social world is but a veneer covering the volcanic underworld of primitive instincts, which are waiting to break out and seek expression, is fanciful. No more than that. Caudwell never said this. Caudwell's view is the clearer, no matter how 'difficult,' as Cornforth claims, his writings are to read.(38) To be fair to Cornforth, he did admit to Caudwell's brilliance and he was to use Caudwell in the 1960s in an argument against the philosopher Karl Popper[14] on the subject of the scientific basis of Marxism.(39) It is ironic that he should use a critic whom he regarded as an anti-Marxist, idealist metaphysician,[15] to berate another critic for taking an anti-Marxist stance.[16] Cornforth's

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[14] See thesis chapter 10 'The Philosophy of Reality', pp. 325-326. (21) for text.

[15] In fairness to Cornforth, it must be pointed out that although he had grave misgivings about Caudwell and his works, he found him 'sound' enough to quote him on the subject of linguistics in his own work, *In Defence of Philosophy Against Positivism and Pragmatism.* p. 106. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1950.

views, though extremely well-expressed, are, nevertheless, inaccurate. The argument that Caudwell was a vague, Freudian-Jungian idealist is untenable and unjustified. Cornforth's attitude, in this instance, comes very close to the mechanical materialism which seemed to permeate the ideology of the CPGB at the time, rather than a dialectical-materialist position, in that he takes an economic-reductionist stance on the question of political, social and cultural development.

(b) - George Thomson: 'In Defence of Poetry'.

Thomson, one of Caudwell's most resolute defenders, replied to Cornforth's accusations in the *Modern Quarterly*. He writes: 'If I were asked to name the two books to which I owe most in my own work on Greek poetry, I should not hesitate about the answer. They are Engels' *Origin of the Family* and Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality*.[17] In coupling the two books together I am not concerned to judge their relative importance, but simply assess my debt to them.'(40) How does Thomson reach this conclusion? Thomson has quoted Caudwell before in his works *Æschylus and Athens* and *Studies in Ancient Greek Society: The Prehistoric Aegean*[18] in 1949. His opinion of Caudwell is clear: the latter's works on poetry and the Greeks (which Thomson admits extends only to a few pages in *Illusion and Reality*(41)) are profound. Thomson sees the great value of Caudwell's works precisely because he sees Caudwell as a *Marxist.* Throughout, Thomson continually takes Cornforth to task on the notion that Caudwell was an idealist and was thoroughly tainted with Bourgeois ideology, culture, style, etc. He says of Cornforth's

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It should also be noted that it was Cornforth's and Bernal's reconsideration of Caudwell that led to the publication of his works after the debate.

[16] See thesis chapter 10, 'The Philosophy of Reality'.(21) pp. 325-326.

[17] A debt already noted in his introduction to *Æschylus and Athens*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1940. p. vii.

[18] See this thesis chapter 5 'The Inverted World'. p. 170. (44)

faint praise of Caudwell that parts of his work 'bear the stamp of true genius' but, as Thomson notes, Cornforth makes no attempt to say *which* parts.(42)

Although Cornforth's views have already been discussed we should consider Caudwell's own views in regard to dialectical materialism.

> Mind is a determining set of relations between the matter in my body and in the rest of the Universe. It is not all the set, for not all the necessities whereby my body and the rest of the Universe mutually determine each other is known to me, not all my being is conscious being. In so far as these relations are conscious, I am free, for to be free is to have one's conscious volition, determine the relations between the Universe and oneself.[Caudwell's capitalisation.](43)

These are not the words of an idealist, neither are they words of a Machist or an Empiricist. Caudwell sees the rôle of consciousness in relation to freedom as crucial, an indispensable condition for human progress, both of the individual and the collective. Our ability to wield, constructively, the forces of nature are effective and *a*ffective upon ourselves and the world about us.

As to Cornforth's assumption that Caudwell's 'style' is not Marxist, he asks:

> Now, in the first place, what *is* the style of a Marxist? Is it the style of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin or Mao Tse-Tung? Is it the style of Harry Pollitt, William Gallagher or R. P. Dutt? The work of some of these Marxists is known to me only in translation; yet even in translation they reveal differences in style no less great than the differences of their personality.(44)

The gist of Thomson's argument is this: there is no such thing as an abstract 'Marxist style' because there is no such thing as an 'abstract Marxist'. Abstract Man does not exist, as Caudwell's analyses repeatedly show. We are all, for better or for worse,

produced by our social and economic environment and for the authors quoted by Thomson above, their backgrounds were as varied as their emotional disposition and their intelligence. As to Caudwell's own style I agree with E. P. Thompson when he writes that: '[C]audwell's style is fluent, cogent and assertive.'(45) This can be seen throughout all of his theoretical works as even a cursory reading will show.

On the question of poetry, Thomson defends Caudwell against Cornforth's assumption that Caudwell is seeking some 'Inner Man', in a Rousseaunian sense, a mythical, primordial source of creation. He accuses Cornforth, justifiably, of demolishing Caudwell's argument without stating it.(46) He does note, however, a problem in *Illusion and Reality*. It is in the section started in Chapter VIII ('The World and the 'I''.) and concluded in Chapter XI ('The Organisation of the Arts'.). Thomson says that, had the matter been left as it was, it would have had to have been resolved as best it could.(47) But the matter (a major confusion, identified by Cornforth of the Freudian Libido in relation to aesthetics) was, however, *not* left unresolved by Caudwell, for, as Thomson points out, in the last few months left before he was killed at Jarama, he addressed the problem in his work 'Beauty' in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*.(48) There Caudwell states that aesthetics is the product of a social process. Not all humans at all times feel that the same object is beautiful or otherwise. 'We do not respond to all beautiful things in precisely the same way.' says Caudwell(49), and while we might see this as a commonplace, his further observations are not so easily dismissed.

> Still more striking is the change in the responses to the beautiful from age to age. No age is satisfied wholly with the beautiful things of its forefathers, but produces other things, to the measure of its desires, quite clearly different from those beautiful traditions it inherits. This new vision does not exclude the old, however. The old still seems beautiful, but now its qualities are seen through a kind of mist or aerial perspective of intervening time, changing and toning its hues.(50)

For Caudwell, social change is the key to the change in aesthetic function, not a changeless undercurrent inherent in the human genotype. That he acknowledged the existence of the genotypical functions of the human race is unquestionable, but that he placed little reliance upon that genotype as the foundation of human *society* is also unquestionable. His words are a reply to Cornforth when he states:

> In the process of society, all nature enters. Man measures himself against infinite space and takes his time from the sun. He feels the hot breath of the desert in his cities, and he goes out alone or in bands to establish himself in jungles. He moves on the face of the lonely sea in man-made ships. The threads of social process penetrate, under the hands of Einstein, and Amundsen, Freud and Rutherford, Kepler and Magellan, into remoter and remoter cracks in reality. The labouring masses of society root deep into the face of the earth. The farmer sowing the fruitful prairies, the lone hunter in untamed woods and the sailor on the 'wine-dark' sea are all part of the social process. As such, the social process generates everywhere beauty, not just as a universal but as a specific social product, just as it generates science, politics or religion.[Caudwell's quotation.](51)

(c) - Margot Heinemann: 'A Reply to Thomson'.

Margot Heinemann comes to the defence of Cornforth and his views on Caudwell in issue VI (iv) of *The Modern Quarterly* of 1951. She says of Thomson's views that 'I do not think that either Professor Thomson or any other critics of Maurice Cornforth have controverted his main point, which is that the *central thesis* of *Illusion and Reality* is wrong, un-Marxist and leads us away from a proper understanding of poetry into an idealist muddle.'[Heinemann's emphasis.](52) Is this valid? Her argument is that

Caudwell makes '[a]n extremely sharp antithesis between perception and thought.'(53) By this I understand that Heinemann is referring to the issue that Cornforth attempted to address with his critique of Caudwell's notion of the genotype and, if we may use the phrase, the 'inner, eternal being' that seems to run counter to Marxist thought. Heinemann sees that Caudwell equates perception with the genotype; thought with the 'higher' social human being. But this is not Caudwell's thesis. On the genotypical foundations of art, and art's adaptability to society, Caudwell says that:

> [Art] becomes more socially and biologically valuable and greater art the more that remoulding 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.(54)

Further, he says, '[b]y giving external reality an affective organisation drawn from its heart, the genotype makes reality, even death, more interesting because more true.'(55) This, of course, is not a narrowly orthodox view for a Marxist of his era; that is the reflective view that art must mirror reality. Caudwell's argument is that human physical existence - itself materially based - has a profound impact upon our art and culture. But to identify this aspect of human existence does not make one an anti-Marxist. He says, in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* that there is a vast difference between humans and the social insects such as bees, ants and wasps.[19]

> With them, this organisation is instinctive: bees and wasps in any situation will reproduce it. But men will not reproduce their society instinctively. European culture and capitalism are not instinctive. Men, turned as babes into a jungle, would wander

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[19] See below Karl Marx (78)

> through it as mere brutes, without individuality or consciousness, feral and dumb.
>
> This proves that man's behaviour, ideas, art, science, laws ethics, technique are not in *him*, in his genetic make-up. In his genetic make-up is only plasticity, the potentiality of this or a thousand other shapes.[Caudwell's emphasis.](56)

Caudwell never relegates the social implications of art to a secondary rôle. As we shall see in his collective call of the proletariat to the wavering artists, he demands a social responsibility from poets that runs entirely counter to the 'art for art's sake' argument.

> Your conception of freedom is also partial. All consciousness is determined by the society which produces it, but because you are ignorant of this mode of determination, you imagine your consciousness to be free and not determined by your experience and history. The illusion you exhibit so proudly is the badge of slavery to yesterday, for if you could see those causes which determine your thought you would be like us, on the road to freedom. The recognition of necessity in society is the only passage to social freedom.(57)

Heinemann makes no mention of this aspect of Caudwell's works; the authentically Marxist dimension that demands that art squares itself with life, both internally and externally. Rather, she dwells upon an aspect that she and others consider to be unpalatable and unacceptable by orthodox Marxist standards. Heinemann accuses Caudwell of 'working out a narrow and decadent definition of "pure poetry".'[Heinemann's quotation.], and claims that '[M]uch that is unsatisfactory in Caudwell's criticism comes from this, from trying to force all poetry - primitive ritual, work-songs, opium dreams, Shakespeare's sonnets and all - into one mould.'(58) This is wholly untenable. Throughout his works Caudwell militantly opposes such a notion, but this point, apparently, is lost upon Heinemann. She seems to have taken Caudwell's words on poetry and the poet as his definitive statement on the subject without going any

further into the matter. When he writes: 'poetry springs from the contradiction between the instincts and experience of the poet'(59) he is, indeed, drawing his argument - in part - from a genotypical foundation. However - and this is the most important rebuff to Heinemann - he says, further, that: 'The researches of a brilliant investigator such as Freud increase instead of clarifying the hopeless confusion of modern ideology.'(60) Had Caudwell been a 'decadent idealist' surely he would not have so resoundingly condemned Freudian analysis here and elsewhere in his works? That Caudwell's analyses are, by comparison to those of his contemporaries, highly innovative is beyond doubt but this is hardly detrimental to his thesis, ambitious as it is. Innovation and originality is, I would argue, a major part of Marxism and to call Caudwell a bourgeois idealist is as unreasonable as calling Karl Marx an unregenerate Hegelian. The influence is undeniably there but Caudwell, like Marx, has taken the essence of a school of thought and turned it on its head to the benefit of dialectical and historical materialism and the struggle for progress. Applying the concept of the genotype to a Marxist analysis Caudwell has strengthened the approach of Marxism to undoubtedly idealistically-influenced doctrines such as bourgeois psychoanalysis and literary criticism in his attempt to provide a comprehensive world-view, an outlook that squares itself with reality. Caudwell has never, in any of his works, defined poetry as coming from a single source; he acknowledges, repeatedly, the multiplicity of sources, both social, material and idealistic. Should anybody be accused of trying to make poetry conform to a simplistic and crude foundation then surely it should be those who insist on life and mind being a mere reflection of human, material existence. Neither is Caudwell alone amongst Marxists in this view. Sebastiano Timpanaro says much the same in his work, *On Materialism*, on the continuity of culture that:

> [W]e should not forget either that this cultural continuity - through which, as Marx observes, we

> feel so near to the poetry of Homer - has also been rendered possible by the fact that man as a biological being has remained essentially unchanged from the beginnings of civilisation to the present, and those sentiments and representations which are closest to the biological facts of human existence have changed little.(61)

No doubt Timpanaro, too, would have fallen foul of Cornforth, Heinemann and co., whose objections stem, I believe from a serious over-reliance upon the USSR as the acme of political, economic, artistic and scientific critique, although Caudwell himself was not wholly immune to this illusion either. E. P. Thompson says of his work that there is a Messianic tone to it, contrasting the dying bourgeois culture with that of the vigorous and progressive Soviet Union of his time.(62) That being said, and I am in cautious agreement with Thompson here, particularly in relation to *Illusion and Reality*, I feel that I must reiterate what has already been noted in the 'Introduction' to this thesis, that Caudwell's works are, for the most part, lacking in the over-blown rhetoric so often found in Communist writers of that era.

We should now consider the views of the scientist J. D Bernal.

(d) J. D. Bernal and Scientific Socialism

Bernal's hostility to Caudwell's analyses is clear from the outset of his article in support of Cornforth. 'In them[20] there is only too ample evidence of the truth of Cornforth's thesis, that their formulations are those of contemporary bourgeois scientific philosophy, Einsteinianism[sic] - Morganist - Freudian, and not those of Marxism.'(63) His argument, in line with Heinemann and Cornforth, is that Caudwell's doctrines are tainted

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[20] Caudwell's works.

with bourgeois heresy. Of Caudwell's works on physics he says that it is deeply imbued with Freudian thought. Bernal quotes from *Illusion and Reality*'[S]cience is the cognition of the Real World by a Mock Ego as against Art where the Feeling of a Social Ego creates a Mock World.'[Capitalisation as Bernal's.](64) Apparently what Bernal finds frustrating is that Caudwell is using inappropriate terminology i.e. that of a psychoanalyst rather than a physicist. Of course, the issue is not solely a question of linguistic confusion; he also berates Caudwell on the question of physics in relation to Marxism. He says that Caudwell's approach is an '[e]ssentially static, formalistic, patterned thinking, quite foreign to Marxism.'(65) I do not agree with this analysis. Even a cursory reading will show that Caudwell was a highly creative, imaginative thinker who could link quite disparate themes to strengthen his argument. However, like Cornforth, Bernal admits that Caudwell was striving to be a Marxist(66) and that he had based a good deal of his works on the Marxist classics. Nevertheless Bernal insists, '[F]reud, Einstein and Marx are uncomfortable bedfellows.'(67) There can be no serious Marxist who would disagree with Bernal who, supporting Cornforth, maintains that such importations produce the most harmful distortions.(68) However, I maintain that any usage Caudwell may have made of Freud and Einstein was to condemn the system that produced both Freudian thought and Einsteinian physics. Further, Bernal regards Caudwell not only as a Freudian, but an Hegelian, too. 'Read in its context, this whole dialectic, for all its constructive achievement, appears far more Hegelian[21] than Marxist'.(69) It would seem that Bernal, in the manner of Cornforth, is willing to use any stick to beat Caudwell, providing that he is soundly beaten. Caudwell, in the words of Bernal himself, '[c]riticised brilliantly and destructively the bourgeois scientists' but (echoing Cornforth) that he had 'allowed much of their method to slip into his thinking.'(70) There is, patently, far too much of the Freudian in Caudwell for Bernal's

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[21] There is a distinct possibility that Bernal has cribbed this rather unhelpful comment from J. B. S. Haldane's 1939 review of *Illusion and Reality*. See this thesis chapter 1 'Introduction'. (12) p. 5.

liking. He says of Caudwell, damningly, that '[h]is science, like his "bourgeois", has a timeless air.'(71)[Bernal's quotation.] the use of 'timeless' is Bernal's keyword in his criticism of Caudwell. In this he denounces, ironically, the genotypical concept of Caudwell's theses. Caudwell's own words on the nature of society and history should be sufficient reply to Bernal's accusation.

> History only starts when fresh laws, inclusive of, but additional to physical, physiological and biological laws begin to operate and the evolution and change of these laws is the subject of history.[...]
> History has this peculiarity additional to the other sciences that, as it were, it forces man to bend round and look himself in the eyes.(72)

Yet another criticism of Bernal's is that Caudwell's attempt at popularising science appeals to intellectuals and, in the main, to *literary* intellectuals and thus Marxism is presented in a way that they are familiar with and understand.(73) We must, however, ask: why is this a problem? Surely Bernal doesn't wish to *exclude* literary intellectuals from the revolutionary struggle? Certainly Caudwell did not as is shown in his 'proletariat's collective address'.[22] For all his 'popularising' his message to the intelligentsia was clear: there is a revolution coming, it's up to you to take a stand and to take it now. I think that there is an air of professional dismissal of Caudwell in Bernal's critique. He feels, perhaps, that Caudwell is impinging on 'his' field of study and I think that his lack of sympathy stems, in a good part, from this. Of course this in itself does not make Bernal wrong. Even he admits that Caudwell got it right in a roundabout way, due to the parlous state of physics at the time, rather than any great insights for Caudwell. Damning with faint praise as it is, Bernal is objective enough to see that Caudwell tried to apply a Marxist critique to physics. Since Bernal's time we have seen the crisis, so

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[22] See above in the section on Margot Heinemann. (57) p. 107.

ably demonstrated by Caudwell, deepen and become even more fragmented. Bernal, were he alive today, might well take a different stance on the question of Caudwellian physics given the way the situation has deteriorated even further since the early 1950s.

There were other contributors to the Caudwell controversy in support of Caudwell. Edward York's refutation of Cornforth's accusation of Freudianism in Caudwell says of the former's views that '[i]n fact, Caudwell did live long enough to reject Freudism,[sic] and, if this involved the need to scrap[23] *Illusion and Reality*, then in *Further Studies,* that is, by implication, just what he did.'(74)

Werner Thierry said of the Cornforth attack that he, Cornforth, '[d]oes not show the main idea always haunting Caudwell: the demonstration that liberty is a question of social adaptation and conscious activity, not, as proclaimed by all bourgeois post-war prophets, a question of individual independence and emotional spontaneity.'(75) And O. Robb asks of the detractors, 'Does the poem not exist in the imagination of the poet before he commits it to paper?'(76) A good question indeed, for if we take the orthodox 'reflective' view of the mind and culture, subordinating it to a secondary rôle, the imagination must be a pale, etiolated shadow of external reality. This, however, denies the human power to conceptualise abstractly and powerfully for the benefit or, it must be said, sometimes to the detriment of human progress. From where comes the ability to develop such notions as physics, psychology, the arts etc., without the imagination? In 1989 Christopher Pawling[24] said '[T]he finest Marxist thinkers have all recognised the power of art to reflect on and transcend its own conditions of existence by experimenting with, and remodelling, reality in and through the imagination',(77) and Marx himself

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[23] Much as I am in favour of York's defence of Caudwell, I feel that the notion of 'scrapping' *Illusion and Reality* is going rather too far for, although the refutation of Freudian Thought is far more developed in *Further Studies,* it can hardly be said that *Illusion and Reality* is replete with Freudian idealism.

[24] Pawling notes that other critics take a more sociological, rather than biological view of the foundations of art. He quotes Janet Wollf's *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art.* London: Allen and Unwin. 1983. She quotes Foucault's works on gender in relation to capitalism in support of her thesis. Also, on p. 22, she makes a passing reference to Caudwell and Fox in relation to their analyses.

states in *Kapital* 'A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the constitution of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure *in imagination* before he erects it in reality'[Emphasis added.](78) In this vein, Alick West defends Caudwell against Cornforth by saying that 'Caudwell's words to bourgeois intellectuals spring from his own practice.'(79) and that he '[c]arried his Marxism into a field which too often is kept a secret reserve for bourgeois thought and emotion - one's own subjective experience, and particularly aesthetic experience.'(80) This last might seem, superficially, to agree with Cornforth's dismissal of Caudwell as a subjective idealist, but West insists that the former is 'fighting shy of subjective activity'(81) and that

> [b]eneath Cornforth's "we" there seems to be concealed the ghost of a bourgeois "I": it is that ghost to whom the world appears an indiscriminate conglomeration of nature and society - that is, of all other people except himself and it is that ghost who calls down St. Paul from the Areopagus to give to this conglomeration a semblance of meaning.
> Socialist realism and socialist humanism assert the contradiction between nature and people. For our aim is freedom - that we "freely associated men," should control nature, not that nature should control us.[West's quotations.](82)

We should take it that West is accusing Cornforth of being a mechanical materialist in his 'reflective' approach. If, as has been argued above and elsewhere, human consciousness is *solely* a reflection of external reality, then to use Caudwell's words quoted elsewhere[25] in relation to the 'perfectly logical language' it would be a 'perfectly useless thing'. To be sure, Caudwell is addressing the problem of linguistics here, but I

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[25] See thesis chapter 9 'Caudwell and Wittgenstein's Ladder'.(23) p. 288

think his words apply, readily, to this matter too. We cannot have a passive, reflective view of life. This, in any case, denies dialectical materialism. To argue for this is to be refuted in the manner that Engels refuted the claim that economics is the *sole* arbiter of human history.[26] True, it is the *final* basis but never the entirety. West's argument is that Cornforth is attacking Caudwell for a great achievement, the analysis of what can turn dreams into reality and that, while Caudwell's work '[n]eeds and merits critical appraisal' it should '[n]ot be from the standpoint which he overcame.'(83) I agree with West. It would seem, to repeat, that Cornforth has erroneously criticised several major positions of Caudwell, mainly from an inaccurate reading of his works and an over-reliance on *Illusion and Reality* as the main text.

The following critique of G. M. Matthews also takes issue with Cornforth but is cautiously critical of Caudwell and his admirers and notes and welcomes Cornforth's '[s]harp warning' against 'swallowing Caudwell whole.'(84) However Matthews points out that humanity's biological makeup is relatively unchanging. He says if it that if it were otherwise it would make a mockery of Karl Marx's views on the enduring appeal of the Greek epic.[27](85) Further, Matthews sees no essential conflict between Cornforth's and Caudwell's view on the nature of poetry. '[I] do not see that it differs essentially from Cornforth's view that poetry portrays "In poetic imagery the reality of the world and our life in it," except that his [Cornforth's] definition is *passive* and fails to specify the all-important factor of *conflict* in reality as so portrayed.'[Matthews' quotations, emphases.](86) However, Matthews' most serious accusation is that Cornforth '[a]ppears so anxious to prove Caudwell entirely wrong that the value of his own criticism is

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[26] See Engels' letter to Joseph Bloch. Ibid. (14)

[27] 'But the difficulty is not in grasping the idea that Greek art and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. It lies rather in understanding why they still constitute for us a source of aesthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment.' Karl Marx. *The Economics. Selected Works.* (Editor:) David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 541. See, also, Timpanaro's comments. Ibid. (61)

impaired.'(87) This last would certainly seem to be the case. I would argue that, at times, Cornforth's objectivity is questionable. As Matthews notes:

> [H]e sees the *words* "irrational", "emotional", "barbaric", "illusion" and the rest, and without examining what precisely Caudwell means by them, and the contexts in which they are employed, he assumes that because they have an idealistic ring they must have a non-material significance. [Matthews' quotations, emphasis.](88)

It is as if Cornforth feels driven, no doubt by the Zhdanovian impetus, to disparage Caudwell no matter what. We have seen him accuse Caudwell of being a Freudian, an idealist and a bourgeois intellectual, whereas he was certainly none of these.

There is, however, support for Cornforth from Montagu Slater. He says of Caudwell's works that

> [a] chief source of obscurity is found in what Caudwell understands by the word "poetry." He takes from Mallarmé the second half of a famous phrase. "Poetry is not composed of ideas, it is composed of words". Now Mallarmé, of course, was following Baudelaire, who translated the originator of the theory, Poe. All three were concerned to change the notion of poetry then current, - e.g. Poe argued that most of *Paradise Lost* was not poetry - they demanded a final specialisation of function, aiming at what later came to be called "pure poetry."[Slater's quotations.](89)

Once again, Caudwell is being attacked for being a critic who is primarily concerned with an 'Art for Art's sake' argument. Slater says of this approach to art that it is 'decadent and narrow' much as Heinemann does. And, to be sure, if it were actually the case then Slater would, indeed, be right to condemn this for if poetry is merely 'words' then it cannot carry an affective emotional tone, cannot develop ideas and cannot be

anything except an exercise in decadent surrealism.[28] Unfortunately for Slater's argument, this is not the case. Caudwell makes quite clear his opinion of this notion. He says:

> Mallarmé's advice to his painter friend is well known: "poetry is written with words, not ideas." [...] Poetry certainly *evokes* ideas i.e. memory images, or it would be mere sound. We confine ourselves here therefore to the proposition: "poetry is composed of words."
> [Caudwell's quotation, emphasis.](90)

Slater's argument is seriously damaged by Caudwell's statement. True, poetry is composed of words, but *not* merely words *alone* as if standing in a vacuum. Caudwell's views are based on a preceding analysis of both Matthew Arnold and Shelley. Arnold's view is that poetry is idealistic, while Shelley's is that poetry and society are synonymous[29] and 'that both Plato and Bacon were poets.'(91) Caudwell finds this as untenable as the notion that poetry is 'merely words'. He takes a Marxist, dialectical approach to both concepts, his synthesis being that poetry is, indeed, words but it is also ideas, denying both the narrow, decadent approach for which he was wrongly condemned and also the idealism of writers such as Matthew Arnold and Shelley. In justice to Slater he does admit that lack of space makes him - Slater - seem 'cocksure and dogmatic' on this question and that he '[w]ould like to put in a hundred qualifications.'(92) but the major flaw with his argument is that he is wrong to condemn Caudwell on the basis of decadence and narrowness, just as Heinemann was wrong to do so.

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[28] see, for example, the works of Roger Roughton, Phillip O'Connor, etc.

[29] See Shelley's *Defence of Poetry. Shelley's Political Writings.* (Editor.): Roland Duerksen. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 1970. 'The poetry of the doctrines of Jesus Christ and the mythology and institutions of the Celtic conquerors of the Roman empire outlived the darkness and convulsions connected with the growth and victory and blended themselves into a new fabric of manners and opinion.' p. 182.

Bernal's thesis may (possibly) be on somewhat safer grounds but even he had to admit that Caudwell's critique was 'brilliant and destructive'. Heinemann's criticism is merely a reiteration of Cornforth's attack from a literary, rather than psychological angle. In fact, if we are to consider the later criticisms of Currie, Eagleton, Pradhan and Schuyler, this is precisely what they themselves are doing: recycling Maurice Cornforth, J. D Bernal and Margot Heinemann. Ever since Mason's attack in 1938 there seems to have been a barrage of criticism, some more considered and insightful than others, while the remainder are merely crude and ill-considered attacks from critics who, to be frank, have fallen into the same trap as Cornforth, this being an over-reliance upon *Illusion and Reality* as *the* essential Caudwellian text.

Cornforth replied to his own detractors in the pages of *The Modern Quarterly.* He maintains that although '[H]omage will always be paid to Caudwell for the boldness and scope of his ideas and his pioneering spirit', '[M]ost of what he actually wrote, however, was very far removed from a Marxist theory of art.'[30](93) He accuses those who had written in defence of Caudwell of avoiding the issue that Caudwell was a Freudian. They had, according to Cornforth, '[c]ircled round and avoided this central point.'(94) This must be challenged. Most of Cornforth's critics, in defending Caudwell, have taken issue with his one-sided approach which condemns Caudwell for a Freudian heresy, *via* an exclusive reading of *Illusion and Reality* with no reference to *Studies* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture.*

When Cornforth discusses his critics he says of Thomson and West that they exclaim '"Cornforth chooses the object!'"[Cornforth's quotation.](95) His answer? 'Yes, I certainly do "choose the object," in the sense that the object - external reality, matter, being, is primary.'[Cornforth's quotation.](96) I think we should be in no doubt that Cornforth did, indeed, choose the object. But neither should there be any doubt that

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[30] But see Helena Sheehan's comments regarding the Caudwellian *Weltanschauung* and quoted in this thesis chapter 1 'Introduction'. (44) p.18.

Caudwell did so, too, although never denying that the *subject* was to be taken into account. Caudwell's own views on this are clear throughout his works and his personal correspondence. In a letter to Paul and Elizabeth Beard, in which he says that he has volunteered for service in Spain, he comments:

> [I] will only say that like most idealists, you separate the subject from object and ascribe "materialism" to the object and "spirit" to the subject. The result is that the object becomes so abstract it is just hard matter and the subject so bloodless and attenuated that is just Idea.
> [Caudwell's quotations, capitalisation.](97)

Cornforth may not have had access to Caudwell's letters when he made his ill-founded attack, but, surely, there is copious evidence throughout his works that Caudwell never denied the object?

Cornforth challenges Thomson on the grounds that the latter had '[b]een led astray by Caudwell's over-simplified idea that all consciousness is the product of the ruling class.'(98) This is a pretty damning indictment of both Thomson and Caudwell if true. But it is not. Caudwell never said any such thing. He did, indeed, say that consciousness gravitated towards the pole of the ruling classes of any society, be it Slave-owing, Feudal or Bourgeois. However - and this is the crucial point - the productive forces are the determining factor not the ruling class itself. Caudwell pointed out in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*: '[s]ociety is not in fact determined by the will of a slave-owning master, but by the productive forces at the service of such an economy.'(99) Which is a clear answer to Cornforth on the (supposedly) anti-Marxist notion of class consciousness espoused by Caudwell. E. P. Thompson said of the accusations made by Cornforth that: '[M]arxism's resistance to the concept of 'human nature', however deployed, may be proper. But the resistance may also cover, as I think it did with Cornforth, an ulterior flight from the subjective.'[Thompson's quotation.](100) I

agree with Thompson. To ignore the subjective is as fatally one-sided as to ignore the objective and this series of debates speaks volumes about the way the CPGB seemed to be veering towards a vulgarly-economistic, reductionist mechanical materialism in this period. The whole 'Caudwell Discussion' was, as Helena Sheehan has commented, '[a] rather disgraceful affair, in which his [Caudwell's] philosophy was subjected to heavy-handed and ill-founded attack.'(101) As we have seen above, this is an accurate assessment of the controversy, which, adds Sheehan, '[r]evealed more about the state of British Marxism in its time under pressure of these events[31] than about Caudwell.'(102) I am in agreement with Sheehan here; it would seem that there was a concerted effort to destroy Caudwell's reputation as a serious Marxist thinker and that this effort was conducted in an unprincipled way, even though he was resolutely defended by Thomson, West, Robb, York and others against Cornforth, Heinemann and Bernal. That the controversy took place at all is indicative of how seriously the CPGB considered the issue. E. P. Thompson said of the controversy that it blossomed '[l]ike a crimson cactus in flower in the sand-hills of *The Modern Quarterly*.'(103) And it is ironic that it was Caudwellian-Marxist philosophy that caused this flowering; the works of a theorist who was considered to be questionable at best, downright unorthodox at worst. Thompson's view is that there was some legitimate basis for the attack on Caudwell,(104) which I question, but he is certainly right when he says that it did lasting damage to Caudwell's reputation. He says that: '[B]y the time the dust had settled, his work had fallen into disrepute.'(105)

As we have seen, the Caudwell Controversy drew supporters and detractors from a range of left wing theorists and intellectuals. That it stemmed, in good part, from

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[31] The Zhdanovian attack on 'cosmopolitanism', Lysenkoism in Soviet genetics, etc.

Zhdanov's attack in 1947 upon Alexandrov, Sartre and Genet is clear enough although it should be pointed out that others on the 'Left', those who were not adherents of the Communist Party of Great Britain, also found Caudwell seriously wanting. The first to be considered is Roger Schuyler.

iii - Roger Schuyler - *Literature and Ideology*

> When I agreed to review Caudwell's *Romance and Realism: A Study in Bourgeois Literature*, I decided not to criticise his bourgeois outlook, for it has been apparent for over thirty years that he is an idealist who has not influenced any progressive movement. (106)

Thus spoke Roger Schuyler in 1971. At the time Schuyler was writing for the Canadian Maoist periodical *Literature and Ideology*. Schuyler's task, as he saw it, was to comment upon what he regarded as the widespread dissemination of Caudwell's works by imperialist publishers. He equates - pejoratively - György Lukács with Caudwell, although it must be said that there has often been a favourable comparison made between Caudwell and Lukács. He quotes Samuel Hynes' introduction to *Romance and Realism* as a further 'proof' of Caudwell's anti-Marxism. Hynes says Caudwell's purpose was:

> [t]o find a way of treating literature in Marxist terms that would preserve the idea that literature was intrinsically valuable to the individual, and would make art more than an instrument of social change. (107)

It should be noted that this is Hynes' view of Caudwell, not Caudwell's view of himself and I can find no evidence, as noted above and in other chapters of this thesis, of any idea on his part that art should stand above and beyond society. Quite the reverse. Schuyler calls Hynes' introduction 'anti-Communist'.(108) I agree; throughout, Hynes is quite often less than complimentary to Caudwell. But is Schuyler being objective here? He has made strategic use of an anti-Communist's hostility towards Caudwell which is fair enough, but *only* if that critique can be borne out in a close reading of Caudwell's works. I would argue that it cannot and Hynes is as mistaken as Schuyler in this matter. Schuyler's task, as he saw it, was to pose the question: Literature and Art for *whom*? The working and other masses or their imperialist oppressors? A good question and for Schuyler there is a clear answer. The imperialists and their allies try to get academics and the intelligentsia to study Marxism in a detached manner in order to obscure its revolutionary rôle.(109)

Leonard Goldstein in his work *The Social And Cultural Roots of Linear Perspective* is perfectly clear on this subject. He says of the better-known academic Marxists such as Jameson, Eagleton and Weimannn that their Marxism is 'fashionable'.(110) Moreover he says:

> [t]hat prestigious universities (in capitalist countries) have hired Marxists where in the past Marxists never got past their front doors, or that prestigious publishing houses published Marxist books where in the past only the Communist press published Marxist books, does not cause these latter-day Marxists to wonder how all this came about. One could learn Marxism as easily as one could learn Old English.
> [Goldstein's parenthesis.](111)

Far more sophisticated in his approach than Schuyler, Goldstein's view is still basically the same. There is something wrong, according to Goldstein, either with Marxism or

those academics who purport to be Marxists. Neither, I would imagine, would agree to the former so it must be the latter. I will not enter into a discussion upon the merits of the academics mentioned above, but it should be pointed out that Goldstein, unlike Schuyler, is an admirer of Caudwell and would not bracket him with the 'armchair revolutionaries.' Caudwell's brief life is hardly the hallmark of the ivory tower intellectual.[32] As Edgell Rickword notes in his *Preface* to *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*: 'Caudwell did not '[s]tand dreaming on the verge of strife', nor did he plunge into struggle without thought.' and Caudwell had a decade of experience of the 'existence of [a] crisis [that] was brought home to all but the most butterfly-minded.'(112)

Schuyler, however, is in no doubt as to Caudwell's bourgeois idealism and quotes Lenin at length from the *State and Revolution* to strengthen his claims.(113) The most telling part of the quotation is the section where revolutionary theory is said to be robbed of its substance by those who wish to destroy it. If Lenin is to be used, then we should compare Lenin's view to Schuyler's. The latter says:

> Caudwell and Lukács study the bourgeois tradition to make it respectable and thus oppose the proletarian view of partisanship and literature as a weapon in the class struggle.(114)

There is no evidence in any of Caudwell's works to give credence to this accusation. It seems to me to be merely a Maoist-sectarian assumption on the part of Schuyler. On the

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[32] 'In the Jarama Battle, decisive in the saving of Madrid, casualties were heavy amongst the British Battalion of the International Brigade. We owe the fallen comrades a debt which can only be met by increasing support for the cause in which they died. Amongst those who broke the thrust of Hitler's iron divisions at the supreme cost was a young writer of great promise, Christopher St. John Sprigg. He was a member of the Poplar Branch of the Communist Party.' *The Left Review.* May. 1937. Obituary Notices. Caudwell Archives. Box 9, Folder 4. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA. See, also, 'Appendix: Caudwell Obituaries' this thesis p. 369.

question of 'studying the bourgeois tradition' we should quote from Lenin here, in his rather qualified praise of Tolstoy. He says:

> Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years[33] of the development of human culture.(115)

I would suggest that this is more in line with the Caudwellian-Marxist view than Schuyler would have us believe of him and his works.

Schuyler says that Marxism is a guide to action not a dogma. Nobody with any Marxist leanings should disagree with this but, as stated above, Caudwell was - if we may use the term - a man of action. He fought Blackshirts, sold the *Daily Worker* and died fighting for democracy in Spain.[34] The question is whether his works are, at bottom, so reactionary that the bourgeoisie will publish them as a weapon to stultify the masses? Are they, or are they not, a revolutionary call to arms? We should consider the words of Caudwell himself in *Illusion and Reality* when speaking for the proletariat to the waverers and intellectuals of the Popular Front as noted above in the section on Margot Heinemann. These are the words of a committed, revolutionary activist. Nor is Schuyler suggesting that, no matter his original intention, Caudwell has now been usurped and distorted rather as Lenin had said could happen in *State and Revolution.* Schuyler's words at the very beginning of the article deny that. For him Caudwell was, is and always will be, a bourgeois idealist. Some historical account must be offered as to

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[33] By this we must assume that Lenin is taking a somewhat Eurocentric approach in this matter. After all, other cultures such as that of Dravidian India, Mesopotamia, Pharonic Egypt and Shang China all have far earlier beginnings.

[34] A bourgeois democracy, it is true, but this was a central tenet of Popular Frontism, though a Maoist such as Schuyler would no doubt disagree with the Popular Front as, for him, it would only be a *façade* of Imperialist reaction.

how Schuyler came to these views. The article was written in the early 1970s when there were the various national liberation and revolutionary struggles going on throughout the world, Vietnam, Palestine, Central and South America. The events of May 1968 in Paris were still fresh in people's minds. At this time, the Maoists and revolutionaries looked to China and Albania[35] for inspiration and guidance. It must have seemed that the revolution, the 'Final Crisis' was just around the corner, much as Caudwell and his contemporaries saw a little over thirty years before. The Soviet Union had already been officially - and publicly - denounced as Revisionist, Social Fascist and Social Imperialist at the International Eighty One Parties Congress[36] in Moscow, by the Albanian and Chinese delegations led by Enver Hoxha and Liu Shaoqui respectively.(116) Trotskyism and Anarchism had also been anathematised.

This was Schuyler's background, politically and culturally, so one may see where he stands on this issue, rather as one might understand Cornforth and others. It is not merely a question of dislike or the crudest form of partisanship, it is the entire *milieu* in which these articles are written, that has to be taken into account. At the end of the article, Schuyler exhorts his readers to read Mao(117) rather than Caudwell. Schuyler's argument - that because Caudwell is promoted by bourgeois publishing houses, he is somehow tainted - holds very little water. It can be pointed out that Karl Marx's works are available as *Penguin Classics*, and, since the collapse of East Germany where Caudwell's books have been produced since the 1970s, his works are now out of print and unavailable. Schuyler, in this instance, really has no argument against Caudwell, for if being published - or not - is the litmus test for a truly revolutionary writer, then Caudwell, by this analysis, stands higher than Karl Marx. I don't believe this and neither, I think, would Roger Schuyler.

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[35] This was only a few years before the Albanian Party of Labour denounced Maoism and 'Mao Zedong Thought' as reactionary, mystical and anti-Communist in content if not in certain, outward, forms.
[36] 1960.

iv - Terry Eagleton

Of the contemporary 'Left' critics of Caudwell, Terry Eagleton is the best known. He is a widely-read and very highly-regarded academic. He has also been one of Caudwell's most incisive detractors.

> Who is the major English Marxist Critic?
> Christopher Caudwell, *hèlas*![37](118)

Why alas? Not so much, I feel, that he had no respect for Caudwell, but that there was really nobody *better* than him.[38] This may well be true, given the state of English Marxist criticism of the period. Consider Ralph Fox and John Cornford. Both were Communists and both committed themselves to substantial literary undertakings, Fox with his *Novel and the People*, Cornford with his poetry and *Know the Weapon, Know the Wound.* Both were killed in Spain fighting for the Republicans. However high their merits, they did not - for whatever reason - take on the great task that Caudwell set himself in *Illusion and Reality*, *Studies* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*, etc. It surely was not for their lack of talent. Reading either of them - especially Fox - reveals a clarity and precision of writing and analysis equal to that of Caudwell. Eagleton says that there is little - except negatively - that may be learned from Caudwell.(119) Why? Eagleton is clear on this: Caudwell was isolated from Europe, permeated with *Stalinism* and idealism.[Emphasis added.] Francis Mulhern agrees with Eagleton on the issue of isolation when discussing British Marxists in general. 'The works of Marx, Engels and

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[37] *Cf.* André Gide's comment on Victor Hugo when asked who was the greatest 19th Century poet. 'Hugo - *Hélas*!' Claude Martin. *La Maturité d' André Gide*. Paris. 1977. p. 502.

[38] This view is rather reminiscent of J. D Bernal's criticism of Caudwell's analyses of theoretical physics.

Lenin, were, of course, available, but for their knowledge of contemporary Marxism, the British neophytes were almost entirely dependent on the officially sponsored writings of Plekhanov, Bukharin and Stalin.'(120) However, Mulhern says, further, that the one British Marxist who escaped this limitation was Caudwell. I agree with Mulhern against Eagleton on this matter when the former says that *Illusion and Reality* is a full-scale reconstruction of poetic theory and that its new range and depth make it the most important Marxist literary[39] treatise of that or any other period in England.(121) As to Eagleton's view of Caudwell's 'isolation', the copious bibliography of *Illusion and Reality* is itself a decisive refutation of this claim.

Eagleton's view on Caudwell, particularly his cultural-political isolationism, is unjustified. As noted above, he was an autodidact and this may also be cause for misgivings on Eagleton's part. It is instructive to compare the criticisms of Eagleton and Mason. Both find Caudwell vulgar, amateurish, and in Eagleton's words, 'hair-raising.'[40] Eagleton says that while most of the Left writings of that period have little but historical interest, one name has survived; Caudwell's. Hence the *hèlas*! To be fair to Eagleton he says that if Caudwell has faults, such as those caused by the lack of an English Marxist tradition, it is the measure of our own lack of an English Marxist tradition, we who came after him. That said, Christopher Pawling has drawn some close parallels between Eagleton's literary works and those of Caudwell, most notably *Romance and Realism*. Pawling notes that 'Both Caudwell and Eagleton privilege the 'discover of the relativity of bourgeois norms, hitherto taken as absolute.',[41] as the

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[39] 'Doubly deprived of socialist community, the nascent Left failed to emancipate itself from the tutelage of the English intellectual tradition. Historically the responsibility for social criticism lay largely with the literary intelligentsia.' Francis Mulhern. 'The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell'. *New Left Review*. London. 1974. p. 40.

[40] Eagleton's critique of Caudwell is hardly seamless. In the bibliography of *Marxism and Literary Criticism* he says that Caudwell is 'crude and slipshod in many of his formulations' p. 65., while in his Chapter Notes to the same work, Eagleton says that '[I] do not intend to imply that Caudwell, who heroically attempted to construct a total Marxist Aesthetics [Which is questionable in itself. k. m.] in notably unpropitious conditions, is merely dismissable as a 'vulgar Marxist'. p. 79. London: Methuen. 1976.

[41] *Romance and Realism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 97. The quotation is from the

crucial point of mediation between novelistic and social structures at the end of the 19th century.'(122)

To end, I should point out that although Eagleton has come across as an ardent anti-Caudwellian, his attitude has changed since the 1970s. I wrote to him in 1998 and asked him if he still felt the same about Caudwell. His answer?

> I'm afraid I haven't ever looked again at Caudwell, though I suspect that if I did I'd find him a good deal more rewarding than my rather dismissive early remarks suggest.(123)

This is a generous and honest reply and I think his revised views are warranted and commendable although it might be more generous still if he were to make his views known publicly and actually look, again, at Caudwell in this new light. Pawling's opinion is that there is far less of a gap than might be supposed, between Eagleton and Caudwell. He says:

> The parallels between *Romance and Realism* and Terry Eagleton's writings suggest that Caudwell's work may have more bearing on the problems facing contemporary Marxist theory than has been recognised hitherto. His sensitivity to the way in which analysis must proceed at the level of form, as well as content, is unusual in an English Marxist critic of that era, connecting him with that creative strand of 'Western Marxism' represented by the early Lukács and Goldmann.[Pawling's quotation.](124)

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section were Caudwell analyses the epistemological crisis of the bourgeois novel and relates it to the Michelson-Morley experiment in physics which, states Caudwell, is indicative of the same epistemic crisis. Further evidence, indeed, that Caudwell's thesis was *not* to construct a full-blown Marxist Aesthetic, but that the aesthetic studies were to provide and auxiliary to his wider-ranging analyses, although we should never discount the crucial importance of his literary researches.

So much, then, for the notion of Caudwellian parochialism. Eagleton has said that Caudwell had taken on a hopeless task and perhaps he was right, but it took a mind of the calibre of Caudwell's even to conceptualise it. This is Caudwell's greatest achievement. The end result may have contained some 'hair-raising vulgarities', but the very concept of *Illusion and Reality, Romance and Realism, Studies* and *Further Studies* etc. bears the mark of true genius.

v. Robert Currie - 'Christopher Caudwell: Marxist Illusion, Jungian Reality'

> [i]f Caudwell can be said to have died as a Marxist,
> he must also be said to have written as a Jungian.
> (125)

The view of Robert Currie, that Caudwell was in no way a Marxist, but a crypto-Jungian, is not a new one. It goes back as far as the critique by Mason in 1938 and that of Maurice Cornforth some ten or more years later.

Currie's analysis is complex and covers areas such as the (supposed) Jungian attitudes of Caudwell, his (apparent) non-Marxist approach to literature and the 'timeless genotype.' On the subject of poetry and literature, Currie maintains that his attitude is not Marxist but of a more individualistic and bourgeois nature. He says that '[i]n Caudwell's aesthetics, art is a matter of particular relationships between individual 'consciousness', 'theory' and 'experience.''[Currie's quotations.](126) However, not even the most hard-line Marxist would disagree as to the rôle of individual consciousness, no matter how it may have been shaped by social forces. On the question of Caudwell being a crypto-Jungian, we should compare Jung's view on a given subject

to that of Caudwell. On the question of religion Jung says that '[r]eligions are psychotherapeutic systems in the truest sense of the word, and on the grandest scale.'(127) Of course, Jung is not arguing in favour of religion in the conventional sense, that is, to put the human race in touch with God or the gods but, rather, that it puts us in touch with our inner souls, and that no soul, with religion, is truly cut off.(128) His is the standard bourgeois, psychoanalytical approach, no matter how radical it may seem. For Jung it is enough to tend to the individual and thereby all society will be cured of its neuroses. Society's ills are an effect not a cause of the individual's disturbed psyche. It is true that Caudwell speaks of the 'common ego' and the conflict between the ego and the environment,(129) but the final analysis, the deciding factor, is based squarely upon class-schism and a developed Marxist class analysis. He says:

> Thus we see what Marx meant when he said that religion is an inverted world. The exploited class, which is the real source of the productive power of society, places itself at the bottom of the pyramid by giving to the parasitic class the whole of the goods it produces beyond the bare minimum necessary for existence.(130)

Caudwell is very clear on this subject; he sees the rôle of class here as crucial in the problems that afflict modern society. Further, he says:

> In a society where consciousness (the subject) has become separated from the environment (object) because the thinking class has become separated from the working class, there is not possible that constant correction of men's ideology of reality by practice which secures the health and movement of science.[Caudwell's parentheses.](131)

This is hardly evidence to support Currie's argument that Caudwell's approach is that of a bourgeois-individualist. Although there are borrowings from Jung and Freud in his works, it is very hard to see that Caudwell is anything but a Marxist. In his critique of Freudian and, more particularly, Jungian psychology Caudwell says that Jung betrays science by his approach to the problems of the psychically disturbed patient. Jung, he maintains, asks that the patient actually believe his own fantasies about, in this case, medicine, as he - Jung - thinks that the patient will be able to fall back upon archetypal structures in the mind, the very same structures that create our mythologies. This, Caudwell says, is a fundamentally idealist approach.(132) Caudwell's view is scathing and he insists that humans do not need archetypes to see them through and out of a problem, and that decadent bourgeois culture has evolved the vigorous religion of fascism, complete with mythology and choreagus[42] in Germany and Italy.(133) We need only read Jung on the phenomenon of Wotan to see how far apart he and Caudwell are in their approach to psychology. Jung says that Wotan, the Teutonic god of frenzy and chaos, was already stirring within the Germanic psyche long before the advent of Hitler and Nazism in Germany.

> But what is more than curious - indeed piquant to a degree - is that an ancient god of storm and frenzy, the long quiescent Wotan should awake, like an extinct volcano, to new activity, in a civilised country that had been supposed to have outgrown the Middle Ages.(134)

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[42] Paul Morrison is in agreement with Caudwell on this matter. 'Communism collectivises the means of production and the fruits of labour; fascism provides the illusion of collective experience through aesthetic means. The latter is most apparent in the elaborate political choreography to which that is given - the aesthetics of the mass rally, *sabato fascista*, and the like - but it is no way restricted to it.' *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Paul de Man*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996. p. 7.

Of course, Jung is *not* saying that Wotan actually exists, either now or in the past, but rather that he was a projected archetype, something that lay deep within the German psyche. Thus he blames an aspect of the Germanic character - something he also labels as pathologically hysterical, its most grotesque embodiment being Hitler - for the Second World War, the Holocaust, etc. After the war Jung wrote about Hitler and his relation to the German people. Jung says:

> It is difficult to understand how his ranting speeches, delivered in shrill, womanish tones, could have made such an impression. But the German people would never have been taken in and carried away so completely if this figure had not been *a reflected image of the collective German hysteria.* [Emphasis added.](135)

Although Jung admits that there were social, political and economic factors in the rise of Hitler and Nazism, he says, that, ultimately, the problem lay deep within the German psyche, a character, he says, that is loud-mouthed, abrasive and tactless abroad, but which grovels like a dog at home.[43] Hysteria and Wotan-like frenzy, in the case of the Germans, is the key to the most bloody war in human history. This is an argument which will lead us directly back to Caudwell, or rather Caudwell's complete rejection of such concepts. There is some truth in Jung's view, in the sense that a great deal of Nazi ideology grew out of earlier mystical doctrines such as theosophy, the Ariosophists, the

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[43] Theodor W. Adorno analyses this concept in his work *The Culture Industry* in relation to Adolf Hitler. Adorno writes: '[T]hus hierarchical structures are in complete keeping with the wishes of the sado-masochistic character. Hitler's famous formula *Verantwortung nach oben, Autorität nach unten,* (responsibility towards above, authority towards below) nicely rationalises this character's ambivalence.' p. 123. London: Routledge. 1991. In a note to this chapter he compares this to the German folk notion of *Radfahrennaturen* - cyclists' nature - whereby the head is bowed to those above, but the feet kick out at those below. *n*25, p. 135. [Parenthesis, German, Adorno's.] Unlike Jung, however, Adorno's analysis, though in many points at variance with Caudwell's is, essentially, a Marxist one, and does not rely upon any archetypal concepts such as those that Jung employs. Authoritarianism for Adorno, as with Caudwell, finds its roots in class struggle. For a graphic example of the 'authoritarian personality' see Hannah Arendt's work, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil.* London: Penguin. 1992, esp. Chapter VIII: 'The Law Abiding Citizen'.

proto-Nazi Thule Movement[44] and Ernst Haeckel's Monist Movement, but his argument is seriously flawed and reactionary, even racist. As Caudwell said of the mythology of fascism when discussing the more destructive, atavistic elements within a revolutionary movement:

> It gives even the revolutionary element in their art a Fascist tinge because they draw their hate at the same source, petty bourgeois suffering from bourgeois development. However with them, this hate is directed at its true source, capitalism, whereas with Fascists *it is directed against mythical sources* - Marxists, Jews, and other nations.[45] [Emphasis added.](136)

This should clear away any potential misunderstandings about Caudwell being a Jungian. He consistently denounced bourgeois psychoanalysis in general and Jungian analysis in particular; the latter he saw as barbaric. For all that he used certain elements of psychoanalytical terminology and for all his - arguable - overuse of terms such as genotype, Caudwell is a Marxist. Even though he does admit that Jung had rich experience and a subtle mind, he still maintains that Jung is epistemologically confused,(137) hardly the view of somebody who Currie would have us believe is an ardent Jungian. Let Caudwell's views on the economic foundation for human society and culture, when discussing the Bedouin tribes, stand as the definitive riposte to Currie. Caudwell asks whether it is civilisation that fetters instinct as maintained by Freud, Jung,[46] Adler, D. H. Lawrence, etc. His answer?

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[44] See Nicholas Goodricke-Clarke's *The Occult Roots of Nazism. Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology. Passim.* London: I. B. Tauris. 1992.

[45] See Theodore W. Adorno and others on this subject. *The Authoritarian Personality. Passim.* New York, N. Y.: Norton. 1969.

[46] We should avoid conflating Freud and Jung too readily. They were very different thinkers in many respects. The Caudwellian critique is that both of them suffer from bourgeois idealism.

> No, it is precisely *economic* differentiation, by the possibility of specialisation that it affords, which gives opportunity for the most elaborate developments of the peculiarities or "variations" constituting the "difference" of a biological individual. [Caudwell's quotations. Emphasis added.](138)

However there is more than just the accusation of psychoanalytical idealism in Currie's work. He says that there are difficulties - even to the point of impossibility - of creating a truly authentic Marxist aesthetic and that *Illusion and Reality* makes this more difficult still; however as we have seen Caudwell's thesis was *not* to create a Marxist aesthetic and any notion of this stems, in good part, from an over-reliance on *Illusion and Reality* as the key text, a trap that others, both antagonistic and supportive, have fallen into. We should now take this into consideration by reviewing S. V. Pradhan's paper on the subject of Caudwell's Marxist synthesis.

vi. S. V. Pradhan - 'Caudwell's Theory of Poetry: Some Problems of a Marxist Synthesis'

Pradhan begins with the - by now commonplace - observation that Caudwell has been attacked often enough for being an idealist, and that 'correct' Marxists insist that he departs from revolutionary doctrine in his persistent view that art is not a 'reflection of reality.'(139) Caudwell says of art and literature that: '[t]he experience of men in general is determined in general by the social relations of that age, or to be more accurate, the experiences average out, just as a species is a group of animals' physical peculiarities averaged out.'(140) So far, then, we have an argument for the 'reflective view' of art, that is the view that art is based upon the collective experiences of human beings, 'reflecting' their average attributes as individuals. Caudwell maintains that the artist is in

no way a 'lone wolf' but a product of his age and circumstances. Caudwell also saw the rôle of instinct in society, but this rôle is a subordinate one and it is through the use of specifically human creations, such as dance, ritual and poetry that the instincts are harnessed by what Caudwell describes as a 'great switchboard.'(141) But Caudwell is very clear on the nature of instinct. On the same page he says that:

> Unlike the life of beasts, the life of the simplest tribe requires a series of efforts which are *not instinctive*, but which are demanded by the necessities of a *non-biological economic aim* - for example a harvest.[Emphases added.](142)

Caudwell cannot be clearer or more concise in this particular analysis. Pradhan's view is that Caudwell is attempting and failing in his attempt to create a fully mature Marxist synthesis of poetry and the arts using not only orthodox Marxism but other sources as well; hence the accusation that Caudwell's theory is somehow 'tainted' with psychoanalysis.

As we have seen above this isn't really tenable, as it would seem that Caudwell was using his aesthetic studies as *auxiliary* to his main thesis, but Pradhan's views deserve more than a cursory glance. He accuses Caudwell of coming perilously close to an 'Art for Art's Sake' argument in that Caudwell maintains that art and beauty are something that stand externally to our subjective desires, or as Pradhan says, 'something that was never on sea or land.'(143) Colourfully put, but inaccurate. Caudwell is very clearly hostile to such notions as shown throughout his works. He says in *Further Studies*:

> If man, substantially unchanging in his innate make-up, faced the unchanging earth and stars without material mediation, how could an ever-changing beauty be generated?(144)

Pradhan's somewhat patronising view is that although Caudwell is close to such a concept he never expresses it and it is therefore a 'rather engaging ambiguity'.(145) I cannot agree with this. Caudwell is patently not suffering an epistemological crisis here, and he is most definitely not making the argument for Art for Art's Sake. His argument is that there can be no such thing. He says in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* that the conception of Absolute Beauty is parasitic because it sucks its emotive colouring from all beautiful objects.(146)

We can see Caudwell's point. There is no possibility of a Concept of Beauty and Aesthetics that would have them stand above and beyond the objective world. I would argue that this is a mystical ideal and definitely not a Caudwellian-Marxist concept. It should be noted that Caudwell is not arguing, either, from the point of view of a purely 'socialist' aesthetics, i.e. that the art should be in some way so militantly left-wing that, in the words of Engels to Margaret Harkness in April 1888(147), a novel will become a *Tendenzroman*[47] in which all the ramifications of the struggle for socialism are explored, even to the point of exhaustion.[48] Engels stood firmly against such a concept as did Caudwell, who demanded that writers reject 'proletarian' categories in art, that is to resort to empty dogmatism. Pradhan does admit that Caudwell takes a Marxist route, even though his approach is found seriously wanting due to what Pradhan calls a mixture rather than a synthesis of views, and that he argues as a good historical materialist, rather than an affectively oriented aesthetician.(148) However, Pradhan also makes note of Caudwell's own critique of artists such as Auden and Day Lewis who,

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[47] A novel. with some definite and didactic purpose.

[48] Indeed, Caudwell's only novel of this *genre* was *This My Hand.* London: Hamish Hamilton. 1936. Considered his most serious fictional work, it is a fusion of Marxist class analysis, Freudian analysis and detective fiction, concerning a murder committed by a First World War veteran, Ian Venning and his subsequent trial and execution. The capitalist state is shown, throughout the book, to be the real murderer not only of Ian Venning but his victim, too. This work shows that Caudwell was not overly fond of the *Tendenzroman* and was no great admirer of *Proletkult,* although this, of course, is clearly shown throughout his works, both fiction and non-fiction.

although going over to the revolutionary side, have not themselves become communists. Pradhan's view is that Caudwell is in exactly the same league as these waverers, that his own views are still permeated with bourgeois psychology, aesthetics, idealism, etc. Of course, this is untenable. The Caudwellian-Marxist dialectic proves that Caudwell, beyond a doubt, broke with bourgeois thinking at all major points, that he was not an isolated, parochial figure, a 'voice crying in the wilderness' but had applied himself wholeheartedly and thoroughly to the tasks that he set himself, and he was certainly no dabbler or dilettante, a magpie picking over the most glittering objects, something which he still is considered to be by many, by those in favour and by those, as noted above, who are hostile. As Helena Sheehan has pointed out:

> [e]ven Caudwell's most devoted defenders, however appreciative of his insights and aware of his profundity, have tended to see his importance for them primarily as a "home product" and haven't fully grasped his importance within the development of Marxism as a whole. Those on both sides have made far too much of Haldane's "quarry of ideas" metaphor, probably far more than Haldane intended by it, missing Caudwell's essential contribution, which was a tightly constructed and unified analysis of the nature of bourgeois culture and the socialist alternative. He has been interpreted too randomly - as a source of insights - rather than as the bearer of a coherent world view.[Sheehan's quotations.](149)

In summation of the criticisms analysed above, I hope to have shown that while a few are valid to a greater or lesser degree, most are unfounded, particularly the charges of Caudwell's supposed susceptibility to bourgeois psychoanalysis and mysticism. From the Right to the Left, Caudwell seems to offended a wide spectrum of critics, either in his 'idealism', his 'vulgarity', his 'vagueness', or his 'Stalinism', notwithstanding Terry Eagleton's later 'generosity' towards him. Caudwell has made a mark on these writers,

although perhaps not the mark he might have intended. We must see that almost all of the hostility towards Caudwell has been based upon a reading (close or less so in the case of some critics) of *Illusion and Reality*. Far too much attention has been paid to this work as the quintessence of Caudwellian thought and, while this state of affairs continues, his other works will be relegated or disregarded. True, *Illusion and Reality* is a highly important work, but not the most important by any means. E. P. Thompson, while sympathetic to Caudwell, which may well be because he *has* taken *Studies* and *Further Studies* into account, nevertheless still says of him that '[n]othing he wrote is of a maturity or consistency to merit election as a Marxist or any other kind of "classic".'[Thompson's quotation.](150) I cannot agree with this analysis. It is only when one sees Caudwell as the synthesiser of a consistent world view that one sees him in his true light, not as critics from Mason, through Cornforth to Eagleton and, it must be said, even E. P. Thompson, as an eclectic amateur raking over the scrap heap in search of new ideas. To be this is to be un-Marxist and Caudwell was anything *but* as I hope to have shown above.

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149. Helena Sheehan. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science.* Humanities Press. New Jersey, N. J.: 1993. p. 381.

150. E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin. 1977. p. 262.

5: The Inverted World

i - The Moral Sanction

> This state, this society, produces religion's inverted attitude to the world, because they are an inverted world themselves. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal basis for consolation and justification.(1)

Karl Marx's powerful statement is quoted by Caudwell in a slightly different form in *Illusion and Reality*,(2) and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*.(3) A close reading of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Caudwell will reveal that the argument is not as simplistic as it may seem at face value. That it is not a condemnation of religion in any sense, and that Caudwell, through his anthropological studies in relation to Marxist dialectics, proves the necessity of religion to primitive humans. He says in a letter to Paul and Elizabeth Beard that neither

> [M]arx nor I ever denied that great religions contained truths. It was Marx's subtlest achievement to point out how religions expressed the truths of contemporary social relations, and, of course, the instinctive psychological mechanisms common to all societies thus explaining both the likenesses and differences of religions.(4)

He says of the class nature of religion of the Ancients that:

> At first the ruling class believes its religion, for differentiation from primitive mythology has only just taken place. It endeavours, therefore, to appropriate for itself all the goods of religion, as it is

> already doing those of society. The best seats in Heaven are taken, or - as with the early rulers of Egypt and the aristocracy of Greece - the Elysian fields are monopolised by them. But as the exploiting class is challenged by a restive exploited class, the exploiting class appeases it by sharing with it its own spiritual goods, for these, unlike material goods, do not grow less for being shared.(5)

Caudwell's cynical observations - particularly the last sentence - may be unpalatable to some, but he is not alone in the view that the ruling classes of antiquity were, at a certain point in history, quite happy to give only themselves the 'best seats in the house' and let their lesser followers go the same route to oblivion that only animals are now consigned to by religions such as Christianity. Consider Francis MacDonald Cornford's observations, strikingly similar to the above passage by Caudwell.

> In the King and the hero we have found transitional forms, which make, as it were, a bridge from the daemon of a group to the individual soul. The chief was, probably, the first individual [...]
> The soul has been held to be immortal, primarily because it was at first impersonal and superindividual - the soul of a group, which outlives every generation of its members. Beginning as the collective and impersonal life of the group, it becomes confounded, as we have seen, with the individual personality of the chief; and there was, probably, a stage in which only chiefs or heroes had immortal souls. The tradition of such a phase seems to survive in Hesiod's Age of Bronze - a class of immortals which consists of the heroes who fought at Ilion and Thebes, but does not include the undistinguished mass of their followers.
> The democratic extension of immortality to all human beings was perhaps partly helped by the rise of the patriarchal family as the unit of a new social structure. The family differs from the original

> undifferentiated group in that it is organic: the father, the mother, the son and the daughter have each a distinct function in the household economy, and this means a distinct 'nature' essence or 'soul'. But no doubt many other causes contributed to this result.[Cornford's quotations.](6)

This is a lengthy passage but I feel it necessary to show not only that Caudwell was heavily influenced by Cornford and the so-called 'Cambridge School of Anthropology' but that an historically-grounded critique is not exclusive to Marxism. That people have been critical of organised religion over the centuries is clear, but up until the 19th century there was no truly scientific basis for it, although the Epicurean poet Lucretius[1] was a notable exception, as were the French Philosophers of the Enlightenment, particularly the secular and utilitarian philosopher Baron d'Holbach,[2] the mechanical materialist, Julien Offray de la Mettrie[3] and the Deist Voltaire.[4] It was the development of the natural sciences, the theory of evolution and materialist dialectics that sounded the first real death-knell to unquestioning belief, though of course - as we have seen above - people have always questioned, often with fatal consequences. Now, however, the questions could be asked and answered with greater and greater confidence. Caudwell - like Marx and Engels - based his work on dialectics, class-analysis and historical materialism. Caudwell's - and Cornford's - views on the changing nature of religion are

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[1] Epicurus and, later, Lucretius did not deny the existence of gods, but they denied the gods' involvement with humanity and also denied any form of life after death. Lucretius writes: '[I] say, since, when vessels are broken to pieces you see water flow about and any other liquid run away; and since also, mist and smoke disperse into the air, you must conclude that the soul likewise is scattered abroad.' *De Rerum Naturae. Book III.* 436-439. (Transl.): W. H. D. Rouse. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1924.

[2] '[e]very Artificial Religion is contrary to morality, or utterly useless.' W. H. Wickwar, quoting d'Holbach in his work *Baron d'Holbach, Prelude to the French Revolution.* London: Allen and Unwin. 1935. p. 72.

[3] 'It follows that the study of nature can make only unbelievers; and the way of thinking of all its more successful investigators proves this. The weight of the universe, far from crushing an atheist, does not even shake him.' Julien Offray de la Mettrie. *Man a Machine.* p. 125. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court. 1912.

[4] Consider Voltaire's sharply sceptical views on the Christian doctrine of Bodily Resurrection. 'A child dies in the mother's womb, just at the moment that it has received a soul. Will it rise again, foetus, boy or man? If foetus, to what good? If boy or man, where will the necessary materials come from?' *Questions Concerning the Encyclopaedia. Voltaire Selections.* (Editor): Paul Edwards. London: Macmillan. 1989. p. 201.

borne out by the work of Siegfried Morentz. He points out in his work *Egyptian Religion* that, by the First Intermediate Period (Thebans) *circa* 2250-2040 BCE, everybody had been assigned a *ba* or immortal soul, whereas this immortality was, in the Old Kingdom, reserved only for Pharaoh himself.(7) This has also been pointed out by Henri Frankfort in the increasing rôle of Hathor the Mother Goddess in the later Egyptian period, and her rôle in funerary rites. Frankfort says that this is due to the transference of belief in immortality being vested solely in the king, to the common people.(8)

Neither is it solely class division which causes religion to develop and differentiate. Environmental factors, too, play an important part in belief, although it might be cogently argued that this, too, is part of the economic-based class schism, so noted by Marxists. Compare the miserable existence in the Babylonian Place of the Dead, the realm of the goddess Ereshkigal, in relation to the Egyptian afterlife. In the former, the dead exist in a wretched semi-life and no one is exempt from joining them, not even the King. For the Egyptians it was different; although there was a monster, Ammit, present when the newly-dead arrived, ready to eat the soul of the transgressor, Ammit never once had to act. All were admitted provided they could say they had not done evil during their life on Earth and had learned the names of the guardians of the way to the afterlife. It can be argued that the difference lay in that Mesopotamian society was located in a region plagued with uncertainty, that its agriculture and industry were at the mercy of the Two Rivers which did not have the almost clockwork precision of the Nile.[5] When one is uncertain of tomorrow's benefits this anxiety must, indeed, translate itself into a concept of the afterlife, as we may see in the contrast between the Babylonian and Egyptian religions.

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[5] The Sicilian-Roman historian Diodorus Siculus (*fl.* 1st Century BCE) reports of Egyptian agriculture: 'For, generally speaking, every kind of field labour amongst other peoples entails great expense and toil, but among the Egyptians alone is the harvest gathered in with very slight outlay of money or labour.' *The Library of History. Book I.* 36. 4-8. (Editor and Transl.): W. A. Oldfather. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1933.

ii - The Necessity of Belief

Caudwell acknowledges that there was, in the distant past, a necessity for belief - for magic - that provided a powerfully cohesive force within the hunter-gatherer tribes and in the earliest forms of agricultural society and that poetry[6] and dance was one of the mainsprings for this observance.

> By holding out the divine certainty of the harvest, or the promise of children, or the magic reinforcement of game, it gives man courage and heart for the lengthy labours required before his satisfaction. It does this by the dance, the chant, the fable and myth, the feast in common.(9)

Caudwell's view is that primitive humans of the past rely, as do the less technologically advanced peoples of the present era, on a form of fantasy-projection that enables them to conceptualise the future. It takes no great leap of the imagination to see that this will eventually lead to a projection beyond the world in which we live. A 'leap to heaven', as Cornford and Caudwell have pointed out above, was not the first rôle of religion, certainly not for the greater mass of the people, unfit for the 'Elysian Fields'. But even the Elysian fields are far in the future of this most primitive form of religion, although it should be noted that the fossilised vestiges of these early beliefs still exist in most major religions. Witness the Anglican Harvest Festival, for example. It might be argued that this is merely giving 'Thanks to God' for his bounty but the harvest and the weather that it was so dependent upon existed long before the Anglican Church. As Jane Harrison points out in her work *Ancient Art and Ancient Ritual*:

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[6] See this thesis, chapter 2, 'Caudwell Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic'.

> In the old ritual dance, the individual was nothing, the choral band, the group, everything, and in this it did but reflect primitive tribal life. Now in the heroic saga the individual is everything, the mass of the people, the tribe or the group, are but a shadowy background which throws up the brilliant, clear-cut personality in a more vivid light.(10)

Harrison has also pointed out that even the gods themselves have somehow 'evolved' throughout time: 'Track any god right home and you will find him lurking in a ritual sheath, from which he slowly emerges, first as a *dæmon* or spirit of the year, then as a full-blown divinity.'(11) Not only in Europe, Africa and Australia but in ancient Japan we may see the same form of indivisibility within religion. Joseph Kitagawa says:

> While early Shinto was not interested in speculating on the metaphysical meaning of the world, the early Japanese took it for granted that they were integrally part of the cosmos which they saw as a "community of living beings" all sharing the kami (sacred) nature. [Kitagawa's quotation, parenthesis.](12)

There are no clear-cut boundaries at this stage between humans and nature; they are one and indivisible and only later class and technological differentiation force a change and it should be noted that peoples who are still at this stage of development have these beliefs. George Thomson makes a similar observation, no doubt under Caudwell's influence when he says of tribal religion: 'The ancestor worship of the early phases of tribal society is at once an expression and a confirmation of the authority exercised by tribal elders.[7] It is magical rather than religious. No prayers are addressed to the totem, only commands.'(13) The totemistic nature of early religion is clearly at a point where the gods and humanity are one.

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[7] See this thesis chapter 6, 'The Leninist Concept of War'. p. 197 (42)

Hegel touches upon this in *The Philosophy of Religion* - although from a very different standpoint to Thomson's or Caudwell's - when he says of the Nature of the humanised God:

> But this humanity in God - and indeed the most abstract form of humanity, the greatest dependence, the ultimate weakness, the utmost fragility - in natural death. 'God himself is dead' it says in a Lutheran hymn, expressing an awareness that the human, the finite, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine, that they are within God himself, that finitude, negativity, otherness are not outside of God and do not, as otherness, hinder unity with God.
> [Hegel's quotation.](14)

True, Hegel is speaking entirely from the Christian point of view, but even he has to admit that God has to be somehow human, even though this fallibility is within the scope of the Divine and part of that Divinity. God, for Hegel, is meaningless without that essential humanity. God has ceased to be nature personified, 'God-in-Nature', but has now become 'God-in-Man'. Once again God has had to be related to humanity and does not exist beyond the human race as an absolute thing-in-itself. Hegel's words echo Engels in *Anti-Dühring* when he maintains that:

> All religion is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces.(15)

More forcefully put, but it is essentially the same message as Caudwell's; that we and all around us are part of the natural processes of the world and indeed the greater universe beyond our world and all can and eventually *must* be reducible to the physics of natural

law and it also ties in with Hegel, quoted above, that it is not so much a matter of God being what He is but what we see Him as or would like Him to be.

Cornford, Engels and Harrison were studied by Caudwell and their influence on him is considerable in relation to the question of natural dialectics, religion and anthropology. Caudwell himself says of religion and religious belief that 'it is the crime of class religion to have separated goodness from beauty and the conscience from the heart',(16) which may be recognised as the Caudwellian-Marxist view that class schism and class oppression is at the root of all social ills within the present system and will remain so until the present system is ended and the classless society of communism is ushered in after socialism.

iii - Heavens, Hells and Horn Dancers

Of course, in class-religion, not only is there economic coercion, in that the goods of the rich will be fabulously 'shared' in Heaven, but outright control by fear, particularly in beliefs where there is the promise of eternal hellfire and damnation such as Christianity, Islam, certain Buddhist sects (the Mahayana Buddhist Avici hell, for example) etc. Many must 'take pause' as Hamlet does when he considers the awful possibilities of life after death and what comes with that life. 'Aye, there's the rub, for in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off our mortal coil?'(17) It must be said that many - if not most - still, even in this secular age, feel dread at death's prospect. As the 18th century mechanical materialist de la Mettrie pointed out in *Man a Machine* people are often virtuous because of the dread of what may come in the afterlife. '[l]ike those Ixions of Christianity who love God and embrace so many fantastic virtues merely because they are afraid of hell!'(18) Nonetheless the question has to be addressed: how valid are the Marxist, materialist and, more closely, Caudwellian views on class religion?

Caudwell presents a coherent argument against religion and more importantly *class* religion, because as we have seen earlier he maintains that there is a survival value inherent in religious belief and particularly in the very early stages of human social development. If humans could not project their deepest desires onto the canvas of the future and paint the picture that was needed then there might have been no future harvest, no successful hunt, the result being extinction. That human beings 'became' the hunted animal in their dances is borne out by the Neolithic cave paintings in France and Spain, the modern aboriginal dances and rock drawings in Australia and even that most ancient of English country dances, performed at Abbott's Bromley in Staffordshire, the Horn Dance, where men wore antlers and performed the dance of the hunt.

As the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore* says, it is:

> [A] men's dance with reindeer horns held near the head, performed only at Abbots Bromley in Staffordshire. [...] There are six dancers, as in the Morris, three with the great antlers painted white and three with red. [...] The symbolic colouring, deer horns, and formerly ritual characters, (man, woman and clown) point to an ancient ritual significance, marking this as one of the few surviving animal dances in Europe.[8][Parenthesis, Editor's.] (19)

It might be considered unfortunate, however, when one considers that the ritual of projection is still within the socio-religious orbit of human life. Irving Babbitt wrote in 1924 that:

> We readily recognise that the God whom the Kaiser and many Germans worshipped during the War was

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[8] Apparently the dance is no longer performed, according to Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick in their work *The History of Pagan Europe*. London: Routledge. 1995. p. 159. They note, however, that the Reindeer horns, now kept in the village church, have been carbon-dated to the 11th century CE by when Reindeer had died out in Britain, thus assuming that they had been brought in by Norse settlers.

> only a projection into the religious realm of *their own will to power.*[9] [Emphasis added.](20)

Babbitt was in no way a Communist, in fact he was vehemently anti-Marxist, but his words are in keeping with Caudwell's view on the religious projection of the collective desire into the realm of myth and magic. Once it had been a survival trait, whereas now - if we are to accept Babbitt's view - it has become a positive menace to human survival, especially as the human race is so much more efficiently armed since Babbitt's and Caudwell's day. The harvest festival and the hunting dance, along with so many other rituals have - as noted above - survived, either in societies that still believe in them, such as the various Neolithic communities scattered about the world or even in technologically advanced countries such as Britain at Abbott's Bromley. The difference between Britain and - for example - New Guinea or Australia is that other beliefs from various stages of technological development have, as it were, been grafted on to the earlier beliefs and customs. Lenin develops this argument in his *Philosophical Notebooks: On The Question of Dialectics*, when he points out that:

> Human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve. Any fragment, segment, section of this curve can be transformed (transformed one-sidedly) into an independent, complete straight line, which then, (if one does not see the wood for the trees) leads into a quagmire, into clerical obscurantism (where it is *anchored* by the class interests of the ruling classes). Rectilinearity and one-sidedness, woodenness and petrifaction, subjectivism and subjective blindness - voilá the epistemological roots of idealism. And clerical obscurantism (=philosophical idealism), of course has *epistemological* roots, it is not groundless; it is a sterile flower undoubtedly. But a

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[9] On this subject see Carl Jung on the resurgence of 'Wotan' in Germany in the 1930s. Quoted in thesis chapter 4 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'. (134) p. 130.

> sterile flower that grows on the living tree of living, fertile, genuine powerful, omnipotent objective, absolute human knowledge. [Lenin's parentheses, emphases, quotations, etc.](21)

For Lenin - as for Caudwell - there is a genuine basis for religious belief; it is not some mystical series of thought-concepts, idealistically developed from within but derives from the social, economic and political *milieu* in which the given subject lives. For it to be other than that would make it the very thing that Lenin, Caudwell and others denied: something *a prioristic*, God-given. Dialectical materialism rejects this.

iv - The Relative and the Absolute

> '[B]ut God doesn't change.'
> 'Men do, though.'
> 'What difference does that make?'
> 'All the difference in the world,' said Mustapha Mond.(22)

Aldous Huxley's view, expounded in *Brave New World*, in the exchange between John Savage and the World Controller for Western Europe, Mustapha Mond, is cynical but it hits upon a profound truth; that while religions may seem to be stable and even eternal, humanity has a habit of outgrowing them. In relation to the way it has developed historically, religion is put at a serious disadvantage, as it can clearly be seen that so much of it is a compound of earlier, more primitive beliefs. The problem lies in the fact that most (but not all, it has to be said) religions being 'the Word of God on High' so often fall into ossification as the world progresses, dialectically, beyond the original aims of their founders. As Caudwell has pointed out, although in relation primarily to poetry: 'Man's emotions are fluid and confusing. They are projected into the outside world in animism, orondism and manna at his primitive stage of culture, not because he is one

with his environment, but because he has consciously separated himself from it in order to seek his desires by hunting or crop gathering.'(23) This is crucial to Caudwell's critique of religious belief. Humanity is always changing, as is the rest of the Universe, however once a religion purports to be the 'True Word,' or 'Last Word,' then it finds itself in a dilemma, and should it attempt to try to enforce this subjective 'timelessness' it will then, deliberately or otherwise, attempt to do the same thing to the economic forces that are still progressing within the society of which it has become part. On the subject of the immutable, eternal, infinite etc. we should, perhaps, consider René Descartes' words in relation to God and corporeal substance:

> There remains, then, only the idea of God, in which I must consider whether there is anything which could not have come from me. By the name of God I understand an infinite substance, eternal, immutable, independent, omniscient, and by which I and all the other things which exist (if it be true that any such exist) have been created and produced. [Descartes' parentheses.](24)

Descartes view is idealistic and solipsistic. He contemplates the possibility that there is no external world beyond himself and his all-powerful God. Cartesian subjectivism is indicative of the way that religious belief has changed over the millennia since the first hunter-gatherers danced the festival of the hunt, not to propitiate an omniscient, omnipotent God who may or may not 'deliver the goods', but to get in touch with the spirit - the *anima* - of the beast that was to be hunted.

Here is an essential paradox: Religion changes in relation to its surroundings, its needs and desires, but in effect it sees itself as unchanging. In the earliest days of humanity, no such thing could have been conceived; humanity lived in the dawn time, the childhood of the human race. Since then, we have passed into class society, a period of exploitation, schism and war. We are no longer a part of nature and, paradoxically, we

have to find the Eternal somewhere. Be it God or any other name we want to give the projected deity, it has to be something outside ourselves, something transcendental. Consider Ralph Fox's view on the question of historical literature and our mythical past:

> Odysseus lived in a society without history, a society in which myth and reality are indistinguishable and time is without terror. The sea-driven Odysseus knows that his fate is in the hands of the gods who control nature, for the storm is the wrath of Poseidon and ship wreck is only another trial in the long journey home to Ithaca.(25)

Fox compares this with the travails of Robinson Crusoe, that Bourgeois *sans pareil*, when he says:

> Robinson's world is a real world, described with a vivid and understanding feeling for the value of material things. The storm is a horror which puts in peril the ship and its cargo, men are pirates and mutineers, cruel and merciless to their fellows, but Crusoe's faith in himself, his naïve optimism, enables him to overcome both his own folly in risking his fortune, the cruelty of nature, and to found his ideal colony beyond the seas.(26)

Crusoe's optimism - in spite of all his difficulties - is based on his bourgeois, Protestant relationship with his God which, if we are to agree with Marx and Caudwell, is only an intimate relationship with his *alter ego*, his self projected into the fantastic world of idealistic religion which develops or, perhaps, devolves further into the scepticism and deism of the 18th century. Caudwell says of this that:

> [T]he logical end of the bourgeois religion was Deism. The bourgeois class was a class which denied social relations and, in doing so, necessarily

> denied all the symbolisations of social relations in religion. Hence the Reformation demanded the sweeping away of Purgatory, of the saints, of all rites and ceremonies. Only the Spirit, indwelling in man was left in Puritanism. The Spirit itself was simply the symbol of Will as the bourgeois believed it so - spontaneous, free, and undetermined. [Caudwell's capitalisation.](27)

With regard to the beliefs of an earlier period, once again we return to the essential class nature of religion. Caudwell points out that even heresy can be seen as class and economic-based. Due to the increasing class division in society he says that:

> Many 'heresies' such as that of the Albigenses,[10] had before this[11] expressed the revolt of the exploited classes against the feudal landlords. Only a revolt led by the bourgeoisie and based on the large towns, could be successful. Bourgeois and peasants and monarch were able for a time to make common cause because their enemies were at that stage the same - the big feudal lords.(28)

Heresy, as with classes, is a product of economic development. I can find no evidence of any pre-class society, past or present, punishing heretics. It should be noted in relation to taboo and heresy that, while the Romans, Irish and others may have had extremely strict rules with regard to religious observation they were virtually immune to heresy: the pre-Christian Romans[12] rarely tried to suppress a religion for itself alone; only when that

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[10] The first recorded burning of a heretic in the West is reported to have occurred in the reign of King Robert II 'The Pious' (996-1031) of France at Orléans. Subsequently this became a more and more common practice, such as the hanging of heretics at Goslar in 1051 by the Emperor Henry III. Apparently they refused to kill some chickens when ordered and this revealed them to be inspired by Manicheanism. Malcolm Lambert. *The Cathars.* Oxford: Blackwell. 1998. p. 9.

[11] The rise of Protestantism.

[12] However, it was an entirely different matter with the *Christian* Romans. See the Theodosian Code of the Late Roman Empire. 'Despite the best efforts of clergy and emperors, human wickedness still risks the force of the law and eternal judgement. It is necessary, therefore to reiterate laws against Donatists, Manichees and Priscillians, pagans and a new sect, the Caelicolae. The buildings of such groups are appropriated to churches, temple properties appropriated to the imperial *annona.* Statues are to be destroyed, temples put to public use.' *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code.* John F.

religion incited rebellion against the Roman state, such as the Jews at Massada and the Druids on the British Island of Mona, although, of course, this is hardly excusable as in both cases it was aggressive imperialism crushing the manifestation of a people's resistance to conquest.

Thus it would seem that heretics do not exist in pre-class societies, although of course they may punish taboo breakers, which is a somewhat different matter. This does not, of course, minimise the power of taboo. It can create quite complex rules and hierarchies even in supposedly backward societies. Consider the rules binding the High Priest of Rome, the Flamen Dialis. While in office he may not ride or even touch a horse, nor have any knot on any part of his clothes. He must not touch wheaten flour, or leavened bread, touch or even name a goat, a dog, raw meat, beans[13] and ivy. He must not walk under a vine, the feet of his bed must be smeared in mud. His hair could not be cut except by a free man with a bronze knife.(29) His wife, the Flaminica, had almost the same restrictions and even some more. J. G. Frazer points out that the kings of ancient Ireland, Africa and the South Sea islands suffered from equally burdensome restrictions. That taboo existed and still exists is a survival from a much earlier prehistoric time when nature and humanity were indivisible - at least in humanity's own view of the world - and that these customs have been since ossified, embedded within the societies within which they existed or still exist. Taboo had a powerful influence on those it ruled.[14]

Considering again the Cartesian God, Caudwell points out that this God is a bourgeois one, and, as such, a compound. He is at one moment an abstract principle of necessity, a driving force for the universe, and - as Caudwell says of Him - He is, in this

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Matthews. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. 2000. pp. 147-148.

[13] The prohibition against beans is possibly Pythagorean in origin. The Pythagoreans insisted on the transmigration of the human soul and that beans were the vector for this, hence their refusal to eat beans which contained the πνευμα or human spirit: alternately, a bean looks somewhat like an early-stage human foetus which may also contribute to this taboo.

[14] Such as the King of Ulster not be allowed to hear the fluttering of birds on Linn Saileach after sunset.

guise, unappetising. But He is also the God of quality, the God of the mystic and seer, the personal God of the Virgin Birth, the Crucifixion, anger and great interest in the individual.(30) I would suggest that this is this same Bourgeois God. Not only is he the driving impersonal God that commanded *'Fiat Lux!'* and set the cosmos with all its trillions of stars and billions of galaxies flying outward, but he is also the personalised God of bourgeois culture.

A good many people, perhaps even a great majority, particularly in the western world, have this same Cartesian, bourgeois God. A Cosmic 'Jack Of-All-Trades' who can turn His hand to just about anything and everything. Much like the ideal bourgeois citizen who can hustle a dollar or two along with the best. That this God would be equally incomprehensible to a Roman Senator, Aztec peasant or a present-day Australian Aborigine is of no consequence to the bourgeoisie. The Bourgeois God is 'Eternal'. He has to be for he is the mainstay of bourgeois belief, not only in the supernatural but in themselves. The Bourgeoisie exist, therefore the bourgeoisie have always existed, even in the centuries when there *were* no bourgeoisie. Therefore they will exist forever. Rather like their God, in fact. God must be eternal, therefore they shall last forever.

v - The Death of God

But in the past, before Christianity, people were far more reasonable about the longevity of their gods. The deity could, as Frazer has observed, die. In *The Golden Bough* he reports the story told by a Colonel Dodge when questioning a North American Indian about their God, the Great Spirit who made the world: 'Being asked which Great Spirit, he meant, the good one or the bad one, "Oh, neither of them," replied he, "the Great Spirit that made the world is dead long ago. He could not possibly have lived as long as this."'(31) Frazer also notes that the grave of Zeus was shown to visitors at Crete as late

as the beginning of the present era and that, at Delphi, the grave of 'Dionysus, son of Semele', was set beside the golden statue of Apollo. How has this come about? Frazer puts it tersely: 'Man has created gods in his own likeness and being himself mortal he has naturally supposed his creatures to be in the same sad predicament.'(32)

Caudwell and Frazer are so far in agreement here. God is a creation of mortals, therefore he too, is mortal. But this does not accord with the aspect of God that is, to all intents and purposes, *im*mortal, that God which knows no bounds, and is the objective half of the Cartesian God of the bourgeois, for it is self-evident that humanity, both collectively and individually, is not immortal. I believe, *via* a close reading of Caudwell, Cornford, Frazer and others, that it is the question of class that causes this 'elevation' to immortality of the gods as *individuals* and in contrast to the collective immortality of the primitive peoples. Once again, typically of religious conservatism, the mortality of the gods lingers on, into class society so that even in aristocratic, Classical and, later, Hellenic Greece it was thought possible that the father of the gods, Zeus son of Rhea, was buried in Crete. Apparently even the circumstance of Zeus' death is known. Robert Graves in his extraordinary work *The White Goddess* says of the death of deities that:

> An unknown god disguised as a boar kills Ancaeus, the Arcadian King, a devotee of Artemis, in his vineyard at Tegea and, according to the Nestorian Gannat Busame ('Garden of Delights') *Cretan Zeus was similarly killed.*[15] [Graves' parentheses, quotation. Emphasis added.](33)

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[15] George Thomson notes that: 'With the development of farming, the sky, as the source of rain, and the earth, as a receptacle of seeds, assume a new and universal importance, embracing the common interests of a whole area of tribes; yet even these new sky gods and earth goddesses that emerge out of these conditions usually betray some marks of a pre-anthropomorphic origin.' George Thomson. *Æschylus and Athens.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1940. p. 19. This analysis, combined with Graves' observation regarding the death of Zeus by an animal seem indicative of a conflict between earlier, animistic belief and the later anthropomorphic religion of the later invaders of Greece.

Thus we have gods, even at this relatively late stage of class development, dying as if mortal, which might be seen as a leftover from earlier, more primitive, beliefs.

When did God become the immortal, omnipotent and - for the most part - indivisible deity? I suggest, once again - in line with the Caudwell - that it was when class schism became too great and that the god had to imitate the ruler who, of course, in turn had to become 'god', in a euhemeristic manner. Egypt, China, the Hellenic Greeks and Romans all passed through this stage of an imperial 'mirror image' of Heaven on Earth and Earth in Heaven, the ruler of Heaven becoming the Ruler of Earth and once again, vice versa, which brings us back to the 'inverted world' noted by Marx. The tribe, passing from collective, primitive communism into class-schism and slave ownership, passes also from one form of religion to another. The earlier form of group religion where any afterlife is collective and continual, the concept of *παλινγενισια* - reincarnation - gives way slowly but surely to the Heavenly ruler, which grows out of the king or the hero. The question must be asked: how is it possible to believe in a supreme ruling deity, when one has no concept of such a being in earthly terms? I would argue, from the Caudwellian standpoint, that it is impossible.

vi - Survivals and the Gods

There are elements of older forms of belief embedded - fossilised as it were - within the present-day religions of the world. Reincarnation, harvest festivals, ritual scarring, even a rarefied and vicarious form of cannibalism here and there. We might consider the origins of the traditional saffron robes of the Buddhist mendicant in this context. The colour is quite accidental as C. H. S. Ward in his *Mahayana Buddhism* has pointed out when discussing the nature of very early Buddhism:

> All the ascetics (except the 'sky-men', who went naked) wore the yellow robe. The colour however does not appear in those early days to have any religious significance: it really is accidental. These devotees were directed to collect rags from the dust heaps, generally at the Burning Ghats, and stitch them into robes. Such rags would be a dirty faded yellowish colour and so the yellow robe was established.
> At the present day the new robes of Buddhist monks are supposed to be made of pieces of material stitched together. It is ordered that even the most expensive and beautiful robes should each have at least one patch. [Ward's parentheses, quotation.](34)

A clear example of the fact that religion nearly always diverges from its original intentions. Not because it wants to but because, existing within a class-based society, it *has* to. On the subject of Buddhism and class we should also consider David Snellgrove's work *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* when he quotes the words of King Ye-shes-'od of Gu-ge, Western Tibet, who ruled in the 10th-11th centuries CE. The king's rant against the religious practices of the Tantric school of Buddhism (where he uses such comparisons as faeces, urine, semen and blood, rotting corpses and unclean animals, etc.) ends with:

> It is truly amazing that a Buddhist should act this way. If practices like yours result in Buddhahood, then hunters, fishermen, butchers and prostitutes would all surely have gained enlightenment by now.(35)

It would seem that the King has more than a little class contempt for the lower orders of his kingdom. Enlightenment is definitely not for them. Class considerations and prejudices take priority over religion, not only in the West but also the East. These survivals and distortions are no more indicative of the existence of a 'true' *a prioristic* religion than the continued existence of the British House of Lords into the early 21st

century is any indication that feudalism is still the ruling form of economic exploitation. In the words of Marx:

> Hitherto men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be. They have arranged their relationships according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms have got out of their hands.(36)

There seems to be very rarely, if ever, a clear break between an older belief and a newer one. Nietzsche, in his *Birth of Tragedy*, maintains that there is an historical basis for religious belief and that the transformation from the Dionysian into the Apollonian in Greek religion has had repercussions down through the mediaeval era even to our own age, although any formal worship of Dionysus has long been suppressed by Christianity. Nietzsche says:

> [i]n the German Middle Ages singing and dancing crowds, ever increasing in number, were whirled from place to place under this same Dionysian impulse. In these dances of St. John and St. Vitus, we rediscover the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks, with their early history in Asia Minor, as far back as Babylon and the orgiastic Sacæa.(37)

In this, one might see Marx's view that 'their phantoms have got out of their hands', and Nietzsche's argument is a powerful one which ties in with Caudwell's view that: 'In the dance and the chant man retires into a half-sleep by dismissing the world of immediate reality. This enables him to play fast and loose with the world of external reality, to build and unbuild it.'(38) This shows how important the dance was to ancient ritual, in the early history of the human race. It harks back to that time when Man and Nature - to use

the Caudwellian capitalisation - were one and indivisible, totemism and natural mimicking was the means of human understanding when 'Man was really Nature'.(39)

The dance is the inverted, religious world of the tribe: but, being so, it now becomes the inverted world of the class in control. In this particular instance, the Warlord or Hero. Whether he is Cu Chulain, Perseus, Dionysus, Vishnu or Agamemnon, these symbolic projections must have had their origins in real people living in a real time, but have become fused (and confused) with the earlier totemistic deities of nature, *manna*, etc. The boundaries between the mortal gods and the godlike mortal is unclear, even now, as it was for the people at the time. The mimicking dance is still, of course, performed, as it is to this day, even in such rarefied circles as the Royal Ballet, but the subject changes with the changes in society. Dancers no longer mimic emus or kangaroos, but kings and nobility, even allowing for the exception of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. Harrison says in *Themis*: 'Pantomimic dancing is the essence of each and every mystery function'.(40) Again, we see the rôle of religion not only changing as societies change but that certain earlier elements are incorporated into the newer religious ideologies. No matter how hard a religion may try - consciously or unconsciously - to stem the tide of change, it still falls foul of dialectical changes within the society of which it is a part.

vii - Poetry and Religion

Poetry, too, has its origins in ancient religious ritual. According to Caudwell poetry and religion are almost inseparable in the childhood of humanity though there are some crucial differences. He says:

> How can we separate religion from poetry in the childhood of the race? Both have an economic function and a social content.

> We can distinguish them because we find in poetry, in all ages, a characteristic we do not find in religion, the more and more clearly it emerges as "true" religion. Poetry is productive and changeful. The poetry of one age does not satisfy the next age, but each new generation (while appreciating the old poetry) demands poems which more peculiarly and specially express its own problems and aspirations. [Quotation, parentheses, Caudwell's.](41)

Once again we see the problems caused within religion by its own aspirations to 'changelessness' in conflict with the ever-changing nature of the historical and materialist dialectic. That religions do try to bring poetry under their control can be evinced by Robert Graves' telling of the story of the origin of Japanese poetry in *The White Goddess*. Parenthetically he says that:

> [t]he legendary origin of Japanese poetry is in an encounter between the Moon-goddess and the Sun-god as they walked around the pillar of the world in opposite directions. The Moon-goddess spoke first, saying in verse:
>
> *What joy beyond compare*
> *to see a man so fair!*
>
> The Sun-god was angry that she had spoken out of turn in this unseemly fashion; he told her to return and come to meet him again. On this occasion he spoke first.
>
> *To see a maid so fair-*
> *What a Joy beyond compare!*
>
> This was the first verse ever composed. In other words, the Sun-God took over control of poetry from the Muse and pretended that he had originated it - a lie that did Japanese poets no good at all. [Graves' italics.](42)

I feel that I should point out that Graves had some very singular views on the relationship of poetry to the human race and that, quite unlike Caudwell, he believed that the Muse,

personified, actually existed.[16] I do not believe this and I have used Graves to show that there is, in spite of Graves' views, not only a relationship between religion and dialectical materialism but also religion, poetry and class exploitation, no matter what Graves actually believed of it himself as his research was quite exhaustive and in many places extremely apposite to this thesis.[17] I merely wish to avoid any potential charges against Caudwell - or myself - that there is some support for a secretly mystical interpretation of Caudwell's works. Caudwell was not a mystic: he was a Marxist and conducted himself as such, in every sphere of life and research, though he had recourse to many non-Marxist sources. A cursory comparative reading of Caudwell and Graves will reveal a gulf between Caudwell's scientific attempts at a materially-grounded analysis and Graves' Classicist, intuitive and anti-rational beliefs, though this is in no way a diminishment of the latter's great erudition and brilliance.

To return to the present theme: Caudwell - as did others - saw the connection between the very early forms of worship and the fact that they had diverged markedly by the present era. There was once no division between song, poetry, dance, music and religious belief. All of these aspects were interconnected and there was no way to say that 'this song is religious' or 'this poem is secular.' In the dawn of the human race no such division existed. Graves says much the same thing as Caudwell though from a very different perspective: 'The ancient Celts carefully distinguished the poet, *who was originally a priest and a judge* and whose person was sacrosanct, from the mere

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16 'No Muse-poet grows conscious of the Muse except by a woman in whom the goddess is in some degree resident.' *The White Goddess*. London: Faber and Faber. 1961. p. 490.

17 See, especially, Graves' *The Greek Myths*, Vols. I and II. London: The Folio Society. 1955. There is a far greater historically-materialist slant in this work than in *The White Goddess*. However, even here, while Graves will freely affirm that, for example, much of Greek religion and the conflict of the various groups of gods originates in the conquest of pre-Hellenic, matriarchal peoples by Indo-European, patriarchal invaders, (*Cf.* Perseus the Sun-Hero destroying the Gorgon, the Moon-Goddess.) rarely does he give any analysis into why these wars actually occurred in the first place, i.e. class conflict and economic exploitation (although he does say that the Trojan War, no matter its results, was a trade war due to a blockading of the Black Sea (Euxinus Pontus) trade routes from what is now Russia and Ukraine to the Mediterranean). Like that other notorious anti-rationalist Nietzsche, Graves knew very little, if anything, of political economy.

gleemen. He was in Irish called fili, a seer; in Welsh, derwydd or oak-seer, which is the probable derivation of 'Druid.''[Emphasis added.](43) In a similar vein the Marxist historian George Thomson pointed out in 1949 that:

> [f]inally the prophet becomes a poet. In primitive thought there is no clear line between prophecy and poetry. The minstrels described in the Homeric poems are credited with second sight and their persons are sacrosanct. The poet is a prophet at a higher level of sublimation. The physical intensity of the trance has been mitigated, but it is a trance all the same. His psyche is precipitated into fantasy in which his subconscious struggles to find an outlet. And just as the prophet's predictions command general acceptance, so the poet's utterances stir the heart.[18]
>
> In this way we are able, *with Caudwell*, to define the essential nature of art.[Emphasis added.](44)

Thomson is in no doubt as to Caudwell's credentials where it comes to poetic and anthropological analysis. Both saw that prophecy and poetry were once indivisible. But what of the fate of religion? We have explored the origins of theology, but, after its bifurcation, what did it become in our own era, the age of late capitalism and imperialism?

viii. Søren Abbye Kierkegaard - Existentialist Christianity

> Kierkegaard acknowledges no world-history save in the eyes of God. For man, who in his view significantly enough - could be only a spectator in

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[18] This section, without any direct reference to Caudwell, appears in Thomson's *Marxism and Poetry*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1945. p. 28.

> history, there is no history but only an individual moral-cum-religious development.(45)

György Lukács notes that the doctrines of Kierkegaard insist that there is no place for humanity in the history of the world. If such a history exists then it can *only* be that of God. But what - and where - is God? As we have seen, 'God' for Caudwell was a changing entity, subject in himself to the dialectical, historical changes that not only affect humanity but are *effected* by it. If the gods are mere shadow figures of the causal laws of nature, where does this place Kierkegaard? His doctrines, often put forward as the first true example of existentialism are also intensely individualist and reactionary; Christian in outlook and epistemology.[19] Kierkegaard writes in the preface to *Fear and Trembling:*

> Not just in commerce but in the world of ideas too, our age is putting on a veritable clearance sale. Everything can be had so dirt cheap that one begins to wonder whether in the end anyone will want to make a bid. Every speculative score-keeper who conscientiously marks up the momentous march of modern philosophy, every lecturer, every crammer, student, everyone on the outskirts of philosophy or at its centre is unwilling to stop with doubting everything.(46)

Caudwell makes no direct references to Kierkegaard and this is hardly surprising as the latter has only recently been 'discovered' in the early to mid-20th century. Neither Marx,

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[19] When commenting upon Greek dialectics, Kierkegaard writes: 'In the most recent philosophy, abstraction culminates in pure being, but pure being is the most abstract expression for eternity and again as 'nothing' it is precisely the moment. Here again the importance of the moment becomes apparent, because only with the moment become the extreme opposites, whereas dialectical sorcery, on the other hand, makes eternity and the moment signify the same thing. It is only with Christianity that sensuousness, temporality and the moment can be properly understood, because only with Christianity does eternity become essential'. Søren Kierkegaard. *The Concept of Anxiety: The Kierkegaard Reader.* (Editors:) Jonathan Rée, Jane Chamberlain. Oxford: Blackwell. 2001. p. 195*n*.

Engels or Lenin have anything to say about him. However the modern 'discovery'[20] of the Kierkegaardian ethos is perfectly understandable if we are to agree with the Marxists. Lukács says of the modern recognition of Kierkegaard that he '[d]id not emerge as a leading intellectual force decisively influencing European (and American) philosophical reaction until between the two World Wars, on the eve of Hitler's seizure of power. This position he has held up to the present day.'[Lukács's parenthesis.](47) In regard to this, it should be noted that the tutor of the leading nuclear physicist Niels Bohr - Harald Høffding - was himself a Kierkegaardian. James T. Cushing writes in his work, *Quantum Mechanics: Historical Contingency and the Copenhagen Hegemony.* that 'Bohr explicitly acknowledged the influence of Høffding's philosophy on his own formulation of complementarity.[21] One of Høffding's central tenets was that in life decisive events proceeded through sudden "jerks" or discontinuities.'[Cushing's quotation.](48) This makes sense if one gives Bohr's views a cursory reading and it can be argued with some force that the question of indeterminacy as espoused by Bohr and other notable physicists has its roots - in part at least - in Kierkegaardian existentialist ethics.

Physics aside, it should be noted that Kierkegaard was deeply suspicious of the masses as can be seen by the quotation above from *Fear and Trembling.* It matters not at all if these 'masses' are, in this case, the intelligentsia, they are to be treated perhaps, to use modern terminology, as car boot sale rummagers in the intellectual sell-off. It is a

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[20] It should come as no surprise when Martin Heidegger says in a note to his work *Being and Time* that: 'The man who has gone farthest in analysing the phenomena of anxiety - and again in the theological context of a 'psychological' exposition of the problem of original sin - is Søren Kierkegaard.' [Heidegger's quotation marks.] H. 190. *n*iv. Oxford: Blackwell. 1962. (Editors and Transl.): John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson.

[21] 'The lesson... is that the measured value of an observable need not (and in general cannot) be the value that existed before the measurement process. This truly reflects Bohr's concept of the wholeness of quantum phenomena and the spirit of his principle of complementarity. How a microcosm behaves depends on its environment - an observed value is *contextual.*' [Cushing's parenthesis and emphasis.] *Quantum Mechanics: Historical Contingency and the Copenhagen Hegemony.* Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press. 1994. p. 102. See also on this subject thesis chapter 10, 'The Philosophy of Reality'. *Passim.*

supreme irony (a trait for which Kierkegaard himself is frequently praised) that the same might be said to have happened to Kierkegaard's theories. Kierkegaard's views are that, in essence, it is only the *individual* that really matters and as such the rest is not really worth considering except in the most derogatory terms. He writes:

> Here again the movement tends towards simplicity: it is from the public to the individual. *Religiously* speaking, there is no such thing as a public,[22] but only individuals, for religion is seriousness, and seriousness is... the individual - in the sense, however, that absolutely every human being, can be and indeed must be, an individual. To me, the edifying author, it was, and is, therefore, a joy that from this moment the matter of 'the individual' began to receive some attention.[Kierkegaard's emphasis and quotation.](49)

So, what might we make of this religious individualism so admired by Kierkegaard? It should be noted that Caudwell saw Protestantism as a mere reflection of bourgeois self-interest and individualism. He writes in *Studies in a Dying Culture* that: '[P]rotestantism, the religion of the bourgeoisie, necessarily revolted against tribal Catholicism. As a religion, it 'reformed' all the social elements of Catholicism. *It became Catholicism minus the social elements and plus individualism.*'[Emphasis added.](50) So far, then, we can see the economic foundations of a good part of Kierkegaardian doctrine, and it might well be argued that this much sought after 'individualism' is a precursor to the positivistic attitude to art, or Art for Art's Sake. Certainly Theodor W. Adorno would have it so. He says when criticising the aesthetic attitudes of Kierkegaard:

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[22] *Cf.* Margaret Thatcher's view on society. 'There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.' From *Women's Own* 31st October 1987. Quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996. p. 691. To be fair to Kierkegaard, however, his view is, essentially, that of a religious individual while Thatcher's is entirely secular.

> The consequence, that art becomes its own object, is prefigured in the aesthetic idealism of the early Schelling and Schopenhauer and finally brought to its destructive completion in Wagner and Nietzsche. Under the influence of German romanticism, Kierkegaard's writings prepare for the transition of this intention from philosophical systematics - which he critically breaks through - to an artistic praxis of which he was not yet capable.(51)

The Kierkegaardian doctrine of 'Self for Self's Sake' or, in his particular case, 'Self for Christ's Sake' is not far removed from 'Art for Art's Sake', I would suggest, the results of which can be seen throughout art and literature certainly since the mid-19th century. As Caudwell says in relation to the art of the Imperialist Epoch 'The rejection of all the specifically social features in poetry as a revolt against *convention.* Words are increasingly used for personal associations. Either the rejection of all rhythm because of its social genesis or its use hypnotically to release associations which will be personal in proportion to their depth and therefore their unconsciousness.'[Caudwell's emphasis.](52) Caudwell's argument is, primarily, that once bourgeois 'individualism' is placed at the pinnacle of human society, the collective, the 'social' is relegated to second place at best and individualist anarchy will be the result. This individualism - an existentialism of the most backward form - can precipitate a turn towards reaction and, ultimately, fascism.[23] Caudwell recognises a clear link between the decline of imperialism and the upsurge of fascism and the 'mercenary class' that arises from that transition, the fascists themselves. He says in *Romance and Realism* that this is 'an ignobler class'.(53) Of this class he says:

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[23] Of course, to recognise this is not to imply that all existentialists are fascists: far from it. Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, etc., are clearly representatives of the 'Left Wing' of the movement.

> It is not now asked, like the empire builders,[24] to dominate "inferior" races - races at an earlier stage of culture - but it is framed to dominate that very class in its midst which represents socialism and the culture of the future, the proletariat. This task, at once ignoble and reactionary, demands complete unconsciousness and stupidity from its tools. [Caudwell's quotation.](54)

God, although still *eternal* has been dethroned, not because the bourgeoisie see no need for a God, but because the Deity of the past has become too detached from the problems of humanity. But fascism is in fact no answer at all for this only exacerbates the problem. Of the question of religion in relation to fascism, Caudwell draws parallels between the rise of modern reaction and that of the latter days of the Roman Empire. He says that Jesus attempted to build a "People's Republic'(55) and that, before him, the 'Pharisees had a relationship with the Romans rather like the de Valera government of Ireland had with the British.'(56) However, Jesus took a reformist path and thus was branded a blasphemer and was executed.(57) As in Germany, centuries later, Constantine used Christianity to shore up his own and the Empire's crumbling power:

> Himself of proletarian origin, Constantine understood precisely the rôle Christianity was playing in relation to the masses. Like Hitler in a Germany 'menaced' by Socialism, Constantine, faced with the menace of Christianity saw how to make this revolutionary feeling the means of bringing him to power, not as a revolutionary leader but within the framework of the existing State. Thus Constantine's legions, like Hitler's Nazis, having

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[24] Consider, for example, Rudyard Kipling in this context. 'Kipling therefore does not represent the imperialism of the big bourgeoisie, who are quite conscious of their role, but the imperialism of their duped servants, the public school boys who are sent out, stuffed full of propaganda and class pride to do the bourgeois' dirty work and take the knocks.' Christopher Caudwell. *Romance and Realism.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 83.

> been promised the full programme of revolution, swept him to power, after which he found no difficulty in consolidating his position within the Imperial machine and dropping the revolutionary Programme.
> [Caudwell's quotation, capitalisation.](58)

This does have some tenuous parallels with the modern world but I feel that I must agree with E. P. Thompson when he calls this section 'jejune'.(59) It does not, however, make the entire essay 'ridiculous' as Thompson claims. Certainly it is less than sophisticated but, given the era that Caudwell lived in, it is apposite to his thesis.

x. - Conclusion

Thus we have a system of thought that is as old as human thought itself. That religion has grown out - and away from - art and poetry can be seen in Caudwell's analysis of its effects, not only on the human race but on art and - paradoxically - religion itself. As Caudwell points out, though, religion cannot fulfil the need that society places upon it. When speaking on art he says: 'Art tells us what science cannot tell us, and what religion only feigns to tell us - what we are and why we are, why we hope and suffer and love and die.'(60)

Caudwell's view, that religion is - at best - a feigning, a 'shadow world' of illusion, ties in with Karl Marx's view that the world of religion is the inverted world, that it is the projected aspiration of our best hopes and worst nightmares - Paradise, the Fields of Yaru, Nirvana, the sulphurous pit of Gehenna, the Babylonian Irkalla or the Buddhist Avici, etc. - which have grown out of the innocent needs of our earliest ancestors and has turned into something quite unlike its origins, save that it holds within it petrified remains of the earlier beliefs once so vital to our ancestors' survival.

Caudwell says of class religion that:

> [b]y carefully protecting its symbolic statements from material test, confines them to a kingdom of heaven which is either invisibly present behind the real world,[25] or in more sophisticated forms is simply "in men's hearts", i. e. is after all subjective. In that case religion's truths are simply symbolic of feeling-tone, and religion thus reduces itself to art, with this difference, that the very method of its generation gives it a dogmatic and amateurish stiffness which is opposed to the flexibility and technical richness of conscious art - conscious of its rôle, of its materials, its problems, its techniques and its traditions.[Caudwell's quotations.](62)

These observations have been made not only by Caudwell but others, as noted above. The main difference is that Caudwell's analyses are from a Marxist, class-based point of view as well as historically materialist, whereas Harrison, Frazer, Cornford and Freud are not concerned, specifically, with the economic class-determined aspect of analysis. Marxists have always been hostile to religious dogma for the very reasons quoted above. What was once necessary to human survival is seen by Caudwell and others as a reactionary menace and a great weight holding back human development.

Caudwell's analysis of religion and dogma, I would maintain, is no less insightful or apposite than that of Lenin, Harrison, Frazer; Freud or Cornford. He has, in this instance, provided an invaluable contribution to the historical-materialist world-view in that he sees how religion may have played a vital rôle in the social ontology of humanity but that rôle has now not only become obsolete but dangerous. The tribal, immanent deity has passed, inexorably, through to the monotheistic, transcendental God of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and has now, thanks to the bourgeoisie, become an

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[25] The influence of Platonic Idealism on Christianity is, of course, colossal. Francis MacDonald Cornford says of both Plato and Aristotle that they would have both been canonised centuries ago, even allowing for some heretical tendencies, had they not been born before the Christian Era. He adds that Socrates' canonisation would have taken place too, although at a much later date. *Before and After Socrates.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1932. p. 65. For further on this subject *cf.* Plato, especially *The Apology* and *Phaedo.*

individualistic God, once again immanent but not with the interests of the tribe at the core but that of the individual, the God and heaven in our heart. It must be said that this particular 'God' is regressive, reactionary and more corrupting - at least on social terms - than the abstract, unindividuated deities of the Stone Age and other early peoples. What was once vital to survival may now be a root cause of humanity's problems, certainly if we are to agree with the Marxist-anthropological analyses of Caudwell and others. Class war is waged on all levels and on all fronts; religion is no exception to this.

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37. Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy. Philosophies of Art and Beauty.* (Editors): Albert Hofstader, Richard Kuhns. London: University of Chicago Press. p. 501

38. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 206.

39. Ibid. p. 37.

40. Jane Harrison. *Themis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1912. p. 24.

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42. Robert Graves. *The White Goddess.* London: Faber and Faber. 1961. p. 393.

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44. George Thomson. *Studies in Ancient Greek Society: The Prehistoric Aegean.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1949. p. 61.

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51. Theodor W. Adorno. *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic.* Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press. 1989.

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54. Christopher Caudwell. *Romance and Realism.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press. 1970. p. 88.

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56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

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59. E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin. 1977. p. 263.

60. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 291.

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6: The Leninist Concept of War

i - The Consciousness of War

> We see, therefore, that War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a continuation of the same by other means.(1)

This often-quoted dictum of Clausewitz, that War (capitalised) is not an accidental occurrence between otherwise peaceful states, but an integral part of the body politic of the State itself, was quoted with approval by Lenin in the Spring of 1917.[1] The latter saw Clausewitz as a man ahead of his time even though Clausewitz was politically conservative. But it was not the politics of Clausewitz that Lenin approved of: it was his - for the time - revolutionary analysis of the nature of war itself. What has this doctrine to do with Caudwell? Caudwell had very definite theories of war, peace and pacifism and, indeed, his own life and work were cut tragically short by his participation in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. Here we will see that war and pacifism - both of which Caudwell saw as products of bourgeois ideology - may be recognised within the Marxist, materialist analysis as a superstructure upon the economic base.

William B. Gallie in his work, *Philosophers of Peace and War* gives a clear analysis of the development of Marxism and later, Leninism, into an ideology able to deal with the contingencies of war:

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[1] 'War is a continuation of policy by other means. All wars are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given *class* within that state, pursued for a long time before the war is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action being alone changed.' [Emphasis added.] V. I. Lenin. *Lecture on War and Revolution.* 14th May, 1917. *Collected Works. Vol. XXIV.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1978.

> Suffice to say that Marxism, a revolutionary creed which had been conceived, and whose fundamental structure had been laid down, in an age of military quiescence (if not genuine peace), came to political maturity and effectiveness some thirty years later in a Europe obviously dominated by the threat of total war.[Gallie's parenthesis.](2)

ii - The Class Nature of War

Friedrich Engels, writing towards the end of the 19th century, said of the warfare of that period that it was - essentially - an arms race between the most-highly industrialised powers in the world, i.e. Britain, Germany, France, Italy, etc.(3) Commenting on the almost feverish pursuit of heavier and heavier Naval Dreadnoughts, he says: '[t]he rivalry between armour plating and the fire power of guns is so far from being at an end that nowadays a ship is almost always out of date before it is launched.'(4) Further: '[t]he modern warship is not only a product, but at the same time a specimen of modern large-scale industry, a floating factory - producing mainly, to be sure, a lavish waste of money.'(5) Engels' argument is succinct: the vested interests of bourgeois monopoly capitalism tie up vast amounts of finance, manpower, material resources, energy, etc. into something that is, for all intents and purposes, practically obsolete by the beginning of its maiden voyage. Why? Because, if we are to agree with Clausewitz, it is precisely the nature of imperial-military policy to ensure that, if any capitalist nation should go to war, it will stand at least some chance of either defeating or at least neutralising its enemies. It *cannot* afford to lag behind in the field of military developments more than it can in any other field. It is '[c]onstantly revolutionising its instruments of production,'(6) even in the field of war, the production of violence. Karl Marx in *The Economics* says of

this aspect of bourgeois society that it is within the military that most often wider social developments are presaged.

> War attains complete development before peace; how certain phenomena, such as wage-labour, machinery etc., are developed at an earlier date through war and armies than within bourgeois society. *The connection between productive force and commercial relationships is made especially plain in the army.*[Emphasis added.](7)

A specific example of this is the way the Roman monetary system was organised. Marx says: '[A]s a matter of fact, the money system was fully developed there only as far as the army was concerned; it never came to dominate the entire system of labour.'(8) One can see, from the Roman Military's point of view, the necessity of this. A more or less standardised, highly mobile armed force, which is what the Roman Imperial Army was, could hardly pay its troops in goats, bushels of wheat and bags of salt, which is what the more static elements of the *Pax Romana* still did.

In *Illusion and Reality*, Caudwell tackles the problem of finance and capital in relation to armed conflict by saying of industrial 'rationalisation' that it is, in fact irrationalisation as:

> [I]t leads to an increase in anarchy inside and outside - internally by a profound disturbance in the economy resulting from the growth of the armament and luxury industry at the expense of necessities and a general lowering of wages, and externally by an increase in tariffs and a general drive towards war.(9)

War, then is not merely an 'accidental occurrence,' something that 'went wrong' and the ending of the war (clearly with a decisive victory) would settle the problem once and for

all. Hence the First World War was erroneously called 'The War to End All Wars'. As Lenin said in 1914, '[T]he story about this being the "last war" is a hollow and dangerous fabrication.'[Lenin's quotation.](10) It is has to be pointed out that Lenin was in no way an absolute pacifist, and that he saw a necessity for certain kinds of warfare. He had no qualms about calling for a war that would, eventually, lead to the liberation of the working masses.

> To the Third International falls the task of organising the proletarian forces for a revolutionary onslaught against capitalist governments, for civil war against the bourgeoisie of all countries for the capture of military power, for socialism!(11)

Jonathan Glover in his work *Causing Death and Saving Lives* says that Lenin was a 'contingent pacifist' in that he saw the rôle of warfare in relative rather than absolute terms. Glover says: '[W]hat marks off the proletarian revolution from other wars must be the greater evil it avoids, the greater benefit it brings or the less killing and suffering it involves.'(12) This is in stark contrast to the nature of capitalist conflicts. Engels points out that the inherent contradictions within the capitalist system will not only cause more wars but that the social ontology of the bourgeois military system is fatally flawed: '[t]he machine refuses to work, and militarism collapses by the dialectics of its own evolution.' (13) Thus in just over twenty years, (thirteen if one counts the Japanese invasion of China in 1931) there is the Second World War. Engels, writing in 1870, also demonstrates the sheer hypocrisy of bourgeois warfare. In an article for the *Pall Mall Gazette* he reveals the brutal Prussian attitude to the French *Franc Tireurs* - irregulars - who fought them, often shooting anyone suspected of even aiding them. He compares this attitude to the Prussian *Landsturm Order* of 1813, in which all men, in civilian clothes, were to harry and attack Napoleonic troops on Prussian territory. When the

tables were turned the Prussians, less than sixty years later, were massacring the French for doing precisely the same thing. At the end of the article Engels says:

> [T]he argument brought forward in favour of so despicable a method of waging war[2] serves only as proof that, if the Prussian Army has immeasurably improved since Jena, the Prussian government, on the other hand, is ripening for those conditions that made Jena possible.(14)

Engels' view may be seen as further evidence in support of the Caudwellian-Marxist analysis that bourgeois culture, society and ethics, in this case, warfare, are all distorted by bourgeois illusion and idealism, and that it is the fundamental false-consciousness of capitalist society that leads to a militarist system that executes people for doing exactly what is considered patriotic if carried out by their own side. By contrast, the Ancients seemed in many ways to have a more sober and realistic view of warfare and its end results. Thucydides said of the nature of war and peace that '[p]eace is more firmly established when it follows war, but to refuse to go to war from a desire for tranquillity is by no means so free from danger.'(15)

Like Lenin, Caudwell was no pacifist. He fought and died in Spain[3] because, as he saw it, it was more important to defend a Republican, if bourgeois government, than to let it go down in flames to an even worse system; outright fascism. When the Second Republic was declared in Spain most hoped for a peaceful transition. Even at the beginning of the Republic, however, there were serious misgivings amongst the Spanish people.

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[2] Killing civilian suspects without trial, etc. Much the same can be said of the Nazis, seventy years later, particularly in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the USSR.

[3] Under the command of Briskey, a bus driver from Dalston, East London. *Studies in a Dying Culture*. Introduction by John Strachey. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. v. and also 12 'Appendix: Caudwell Obituaries'. of this thesis. (2) p. 374.

> 'The Republic has arrived without bloodshed' one of my teachers said. 'Yes,' replied another, 'and we shall live to regret it.' I was shocked to hear him talk like that; but later I came to wonder if he wasn't right. [Author's quotations.](16)

This eyewitness account, by a woman who was fifteen at the time, is all the more ominous because of what happened later in Spain, and is a pessimistic echo of Thucydides words on the desire for tranquillity and its inherent dangers. That one may have a peaceful transition from one form of class rule to another, is still an integral part of the illusion. Caudwell saw this, and he tried to ensure that he himself was as clear-headed as he could be about the nature of class warfare, either in civil wars or international imperialist wars. For a Marxist-Leninist a war has to be judged as to whether it serves or hinders social progress. Jean-Paul Sartre said in 1948: '[a] war is neither praiseworthy nor condemnable in itself. We have to see whether, in the historical circumstances, it serves the interests of the proletariat.'(17) This is a typically Marxist view, insofar as it fights shy of declaring anything ideal or absolute when set against an historically-materialist backdrop, in this case human conflict, and is a clear echo of Lenin. For Marxists, war can never be viewed as an absolute evil, particularly if it advances the revolutionary cause of even a bourgeois revolution. Ernst Fischer very aptly said of the Romantic period that:

> All the contradictions inherent in Romanticism were carried to their extreme in the revolutionary upheaval of which the American War of Independence was the prologue and Waterloo the final act.(18)

Even though, by the very nature of the bourgeoisie, the revolutions of this period were illusory and tainted by class-schism and idealism, they still overthrew the absolutist

feudalism that still lingered into the 18th and 19th centuries, therefore they were to be considered progressive. Lenin's views accord with Fischer's on this subject:

> The Great French Revolution ushered in a new epoch in the history of mankind. From that time down to the Paris Commune between 1789 and 1871, one type of war was of a bourgeois-progressive character, waged for national liberation. In other words, the overthrow of absolutism and feudalism, the undermining of the institutions and the overthrow of alien oppression, formed the chief content and historical significance of such wars.(19)

However, it must be pointed out that even Caudwell - to a degree - was in some ways unaware of the real nature of warfare as carried out by fascists. This was unavoidable, as he was killed in 1937 before the Second World War, and never witnessed the atrocities committed by the Axis forces, especially on their Eastern Front. His says in *Studies in a Dying Culture*:

> Consequently England need have no fear that a victorious Germany would have raped all Englishwomen, beheaded all Englishmen and transported the Elgin marbles to Berlin. Bourgeois states do not do such things. It would have confined itself to taking England's Imperial possessions and completing the profitable task of converting them to full bourgeois social relations.(20)

However, it can be argued that this might well have been the case had the Germans successfully invaded Britain in 1940. Hitler was desperate for some form of *rapprochement* with the British as he admired the British Imperial system so much,

particularly the way the British dealt with India. Hitler said in 1941: 'If the English were to be driven out of India, India would perish.[sic] Our rôle in Russia will be analogous to that of England in India.'(21) The Nazi-Axis assault on the USSR left entire cities flattened, looted of all their valuables[4] and at least twenty seven million[5] Soviet soldiers and civilians dead, whether killed outright in the fighting, starved and worked to death in the camps[6] and factories or murdered by the *Einsatzgruppen.*[7] This is yet another example of the Clauswitzian dictum of warfare being a continuation of policy by other means, in this case the attempted conquest and colonisation of Poland and the Soviet Union as part of the '*Drang Nach Osten*' policy of the Nazis. Götz Aly has said in *Planning, Intelligentsia and the Final Solution* that:

> [t]he initial aim[8] was to achieve a '180° turn around' in the direction of the economy of the Ukraine, which should no longer feed Soviet workers, but secure foodstuffs and hence immunity to a blockade of Central Europe. [Quotation, Aly.](22)

Caudwell's lack of knowledge with regard to the true nature of Nazism is clearly understandable: after all the Wansee Conference where the 'Final Solution' - *Der*

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[4] See Caudwell above on the Elgin Marbles.

[5] Or one in seven of the pre-war population.

[6] Christian Streit reports that from the day that Operation *Barbarossa* opened to the end of the war in Europe 3,300,000 Red Army officers and men perished at the hands of their captors. This is 57.5% of all Soviet Armed Forces prisoners. Compare this to the 8,348 (3.5%) American and British prisoners who died in the same period. *War of Extermination. The German Military in World War Two. 1941-1944.* Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann. (Editors): New York, N.Y.: Berghann's. 2000.

[7] For those who might argue that the Red Army was every bit as bad, or even worse than the German Wehrmacht and SS, I recommend a reading of Alan Clark's work, *Barbarossa.* Critical of Stalin and the Soviet Government, it is remarkably objective in the way it deals with the war on the Eastern Front. For example: 'Yet barbaric as it was, the first impact of the Soviet Armies in Germany will not stand comparison with the Nazi conduct in Poland in 1939, or in White Russia and the Baltic provinces in 1941. The atrocities of the Death's Head units of the SS who systematically murdered school-children and poured petrol over hospital inmates was the deliberate policy of terror, 'justified' by half-baked racial notions, but implemented with a perverse and sadistic relish.' [Clark's quotation.] *Barbarossa.* London: Hutchinson. 1965. p. 362.

[8] The Nazi invasion of the USSR.

Endlösung - was ratified, was only held in April, 1942. No matter how aware Caudwell was of the nature of bourgeois warfare, even he could not see into the future. But as Caudwell points out with regard to the nature of the bourgeois attitude to the USSR: 'Only when the bourgeois begins to see the inevitability of Communism does he begin to regard Russia as a greater danger than any other bourgeois State.'(23) Caudwell knew that, eventually, it would come to war between the Soviet Union and some other Imperialist state, not necessarily Germany.

Immanuel Kant makes the point that differing political structures within a state can profoundly influence the way a war is declared and subsequently conducted. Kant draws a sharp distinction between constitutional and non-constitutional states when he says in his essay *On Perpetual Peace*:

> [u]nder a non-republican constitution, where subjects are not citizens, the easiest thing in the world is to declare war. Here the ruler is not a fellow citizen,[9] but the nation's owner, and war does not affect his table, his hunt, his places of pleasure, his court festivals and so on. Thus he can decide to go to war for the most meaningless of reasons, as if it were a kind of pleasure party, and he can blithely leave the justification (which decency requires) to his diplomatic corps, who are always prepared for such exercises.
> [Kant's parenthesis.](24)

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[9] *Cf.* William Shakespeare's view of warfare as a 'pressure valve' to relieve tensions on the home front.

> 'Therefore, my Harry,
> Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
> With foreign quarrels, that action hence borne out
> May waste the memory of the former days.'

Henry IV. II. Act IV. Scene iii. Lines 341-344. The Complete Works. (Editors:) Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994. p. 534. Henry IV's words to his son Prince Henry might be cynical and Machiavellian, but they give a good picture of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century thinking with regard to warfare and the rôle of the absolute monarch in the affairs of state.

The relative ease with which Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Militarist Japan attacked their neighbours, be it China, Albania, Poland, Britain, France, the United States or the Soviet Union, is in stark contrast to these latter states' reticence in military matters; how they would attempt to appease, mollify and soften the oncoming blows by treaties, pacts and negotiations, none of which worked in the long term although it can be argued that such deals did buy a little time for rearmament. The aggressor nations could always find some *casus belli*, be it *Lebensraum*, the Mukden Incident,[10] the Danzig Corridor, or a fabled 'Holy War Against Bolshevism', as a self-righteous justification for their aims.[11] War was either declared for totally spurious reasons or came 'completely out of the blue' as it did with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 or Operation '*Barbarossa*' against the Soviet Union in June of that year without any declaration of war whatsoever, although it is a myth that the Russians were caught completely unprepared for the assault. Geoffrey Rogers, in his excellent work *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War*,[12] shows that the Soviet Government was frantically trying to ease the tensions, even into the last minutes before the attack at 04:30 hours, Eastern European Time. It was to no avail: the Germans and their allies invaded, unilaterally breaking the German-Soviet Pact signed on 23rd of August, 1939.[13]

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[10] The Mukden Incident. Two Japanese agents, Ishiwara and Itagaki, blew up a railway line near Mukden on the 18th of September, 1931. This incident, blamed upon the Chinese by Japan, was the trigger for the invasion of China. Piers Brennan. *Dark Corridor*. London: Pimlico. 2001. p. 182.

[11] In November 1940, Foreign Minister of the USSR V. I. Molotov led a delegation to Berlin to discuss with Adolf Hitler what the USSR saw as ominous portents of war in the Balkans and Eastern Europe initiated by the Germans. Molotov refused to be fobbed off by Hitler's platitudes on the question of Bulgarian neutrality. Hitler, feeling cornered, said 'I'd have to consult *Il Duce* on this. Italy is also interested in the affairs of that part of Europe. *If Germany needed to look for a motive for friction with Russia, it could find one in another area.*' [Emphasis added.] Seweryn Bialer (Editor): *Stalin and his Generals*. New York, N.Y.: Souvenir Press. 1969. p. 126.

[12] Rogers is particularly clear on this matter, especially in Chapter 9. 'Stalin and the Road to War: April - June, 1941'. *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War*. London: MacMillan. 1995.

[13] 'Who compels us to keep our promises?' Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler to Günter d'Alquen, editor of *Die Schwärze Korps*. September 1944. Quoted in Alan Clark's. *Barbarossa*. London: Hutchinson. 1965. p. 354.

iii - The Ideology of Pacifism

> Is it an historical fact that the defencelessness of his victims has ever aroused man's pity? History records millions of opposite cases, of Tamburlane, of Attila and his Huns (checked only by violence), Mohammedan [sic] incursions, primitive slayings, the Danes and their Monastic massacres. Can anyone in good faith advance the proposition that non-resistance defeats violence? How could slave owning states exist, if peaceful submission touched the hearts of the conquerors?[Caudwell's parentheses.](25)

Caudwell's views on warfare and pacifism are clear. His analysis is that pacifism is not an active resistance to war, but a submission to bourgeois idealism and, unpalatable though this may be to some, he does put forward a cogent argument that pacifism is a major hindrance to the opposition to war. Here I must emphasise that nowhere does Caudwell imply that pacifists are cowards in any individual sense. Consider the brutal way that the Nazis treated conscientious objectors who would rather be sent to a concentration camp than fight. Martin Kitchen cites the six thousand Jehovah's Witnesses who died in Nazi captivity for refusing to give the Hitler Salute and also refusing military service.(26) Yet for all their undoubted courage it is clear that it was not Witnessing that ended the war, but the Allied Armies, although a case might be made that their presence in the concentration camps tied up personnel who might have been used in the fighting.[14] Rather, Caudwell's analysis is that pacifism as a doctrine is

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[14] Terry Eagleton comments that: '[O]ne of the most mind-shaking aspects of the Nazi concentration camps is that they were entirely unnecessary, and indeed *from the Nazis' own military and economic viewpoint counterproductive.*'[Emphasis added.] *The Ideology of the Aesthetic:* 'From the *Polis* to Postmodernism' . Oxford: Blackwell. 1990. p. 412. In support of Eagleton's thesis, Aleksander Lasik says of the Commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höß, that '[H]ad his life taken a different turn - had he become a factory director for example, he undoubtedly would have applied himself to his assigned task with equal diligence.' Höß was

idealistic, untenable and unworkable in the face of bourgeois violence. Caudwell points out that, nevertheless, there is much to the pacifist argument when seen in the light of bourgeois social relations,(27) and that a modern bourgeois state cannot behave like Tamburlane's nomad hordes, because the bourgeois mode of warfare is so much more profitable than merely ransacking a country and then riding off home with the loot. This form of warfare - while quite suitable to Attila's heterogeneous slave armies, the Vikings, the Lombards or the Golden Horde of the Tatars - is hugely wasteful under bourgeois social relations. The bourgeoisie, if they conquer a territory, bring it under the domination of their own economic relations, setting the subjugated peoples to work for them. As Caudwell says: '[B]ourgeois culture has discovered that *what pays is bourgeois violence.*'[Emphasis added.](28)

It can be forcefully argued that the war on the Eastern Front proves Caudwell's thesis in this respect, even allowing for the suggestion of possible *naïveté* made earlier. It should be pointed out that Germany was the most brutal of the Axis states, far worse than even Japan and Italy, and also that the war against the USSR was *not* a conflict between two bourgeois states, therefore as far as Germany was concerned the normal 'rules of engagement' - as pointed out by Caudwell[15] - did not apply in this case. The various peoples who were subjugated were treated - at best - as colonial serfs. Hitler said in September 1941 that '[w]e'll supply the Ukrainians with scarves and glass beads and everything colonial people like.'(29) Certainly this particular dimension of the Second World War proves emphatically that non-resistance would not have paid. It may well be argued that a conqueror would be delighted that a whole population should take an attitude of non-resistance, sparing the invading army the trouble and expense of fighting

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hanged at Auschwitz for crimes against humanity, 2 April, 1947. *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp.* Yisrael Gutmann, Michael Berenbaum (Editors.). Washington. D. C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 1998. p. 297-298.

[15] See (20)

them. Neither is it in the interests of a state to disarm so completely that it cannot fight a war. The suggestion made by idealist utopians that the advanced nations should abandon industrialism and 'go back to the land,' is also untenable as it would leave such nations wide open to attack from any less idealistic or more unprincipled aggressors who had not done the same themselves.

Caudwell, like Clausewitz and Lenin before him, saw that conflict was not an accidental misfortune but an integral part of the class system. 'It is not something that descends from heaven for a time to madden the human race. It is *implicit* in the bourgeois illusion.'[Emphasis added.](30) Throughout history there have been groups, mainly Christian non-conformists, who have rejected war in favour of pacifism; the Quakers, Mennonites, and the Waldensians are the best known. The last, followers of Peter Waldo of Lyon, though staunchly pacifist by persuasion since the 12th century, eventually gave up their pacifist beliefs in the 15th century to fight their oppressors, the Holy Inquisition.(31) This is an example of socio-political and economic reality overwhelming the idealistic principles of a sincere group of people, but it does indicate that pacifism can only exist in certain, favourable conditions and that those conditions are quite rare and relatively short-lived in historical terms.[16] The Ancients had no concept of pacifism and, indeed, saw warfare and conflict as a necessity in the survival of their city-states. Pericles of Athens in the Funeral Oration, quoted by Thucydides in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, said:

> [f]or we place our dependence, not so much upon prearranged devices to deceive, as upon the courage which springs from our own souls when we are called to action.(32)

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[16] The Waldensians were finally wiped out in the Piedmont Massacre on the 24th of August 1656, by the troops of Carlo Emanuel II, Grand Duke of Savoy.

A century or so earlier, Heraclitus of Ephesus said that 'War is the father of all and king of all.'(33) He saw a pivotal rôle for warfare and conflict in shaping not only the human mind but society. Indeed, he saw it as a form of Justice. 'One must realise that war is shared and Conflict is Justice, and that all things come to pass in accordance with conflict.'(34) As Caudwell says in *Studies in a Dying Culture*: '[e]xistence is the exercise of force on the physical environment and on other men.'(35) This is a distinctly Heraclitean[17] dialectical view, although it must be cautiously pointed out that the Classical concept of warfare is far removed from that of the present. Giorgio de Santillana discussing this topic, says that '[i]t is not the war beyond measure of which the atom bomb is the present symbol: it is the struggle within the bonds of common interest to which the adversaries are compelled to recognise each other.'(36) Jennifer Teichmann makes the point that pacifism is, essentially, a Christian doctrine; even though Eastern theologies such as Buddhism and Jainism can be seen to be pacifist, they are, as Teichmann says, 'anti-war-ist'[Teichmann's spelling.] and only Christianity has a thoroughly worked-out pacifist ideology. There is nothing comparable in Sikhism, Islam(37) or the Hindu *Laws of Manu*. In the latter case, although there are strenuous objections to physical violence[18] against living creatures ('those that breathe'(38)) it was also considered only a minor crime 'to kill a woman.'(39) Elsewhere in the *Laws* it

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[17] Charles. H. Kahn in his work, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, says of this particular fragment that 'This personification of the chief cosmic principle, in terms of imagery normally associated with the king of the gods, prepares and explains the announcement 'that the wise one alone is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus'.' (CXVIII .D. 32.) 'As long as war is understood in this general sense there is no difficulty in seeing how it is responsible for mortality and divinity, slavery and freedom, since it is (by definition) the decisive plan or causal factor in everything that comes to pass.' [Kahn's parenthesis, quotations..] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1979. Further, Karl Marx recognised Heraclitus as the founder of natural dialectics (Leader article in *Kölnische Zeitung*. *Selected Works*. (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977.) as did Engels when the latter said that the notion of the world being in constant flux was a '[p]rimitive, naïve but intrinsically correct conception of the world is that of ancient Greek philosophy, and was first clearly formulated by Heraclitus: everything is and is not,[sic] for everything is *fluid*, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away.' [Engels Emphasis.] *Anti-Dühring*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1954. p. 33.

[18] Sanskrit. *Himsa* = Doing harm.

states that '[w]hen a king who protects his subjects is challenged by kings who are his equal or stronger or weaker, he should remember his duties and *not turn away from battle.*'[Emphasis added.](40) It should also be noted that pacifist groups are virtually all non-conformist Protestants, while the established Churches such as the Roman Catholics were prepared to go to war in a 'just' cause. Teichmann cites the case of Pope Leo IV (847-855) who ruled that killing infidels was not murder.(41) Of course this did not merely apply to Moslems, but to Magyars, Prussians, Letts and the Slav peoples who were still pagans during this period. This accords with Caudwell's view of the fundamental difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. He says in *Studies in a Dying Culture* that there is a dichotomy between these two major branches of Christianity. He maintains that Catholicism is, in fact, still 'tribal' and that within the Roman Catholic Church:

> [T]he Feudal Christian prayed for the Holy Souls suffering in Purgatory, expecting those living to pray for him when dead, and continually called on the departed members of the tribe, the Triumphant Souls of the Saints in heaven to help him, to such an extent that in this strong social grouping God was almost forgotten. [Caudwell's capitalisation.](42)

Clearly this is different from Protestantism, which, Caudwell says, is the real foundation of pacifism in the Christian world. Caudwell maintains that with the rise of bourgeois social relations and the overthrow of the feudal system, it became possible for every individual to be his or her own judge in religious matters, as in everything else. Within this individualistic judgement, so far removed from Catholic 'tribalism', arose the pacifist doctrines, which Caudwell calls morally selfish, because the individualism of the bourgeois is merely a façade. He says that 'the notion of individual guilt, as in Bunyan and the Puritans, reaches a pitch never achieved in Catholic countries.'(43) This notion

of guilt, one might argue, is one of the root causes of pacifism, for if a person sees war as something evil, then it is up to that individual to do something about it, not through the priest's confessional or the intervention of the Saints in Heaven but by their own individual, self-driven will. If we are responsible exclusively to the Deity, rather than our fellow human beings, on matters of ethics and morality, it will follow that if we strictly obey the Decalogue to the letter, we must reject war. The emphasis is forced away from the 'righteous war' towards a 'righteous attitude.' While Caudwell rejects pacifism on ideological grounds, his views on the bourgeois illusion of peace are also very clear. He maintains that the idea of a world state, ensuring peace (in his time the League of Nations) is a concept particularly dear to the heart of the bourgeois ideologue. As he says in *Studies in a Dying Culture*:

> If the class of bourgeois in one country can have a State and police force enforcing order and non-violent competition, why not a State of States,[19] a world-state, in which peace is enforced?(44)

Caudwell's answer to this is rhetorical but precise. It cannot work because a dangerous, exploited class does not exist on a world scale. Therefore they cannot unite as a whole and accept a regulating will superior to their own, except when vested national interests are at stake, and usually the interests of the most powerful members.(45)

In the present period, the way that the League's successor, the United Nations has become increasingly a United States-dominated arm, to punish so-called 'terrorist' states who do not 'toe the line'[20] is more than enough proof that Caudwell's thesis is apposite. In the time of the League of Nations, in the years prior to the Second World War, the

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[19] See elsewhere in this thesis, chapter 4 'Lawrence, Wells and Shaw', especially section iii. *'Ου–Τοπος (Utopia) No Place'* on H. G. Wells.

[20] Afghanistan, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Serbia, Somalia, Sudan, etc.

major non-fascist states of Western Europe were pleading scarcity of weapons during the 'Phoney War' and using it as a reason not to attack Germany, while these same states were supplying Finland with vast amounts of *materiel* to prosecute the 'Winter War' against the Soviet Union in 1939-40,[21] called by Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn 'The long-awaited Holy War.'(46) That these armaments might have turned the tide against the Nazis when they attacked the Low Countries and France is far too obvious a point to labour, but it shows, again, whom the bourgeoisie thought was their real enemy. In such a situation can it be realistically argued that a confederation of states with such foreign policies may be trusted and, just as importantly, trust each other? Their rejection of the Soviet Union in the period immediately before the Second World War when the latter state proposed an Anti-Nazi Coalition led to the German-Soviet non-aggression pact[22] which did buy a little breathing space to prepare for the coming conflict but it was, as Caudwell pointed out, not long before his death in 1937, only a matter of time before the Nazis showed their true intentions and invaded the USSR. As Joseph Stalin said of the conflict in 1941: '[t]he war has torn down all veils and laid bare all relationships. The situation has become so clear that nothing is easier than to define our tasks in this war.'(47) Proof enough, I would suggest, that it was not only Caudwell who saw the essentially illusory nature of the bourgeoisie's attitude towards war and military violence. As we have seen earlier, Nazi 'justifications' such as the Danzig Corridor, *Lebensraum*, the 'Crusade Against Bolshevism', etc., were illusory. The historian Richard Overy has said: 'The New Order was a front for economic exploitation, political dominance, and racial engineering. It was created by violence, thrived on violence and was violently destroyed.'(48)

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[21] For example Britain sent 144 aircraft, 114 heavy guns, 185,000 shells, 50,000 hand grenades, 15,700 bombs, 100,000 greatcoats and 48 ambulances. France - which fell to the Germans a few months later in May - sent 179 aircraft, 472 guns, 795,000 shells, 5,100 machine guns, and 200,000 hand grenades. Michael Sayers, Albert Kahn. *The Great Conspiracy*. London: Red Star Press. 1975. p. 349-350.

[22] See Kant above (24).

iv - Conclusions

What conclusions might we draw from the Marxist-Leninist-Caudwellian approach to war? It would seem that Marxists are unlike the capitalists who, by the illusory nature of their own system, are essentially unaware of its foundations and intentions, Clausewitz excepted of course. The capitalists seem on the whole to veer from absolutist, individualist pacifism through the spectrum to absolutist, extreme violence, though of course there are many instances of a middle ground. Consider the United States in the 1930s which was avowedly capitalist but had very small armed forces. In this case it is geographical and political isolation that engendered such a state of affairs, and also having immediate neighbours such as Canada and Mexico who presented a minimal threat or no threat whatsoever, although of course geography is always subordinate to the rôle of economics and politics as has been vividly proven in the United States since the Eleventh of September, 2001. As György Lukács says in a note to his work *The Ontology of Social Being*:

> The geographical situation is obviously also a natural basis but in the course of historical development it acquires an overwhelmingly social determination. Whether the sea[23] separates or unites two countries *is essentially determined by the level of development of the productive forces.* The higher this is, the more natural boundary retreats, in this case also.[Emphasis added.](49)

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[23] An argument can be made, for example, that the English Channel stopped the Germans invading Britain in 1940. (Operation *Seelöwe*.) Also, much the same has been said about Operation *Barbarossa* in 1941, that is, thar the Nazis and their Axis allies 'ran out of steam' in the vast open spaces of the Soviet Union. However, the Channel did not stop the Allies in 1944 in Operation *Overlord*, neither were the distances in the USSR any hindrance to the Red Army when the tide had turned against the Wehrmacht, ending in the occupation of Berlin. Once again we can see that geography is secondary to the motivation, morale or economic and military potential of any aggressor or defender.

In 1656 James Harrington, the author of *Oceana*, a Platonistic exposition of pro-Commonwealth propaganda, said much the same as Lukács. 'The Sea giveth law unto the growth of Venice, but the growth of Oceana[24] giveth law to the Sea.'(50) In other words, Harrington saw the rôle of the sea either as a barrier to economic development, or, in the latter case of Oceana, a vector of power and economic dominance.[25] In the case of the three most brutal Axis powers during the Second World War, Germany, Italy and Japan, they were all countries which were, for various reasons, denied overseas empires, unlike Britain and France, and/or lacking large-scale natural resources to maintain an advanced level of industrialisation (there are hardly any coal deposits in Italy, for example). Fascism, militarism and war were the only recourse by which to maintain their capitalist oligarchies and their ongoing struggle for the raw materials that might enable them to prosecute further wars.[26] Moreover, the fascist states, being most affected by the bourgeois illusion, failed to mobilise for total war on the home front as readily as did their enemies.[27] For them, there could be 'no doubt' of the Final Victory, hence there was no need to alarm or potentially demoralise the civil population. By contrast Britain, the Soviet Union and even the United States, once the war had been declared went over to a total war footing[28] with the result all too well

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[24] Britain.

[25] Harrington's racist, Cromwellian views about the Irish are, nevertheless, given full rein throughout *Oceana*.

[26] See Engels.(5)

[27] It was believed that the workers would be more productive if their needs as consumers were satisfied, and thus that the consumer goods industries could expand without a reduction in armaments. Martin Kitchen. *Nazi Germany at War*. London: Longman. 1995. p. 45.

[28] We should consider Joseph Goebbels' address to a meeting for the appointment for a Plenipotentiary for Total War. 'The German people are unanimously of the opinion that, *in contrast to the Soviet Union*, we are not conducting a total war. It is incredible that major conferences and festivals are still being held.. *Total war is not only a matter of matériel but of psychology.*' [Emphases added.] *Nazism. 1919-1945. Vol. IV. The Home Front in World War II.* Jeremy Noakes. (Editor): Exeter: Exeter University Press. 1998. p. 47. When one realises that these words were spoken on 22 July 1944, merely a month after devastating defeats of the Germans on both their Eastern and Western Fronts [Operation *Bagration* (The Destruction of Army Group Centre) and Operation *Overlord* - (D - Day) respectively.] and just two days after the failed assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler, they give credence to the opinion that the nazi-fascists had illusory notions about the nature of warfare and by the time they were becoming aware of its true character it was

known to document here save that the Soviet Union and the non-fascist Western Allies were able to build a pact that destroyed their enemies. As J. V. Stalin said in 1944:

> Obviously this task[29] is more difficult than the expulsion of German troops from the Soviet Union. It can be accomplished only on the basis of the joint efforts of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States of North America, by joint blows dealt from the east by our troops and from the west by the troops of our Allies. There can be no doubt that only such a combined blow can crush completely Hitlerite Germany(51)

The Caudwellian, Leninist view is that there is no such thing as an 'accidental' war, that it does not fall 'from on high' as a terrible, unavoidable tragedy like a natural disaster, but is the direct result of bourgeois militarism, expansionism and power politics seen through the idealistic filter of the bourgeois illusion.

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far too late to do anything concrete about it.

[29] The invasion and total defeat of Nazi Germany.

Chapter End Notes

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2. William B. Gallie. *Philosophers of Peace and War. Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1978. p. 69.

3. Friedrich Engels. *Anti-Dühring.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1954. p. 238. *ff.*

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto. Selected Writings.* (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 224.

7. Karl Marx. *The Economics. 1857-1867 Selected Writings.* (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 358.

8. Ibid. p. 354.

9. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 131.

10. V. I. Lenin. *Sotsial Demokrat, I/11/1914 Collected Works. Vol. XXI.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1978. p. 40.

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12. Jonathan Glover. *Causing Death and Saving Lives.* London: Penguin. 1977. p. 280.

13. Friedrich Engels. *Anti-Dühring.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1954. p. 236.

14. Friedrich Engels. 'On Guerrilla Warfare'. *Pall Mall Gazette, 11th November, 1870.* Quoted in *Marxism and Guerrilla Warfare.* (Editor): William Pomeroy. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1969. p. 60.

15. Thucydides. *The History of the Peloponnesian War. Book I. CXXIV.* London: Duckworth. 2000.

16. Ronald Fraser. *Eye Witness Account of Victoria Roman. Blood of Spain.* London: Pimlico. 1986. p. 40.

17. Jean-Paul Sartre. *A New Authentic Way of Being Oneself. The Existentialist Reader.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2000. p. 318.

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20. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'Pacifism and Violence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 123.

21. Adolf Hitler. *Hitler's Table Talk.* London: Phoenix Press. 1953. p. 33.

22. Götz Aly. *Planning, Intelligentsia and the 'final Solution'. The Holocaust. Origins, Implementation, Aftermath.* Omer Bartov. (Editor): London: Routledge. 2000. p. 100.

23. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'Pacifism and Violence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 110.

24. Emanuel Kant. *On Perpetual Peace.* London: Hackett. 1983. p. 113.

25. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'Pacifism and Violence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 121.

26. Martin Kitchen. *Nazi Germany at War.* London: Longman. 1995. p. 182.

27. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture: Pacifism and Violence.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 122.

28. Ibid.

29. Adolf Hitler. *Hitler's Table Talk.* London: Phoenix Press. 1953. p. 34.

30. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'Pacifism and Violence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 110.

31. Jenny Teichmann. *Pacifism and the Just War.* Oxford: Blackwell. 1986. p. 19.

32. Thucydides. *The History of the Peloponnesian War. Pericles Funeral Oration. Book II. XXXIX.* London: Duckworth. 2000.

33. Heraclitus. *Fragment LXXXIII.* Charles H. Kahn. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1979.

34. Ibid. *Fragment. LXXXII.*

35. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture.* 'Pacifism and Violence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 125.

36. Giorgio de Santillana. *Of Men and Ideas.* Cambridge. Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press. 1968. p. 214.

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38. *The Laws of Manu. Book II.* Wendy Donger, Brian K Smith. (Transl. Editors.): London: Penguin. 1991. Section. 177.

39. Ibid. *Book XI.* Section. 67.

40. Ibid. *Book. VII.* Section. 87.

41. Jenny Teichmann. *Pacifism and the Just War.* Oxford: Blackwell. 1986. p. 54.

42. Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in a Dying Culture:* 'Pacifism and Violence'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1948. p. 118.

43. Ibid. p. 119.

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45. Ibid.

46. Michael Sayers, Albert Kahn. *The Great Conspiracy.* London: Red Star Press. 1975. p. 349.

47. J. V. Stalin. *The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union.* New York, N.Y.: Greenwood Press. 1969. p. 68.

48. Richard Overy. *The Penguin Atlas of the Third Reich.* London: Penguin. 1996. p. 81.

49. György Lukács. *The Ontology of Social Being. II. Marx.* London: Merlin. 1978. p. 122. 34n.

50. James Harrington. *The Commonwealth of Oceana.* Heidelberg: Carl Winters University Press. 1924. p. 11.

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7: The Necessity of the Dream

i - The Freudian-Jungian Heresiarch?

Caudwell was considered by some to be unusual, in that he often applied psychoanalytical terminology to his Marxist-materialist analyses. Thus a serious question has to be addressed as Caudwell has, as we have seen, often been accused of being unorthodox, even 'heretical' in his approach.

Robert Currie in his article, 'Christopher Caudwell: Marxist Illusion, Jungian Reality' makes quite plain his opinions on the subject: Caudwell relies too heavily upon Jung to be considered a true Marxist and that Caudwell's use of the notion of the 'timeless genotype' distances him considerably from the orthodox Marxist critique. Currie says:

> Caudwell resorted once more to Jung, whose theory of the primitive collective personality, which is sustained into the collective unconscious of modern man, by means of the archetypes, allowed the possibility of criteria by which to judge the validity of any given subjective or affective reference.(1)

Currie's argument, then, is that although Caudwell wore Marxist clothes, beneath it all he was a secret Jungian. We should consider this view in the light of what Caudwell says of Jung himself:

> Jung is well aware of the contradictions in psychology. He regards them, however, as mechanical and mutually exclusive opposites - such opposites as "introversion" and "extroversion", or "energetic quantitative finality" and "materialistic qualitative causality". He is never able to resolve the

> contradictions he raises, because he never passes from the contradictions of psychology to the sphere immediately beneath psychology, that of society itself. [Caudwell's quotations.](2)

The key word in this passage is 'society'. Caudwell, being a Marxist, therefore saw that the remedy for the ills of humanity lay, not within subjective idealism or psychoanalysis, but in the revolutionary change of society. Karl Marx's *Thesis on Feuerbach, Number Eleven*(3) has been quoted elsewhere,[1] but is readily applicable here. Society, and its irreconcilable class cleavage, is the problem that has to be solved. To accept anything else is to prune the leaves of the diseased tree rather than get to the roots of the problem itself. Caudwell does, of course, accept that some psychologists, at least, attempted to get to grips with the problems besetting society, in a materialist manner.

He says of Adler:

> On the surface, Adler's approach seems more realistic. In his theory of the struggle of existence and the consequent development of the inferiority complex and a compensatory ability, he realises the way in which the bourgeois competition strangles in its final stages all the best in man's individuality and ability. He recognises the environment.
> Let us take a quotation from Adler:
>
> > In a civilisation where one man is the enemy of the other - for this is what our whole industrial system means - demoralisation is ineradicable, for demoralisation and crime are the by-products of our industrial civilisation.
>
> So far so good. Here we have an analysis of the general effect of capitalism on the individual. What is his remedy?
>
> > To limit and do away with this demoralisation, a chair of curative pedagogy should be established...(4)

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[1] See thesis chapter 2, 'Caudwell Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic'. (23) p. 31.

Caudwell's disappointment at Adler's analysis is obvious. He cannot accept the psychoanalytical view that the problems that beset us can be solved from within or by the application of 'science', which is what Adler's holistic, Comtean-positivistic approach suggests. So far, then, Currie's argument doesn't hold much water. That Caudwell used Jungian and Freudian phraseology and some psychoanalytic concepts is without question but this does not make him a crypto-Jungian. Like all good Marxists - and I believe that Caudwell was such - he tried to synthesise a world view that would square itself with external, objective reality. That Caudwell took to task such issues as Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis is to his credit. There are, of course, elements in Freud that tie in, coincidentally perhaps, with the historical materialist framework. In his work *The Future of an Illusion*[2] Freud states:

> [b]ut the less a man knows about the past and the present the more insecure must prove to be his judgement of the future.(5)

It seems to argue for a realistic, dialectical approach to history. However, Freud then says a little later that:

> It is impossible to do without control of the mass by a minority as it is to dispense with coercion in the work of civilisation. For masses are lazy and unintelligent.(6)

Freud's bourgeois-aristocratic attitude, however, is most definitely *not* Marxist. No doubt Freud saw himself as one of the 'minority'. People with this kind of contempt almost invariably do. Caudwell had read this work and nowhere in any of his works, *Illusion and*

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[2] See the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*.

Reality, Romance and Realism, Studies and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*, novels and poetry etc., is there any hint of this attitude to the people, the masses and the proletariat. In any case, Karl Marx had already answered Freud on this subject decades before in the 1840s:

> [a]nd on the other hand, this development of productive forces (which in itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their world-historical, instead of local, being) is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it want is made general, and with destitution the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would be necessarily reproduced; and furthermore, because only with this universal development of productive forces is a universal intercourse between men established, which produces in all nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the 'propertyless' mass (universal competition) makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others and finally has put world-historical, empirically universal individuals in place of local ones.[Marx's parentheses, quotation.](7)

A resounding answer to Freud on the subject of the masses, who are seen as the decisive factor, not only since the Industrial Revolution but throughout all human history. Caudwell says that Freud's psychoanalytical method is unscientific(8) and as such it fails as a therapy and that 'only society as a whole can really direct this force[3] in the individual'.(9) Part of the problem, I feel, with Freudian analyses is that Freud was - as Patricia Kitcher has pointed out - a strict determinist and that:

> [h]e believed that every crazed aspect of every dream must admit to some explanation. So even if

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[3] Neurosis.

> "*Traume sind Schaume*" ("dreams are froth") the froth must be explicable.
> [Kitcher's German, quotations, parentheses.](10)

Freud felt somehow obliged by this commitment to determinism to find an explanation for every problem within the epistemological framework of psychoanalysis. However, such strict determinism will not be of much use to a Marxist analysis. Marxism, no matter what its opponents[4] may say of it, is not deterministic; it is dialectical and although it accepts causality, it will not accept any cut and dried answers such as might be found in Freudian psychoanalytical determinism. Caudwell believed in consciousness; not just the consciousness of the individual but the consciousness of the class and that, within this consciousness, freedom would be found; not in the anarchic, illusory freedom of the bourgeoisie but freedom within the recognised framework of necessity.

ii - Consciousness, Epistemology, Idealism

Caudwell makes a salient point when he says in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* that: 'Unconsciousness and inexperience, not consciousness and experience, are the gaolers of modern bourgeois man.'(11) He follows this up in the same spirit in *Illusion and Reality* by saying that '[t]o be conscious of one's motives is to will freely - to be conscious of the necessity of one's actions. Not to be conscious is to act instinctively like an animal, or blindly like a man propelled by a push from behind his back.'(12) For him the problem was not consciousness but the lack of it. When Caudwell criticised D. H. Lawrence in

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[4] I feel that Robert Currie is one of these. One often finds that anti-Communists will 'defend' Marxism against any possible *faux pas* by its adherents to (1) use the supposed fault of the individual being attacked to 'prove' the fallibility of Marxist Thought and (2) use the supposed 'perfectibility of the dialectic' as a weapon against Marxist doctrine and any individual who professes it, in this case Caudwell. One of the most notorious examples of this 'defence of Marxism' is that of H. A. Mason of *Scrutiny*. See thesis chapter 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'.

Studies in a Dying Culture[5] he pointed out that Lawrence, like so many others, had 'put the cart before the horse', so to speak, in that he saw that the escape for the ills of bourgeois society (and it must be said that Lawrence saw them acutely) was to retreat into unconsciousness, into spontaneity and 'animal' passion. He says of Lawrence's view that:

> Consciousness can only be abandoned in action, and the first action of Fascism is the crushing of culture and the burning of books. It is impossible therefore for an artist and thinker to be a consistent fascist. He can only be like Lawrence, a self-contradictory one, who appeals to the consciousness of men to abandon consciousness.(13)

A further problem faced by psychoanalysis, indeed a central issue, I would argue, is its very junior position in the history of ideas which puts it immediately at a disadvantage. Jung himself said of the subject that:

> Psychology, being the youngest of all sciences, is still afflicted with a mediaeval mentality in which no distinction is made between words and things.(14)

If it relates entirely to the individual - even allowing for Adler's acknowledgement of the wider problems facing human society - then the individual can make it anything he or she wishes. There is a terrible irony in Caudwell's critique of Freud. He denounces Freud as an unconscious fellow-traveller[6] of Fascism, yet he is a fellow-traveller whose books are burnt and whose ideology is reviled by the Nazis. Caudwell says:

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[5] See thesis chapter 3, 'Lawrence Shaw and Wells'.

[6] Caudwell, it should be noted, was wrong about Freud on this matter, though not, of course, about Jung. It should be pointed out that Freud had to flee the Nazis after the *Anschluß* for his own safety although Caudwell's critique of Freudian thought is no doubt based on his analysis of the idealist nature of bourgeois consciousness.

> Yet this is the irony of all bourgeois culture, that because it is based on a contradiction it gives rise to the opposite of what it desires.(15)

For Caudwell the irony is compounded by the fact that Freud himself finds Nazism abhorrent. There is much to be said in favour of Caudwell's critique of Jung and of Freud. Both, he saw, were trying to tackle the problems of society as they saw them. For Caudwell, however, they were part of the wider problem. Borrowing from physics, Caudwell points out that the greater whole will nearly always have a greater effect on the smaller object be it the sun to a cricket ball or society to a an individual personality. 'In psychology, as in mechanics, the reaction of a body on its cosmic environment can be neglected, as compared to the effect of the world on the body.'(16)

Once again we see Caudwell, the Marxist and dialectical materialist, rather than Caudwell the Jungian in this statement. That the individual psyche is subordinate to the greater whole and the socio-economic and political principles of a given society is also shown in Umberto Eco's views on Freudian analysis. He says of it that: '[I]f Vienna had been on the equator and its bourgeoisie had gone around in Bermuda shorts, would Freud have described the same neurotic symptoms, the same Oedipal triangles? And would he have described them in the same way if he, the doctor, had been a Scot, in a kilt (under which everyone knows the rule is to wear nothing)?'[Parenthesis, Eco's.](17) This is almost the same argument as put forward by Caudwell, that although the individual is vital, it is not *solely* the individual which is the root of the problem; it is also environmental and social. For Jung's own views of the relationship of the collective and the individual we should consider his words in 1934 when he said:

> [b]ut I speak not to nations, only to the individual few, for whom it goes without saying that cultural

> values do not drop down like manna from heaven, but are created by the hands of *individuals*. If things go wrong in the world, this is because something is wrong with the *individual*, because something is wrong with me. *Therefore, if I am sensible, I shall put myself right first.* [Emphases added.](18)

This is not to say that Caudwell was not influenced by psychoanalysis. He says of the leading psychoanalysts of the time that: 'Freud, Jung Adler, McDougall, Kohler, Koffka, Watson, Sherrington, Parsons and MacCurdy have all made discoveries of vital importance for the understanding of mental phenomena, but their full value is lost in the welter of bourgeois culture'(19) The key words here are 'bourgeois culture'. Far more Marxist than he could ever be idealist, or bourgeois psychoanalyst, Caudwell remains convinced that the problems lie within the nature of class society and the psychological problems which exist, are the *effect*, not the *cause* of the world's problems.

iii - Subject *versus* Object

Caudwell's abiding interest (some might argue obsession) in the dichotomy between the Subject-*Illusion*, and the Object-*Reality*, is given greater strength when one considers Theodore Driesch's view on the ego and the body.[7] Driesch says of this problem:

> Not much critical insight is required to avoid confusing the meaning of the word *Ego* and *my body*: only a very unphilosophical mind would be likely to confuse the two. But, it seems to me, there are many persons who do not fully realise that *my body* is in fact my *subject* and that it is a *something* that is *consciously* had by the "I" in the form of

[7] His work *The Crisis in Psychology*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press. 1925, is quoted in the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*.

> being meant, in just the same logical sense as any other body is meant and differing from the other bodies only insofar as the number and quality of the immediate data which form the foundation of the concept of *my body* are different from the number and quality of data underlying the concept *body in Nature* in general. [Driesch's emphases.](20)

Caudwell makes use of this concept extensively in *Illusion and Reality* where for instance he says on the question of music and poetry that 'Rhythm, because it shouts aloud the dumb processes of the body's secret life and negates the indifferent goings-on of the external universe, makes the hearer sink deep down into himself in a physiological inversion.'(21) We may take this to mean that we are, if not dominated by the natural rhythms of our body, heavily influenced by our physiological processes such as heartbeat, breathing, limb movement, etc. This 'physiological inversion' is central to Caudwell's thinking on psychology, anthropology and poetry. This is one of the major differences within his works as a Marxist that have led to his being damned as a heretic, a somehow unorthodox and thoroughly odd critic who somehow didn't quite 'play the game' as it should have been played. However Caudwell's views on the instinctive nature of bourgeois psychology should be noted. He admits that there are such things as instincts and that human beings are influenced by them, but he sees them in a subordinate light rather than in any deterministic, teleological manner. The instincts exist, granted, but that they are in any way dominant in society is questionable at best. He says of the instincts:

> [B]ut this is not how the bourgeois sees them. He necessarily regards all behaviour that bursts 'spontaneously' forth from the individual ignorant of its causality, as above all free. Therefore the instincts are conceived as freely striving for unconscious goals, and psychology becomes the adventures of the free instincts in their struggles against the *environment* (in Freud of *society*) which

> impeded and cripple their freedom. Out of this struggle cognitive and emotional consciousness is born. [Caudwell's parentheses, emphases.](22)

iv - The Illusion of Bourgeois Liberty

As Caudwell points out, Freud sees the problem very much in the same way as Rousseau saw it; that "natural man" is born free but everywhere in chains,(23) perpetuating the bourgeois illusion that necessity is a myth. Leonard Goldstein puts it succinctly in his work *The Social and Cultural Roots of Linear Perspective* when he points out that:

> To feel that one is hemmed in by some sort of abstract society which deprives one of one's freedom and crushes one's personality, a world in which one is "alienated" (to use the word in its fashionable popular sense) is to forget that we are the creative human beings we are only by virtue of the fact that we are social beings, irretrievably integrated into the society which provides us with minds to think and bodies to act and, indeed, other beings to whom our actions and signs have meaning. *Without them I am nothing talking to nobody.* To rail against an abstract society is to misaddress one's complaint. [Goldstein's parentheses, quotation. Emphasis added.](24)

This is as much an admonition to Adler as to Freud and Jung, and agrees with Caudwell's views expressed throughout his works. Caudwell maintains that:

> In particular, these thinkers suppose that man is more free, more at liberty, the more he is free from the pressure of culture, consciousness, and social organisation. Russell, Eddington, Freud and Wells are alike in this supposition, which carried (as they do not carry it) to the logical conclusion, means that the only beings with real liberty are the unconscious brutes.

> But the truth is, the world is not a prison house of reality in which man has been allotted by some miracle a honey cell of pleasure. Man is a part of reality, in constant relation with it, and the progress of consciousness, in so far as it increases his knowledge of causality, increases freedom. [Caudwell's parentheses.](25)

Caudwell's central thesis is that consciousness, not its opposite, is the true road to freedom. To say otherwise is to reverse the situation completely. The bourgeoisie, Caudwell points out, is suffering as much from their illusion as are the people they are exploiting. They yearn for freedom (an abstract, idealised 'freedom' where all constraints are thrown off), and the harder they strive for it, the harder it is for them to find. To quote the words of Engels in *Anti-Dühring*:

> Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends.(26)

As Caudwell says: 'Bourgeois civilisation is built on this rock, that complete freedom consists in personal anarchy, and that man is *naturally* completely free. This Rousseauism is found distorting all bourgeois thought.'[Caudwell's emphasis.](27)
We should consider Rousseau's own words on the subject of liberty and its relationship to primitive and modern man. He says of the primitive peoples of the world that: '[t]he savage man breathes only peace and freedom, he desires only to live and stay idle and even the *ataraxia* of the Stoic[8] does not approach his profound indifference towards every other object. Civil man, on the contrary, being always active, sweating and restless,

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[8] See thesis chapter 10, 'The Philosophy of Reality' for further on the nature of the Stoics and their doctrines. See esp. *n*8 and *n*9 p. 319.

torments himself endlessly in search of ever more laborious occupations.'(28) This seems not so much like the desire for the 'savage' man's idleness but Rousseau's own Romantic desire for 'freedom', and is the antithesis of the stance taken by Caudwell[9] and not only Caudwell. It runs directly counter to the Marxist ideology of labour and production, and - to be objective - other anti-idealist arguments given by writers such as the neo-humanist and tutor of T. S. Eliot, Irving Babbitt. He writes:

> True liberty, it is hardly necessary to say, cannot be founded on indolence: it is something that must be won by high-handed struggle,[sic] a struggle that takes place primarily in one's self and not in the outer world.(29)

While Babbitt[10] sees the struggle as an inner one, as opposed to the materialist, Marxist externally-directed struggle for the control of productive forces and the emancipation of the proletariat, he still sees the question of liberty as one of struggle rather than idleness, as would a Marxist, although with a profoundly different emphasis.

Of course, Caudwell has drawn heavily upon Marxism for his argument. Compare his views on the subject of freedom with that of Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* when discussing the views of the Young Hegelian Max Stirner:

> He imagines that people up to now have always formed a concept of man, and then won freedom for

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[9] Caudwell's analysis, in the case of poetry in relation to Rousseau, is worth quoting here. He says [W]ordsworth, like Shelley, profoundly influenced by French Rousseauism, seeks freedom, beauty - all that is not now in man because of his social relations - in "Nature". the French Revolution now intervenes. The Bourgeois demand for freedom has now a regressive tinge. It no longer looks forward to freedom by revolt but by a return to the natural man. p. 106. *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977.

[10] Irving Babbitt was an avowed anti-Communist. He said: 'Circumstances may arise when we may deem ourselves fortunate if we get the American equivalent of Mussolini; he may be needed to save us from an American equivalent of Lenin.' p. 338. *Democracy and Leadership*. New York, N. Y.: Liberty Classics. 1924. See also the thesis chapter 5, 'The Inverted World' for further on Babitt's views.

> themselves to the extent that was necessary to realise this concept; that the measure of freedom that they achieved was determined each time by their idea of the ideal of man...
> In reality, of course, what happened was that the people won freedom for themselves each time to the extent that was dictated and permitted by the existing productive forces.(30)

There is, if we are to agree with Marx, Engels and Caudwell, no such creature as Man in Abstract, forever striving for a mythical, idealised 'freedom'. Such a 'Man' does not and has never existed, and neither has this supposed 'Freedom'. As has been noted by George Thomson,[11] Caudwell dealt firmly with the remaining Freudian aspects of his work in *Illusion and Reality* with *Studies* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture.* It must be argued that the whole body of Marxism and Marxist-Leninist thought is not *a prioristic*, and is an ever-changing process of dialectical and historical materialism which has been forcefully proven by Caudwell, particularly in his later works, noted above.

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[11] See this thesis chapter, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'. (47) p.104.

v - Leninist Cognition

It must be strenuously argued against Currie,[12] Cornforth[13] and others, that Caudwell was emphatically *not* an idealist or Jungian in his approach to psychology. Caudwell is hardly out of step with Lenin when the latter writes in his highly influential *Philosophical Notebooks* that:

> Cognition is the eternal endless approximation of thought to object. The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not "lifelessly", not "abstractly", not devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution. [Lenin's quotations.](31)

Caudwell's analysis is central to the above acknowledgement that everything, without exception, is subject to dialectical change. Following on from this, if one accepts the Marxist dialectic then one must accept, of course, that the mind is secondary to material existence. There is ample mindless matter, but the disembodied spirit is that most elusive of all things. As Engels said, when he wrote to Bloch in 1890; economics was the final foundation it was not the *only* foundation.(32) Neither can it be said that materialism is the sole foundation of existence, although it is the final one. Thoughts, concepts, beliefs, etc., no matter how wrong or right they might be, exist. To be sure, matter is the foundation, but to argue that it is *only* that is to fall into the arid, mechanical materialism of the eighteenth century,[14] long discarded by Marxists.[15] I believe that Caudwell's

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[12] See thesis chapter 4 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'.
[13] Ibid.
[14] For example see de la Mettrie's work *Man a Machine*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court. 1912. *Passim*.
[15] See, however, the Communist Party of Great Britain's Zhdanovian-style attack on Caudwell which is dealt with in chapter 4 of this thesis, 'Caudwell, his critics and the Caudwell Debate'. E. P. Thompson, in particular, accuses the CPGB of this very error and that Caudwell's thought and works were anathematised because of this mechanistic trend. See E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register*. (Editors.):

works are a qualitative, Leninist, development beyond earlier anthropological works such as Engels' *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* and the various psychoanalysts who came after. What must be borne in mind - but seems to have been overlooked by Robert Currie - is that Caudwell was one of the harshest critics of Freud and especially Jung, whom he accuses of 'Barbarism'. Freud, Caudwell says, at least tried to reject this method.[16] Freud, although patently not a Marxist, wrote in 1933 that:

> At a time when the great nations are declaring that they expect to find their salvation in Christian piety, the upheaval in Russia - in spite of all its distressing features - seems to bring a promise of a better future.(33)

This shows a sympathy - albeit somewhat qualified - for a cause close to Caudwell's own views. On the subject of Jungian analysis, Caudwell found grounds for saying that he thought Jung was mistaken and that Jung had got himself into 'an epistemological confusion', saying that the types are real enough within Jung's epistemology but the mechanism is wrongly grasped. He says that sensing is conscious but poetic, that it is generalised feeling but that feeling is conscious but concrete.(34)

vi - Schizophrenia, the Novel and the Pavlovian Response

Caudwell - typically - tries to draw into the psychoanalytical argument the difference between the novel and poetry. His reasoning here might be more than a little confusing, particularly when he tries to draw a parallel between psychasthenic neurosis and poetry on the one hand, and schizophrenia and the novel on the other, an attempt which was

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Ralph Miliband and John Saville. London. Merlin Press. 1977. p. 248., and this thesis chapter 'Conclusion'. p. 370. (6).

[16] Fascism, *unanisme*, leader worship, etc. For full quotation see thesis chapter 2, 'Caudwell, Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic' (46) pp. 38-37.

roundly condemned by Maurice Cornforth in 1950.[17](35) One can grasp Caudwell's attempt to draw these parallels with a cursory reading of Ivan Pavlov's work, *Psychopathology and Psychiatry*. Pavlov says of psychasthenia that it is impossible to engender in dogs as it is related to the higher functions of the human brain, connected with speech. He points out that with psychasthenics:

> [t]he general weakness, naturally, again affects the basic foundations of the correlations of the organism and the environment, namely, the first signalling system and the emotional fund. Hence the absence of sense of reality, continual feeling of inferiority of life, inadequacy of life together with constant fruitless and perverted cogitation in the form of obsessions and phobias.(36)

Caudwell deployed this analysis in his relation of psychiatry to poetry more from a class and collective point of view than in any individualistic way. He says in relation to bourgeois society and its art: 'it has passed to the other pole, from hysteria to psychasthenia, and, attempting to cut itself off from the object which it can no longer control, becomes the blind slave of necessity.'(37) The psychasthenic is the neurotic, hypochondriac kind of character that will put the 'I' at the centre of all things, much as certain poets will do, in the relation of the individual to the external world. As to the relationship between schizophrenia and the novel we must again look at the relationship between Pavlovian and Caudwellian analysis. Here, I have to admit, the connection is more tenuous, but it exists. Caudwell draws a comparison between schizophrenic torpor and catatonia and the processes of novel writing. He says:

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[17] See thesis chapter 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'.

> The novelist, however,[18] makes his "I" coincide not merely with a generalised human "I" (which is the way a poet lifts his "I" from an "I" in specially difficult circumstances to an "I" in all human circumstances) but with the concrete "I"'s developed from by the individuation of society. [Caudwell's parenthesis and quotations throughout.](38)

This is tortuous but - as stated a little earlier - it makes more sense when conjoined with a reading of Pavlov on schizophrenia. Pavlov points out that apathy is one of the prime symptoms of the schizophrenic(39) and this might be seen by Caudwell as part of the novelist's objective distance from his subject in comparison to the poet's subjective involvement, the "'I' in all human circumstances".[19] How tenable this is as a theory can certainly be questioned. Consider the 'poetic' internalised subjectivism of some novels; for example, the notorious *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce, which, at first glance seems to fit neither category.[20] We might be forgiven for calling this particular theory of Caudwell's over-schematic, and I would suggest that more work needs to be done on this subject both in psychiatry *and* literary studies but Caudwell at least attempted an original analysis.

On the class nature of mental illness, Caudwell says in *Illusion and Reality* that there was a distinct difference in the kind of mental disturbance evinced by officers and men who came out of the First World War. He says of it:

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[18] As opposed to the poet.
[19] See above.(38)
[20] For an example of Joyce's 'prose': 'Of the first was he to bare arms and a name: Wassaily Booslaeugh of Riesengeborg. His crest was Heroldry, in vert with ancillars, troublant, argent, a hegoak, poursuivant, horrid, horned.' [Joyce's spelling, grammar, etc.] *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber and Faber. 1975. p. 5. This is typical of *Finnegans Wake*; but is it a novel? It is an extremely surrealist work, devolving entirely, it would seem, on the internal workings of the writer's mind and thus, if we are to agree with Caudwell on the difference between the novel and the poem, it is *not* a novel. It is more a rambling, epic novel-sized circular poem.

> Psychasthenic neurosis is a characteristic bourgeois disease. In the war, hysteria was, according to Rivers, commonest in the ranks: psychasthenic neurosis more usual amongst the officers. It is a disease of a class thrown by the cleavage of society away from external reality on to the consciousness,[sic] just as a hysteria is the disease of a class thrown away from the conscious on to external reality.(40)

This connects it with the whole question of class-consciousness in general and Caudwell's particular comprehension of it. There is far more to Caudwell's analyses than mere muddleheaded idealism. Further on the subject of the novel-poetry analysis, he says of bourgeois psychology that it sees life as a theatre of indwelling forces of conation or instinct,[21] and that a sharp line is drawn between life and non-life.(41) He says that:

> The drama of the instincts then becomes a kind of bourgeois novel, in which the heroes are the instincts; and their experiences, mutual struggles and transformations generate not only all psychical but also all cultural phenomena.(42)

To reiterate: Caudwell's generally negative critique of psychoanalysts, Adler, Freud and most importantly, Jung, places him in at a considerable distance from the modern trends of psychoanalytical thought. His argument is that while psychoanalysis is quite often valuable in the short term, it is totally worthless in the long term as it deals primarily with the individual and not the society as a whole, as any Marxist-grounded analysis would do. Of course, there are weaknesses in the Marxist approach to these issues, as David N. Margolies has pointed out. Basically, all that existed was the work of Ivan Petrovich Pavlov,(43) even though Pavlov himself was in no way a Marxist.[22] Anything

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[21] MacCurdy and Freud respectively.

[22] As David Lethbridge has pointed out in 1985, 'Oddly, even though Pavlov's theory of conditioning is

else had to be done within the framework of bourgeois psychoanalytical thought. Pavlovian experimentation gets a single quarter page in *Illusion and Reality*(44) and a mere editorial footnote to *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* by Dr. B. H. Kerman who discusses Caudwell's statement that '[i]f a complex situation recurs, even the thalamic memory is sufficient to deal with the situation. This is habit'.(45) Kerman says, however, that '[t]here is no evidence to support the view that an habitual response to a complex situation is dependent on 'thalamic memory'. Rather would the work of Pavlov's school and recent experience of head injuries suggest that an intact cortex is essential for this type of response'[Kerman's quotation.](46) The problem with any Marxist analysis of psychoanalytical theory is that there has been very little written on the subject from an avowedly Marxist position.[23] This is understandable when we consider that Marxists will always take the position of the greater whole over the individual when analysing society and even the most sympathetic Marxists - and we should certainly consider Caudwell to be one of them - are quite dismissive of the various schools of analytic psychology. Caudwell says of gestalt psychology, for example, that it is 'Platonic idealism'(47) and not merely Platonic idealism, but 'bourgeois Platonic idealism'.[24](48) That there is a definite weakness in Marxist psychology in general is noted by E. P. Thompson when discussing 'Western' Marxism. he says of it that:

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considered in the Soviet Union to be the basis of a dialectical materialist science of the mind, there appears to have been no attempt, as yet, to demonstrate the dialectical laws at work within the principles of conditioning.' New York, N. Y.: *Science and Society. Summer 1985. Vol. XLIX. No. 2.* New York, N. Y.. p. 159.

[23] Of this problem Martin Procházka reports that: '[O]ne of the most important features of the situation in the nascent Soviet Union was a controversy between the mechanical materialists (disciples of Pavlov) and theoreticians influenced by Husserl's phenomenology. The empirical, mechanistic psychology had pronounced influence on the literary theory of the so-called 'vulgar sociology'.[Procházka's parenthesis, quotation.] 'Caudwell and the Changing Notions of Marxism'. *Christopher Caudwell: Marxism and Culture. Papers from the International Conference at Goldsmith's College.* (Editors.): David N. Margolies, Linden Peach. London: Goldsmith's College. 1989. pp. 70-71.

[24] Caudwell criticises Freud and Freudian dream-analysis when he says of that analysis of the dream has lead to seeing dreams as psychological wish-fulfilment which he describes as a 'pity' and has caused Freud's followers to divorce themselves from other forms of analysis, such as behaviourism and gestalt psychology. *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 197.

> [t]his Marxism has arrived at the oddly-idealist conclusion that all that can be known to thought are thought and its ideal materials: we may correctly examine a category but not a cortex. To examine a cortex during the course of an epistemological enquiry, would be, according to orthodoxy, to surrender to the most vulgar positivism and behaviourism.(49)

He further notes that '[o]ddly enough Caudwell himself polemicises stridently against and even repetitively against mechanical materialism and positivism.'(50) and '(equally odd) that the criticism brought against Caudwell in the 1950-1951 Caudwell Debate was that of 'idealism.'[Thompon's parenthesis.](51) As we have seen this charge was a salient feature of the attack upon Caudwell in this period. Caudwell's explorations of both the idealist *and* the material bases of psychology were, obviously, too much for the CPGB intellectual leadership to accept and was condemned for it.

The section in *Illusion and Reality* on psychology is more related to poetry, even though there are obvious parallels between Pavlovian and Caudwellian vocabulary on such topics as schizophrenia, hysteria and psychasthenia throughout the work. Caudwell says that the poet is like a man who needs to reorganise his emotions into a more current psychological form and that the psyche has many small complexes. The poet, Caudwell says, seems torn in half like Pavlov's dogs who are confused when made to give different responses to different shapes.[25] When shown an intermediate shape, neither quite a

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[25] An application of Pavlovian conditioning was attempted during World War II in the Soviet Union with Mine Dogs. The dogs were trained, by hunger, to run under enemy tanks, the dogs being loaded with explosives. The idea was that the dog would connect a tank with food. The experiment was only a partial success due to the fact that the Axis used petrol engines in their tanks while the Red Army used diesel, thus confusing the dogs' sense of smell. It did work, however, to a limited extent with sixteen dogs destroying twelve enemy tanks at the battle of Kursk in 1943. *The Red Army of the Great Patriotic War. 1941-1945.* Steven J. Zaloga. Oxford: Osprey. 1984. p. 43.

square or a circle, they display neurotic hesitation. Caudwell says of this dilemma in poets that:

> An emotional reorganisation is the resolution in some degree of an autonomous complex by making it socially conscious.(52)

Caudwell then, draws more heavily on the bourgeois analysts than he does on the Marxists, primarily because there is so much more material. The citation of Pavlov in relationship to poetry shows not Caudwell's (allegedly) bourgeois predilections but a weakness within Marxism itself, i.e. Marxism's general failure to provide a coherent answer to bourgeois psychoanalysis. True, if one is a Marxist then one will, ultimately, accept dialectical and historical materialism and, of course, accept that the mental problems that rend present-day society due to the cleavage of the object from the subject will also 'wither away' with the state. Since Caudwell's death there have been some notable advances in Marxist psychology, particularly the work done by Braun and Baribeau in the mid 1980s. Their article, 'A link Between the Social and the Natural Sciences: The Case of Scientific Psychology', and Lethbridge's 'The Natural Dialectics of Pavlovian Conditioning', both in *Science and Society* Summer 1985, are particularly illuminating. Braun and Baribeau point out that there is a causal nexus between psychological phenomena and other phenomena and that the other sciences and areas of studies are not isolated. Theirs is a historical and dialectical argument. They say:

> [p]hilosophy, art, hermeneutic practices, and religious studies are also indispensable sources for psychologists. Classifying and distinguishing the sciences and non-sciences should not lead to a conception of these diverse thought forms as unconnected and independent of each other. *Every phenomenon finds its cause outside itself.* [Emphasis

> added.] Psychological *content* [Braun and Baribeau's emphasis.] would be completely meaningless to an investigator ignorant of non-psychological laws.[26](53)

Every phenomenon finds its cause outside itself. This is a Marxist-Leninist-Caudwellian argument and runs entirely counter to the doctrines of Freud, Jung, the Gestalt psychologists and even the bourgeois behaviourists, in that the latter rely, in my view, too heavily on a mechanically-materialist outlook in their analyses. Braun and Baribeau, elsewhere in the article quote Lenin from his *Philosophical Notebooks*[27] maintaining that he was an extremely clear and dialectical thinker on this subject. It can be said that, decades on from Caudwell's death, others are still working towards a materialistic, dialectical approach towards psychology and leaving the individualist, mystical, irrational, reactionary and non-scientific approach behind. Caudwell, I feel sure, would have approved.

vii - Psychoanalysis: the World and the Dream

Some of Caudwell's most notoriously ambitious statements are the ones on dream. He says of it:

> The "remedy" for the illusory character of dream is not to abolish dream but to so enlarge and extend it that it becomes increasingly close to the realisation it is made to anticipate: to fill it more full of life and

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[26] In a note to his work, *The Social and Cultural Roots of Linear Perspective*, Leonard Goldstein makes the point that to: '[t]o talk of Marxist psychology does not evoke the laughter which used to be visited upon those Marxists who talked about Marxist physics.' P. 154. *n*24. Minneapolis, Minn.: MEP Publications. 1988. I regard Goldstein's views in this matter as an appreciation of a qualitative development of the possibility of a dialectically-based, fully fledged Marxist psychology that, perhaps, deals with the individual sympathetically, within the wider, socio-economic context and without discarding the theory of the superstructure upon the base. These are early days, to be sure, but the potential exists.

[27] See, also, Engels to Bloch above.(32)

> reality and vivid content. Once again freedom is extended by the consciousness of necessity. This programme calls for a socialisation of dream. [Caudwell's quotation.](54)

It seems a far-reaching thing to consider, let alone achieve: to eliminate the cleavage between the Subject and the Object, the Illusion and the Reality. One might speculate, as he might likewise, that in a Communist world, free of all class constrictions and metaphysical idealism, the dream may take its place once again within the sphere of human life. A new, scientific *Dream Time,* its roots reaching far back into human prehistory, but its goals in the far future. As Christopher Pawling has noted: 'Here art could play a crucial rôle in connecting the personal with the political by linking up the world of unconscious unarticulated desires with that of conscious collective action.'(55)
The creation of poetry at the dawn of humanity, was a great qualitative and quantitative advance. Caudwell says, 'Man made a tremendous stride forward when he injected the dream into waking life, which forced it to answer the categories of waking reality.'(56)
But, as Caudwell points out, it should not lose that quality that makes it so important; plasticity. Here is a major dilemma, for if poetry and dream has to agree with external reality, it becomes indistinguishable from perception. 'Perception of things round-me-now, perceptions of feelings inside-me-now.'(57)
As Freud said in *The Future of an Illusion*:

> For this situation[28] is nothing new. It has an infantile prototype, of which it is in fact only the continuation. For once before one has found oneself in a similar state of helplessness: as a small child, in relation to one's parents. One has reason to fear them, and especially one's father; and yet one was sure of his protection against the dangers one knew. Thus it was natural to assimilate the two situations.

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[28] The threat of danger, real or imagined.

> Here, too, wishing played its part, as it does in dream life.(58)

Caudwell could also see the necessity of dream in that it not only provided a buffer zone between the mind and reality but could also enhance and enrich reality. Moreover, he points out that sleep is a function only of the more highly evolved species, including of course, *Homo sapiens*. Sleep - and just as importantly, dream - he says, is, at the physiological level a way for these species, to 'work out' the acquired characteristics necessary during the waking day. Caudwell points out that:

> It is no accident that sleep appears only in higher animals - those whose life is full of acquired adaptations which therefore require "working out" physiologically in sleep. Insects, with their elaborate innate adaptations do not sleep. Or when they do "sleep", as in the chrysalis, it is a final and far more thoroughgoing adaptation, in which every cell in the body is re-orientated.[Caudwell's quotations.](59)

In *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* he uses a similar comparison between insects and the higher mammals:

> Certain animals, for example the insects, in spite of elaborate instinctive activity, are closely geared to an unvarying chain. The sphex will sting only one species of wasp and only in a certain way. There is, in spite of the complexity of the overt behaviour, a poverty of alternative behaviour. The correspondence is virtually one-to-one. We should expect such creatures to experience no affects and no consciousness. Stimuli and reflexes match perfectly and weave an almost unvarying fabric.(60)

For Caudwell, sleep is not only a physiological necessity, it is a necessity that, in large measure, separates us from the lower animals and gives humans a near-infinity of

variable experiences, both waking and sleeping, which has allowed for the evolution of the species *Homo sapiens* away from the purely reflex-driven, unconscious and the unaware. As Heraclitus of Ephesus has said: 'The waking have one world in common; sleepers have each a private world of his own.'(61)

viii - *Altjirangi Mitjina*

There have been copious works written about the Australian Aboriginal 'Dreamtime', or - as it is now more properly called - the 'Dreaming'. Much has been made of this which is beyond the scope of this present work but it should be pointed out that there is an inexactness of translation which seems to divorce the prehistoric Aboriginal 'Dreaming' from the Freudian psychoanalytical form of dream. Aboriginal 'Dreaming' has nothing to do with bourgeois sublimation, that is, being from a pre-class society it has no rôle to play in class schism and the therapies that must inevitably spring from it. It has nothing to do with any passive sleep analysis. In their work, *Dark Side of the Dream*, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra pointed out this crucial, qualitative difference:

> As one Aborigine said recently in an ABC radio broadcast, in response to the question, Is English a very inadequate sort of tool to describe Aboriginal Dreamings and lifestyles and that sort of thing?: 'I think so, because I think that the word dreaming in English is sleeping - you know, sleeping what you dream about. But for us it's got nothing to do with that whatsoever.' (Bowden and Bunbury. 1990:33) [Parentheses and punctuation as the text.](62)

This form of dreaming is far more in keeping with the Caudwellian view of the subject, rather than any Freudian or Jungian analysis. For the Aboriginal peoples, dreaming is an

active necessity, a part of their lives in a waking sense rather than any modern, bourgeois passive way. This is the function of dream before class-schism, before God-Emperors, feudal overseers and factory managers; before the bourgeoisie. Caudwell never wanted a return to primitivism, pastoralism and pre-industrialism; he wanted the concept taken forward to the new, Communist future where dream could be part of everyday life and not the tool of the doctor or psychiatrist trying to fathom out the devastation wrought upon the individual in class society. As Hans Peter Duerr pointed out in 1978, quoting an Australian Aborigine, 'White man got no dreaming, him go 'nother way, white man him go different, him got road bilong himself.'[spelling and punctuation, Duerr's.](63) Caudwell had a keen appreciation of the differences between pre-class, hunter-gatherer societies and the later form of class-oriented, pastoral or agricultural forms of social organisation. He said that:

> [T]he emotions common to all change with the development of society. The primitive food-gatherers or hunting tribes projects himself into Nature to find there his own desires. He changes himself socially to conform with Nature. Hence his art is naturalistic and perceptive. It is the vivid drawings of Palaeolithic man or the bird - and animal - mimicking dances and songs of the Australian aborigine. Its sign is the totem - the man really Nature. Its religion is Manna.
>
> The crop-raising and herd-rearing tribe is an advance on this. It takes Nature to conform with its own desires by domestication and taming. Its art is conventional and conative. It is the arbitrary decoration of Neolithic man or the elaborate rituals of African or Polynesian tribes. Its sign is the corn-god or the beast-god - Nature really man. Its religion is one of fetishes and spirits.(64)

This view agrees with the work of Francis Cornford who, in his work *From Religion to Philosophy*, deals with similar themes.[29] He said of the character of tribalism and human society before it developed out of primitive communism that there was no great divide between man and animal, spirit and matter, the ideal and the object.

> Reason, whose advance is marked at every stage by the drawing of some new distinction, by some fresh attempt to 'carve reality at the joints', may find an opening for a new classification, in which the real differences between men and emus will be too strong for their mystical identity. Then a time may come when no amount of dressing up in emu feathers and strutting about will bring back the old sense of communion and co-operation.(65)

The apparent lack of the individual consciousness amongst pre-class peoples was taken as read by many, though not Caudwell as will later be shown. Jung says that there was at this stage - apparently - little or no boundary between the human individual and the world about him:

> Participation mystique is a term derived from Lévy-Bruhl. It denotes a peculiar kind of psychological connection with objects and consists in the fact that the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which amounts to a partial *identity*. This identity results from an *a priori* oneness of subject and object.[Jung's emphasis.](66)

This, I feel, is the foundation for much of Caudwell's psychological and anthropological work,[30] particularly in relation to the work done on preliterate human societies, either

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[29] Op. Cit.
[30] But only in the sense that he used it to reject such Eurocentric and, we might add, racist concepts.

prehistoric such as the Neolithic period people or modern such as the Aborigine, African or Polynesian. He quotes Jung in his bibliography and also the following work by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl:

> [s]o too, Sir Everard im Thurn, speaking of the natives of British Guyana remarks: "To the Indians all objects, animate and inanimate, seem exactly of the same nature except that they differ in the accident of bodily form... It is very difficult for us to realise the Indian conception of this identity in everything but bodily form, of men and other animals; and it still more difficult to realise that the Indian conception is wider even than this in that it knows of no difference, except again in bodily form, between animate and inanimate objects." [Lévy-Bruhl's quotation.](67)

However, Caudwell, in firm opposition to Lévy-Bruhl, points out that the Aborigines *do* have an historical development, as have other peoples. They are *not* ahistorical. Hodge and Mishra have pointed out that the question of history and the Dreaming that:

> All commentators agree that it is untranslatable and incomprehensible to (other) Europeans, and celebrate this as proving the intricate and mystical incapacity of Aborigines to comprehend history in the European mode. As in Orientalism a warm positivity about this mystical incapacity masks the political function and meaning of the move, one of whose most direct effects is to deny Aborigines the ability (as Aborigines) to establish an alternative account of the foundation event and its aftermath. an account which might refuse to contain the violence and illegalities within the moment of innocence.[Hodge and Mishra's parentheses.](68)

This is a failing of many, apparently, but not a failing of Caudwell who is also supported in this view by Claude Lévi-Strauss who rejects Lévy-Bruhl's notions of non-personality amongst the earliest human societies. He says:

> The savage[sic] mind is logical in the same sense and the same fashion as ours, though as our own is only when it is applies to knowledge of a universe in which it recognises physical and semantic properties simultaneously. This misunderstanding once dispelled, it remains no less true that, *contrary to Lévy-Bruhl's opinion, its thought proceeds through understanding, not affectivity, with the aid of distinctions and oppositions, not by confusion and participation.*[Emphasis added.](69)

This is a firm rejection of *participation mystique*, very much in the manner of Caudwell who maintains that although it might seem that the earlier, less technically-advanced cultures seem to be trapped within a 'Dream'[31], they are in fact as 'historical' as any other culture and that their technique of dream realisation is something that has been lost to class-based societies. He says:

> As to the exact process of differentiation, there are differences of opinion amongst anthropologists. Even the Australian aborigines possess a culture obviously resulting from a period of historical development.(70)

We might compare this view with Driesch's work on the subject of primitive social and psychological differentiation. I believe that Driesch was highly influential on Caudwell and the views of both writers are conterminous with that of Lévi-Strauss, Hodge and

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[31] From a Western, European point of view.

Mishra and others and runs counter to that of im Thurn, Jung, Harrison and Lévy-Bruhl. For example, Driesch says:

> There is no reason to assume that primitive man has an organisation of mind which is essentially different from ours. He merely does not know what criticism and what analysis are, that is all. Even the very thorough book of Lévy-Bruhl on *The Thinking of Primitive Tribes* has not convinced me that the opposite is true. Primitive man has all the categories, in particular, causality, and differs from ourselves insofar as he fills them with content in a very uncritical way. He certainly does not know Mill's law of induction but this does not mean that the structure of his mind is *essentially* different from out own. We may even find the "primordial" type of mind in very uneducated people of our own country, in particular with regard to religious ideas. The so-called primordial mind is therefore related to the critical mind, as mythology is to metaphysics. [Driesch's emphases, quotation.](71)

Therefore, it can be strongly argued that 'Dream' is not some ahistorical vestige, a useless appendage that no longer has a function. Caudwell points out that ethnologists have noted that, amongst the tribes they have studied, all members have individual personalities(72) and that various individuals have differing talents. In this he is in agreement with Driesch as quoted above, but in conflict with Jane Harrison who maintains, in *Themis*, that 'Man cannot project his individual self, because that individual self is yet in part undivided; he cannot project his individual human will, because that will is felt chiefly as one with the undifferentiated *manna* of the world: he cannot project his individual soul because that complex thing is as yet not completely compounded.'(73) Driesch, Lévi-Strauss, Caudwell and others have all pointed to the individual existing within these very early societies, yet Harrison dismisses it. Why? I believe it is question of degree. That is, the degree of how much the individual

personality is allowed to surface within the tribal group, how relevant it is seen to be in relation to the group-soul. To be sure, it exists and we are in agreement with Driesch and Caudwell but also it is relegated to a fairly minor rôle, and here we are in (cautious) agreement with Harrison. Both views are partially right, but that we must not confuse a lack of something in the main body of group i.e. the human individual personality, with its non-existence, something that is quite implausible given the relatively short time that humans have existed. It is a purely cultural and non-genetic divide, I would argue. Not knowing what criticism is, as Driesch has pointed out above, is no indication of the lack of personality. I believe that Harrison's argument is based upon an early 20th century sense of rationalistic Western cultural superiority,[32] something that is almost non-existent in Caudwell's works.

The talents, mentioned above by Caudwell, are not only the arts of spear-making, hunting, weaving etc., but the more arcane ones such as dream-interpretation, rain-making and so on. Even here, in pre-class societies, we see the first signs of class-division, although as Caudwell points out this is more genetic, even though some division of labour is already apparent. Under the new, scientific socialism and, finally, classless communism, we have to assume that dream will take its rightful place, once again, according to Caudwell's programme for the 'Socialisation of Dream', though doubtless it will be as far removed from the *Altjirangi Mitjina* as a power station is from a stone axe.

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[32] Harrison's early 20th century Eurocentrism is glaringly evident in her views on the 'Northern' invaders of Greece when she writes in *The Religion of Ancient Greece*, that '[t]hey are but an early offshoot of those tribes of Northern warriors who, later as Dorians and Gauls, again and again invaded the South and blended with the small, dark, indigenous peoples; blended with them and, it may be, saved them from being submerged in the great ocean of the East.' London: Constable and Co. 1905. p. 28. It is clear that Harrison, for all her erudition and brilliance still assumes, probably unconsciously, that Europe is the *sine qua non* of civilisation and culture, *invigorated* from time to time by Northern barbarians, a necessity when that civilisation becomes too effete and bloodless to survive, which, if we need to make a comparison, is more Nietzschean than Marxist. This, needless to say, is not Caudwell's view.

ix - Conclusions

Notwithstanding Robert Currie's and others' dismissal of Caudwell as an anti-Marxist and as a secret Jungian, Caudwell's views on the concept of dream and its power should not be ignored or underestimated as he certainly does not suffer from any pronounced Eurocentric, positivist and racist tendencies as seen in writers such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Jane Harrison and Carl Jung. It also holds out a promise of further, materialist Marxist-based psychoanalysis in the future for, if we are to reject idealist and bourgeois categories of thought in connection with the problems of the human mind then, surely, it must fall to the materialists to provide the remedy. The crucial point is that while the Marxists may say (with justificiation) that society is to blame for the individual's mental problems then it also incumbent on the Marxists to provide an all-round response to the problems of the *individual*. In this aspect there is, still, an obvious weakness in the Marxist approach. Caudwell recognised this as a many-faceted problem and no doubt would have been able to develop his critique further had there been time.

Chapter End Notes

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8: Heredity and Development

i - Caudwell, Darwin and Lamarck

> The work of Charles Darwin is rightly regarded as the most important event in the history of biology. It is compared to the work of Newton in the realm of physics. The law of evolution is felt to have acted as a unifying and elucidating principle throughout biology, in the same way as Newton's laws of motion and the law of gravity co-ordinated dynamics.(1)

Caudwell leaves us in no doubt as to the importance of Darwinian theory in his unpublished work, *Heredity and Development.* He does, however, observe a sharp distinction between Newtonian and Darwinian theory: Newton's theories were rapidly accepted and used as a basis for physics into the 20th century. Darwin's theory, by contrast, contained flaws and was bitterly opposed from the outset and has given rise to great confusion ever since.(2) How does Caudwell draw this conclusion? He notes the double content of Darwinian theory in that it was, primarily, a theory of evolution and that the species were not fixed, secondarily, it was a process of natural selection that caused this to occur. Caudwell says that while the first part is the most vital content of Darwinian biology, the second is, according to him, formally incoherent.(3) But, as Caudwell points out, the first cannot exist without the second.(4) He says of both components that. 'The observations depend on properties of matter under certain specific conditions.' But, he says, these observations, like the observations of the past, are determined by the attitude to reality of the society which produces them. He notes that in the past biology was attributed to 'an indwelling vital force' a 'vital fluid', 'Archeus' or 'Spiritual Rector',(5) but that these are pseudo-explanatory rather than genuinely

explanatory. His application of a Marxist-Materialist analysis to Darwinian theory draws Caudwell to the conclusion that '[w]e find that this machine for producing new species has a strange likeness to the capitalist economy of that era, as the capitalist saw it.'(6) We return to a, by now, familiar theme of Caudwell; no science produced by capitalist society can be entirely free of that society's own idealism and subjectivism. And, as we have seen, it is not solely *capitalist* societies that are so afflicted. Slave and Feudalist cultures all, according to Caudwell - and not only Caudwell - suffer from this schism. In *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* he observes that the fate of the ancients is often frustrated and the slave-owner frustrated along with it. 'The slave owner is at times visited with a nightmare. He finds that his free will, in spite of its freedom, is thwarted, not by a superior Will but by things-in-themselves - by inferior wills, accidents, mistakes and his own ignorance.'(7) Thus we might see the foundation of the confusion in later capitalist society with regard to evolution. The world is not one where the feudalist or capitalist 'will' is omnipotent and omnipresent but a continual series of dialectical processes which are both evolutionary and, in terms of human society, revolutionary. In relation to the notion of the environment and the evolutionary impetus Caudwell says of it that '[t]he most remarkable assumption of the theory of natural selection is that the environment is solely inimicable to the subject, and that the relations of members of a species is deadly rivalry.'(8) Caudwell sees this as untenable '[f]or if the environment were only inimical to life, how could it be that life came into being and flourished out of the environment?'(9) We might see, if we are to agree with Caudwell, that the 'hostility' of the environment is due, in a good part, to the way the bourgeoisie regard the environment and, by that token, themselves in the world. As Thomas Hobbes puts it: 'Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre as is of every man, against every man.'[Hobbes' spelling, capitalisation.](10) the Hobbesian 'war of all against all' is close, I would suggest, to the capitalist notion of natural

selection and, with the development of Social Darwinism, had terrible consequences in the era in which Caudwell lived and wrote. But, as already noted by Caudwell, the environment, and one's own species, are *not* wholly inimical to the development of life. No life would exist otherwise. The only explanation that one might infer is that life came from 'elsewhere' i.e. from God. Caudwell says, however, that this is a transference of capitalist society into nature.[1] That natural relations were superseded by social relations and, therefore, illusory because it posited a 'conscious' element into an unconscious set of systems.(11) Caudwell maintains that it was the 'competitiveness' of the bourgeoisie and hence their science which 'explained' the rôle of Darwinian natural selection as a '[p]leasant pastoral' and '[t]he purest fairy tale.'(12) As Caudwell points out, the environment is not governed by a question of 'supply and demand' as with the capitalist system.(13) Marx analyses this (supposed) socio-economic nexus in *The Economics* when he commented upon the doctrines of Thomas Malthus in relation to David Ricardo in *The Unhistorical Outlook of Classical Economy*. Marx says:

> Malthus also wishes to see the freest possible development of capitalist production, however only in so far as the condition of this development is the poverty of its main basis, the working classes, but at the same time he wants it to adapt itself to the 'consumption needs' of the aristocracy and its branches in the State and Church, to serve as the material for the antiquated claims of representatives of interests inherited from feudalism and absolute monarchy. Malthus wants bourgeois production as long as it is not revolutionary, constitutes no historical factor of development, but merely creates a broader and more comfortable basis for the 'old' society.[Marx's quotations.](14)

Marx's view of Malthusianism is that it is a prop and mainstay for reaction and the status quo. The notion of 'culling the unfit' in this case, the workers who are 'over-populating'

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[1] See this thesis, chapter 5, 'The Inverted World' for further on the subject of religious doctrine engendered by social change.

the world is tackled, not only by Caudwell but by others too. J. B. S. Haldane said of the concept of 'fitness', in the Darwinian sense, that fitness in one area does not always imply that there will be fitness in all areas. He says:

> It is worth remembering that there is no such thing as general fitness even in animals. In mice resistance to disease is an important element in fitness. Lines of mice which are resistant to mouse typhoid generally tend to be particularly susceptible to virus disease such as "Louping ill", while those which go down readily with typhoid stand up to virus disease.[Haldane's quotation.](15)

He says that if we take eugenics literally, then we will be sterilising the 'fit' along with the 'unfit'(16) as both fitness and unfitness lie within the genome of any creature, human or otherwise. This is, of course, a Marxist argument in relation to biology. The notion of 'fitness' *a la* Malthusianism, neo-Darwinism and social Darwinism is a bourgeois notion and thus it is coloured, perhaps ineradicably, with the illusory outlook of the bourgeoisie and their culture.

Caudwell notes that it this combination of Malthusian doctrine on population and his studies in the Galapagos Islands that brought Darwin to the mechanism, as Darwin saw it, of evolution.(17) But, of course, we must take into account the question of the application of human consciousness in this equation, something, it would seem, that neither Darwin or Malthus do. As Marx said of Malthusian theory:

> There is no doubt that as civilisation progresses poorer and poorer kinds of land are brought under cultivation. But there is also no doubt that, as a result of the progress of science and industry, these poorer types of land are relatively good in comparison with the former good types.(18)

However, Caudwell also takes to task Lamarckian[2] theory; that is the question as to whether acquired characteristics may be transmitted genetically to the parents' offspring. Caudwell's anti-Lamarckian argument is this: 'A given quality of the animal can only manifest itself in a given environment or life-experience.'(19) This, maintains Caudwell, derives from such factors as certain chemicals in food. He says that mother-love in hens is dependent on magnesium in the diet and that fowls fed on different food will have different coloured leg shanks, some green, some yellow, and so on.(20) Caudwell notes that every organism has a life-experience and is only known in that life experience.(21) His analysis is Marxist and dialectical in that these experiences are a synthesis between internal and external forces.(22) We should consider this latter point a little further. The internal is, obviously, the genotype, the genetic foundation for all life from the viruses up to and including *Homo sapiens*. The external is the environment, ranging to climate, food supply and human intervention upon the natural world, both for humans and non-human species. All of these combine to provide an evolutionary impetus and, as we have seen, the environment is not wholly inimicable to life as noted by Caudwell above.[3] Caudwell's argument is that what he calls the 'absolute distinction' made between organism and environment is a 'useless dualism' and a 'characteristic product of bourgeois culture.'(23) The metaphysical dualism of the bourgeois world-view has been noted repeatedly throughout Caudwell's works. Caudwell also sees, in this metaphysical dualism, a confusion arising from the distinction between acquired characteristics and inherited characteristics. 'There is no problem as to whether an acquired characteristic is transmitted. Acquired characteristics are *always* transmitted'[Caudwell's emphasis.](24) By this we can understand Caudwell to mean that the environmental pressure upon an organism will produce the same effect in the offspring as the parent, provided that pressure is still present. therefore, Caudwell sees no real distinction

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[2] Also known as use-inheritance.
[3] See above (8)

between Darwinian and Lamarckian[4] theory. Both are, according to Caudwell, part of the schism in bourgeois thought, presenting the unfolding contradictions brought about by the decomposition of bourgeois culture.(25) Essentially we may understand that bourgeois culture sees the universe as, essentially unchanging, either from a theological or, alternately, a scientific point of view. This, of course, is not the case. Caudwell's analysis is that Darwinian theory reflects the struggle of the individual in capitalist society for supremacy or, in may cases, mere survival. This dichotomy can be seen in the way, according to Greta Jones, Darwin vacillated between Lamarckian theory and the notion of spontaneous variation. However, Jones also notes that Lamarckian theory had a number of advantages. She says: 'It was a means of explaining the origin and persistence of certain social customs and behaviour. An environment could be social as well as natural.'(26) Jones points out that Lamarckianism was used to explain phenomena such as revolutions and upheavals in society,(27) and was also explanatory, in part, of 'national characteristics' in a people or peoples. Commenting on Walter Bagehot's view on the subject, she says:

> Thus Bagehot argues that sober appreciation of the process of parliamentary government among Englishmen and the expression of this in the policies of certain great statesmen provided an ideal which moulded the character of the English nation.[5] The admiration for rationality among the French gave rise to their own tendency to draw up formal constitutional rules.(28)

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[4] Of Lamarckian theory Darwin says it is 'analogical'. 'Lamarck first called attention to this subject and he has been ably followed by others. The resemblance in the shapes of the body and in the fin-like anterior limbs between dugongs and whales, and between these two orders of mammals and fishes are analogical. So is the resemblance between a mouse and a shrew-mouse (Sorex), which belong to different orders.' [Darwin's parenthesis, emphasis.] *The Origin of the Species*. London: John Murray. 1885. p. 373.

[5] '[A] very rare condition of an elective government is a *calm* national mind - a tone of mind sufficiently stable to bear the necessary excitement of conspicuous revolutions. No barbarous, no semi-civilised nation has ever possessed this.' Walter Bagehot. *The English Constitution*. (Editor.): Paul Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001. p. 24.[Bagehot's emphasis.]

Bagehot's view is not an historically materialist view. His racist analysis (for that is what it is), while allowing for an adaptability in the human psyche, relies, essentially, on the idea of innate series of characteristics within us. At first glance this may seem to agree with the Caudwellian notion of the 'unchanging genotype' which so roused the ire of Maurice Cornforth, Margot Heinemann, J. D. Bernal and others. However, the comparison is, at best, superficial. How? Because, as Caudwell points out, when speaking of the machinery of evolution, the machine itself evolves. 'From the Neolithic stick used for turning up the earth, to the modern tractor plough is a tremendous evolution.'(29) And, as noted previously on the same page, '[n]o machine is changeless.'(30) Where, then, is the Lamarckian theory of societal characteristics? At what point does the Englishman [sic] 'become' a Parliamentarian? When do the French 'become' logical constitutionalists? The question cannot be answered because, if we are to agree with Caudwell and dialectical and historical materialism, it has no connection with the inherited and inheritable socialised effects upon an organism or group of organisms, but on the economic foundation; the base upon which the superstructure is built. While Caudwell sees that both acquired and selected characteristics can and will be inherited, we cannot, seriously, claim that these same qualities can be put on an equal footing with industrialism, technology, capitalism, socialism, fascism, etc. These phenomena grow from humanity's struggle against, and in co-operation with, nature. Society is not a callus which, according to Caudwell is produced in the son as in the father if the pressure is identical,(31) neither is it the chemically-induced green shank of the chicken's leg, or mother-love in a hen. Therefore it must be pointed out that while acquired characteristics may well be inheritable, this cannot be applied, on the whole, to society. Social-Lamarckianism is, I would argue, along with Caudwell, as untenable as social-Darwinism. As Caudwell says:

> There is therefore no difference between the Lamarckian theory of the transmission of acquired characters and the Weismann germ plasm theory. When both are properly defined in terms of organism *and* environment, they are seen to be not opposites but the same thing, just because acquired and innate characters are the same thing.[Caudwell's emphasis.](32)

Thus we might see that both Lamarckian and Darwinian theory are two aspects of the same problem; a schism within bourgeois biology. Neither are antagonistic, as Caudwell has shown but neither can it be said that society and its complex problems are reducible to an exclusively Lamarckian or Darwinian analysis. T. H. Morgan,[6] in his work, *The Theory of the Gene*[7] notes a break with Darwinism in the Germ Plasm Theory of Weismann. According to Weismann, 'The egg produces not only a new individual, but other eggs like itself, carried by the new individual. The egg produces the individual, but the individual has no subsequent influence on the germ-plasm of the eggs contained in it, except to protect and nourish them.'(33) This is somewhat like the mediaeval preformationist concept of the homunculus and one can see why it would be anathema to Marxists. Morgan, too, sees problems with it.

> His theory as applied to embryonic development failed, both because the facts concerning the behaviour of the chromosomes during segmentation of the egg gave no support to his assumption of sorting out the materials of the chromosomes, and also because the data from experimental embryology and regeneration indicated very clearly that no such sorting process takes place.(34)

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[6] Thomas Henry Morgan is remembered mostly for his work on the mutation in the fruit fly *Drosophila ampelophila* and saw that the mutations seemed to come within groups of the flies which he noted were divided into four main groups. See *The Mechanism of Mendelian Heredity*. London: Constable and Co. 1915, a work cited in the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977.

[7] See the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*.

Caudwell, of course, sees this problem as part of the all-encompassing collapse of bourgeois culture, a 'tiredness' as Caudwell puts it, and this he sees as a result of '[t]he crippling of the productive activities of science by the social relations of bourgeois economy.'(35) That there is controversy, still, in the biological sciences is clear enough. On the one hand we see a cleavage, explained by Caudwell as a symptom of the disintegration of bourgeois science and society, a 'tiredness' but then we also see a profound problem caused by bourgeois science applying an evolutionist 'blindness' to human social problems. As Caudwell says, relating biology to quantum physics:

> [w]hen physics reached a certain stage of development, epistemology (as expressed in Heisenberg's 'Principle of Indeterminacy') becomes the vital and basic problem. In biology this splitting raised the 'insoluble' problem of evolution - insoluble because environment and organism are artificially separated.[Caudwell's parenthesis, quotations.](36)

Thus we have a Marxist analysis recognising that the dichotomy between subject and object, organism and environment, etc., are part of the all-encompassing collapse and failure of confidence in bourgeois science, where the object becomes entirely unknowable and that human endeavour is at the mercy of blind, natural forces.

A counter to this was undertaken in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, under the auspices of the biologist T. D. Lysenko and will be analysed in relation to the Caudwellian notions of Marxist biology.

ii - T. D. Lysenko and Soviet Science

Caudwell, it must be pointed out, never commented upon Lysenko and for good reason. Lysenkoist doctrine did not make its appearance in the West until more than a decade after Caudwell's death. However, it is germane to apply Caudwell's views to the Lysenko Question as the former attempted to discuss, in Marxist terms, the nature and controversies surrounding human biology and the social sciences. Essentially we will see that Lysenkoist biology is the application of human consciousness to genetics, Lamarckian in its approach to the question, rather than Darwinian. The controversy that ensued from it was, in part, and of course indirectly, the cause of the polemical attack upon Caudwell by Cornforth, Heinemann and Bernal in the early 1950s.[8] Biologists, both Marxist and otherwise would be influenced, even if only for a short while, by what Ronald Clark in his biography of J. B. S. Haldane called 'Lysenko's comet'(37) But what was so 'cometary' about the work and doctrines of Trofim Denisovich Lysenko? He might well be described as part of the first generation of 'proletarian' scientists that emerged in the USSR after the Bolshevik Revolution. Karl Radek's optimistic words at the *First Soviet Writers' Congress* are indicative of this trend.

> We - the army of Communism - do not consist of mere ciphers. Communist society will be a million times richer in great personalities than any other type of society could be. It is enough to look at our country as it is even today.[9] Where else in the world have we seen shepherds growing up into philosophers, brigade commanders, university professors in the space of fifteen or sixteen years?[10](38)

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[8] See this thesis chapter, 4, 'Caudwell, his critics and the Caudwell Debate.' Section ii. *Passim.*

[9] 1934.

[10] Caudwell, no doubt under the prompting of Radek, says that 'Except in Russia, research students are unemployed and the money available for research decreases.' *Heredity and Development. Scenes and Actions: Unpublished Writings.* (Editors.): David N. Margolies, Jean Duparc. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1986. p. 204.

As Dominique Lecourt notes, in his work, *Proletarian Science? The Case of Lysenko*, T. D. Lysenko came to prominence for his work on the vernalisation of seeds of the winter wheat Lutescens 0329(39); by applying higher temperatures to them he found that he could change their properties.

> The first phase (vernalisation) lasts from fifty to fifty five days. The plant then requires low temperatures (+1°, 2°C). If the ears of Lutescens 0329 develop at the indicated temperatures for the desired time, they move onto the next phase. In the case of a normal sequences of all phases, these ears will give seeds which will not be changed from the point of view of the characteristics of the species and will give normal winter ears. On the contrary, it is found that if the same ears are placed from the earliest hours of their growth in high thermal conditions, a temperature higher than 15°C, they will continue to grow, but they will not go beyond the phase of vernalisation and will produce neither stems nor ears; no seeds, just a bush.[Parentheses, Lecourt's.](40)

Now, it should be clear that the external environment will affect the phenotype of the given species so treated. Caudwell's observations that the Lamarckian doctrine of an acquired characteristic being passed on being possible, but only if that same environmental pressure is present, as in the creation of the callus in both father and son.[11] However at this point Caudwell and Lysenko disagree.

> But, said Lysenko, the plants that grow from these seeds will tend to develop *in the conditions in which the process finished*: they will no longer have the 'normal' requirements of Lutescens 0329; *they will have new requirements*, those of the conditions imposed on them at the end of the phase of

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[11] See above (32)

> vernalisation. Hence Lysenko concluded that its heredity has been *destabilised* and that therefore one has a generalisable means to change and direct the heredity of plants at will.[Lecourt's emphases, quotation.](41)

In other words, their acquired characteristics will have been passed on to their descendants. Is this possible? According to Lecourt it was the horticulturist I. V. Michurin[12] who had been most influential upon Lysenko,[13] insisting upon the importance of the life conditions of the plants in question for their development.(42) So

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[12] 1855-1935. He had worked on the acclimatisation of southern plants in central Russia. He was, according to the British Marxist scientist, and opponent of Caudwell, J. D. Bernal, 'A breeder of genius'. *The Biological Controversy in the Soviet Union. The Modern Quarterly*: London. 1949. 2. p. 204.

[13] Michurin's work and, obviously, Lysenko's had, in 1935, even inspired a poem by Semyon Isaakovich Kirsanov. *'Rabota v Sadu'* [*Work in the Garden*. Spelling below as the original translation.] with a fair bit of irony in its intertwining of horticulture and language. We can relate this poem to the pronouncements made at the previous year's *First Writers' Congress* in Moscow where Zhdanov, Bukharin, Radek and others exhorted writers, engineers and scientists to go forward to build and strengthen Soviet science and culture. See *Problems of Soviet Literature. Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress*. Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. *Passim*. Tranls. Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks. *Modern Russian Poetry*. London: MacGibbon and Kee. 1966. p. 735. This is an extraordinary rendition of this poem and while Caudwell is mostly right with regard to the untranslatability of poetry, there are always exceptions. See this thesis chapter 2, 'Caudwell, Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic'. Part Two, section, ii. p. 53.(87)

> Language - a winterhardy class
> At heart I'm a Michurin man
> Working with stems and stalks of words,
> I'm a stubborn squintinarian.
>
> I like Herbariums of speech,
> Vocabulary's scattered grove.
> Some like September's berriums
> Mushroomiums - Fall's treasure trove.
>
> Frost kills the twigs with silver stings
> Slush chokes them in a miry snare.
> My grafting grows; a hybrid shows:-
> My mapple tree - my junipear.
>
> Acres have sprouted with my words,
> After a year's anxiety
> Lingtwistic lemelons appear -
> The crop of my plum-happy tree.

far this is in no way in conflict with Caudwellian biology. Lysenko also agrees with Caudwell that the 'unremitting hostility' of the environment is a bourgeois illusion.

> At first glance it may seem that bourgeois science, in its attempt to prove the existence of intra-specific competition, proceeds from natural selection, a correct thesis of Darwinism. After all anybody can see that an eternal[sic] struggle between organisms is going on in nature. And organisms whose requirements coincide (for instance carnivorous animals of various species), carry on this struggle directly or indirectly, compete among themselves for the capture of food, while organisms whose requirements do not coincide (for instance carnivorous animals and plants) wage no struggle amongst themselves.[Lysenko's parentheses.](43)

Caudwell, too, saw the environment as vital in shaping the way organisms and species developed. Caudwell differs in that he sees that a *constant* pressure must be applied to the subject for there to be any lasting change; however he does not reject the notion of Darwinian selection, although he does reject the claim that it is based on the survival of the fittest in a unremittingly hostile[14] environment. Change is not always the result of some environmental or social trauma; it is evolutionary in the sense that it is part of the normal passing of time and its consequences. As Caudwell says: 'We ourselves grow up. Yet, for some strange reason, this simple knowledge is ruled out of court when we come to study objectively the general laws of animal development,'(44)

Is this partly the reason why Lysenko and others in the USSR rejected Darwinian thought in favour of a more Lamarckian doctrine? As we have seen, Greta Jones[15] notes that it was because there was a more *social* and *conscious* element to this method. This is bound to appeal to a socio-political system that puts humans in the centre of things,

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[14] i.e. Bourgeois.
[15] (26), (27).

rather than as helpless victims of blind external forces or of a vicious, self-interested, bourgeois fellow species; *Homo sapiens*. But, as Caudwell says: '[T]here is no universal law of 'supply and demand' ruling nature. Hence we can never postulate as primary a system of external laws governing the interaction between environment and organism.'[Caudwell's quotation.](45) That Lysenkoist doctrine was wrong we shall see but it is understandable why it came about. Caudwell himself frequently writes of the struggle with nature, in the recognition of necessity and how humanity, by an increasing knowledge of the laws of nature, will free itself from bondage, not in the bourgeois individual sense, that is *unconsciously*, but with consciousness.[16] However, this can be applied creatively or destructively. Lysenkoism is now seen as a 'Stalinist disaster' and Lysenko himself, as Louis Althusser puts it '[a] charlatan whose fortune was bound up with Stalin's despotism'.(46) This may well be so, but it would be wrong to dismiss it as *merely* that. Marxists, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, saw that the world was something to be bent inexorably to the will of humanity for the benefit of humanity.

> The attempt to control nature[17] in a new way is therefore forced on man by nature, and given in the very form of the attempt is society - the non-genetical inheritance of an interpenetration of man and nature. This proves itself a richer and more powerful method than biological interpenetration. The struggle becomes more acute; the war between man and nature is waged on more and more fronts; and it is precisely *this undying hostility, this furious antagonism*, which produces a greater humanisation of the environment by man and a greater environmentalisation of man by nature.[Emphasis added.](47)

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[16] Rather as Caudwell demands that dream should be socialised. *Illusion and Reality*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. pp. 232-233. Thesis chapter 7, 'The Necessity of the Dream'. (54)

[17] 'A man does not control nature by knowing how to make hats, or by being free of the domain of physics, for nature obeys not man the individual but men organised in a society, and fulfils not any particular will but the historic outcome of all wills in action.' Christopher Caudwell. *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*. 'Men and Nature'. London. John Lane and Bodley Head. 1949. p. 123.

Thus Caudwell writes in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*. It is clearly a war of man against nature, and nature against man, which doesn't sit too well with the concept of freedom being the 'Recognition of Necessity' promulgated by Engels and so ardently espoused by Marxists, including Caudwell. War usually has casualties; in the case of Lysenkoism, both humans and nature suffered. As E. P. Thompson puts it in his essay 'Caudwell' when commenting on the above passage:

> This is perhaps a lapse in Caudwell's style into the dominant 'Soviet' rhetoric of the mid-Thirties; the military vocabulary of the opening, the barren antithetical epigram of the conclusion, and the central proposition, then acclaimed in Soviet orthodoxy, that in socialist society the struggle between classes would give way to the more basic struggle between men and nature: massed battalions of tractors, each flying a red flag, waging furious war upon the virgin steppes.[Thompson's quotation.](48)

That mistakes were made, both large and small, was inevitable, such as the ploughing of marginal lands in the mid-1950s in Kazakhstan[18] which led to Dust Bowl conditions similar to those in Oklahoma so vividly depicted in *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck.

The ecological disasters that happened in both the USA and the USSR were of different origins but the result was the same. Neither was it merely Soviet scientists who saw the world in such terms. I cannot think of a more lurid example of British Marxist 'scientific' thinking than this from Ralph Fox:

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[18] 25 million hectares have been lost to soil erosion in this region since 1985. *www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.*

> A German engineer (no doubt he is now in a concentration camp as a dangerous "Marxist") has worked out a plan for utilising the Straits of Gibraltar for the generation of electrical power. The plan is an elaborate one, involving, in its final details, the construction of dams at both the Gibraltar Straits and the Dardanelles, the building of enormous power stations as the level of the Mediterranean falls, and the practical uniting of the continents of Europe and Africa. If this plan were realised the Adriatic would disappear, all the Mediterranean countries would increase their territories by vast areas of fertile land in the most temperate climate of the world. The Rhône, the Po and the Nile would become sources of immense energy.[Fox's parenthesis and quotation.](49)

It would be far too easy and churlish to dismiss this as mere insanity, an idealistic pipe-dream; Fox was a writer, not a trained scientist, not even an exceptionally gifted amateur as was Caudwell. But he was a Marxist and a man of his era, when this sort of endeavour was seen not only as feasible but desirable. The nameless German engineer[19] - along with Fox - presumably didn't consider what would happen to the surplus water that had come from the Mediterranean; obviously it would have to go somewhere. Sea levels would rise considerably if this were to be done. The results would be, perhaps, catastrophic. This is an extreme example, of course, but is indicative of how people, not only Marxists, thought of the world and of humanity's relation to it.[20]

Given that this type of scientific thinking was taking place, we might look at the Lysenko problem in this light. Helena Sheehan has pointed out, there was in the 1920s,

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[19] Note that Fox uses quotation marks when calling the engineer a Marxist. Obviously he thinks the man would have been locked up on a trumped-up charge, not for necessarily being a 'Marxist' but that his views were considered too progressive by the Nazis.

[20] Karl Radek states, with no little satisfaction, that '[I] know of one factory the site of which was a lake three and a half years ago, and the wild ducks, who remember this lake, still look for it when they come flying home in the spring.' 'Fascism and Literature'. *Problems of Soviet Literature. Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress.* Moscow: Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. 1934. This scant regard for the environment is, unfortunately, typical of the thinking of the mid-20th century and not, of course, peculiar to Marxists.

'[m]uch groping, but no specifically proletarian biology.'(50) and that the 'Militant bolshevisers' were calling for biology, like all the other sciences, to be based on dialectical materialism.(51) The appearance of '[t]he barefoot Professor Lysenko'(52) on the scene with apparent solutions to insoluble problems was probably viewed with great relief, given that the country was still suffering from severe food shortages in the aftermath of the imperialist intervention and civil war. Lecourt poses the question: '[h]ow is one to explain the government's haste to approve and have applied all the techniques proposed in the name of Lysenkoism?'(53) His answer *via* the Soviet scientist A. P. Vodkov: 'A new, mass form of husbandry arose - Kolkhozes... *it was necessary to elaborate a new theory of agronomics based on the teachings of Lenin and Stalin.*'(54)[Emphasis, Lecourt's.] Lysenko's techniques, however, were, according to Sheehan, haphazard and unprincipled and were '[l]acking in rigour' and his habit was to '[r]eport only successes.'(55) This is, needless to say, not in the best interest of science, Marxism or the Soviet peoples. However, there *were* successes; had there been none at all Lysenkoism would have disappeared without a trace. The successes, limited as they were, ensured the survival and proliferation of the doctrine. As Lecourt says: 'Now it so happened that Lysenkoism because of the limited but real successes it had just achieved, because of the *immediate* solution it claimed to provide for the problem of grain selection that the 'Mendelist' breeders had been unable to resolve, was in a position to claim (and to appear) to be becoming a new technique.'[Emphasis, quotation parentheses, Lecourt's.](56) Thus Lysenkoist doctrine was accepted by the government without question and any opponents were silenced by various means.[21]

It is crucial here to recognise the major difference between Caudwell's approach and that of Lysenko. Caudwell's attitude to science was to explore any given idea, whether it be in psychology, physics, anthropology, etc., from as many angles as

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[21] For example, N. I. Vavilov, one of Lysenko's bitterest opponents, died in prison in 1943.

possible. True, he was somewhat over-enthusiastic at times, but his great intellect was equal to his honesty and I agree with Stanley Edgar Hyman when he writes that Caudwell's scruples matched those of Marx and Engels.(57) That Lysenko was dishonest is clear with even a cursory reading of the works of Zhores Medvedev, Dominique Lecourt, Helena Sheehan and his own work *Agrobiology*. Nothing of the sort can be said of Caudwell. To be sure, his work on genetics was theoretical and it might be argued that Lysenko was 'out in the field', the 'barefoot professor', but this would be a weak argument, indeed, because Caudwell was, emphatically, not a mere theoretician. He was a Marxist and a Communist Party member,[22] an activist who made the ultimate sacrifice for his principles. As has been noted repeatedly throughout this thesis Caudwell was *never* an ivory-tower theoretician, an armchair revolutionary. That Lysenkoism was not only a theory but actually put into practice does not make it viable in itself. What is good in theory is good in practice and, as we have seen, Lysenkoist biology was neither. As Lecourt puts it, when discussing Bogdanov's doctrines, theory, to Marxists will always take second place to practice. '[A]s Marxists do in fact maintain, primacy is accorded to practical (technical) knowledge; a theoretical practice which itself, in its relative autonomy, is determined in the last instance by the practice of the production of material goods.'[Lecourt's parenthesis.](58) Lysenkoist theory failed to provide for the material production of the goods, in this case foodstuffs for the hard-pressed Soviet Union.

That the leadership of the USSR was desperate for quick answers is obvious and that they uncritically latched onto Lysenko and his theories is all too clear but we have to understand why this happened. Stalin said in 1929, at about the time that Lysenko was coming to the fore, that '[I]t is all the more regrettable comrades, that our agrarian theoreticians have not taken all measures to explode and eradicate all bourgeois theories which seek to discredit the gains of the October Revolution and the growing

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[22] Unlike Lysenko who, according to Sheehan, was never a member of the Communist Party. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science*. Humanities Press. New Jersey, N. J.: 1993. p. 223*n*.

collective-farm movement.'(59) That Stalin and the Politburo relied on Lysenko is equally regrettable. Having said that, what else could they have done given the situation? Obviously more work was needed to verify (or, more properly, disprove) Lysenko's claims and findings. A desperate situation brings forth desperate measures when trying to build socialism in one country, but it is wrong to say that Stalin and the other members of the Politburo were in favour of socialism in one country and *only* one country. To the contrary, while Stalin said that it was possible to build socialism in one country he stressed that the final consolidation and victory of socialism would be only complete when other countries followed suit:

> Does not the Party say, has it not always said, together with Lenin, that the complete and final victory of socialism is possible only if socialism is victorious in several countries? Has not the Party explained scores and hundreds of times that the victory of socialism in one country must not be confused with the complete and final victory of socialism?(60)

At any rate, there were bound to be problems in building socialism in one country, even until other countries had their own successful socialist revolutions. That said, there would have been, without doubt, huge problems even if other countries had followed suit. The rapid electrification, industrialisation and agricultural collectivisation programmes set in motion in the 1920s and 1930s had to do in decades[23] what the bourgeoisie had taken several centuries to complete, not without their own disastrous mistakes, it must be said, and noted by Caudwell throughout his works. It should be

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[23] The fact that the Soviet Union was able to dismantle and move, wholesale, its vital industries eastwards when the Nazi-Fascist invasion took place in 1941 speaks of a highly organised, industrialised and disciplined country which was no longer subject to a backward and parochial outlook. For further on this subject see this thesis chapter 6, 'The Leninist Concept of War'. *Passim.*

stressed that the Lysenko affair was not the death of 'proletarian science.' As Helena Sheehan has noted: 'It must be said emphatically that the notion of proletarian science does not stand or fall with Lysenko. Indeed, Lysenko represented the violation of the very notion that Caudwell was envisioning.'(61)

Caudwell's position on the USSR, as has been noted before, was a rather more thoughtful strain than that of most of his contemporaries, yet even he lapsed into the rhetoric of the Third International occasionally. That he did so only occasionally may have been one of the causes of his dismissal as a serious theoretician by the CPGB more than ten years after his death in Spain. However, Caudwell's work on biology is a profound contribution to the subject and, as noted earlier, is of a far more considered type. It can be seen that the concepts of the bourgeoisie with regard to nature being a machine are illusory. He says:

> Against this true background of the evolution of the species, against this true story of the birth and change of the individual machines begetting in the rise of the machines a similar continual change in the human consciousness, the bourgeois has counterpoised a bourgeois Idea of the Machine, quite false, in which the machine blindly obeys the bourgeois will, completely determined by the plan, without itself being changed or changing its maker.[Caudwell's capitalisation.](62)

Caudwell is saying that the concept of nature being a blind machine working to a predetermined plan is a myth and in this he is in agreement with the Lysenkoists in that they, too, believed that human consciousness was not only a by-product of the material existence of our environment but that it could profoundly affect it. However when Lysenko states that:

> Weismann-Morganism does not reveal the real laws of living nature; on the contrary, since it is a

> thoroughly idealistic teaching it creates an utterly false idea about natural laws.(63)

he is revealing more about his political affiliation, in the manner in which it is addressed, (although it may be a correct statement) than his objectivity which, as we have seen above, was questionable. His argument might be well-founded, i.e. that the Weismann-Morganist outlook relies on random chances and haphazard occurrences in the gene pool but his attitude is crude, propagandist and reductionist. Once again, Caudwell's approach is more considered. True, he would no doubt agree that idealism in any branch of science is non-viable, but his words on the subject are far less shrill than Lysenko's.

> The bourgeois biologist wastes his time in seeking a general explanation for the change in living matter. The dialectical materialist seeks no such general explanation for a change in any part of material reality, for change is what reality is.(64)

Hardly the Lysenkoist denunciation that we have seen in the previous quotation. On the question of historical biology, Caudwell examines the rôle of Gregor Mendel. Again he approaches the question from a dialectical and historically materialist standpoint.

> Of great importance in this connection[24] was the work of Mendel which was the negation of Darwin's theory of capitalist[sic] biology. Mendel was a priest, an Abbot of the order of Augustinian canons. He was opposed to all that industrial capitalism was doing in his world. His stand against the political innovations of the developing capitalist economy in Germany, not only cut short his scientific work, but worried him into an early grave.(65)

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[24] The disintegration of bourgeois biology along with the other sciences.

To be sure, Caudwell finds Mendel a reactionary, unable to cope with the new, either in politics or economics. However Caudwell also pays tribute to Mendel's genius, which he calls 'clerical' as opposed to Darwin's 'bourgeois' genius.(66) Mendel's great discovery, according to Caudwell, was that his quest for changelessness led him to find '[w]hat must necessarily exist in change - the changelessness, *that which* changes.'[Caudwell's emphasis.](67) The result? 'Thus he discovered the Mendelian factors of heredity, whose assembly, beneath the changing mask of the phenotype, forms a predetermined genotype.'(68)

This is, surely, an important foundation for Caudwell's argument for the 'timeless genotype' that caused him to be branded heretical by the Communist Party of Great Britain, especially when one considers that in 1948 Lysenkoism was adopted as the official doctrine where heredity was concerned(69) Lecourt notes that '[t]he result was also to install Lysenko's theory as a prototype of a general reconstruction of scientific disciplines on the same philosophical foundations.'(70) Lecourt also discusses the wider ramifications of the Lysenko question. Referring to the 'World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace' held in 1948 it was '[u]nambiguously formulated:[that] biologists were to support Lysenko's conceptions, his theories of heredity, or else they would *ipso facto* be joining the camp of the heirs of Nazism, the side of what were denounced as the 'forces of darkness.''[Lecourt's quotation.](71) Given when, and where,[25] this Congress was held it is hardly surprising that the delegates felt obliged to comply with the recommendation, especially as it was addressed not only to biologists but '[t]o all scientists and intellectuals.'(72)

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[25] August 25th-26th in the still-ruined Polish city of Wroclaw. The Congress was held just a little more than a month after the Moscow Congress which adopted Lysenkoism as the official Soviet position on biology. 'Comrades, before I pass on to my concluding remarks, I consider it my duty to make the following statement. The question is asked on one of the notes handed to me; what is the attitude of the Central Committee of the Party to my report? I answer: the Central Committee of the Party examined my report and they approved it.'(*Stormy applause, ovation, etc.*) Lysenko at a congress of students of the Leningrad Academy of Agricultural Sciences. 31 July 1948. From: *Agrobiology*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Press. 1954. p. 544.

We should consider the words of Lysenko very carefully in the light of the adoption of Lysenkoism, not only as the official doctrine on heredity but, we might say, as an ideological template for other scientific disciplines. When discussing Mendelism-Morganism in relation to the USSR he says:

> To us[26] it is perfectly clear that the foundation principles of Mendelism-Morganism are false. They do not reflect the reality of living nature and are an example of metaphysics and idealism.
>
> Because this is so obvious, the Mendelist-Morganists of the Soviet Union, though actually fully sharing the principles of Mendelism-Morganism, often conceal them shamefacedly, veil them, conceal their metaphysics and idealism in a verbal shell.(73)

This overtly ideological denunciation is revealing; Lysenko is clearly demonstrating that Lysenkoist biological theory is to be seen as a branch of Marxism-Leninism and his terminology is highly reminiscent of Lenin's when denouncing Machists, idealists and positivists etc., although without Lenin's incisiveness. True, Caudwell had little good to say about Machists, either, but, as we shall see, the CPGB's wholehearted support of Lysenko and Lysenkoist genetics was to prove part of the near-fatal blow to Caudwellian theory only a few years after the 'Comet of Lysenko'[27] blazed a trail across the sky.

J. D. Bernal said of the controversy in the Soviet Union that '[t]he critics of Soviet agriculture are very much in the same position as the critics of the Red Army before the last war. They do not see because they do not want to see.'[28](74) I find Bernal's conflation of two disparate historical events disingenuous. That the Soviet

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[26] The Lysenkoists.

[27] See J. B. S. Haldane above.(37)

[28] E. P. Thompson notes that during this period critics like Bernal '[w]ere apologising or applauding Zhdanov's crass interventions in Soviet intellectual life, Stalin's masterful solution to the problems of linguistics (see this thesis chapter 9, 'Caudwell and Wittgenstein's Ladder'.) and the revolutionary character of Lysenko's genetics.' 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register*. (Editors.): Ralph Miliband, John Saville. London: Merlin. 1977. p. 258.

Union 'got it right' against all the odds in the Second World War (which they did) does not mean we can infer that they had 'got it right' every single time since then. Because critics are wrong in a certain instance it does *not* mean they will be wrong in every instance. True, both the USSR and the Western Communist Parties in various countries were under a sustained attack, most of it unprincipled and based on anti-Communist, imperialist demagoguery, but this does *not* mean that everything done and said by the Soviet Union was 100 per cent. right on all matters at all times. Bernal says, tendentiously, of the Michurinist-Lysenkoist group that '[t]hey represent a movement in science paralleled only by that of the Stakhanovites[29] in history.'(75) However, I do agree with Bernal when he states that '[t]he laboratory worker and the farmer remain too far apart'.(76) Theory without practice is as disastrous as practice without theory, but the practice will never come to fruition without a sound theory to give it impetus and back it up and, it would seem, this is what Michurinism-Lysenkoism failed to provide. Bernal's argument against Mendel and Morgan is this: that their work was narrowly orthodox and '[t]hat there was so much to be done that it was not surprising that at first the insistent and often obscurely expressed criticisms of the young Lysenko were simply brushed aside.'(77) Very well; we have seen, then, that Lysenko was considered something of a maverick by the orthodox Mendelian-Morganists and that, as such, his theories were virtually ignored by older, more conservative scientists; but he was also, according to Medvedev, opposed by his peers as late as 1947. Scientists such as Shmal'guazen, Formozov and Sabinin at a conference in Moscow, criticised Lysenkoism in a logical, well-reasoned and convincing way.(78) Medvedev notes that no Lysenkoist appeared to speak, even though they were invited.(79) This was at the end of 1947, but as we have

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[29] As Dominique Lecourt notes: 'To describe the Lysenkoites as 'agricultural Stakhanovites' thus had a precise meaning: it designated a very special social stratum, that of *cadres of agricultural production in state farms, breeding stations and model kolkhozes.* To say that Lysenko was their ideological leader was to say that Lysenkoist theory represented the systematic form of the social stratum.' [Lecourt's quotation, emphasis.] *Proletarian Science? The Case of Lysenko.*(Transl.): Ben Brewster. Oxford: NLB. 1978. p. 76.

seen there was already strength in the Lysenkoist doctrine, as it was formally declared official a little under a year later in 1948.

The controversy was noted militantly by Bernal and with a more thoughtful appraisal by J. B. S. Haldane. The latter said of it that 'Until I had read Lysenko's speech, I had not recognised the idealistic character of Mendel's formulation of his results.'(80) and that '[w]hat is inherited is not a set of characters, but the capacity for reacting to the environment in such a way that, in a particular environment, particular characters are developed.'[30](81) This is very similar to Caudwell's argument with regard to the bourgeois dualism of Darwinism and Lamarkianism as noted above. Why, then, did Caudwell fall foul, posthumously, of the CPGB under the charges of 'idealism' 'Weismannism' and 'Freudian-Jungism' a few years after? It was, as E. P. Thompson says:

> [I]n those worst years of the intellectual Cold War the international Communist movement had embarked on a rigorous campaign to correct or expose all 'bourgeois' heresies, and the assault on Caudwell was perhaps seen, by the directors of the Party's press, as a small purgative exercise in the Zhdanov mode.
> [Thompson's quotation, capitalisation.](82)

It is against this background that we should consider the scientific and cultural background of a good part of the attack upon Caudwell in the 'Controversy' of 1950-1951.

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30 'The question is more properly formulated like this. An organism X manifests the character α in environment A, β in environment B. If it remains in environment A, its descendants Y will not, in general, manifest the character β in environment A. But in some cases if X has been placed in environment B, Y will show the character β even in environment A. The question to be decided is how often, and in what circumstances, this occurs.' J. B. S. Haldane. 'In Defence of Genetics'. *Modern Quarterly*. London: 1949.

We have seen, above, that Caudwell, while seeing Mendel as a reactionary, still found 'genius'[31] within him. He saw that there was, in Mendelian doctrine, which, to be sure, was seeking to find some stability in an ever-changing and increasingly alien capitalist world, some kernel of truth of the genotype and that his theories were a concomitant part of the whole bourgeois era.

> The fate of Mendel's ideas is proof that the ideology of an era is not the mere sum of the 'discoveries' of individuals, but that these discoveries receive their form and pressure from the social relations of the age. Mendel's discoveries were pressed out of existence until the twentieth century, when de Vries made similar discoveries and Mendel's forgotten work came to light.[Caudwell's quotation.](83)

Caudwell notes, further, that Mendelian theory '[c]ould only come into biology when strict Darwinism, in the form of Weismann's germ plasm theory, had given rise to its opposite, the theory of spontaneous unfolding of large variations or 'mutations'.' [Caudwell's quotation.](84) He says that this mutation theory emphasises the 'free will' of the organism and is correspondent to the change in physics from mechanical materialism to idealism.(85) Again, we see the root of the problem, *via* Caudwell's Marxist-Materialist analyses; that a good part of the confusion surrounding biology is identical to the basis of the confusion in physics; bourgeois idealism.

What conclusions may be drawn from Caudwell's work on biology? Obviously he (like Mendel, De Vries, Lysenko, Haldane and others) did not have the benefit of the work done by Crick and Watson on DNA sequencing which has had a profound effect on biology and will no doubt have far-reaching consequences in the future. Without question, Caudwell, had he lived, would have applied his keen analysis to this development, too. It is obvious to us, now, with the benefit of hindsight that the Lysenko

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[31] Ibid. (65).

affair was an aberration of science and of Marxism but, given the circumstances during the 1920s and 1930s in the USSR it is understandable how it came about. It is easy to dismiss Lysenko and his co-workers as 'deluded Stalinist henchmen'. Jacques Monod[32] quoted by Lecourt said that Lysenko was '[a] paranoiac, who taking advantage of 'ideological terrorism, was able to lead millions of people into his delirium.''[Quotation, Lecourt's.](86) I feel that there is far more to the problem than just this. Certainly there *was* a serious problem and I have no doubt that Caudwell would have been able to expose it, given his work on biology but Caudwell, posthumously, had fallen foul of the CPGB due to his 'idealism' and 'Weismann-Mendelianism' so noted by the Party chiefs. Of course, we have seen that this is entirely untenable, but the Mendelian influence is no doubt there in Caudwell's theories given that he saw an underlying and deep structure within genetics that manifested itself in the 'timeless' genotype so frequently remarked upon by him. An accusation of heresy does not make the accused, automatically, a heretic, although we have seen in this thesis that many considered Caudwell as such, but often, as in the case of E. P. Thompson, in a favourable light. Worth noting, also, on the Lysenko question is Medvedev's comments with regard to the 'Post-Stalin' phase in the USSR. He says that Nikita Khrushchev '[g]ave Lysenko broad and concrete help somewhat more often than had Stalin. Essentially, the head of the party and the government became a direct advocate of Lysenkoism, responsible for carrying out his pseudoscientific recommendations.'(87) I find this intriguing. Khrushchev gained fame (or notoriety, depending on one's perspective) as the denouncer of Stalin in 1956 in his 'secret' report to the XXth Congress of the CPSU(b). Why, then, should he promote and strengthen the work of one who was, according to general opinion, a Stalinist *apparatchik*? I have found no

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[32] Jacques Monod was, at the time of writing, the Laboratory Head of the *Institut Pasteur*. The quotation is taken by Lecourt from Monod's introduction to the 1970 French edition of Zh. A. Medvedev's work *The Rise and Fall of T. D. Lysenko* and is, of course, missing from the English language edition published in 1969 used here.

reference in Khrushchev's memoirs(88) to Lysenko or Lysenkoism, detrimental or supportive. Perhaps we may speculate that Khrushchev's autobiographical lacuna was caused by Khrushchev's fall from power. Certainly, as Medvedev says, Lysenkoism was 'crowded out' from October 1964 onwards.(89)

Comparing Caudwell's approach to biology with that of Lysenko, we can see that the former had a far more realistic grasp of science than the latter. That there was a political element involved in the Lysenko Affair in particular and Marxist biology in general is unquestionable but we cannot see it merely as part of the series of problems and crimes to be laid at the door of Stalin. The USSR was in a serious situation, as noted above, and while a mind of the calibre of Caudwell would undoubtedly have eased the situation, unfortunately it fell to the Lysenkoists to try to solve the myriad problems facing the peoples of the Soviet Union. As we have seen, decades of research were denounced as 'metaphysical' by the Lysenkoists and Lysenko's theories were hailed as a new science.(90) Of course because something is well-established it does not follow that it is authentic. We should take note of the demise of the Ptolemaic system which, for centuries, was the acme of astronomical thought until it was superseded by the Copernican-Galilean systems. But, as we have seen, Lysenkoism was the Ptolemaic system due to the wrong turns, over-confidence and lack of scientific rigour causing scientific endeavour to be, according to Sheehan, '[d]isastrously short-circuited in the Soviet Union.'(91) Caudwell's analytical clarity, whether in physics, poetry, psychology or, in this case, biology are clearly demonstrated throughout his works. Caudwell says:

> Oxygen and hydrogen are not the same as water. This arises from the fact that when the components are separate, their relation to the rest of reality is different from when they are together. In certain circumstances the spoke and rim stand to the environment in the relation of a wheel, and roll over it. Separate they cannot do so. The wheel's quiddity arises from its action as a rolling object on the rest

> of reality. A thing is always more than the sum of its parts, because our recognition of it as a thing depends on it having a new relation to the rest of reality - a new quality.(92)

Here he is revealing much about his knowledge of dialectical materialism, his depth of commitment to Marxism and to scientific progress, his lack of pedantry, shrillness and rejection of rigidly doctrinaire approach to vital matters. That he differed greatly from Lysenko and Lysenko's supporters is clear not only in his approach but also his precision and while it may be seen as inevitable that Lysenko would, given the circumstances, rise to prominence in the Soviet Union it is no less regrettable that it happened.

Chapter End Notes.

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9: Caudwell and Wittgenstein's Ladder

i - Concepts of the *Logos*

> Language is the most flexible instrument man has evolved in his associated struggle with nature. Alone, man cannot plough Nature deeply; hence he cannot know her deeply. But as associated man, master of economic production, he widens his active influence on her, and therefore enlarges the truth which is the product of that action. Language is the essential tool of human association. *It is for this reason that one can hardly think of truth except as a statement of language, so much is truth the product of association.*[Emphasis added.](1)

Here we see Caudwell as the advocate of humanity in humanity's continuing struggle against - and with - the forces of nature, a typically Caudwellian theme. Caudwell was, profoundly, a dialectician and although he saw humanity as part of a greater whole and never divorced from it, he also saw a special rôle for human beings in that we are - for better or worse - unique because we communicate and deal with our existential problems within our own epistemological framework. Unlike animals we can conceptualise in the abstract. One of the greatest weapons in this continuing struggle, for Caudwell, was language. Poetry, song, literature and the arts in general are all unique to human beings and, as such, were of profound interest to him. Language is - for Caudwell - the indispensable condition for progress of humanity. If we cannot communicate then we are little better than dumb brutes who, although they communicate within certain limited criteria, cannot express the complex concepts so vital to our advance upwards from barbarism. E. P. Thompson said of Caudwell's linguistic studies that they were '[m]ore amateurish than was his approach to anthropology, physiology [and] psychology.' and that '[n]one of his studies was centrally concerned with language.'(2) Be that is it may,

Caudwell's works on linguistics are still worthy of note and, we will see, are often auxiliary and supportive to his other theses.

Lenin in his *Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic* makes the marginal notation that:

> [t]he history of thought = the history of language?(3)

Lenin's speculation might well be justified: can there be philosophy without language? Caudwell points out that language is referential, that it is it not the words themselves that count but the concepts, ideologies etc., that are represented. On the nature of poetry, he says that it is not a question of symbols and nothing else.(4) The words themselves are worth nothing except in relation to the things they represent. C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards in their *Meaning of Meaning* deal with this question. We should consider their analysis as it has often been considered that this work was highly influential on Caudwell.[1]

They note that words:

> [a]re instruments. But besides this referential use which for all reflective, intellectual use of language should be paramount, words have other functions which may be grouped together as emotive.(5)

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[1] However, Caudwell writes Paul and Elizabeth Beard in 1935: 'You may notice a similarity in many parts [Of *Verse and Mathematics/Illusion and Reality*. k. m.] between my views and those of Ogden and Richards (Meaning of Meaning) even to the terminology: e. g. use of word 'symbolic.' This is, I believe, a complete coincidence as I have only just read their book. I think in the book as published I shall have to make some extended reference to 'Meaning of Meaning', otherwise it might be thought I had cribbed their ideas without acknowledgement.' [Caudwell's parenthesis.] Christopher Caudwell. *Letters.* The Caudwell Archive. Box 7, Folder 1. Harry Ransom Institute, University of Texas. Texas USA. See, also, W. H. Auden's comment that '[t]his [*Illusion and Reality*. k. m.] is the most important book on poetry since the books of Dr Richards, and, in my opinion, provides a more satisfactory answer to the problems which poetry raises.' 'Illusion and Reality'. *New Verse*. London: 1937. p. 22.

Words are only as good as the *information* they carry. Caudwell sees that one of the problems with language is partly psychological, in relation to the common ego that, perforce, we all share. But there is a *caveat* from Caudwell. He says: '[w]e must emphasise that neither the common perceptual world nor the common ego makes men think or feel in a standardised way. On the contrary, they are the very means whereby man realises his individual differences.'(6) It is evident that Caudwell knew well enough to state that the individual and the individual's experiences are important, even though the foundation may be the common ego and the language that represents it. Language must relate both to the common ego, the common perceptual world, and to the individual; anything else is meaningless. Another scientist influential on Caudwell was Sir Richard Paget. In his work *Human Speech* Paget says that:

> The limitations of gestures of articulation to two dimensions [...] must surely have had important effects in developing pantomimic conventions of the organs of articulation at an early stage. It is possible that this limitation may have directly encouraged the use of the other organs of articulation - the soft palate, epiglottis and false vocal cords - of which the movements are performed unconsciously, in order to make up for the relatively small number of tongue and lip gestures.(7)

Caudwell acknowledges this debt to Paget in *Illusion and Reality*, calling his theory plausible. He says of the biological foundation of speech: 'The purpose of non-rhythmical language is equally obvious. [...] The function itself, as in all biological development, created the organ and was shaped by it.'(8) Paget notes that Archaic Chinese is plentiful in the symbolism of mouth gesture and that nasal sounds denote continuing actions and non-nasal denote sudden ones. He says that the word 'Kam' means 'mirror,' or 'example,' that is, the two lips held together to represent an object and its image, or the example and its copy.(9) Paget gives other examples in this passage,

but it is clear enough that he - and also Caudwell - saw that there was a close link between human physiology and speech which is hardly surprising given that he based his theories on the doctrine of materialism, both dialectical and historical, more of which we shall see below.

ii - Purity of Language

It must be pointed out that Caudwell rejected the notion of a 'pure' language, because as he says there is no such thing as a 'pure' object, subject, matter or mind.(10) If these are 'impure' then how can language be other than 'impure'? The whole concept of 'purity' is alien to Marxism, because Marxism itself is based on dialectical materialism and this is in itself based upon the interpenetration of opposites, the continual reworking of nature itself. 'Eternal Truths' are treated with deep suspicion as products of an idealist, metaphysical mode of thought. Caudwell says of the nature of truth and purity, in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*:

> Thus truth never stands by itself as 'pure'. It is always generated in action, in instinctive organismal [sic] response going out into the situation and modifying both itself and the situation, begetting emotion as a result. Absolute, static, eternal truth is thus impossible.[Caudwell's quotation.](11)

Engels' influence on Caudwell in the sphere of linguistic theory is striking as shown by his attitude to truth, language and linguistic 'purity'. In his very sharp critique of Eugen Dühring Engels remarks:

> We will say only this: "He who can think only by means of language has never yet learnt what it is meant by *abstract* and pure thought." On this basis animals are the most abstract and pure thinkers,

> because their thought is never obscured by the officiousness of language.[Engels quotation, emphasis, etc.](12)

Engels' sarcasm is characteristic of the way Marxists feel about the concept of purity, in language, truth or anything else and Caudwell has obviously taken this up in relation to his critique of language theory. But Dühring's view, that language somehow impedes 'pure' thought should be considered carefully. Is this feasible? How can it be that language *hinders* thought? For if we are to relate it to Caudwell's view, that language is the representational vehicle for the higher functions of communication, then Dühring's view is inaccurate. Colourfully, Caudwell maintains that:

> Language sucks its life-blood from daily life, and in daily life all conversation which his not informative of outer reality regarded objectively (e. g. of events or the speakers feelings treated objectively) or of inner reality (e. g. accent, angry or pleased "tones", facial expressions, circumlocutions, manner polite, curt, surprising, or warm phraseology) is rhetorical in the Aristotelian[2] sense, that is, it is designed to persuade others to act in a certain way and feel in a certain way. [Caudwell's quotations, parentheses, etc.](13)

Ogden and Richards point out that, in Aristotle's time, disputation was based on the notion of a definite meaning of every term.(14) Therefore rhetoric would have a far greater power than it could have now. Ogden and Richards view of this problem is summed up when they say:

> Nothing whether human or superhuman is beyond the power of words. Language itself is a duplicate, a

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[2] Aristotle says in his *Rhetoric* that: 'A speech has two parts. You must state your case, and prove it. You cannot either state your case and omit to prove it, or prove it without having first stated it; since any proof must be a proof of something, and the only use of a preliminary statement is the proof that follows it.' *Rhetoric. Book III.* 1414.30. *Rhetorica. Vol. IX. The Works of Aristotle Translated into English.* (Transl.): Rhys W. Roberts. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1924.

> shadow-soul, of the *logos*, variously conceived as the supreme reality, the divine substance, as the "Meaning" or reason of everything, and the meaning and essence of a name. [Ogden and Richards' quotations.](15)

They point out that this is a remnant of word-magic, held over from an earlier, even more primitive time, than that of the Classical Greeks. For an example of that era we should consider the writings of Demetrius of Phaleron.[3] He said, reporting on the religious practices of the Egyptian priesthood, even in that relatively late period,[4] that '[T]he priests of Egypt, when singing hymns to their gods, utter the seven vowels in succession and men listen to the singing sound of these vowels instead of to the flute or the lyre, because it is so euphonious. It follows that to remove the hiatus is to deprive language of its song and music.'(16) True, Demetrius was speaking mainly on the style of the sounds themselves, but it does give an indication of how powerful human sounds are in relation to spiritual matters. The same argument may be made for Gregorian Plain Song, Buddhist chanting, the call of the Muezzin from the Minaret, etc.

Caudwell had no such 'reverence' for the word, the 'Divine' *Logos*,[5] but on the contrary saw the word as a vehicle, albeit an invaluable one in humanity's continuing struggle with nature. He maintains that it is a commonplace to say that rhetoric and persuasion can be empty and hypocritical, but that it is because both truth and error exist and that man make mistakes.(17) Persuasion in itself is not invalidated by such an

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[3] *Fl.* 3rd Century, BCE.

[4] The Macedonian-Greek Ptolomies.

[5] See N. I. Bukharin's 'Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR'. *Report to the First Writers' Congress.* Moscow: Foreign Workers' Press. 1934. Bukharin says, 'Thus we find in one Arab philosopher the interpretation of the "Word" with a capital W, the Greek Logos, not as reason raised to the degree of the world's Demiurge, but as the embodiment of volition creating the world.' p. 189. This passage is very close to Caudwell's views and I would suggest, along with Maynard Solomon, that the report was, in good part, highly influential on Caudwell. See *Marxism and Art.* Brighton. Harvester Press. 1979. Further, Bukharin criticises the 'pure mysticism' in poetic speech and, while Bukharin makes no direct reference to Wittgenstein, one can see a foundation for Caudwell's attack on the latter stemming from Bukharin's influence.

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argument and language does not merely convey a dead image of our reality but - dialectically - an attitude towards that same image; it certainly is not the fault of the methodology of rhetoric itself.

Caudwell maintains that rhetoric is the '[w]arp and woof of language as an instrument of association, from which science and art separate themselves as more specialised, more organised, more aloof, more abstract and more *real and convincing in their special fields* precisely because of their use of those unreal and illusory scaffoldings, the mock ego and the mock world.' [Caudwell's emphasis.](18) Caudwell's Marxist view of the nature of society sees the necessity of rhetoric's rôle in the continuing struggle with nature and with class consciousness.

iii - Wittgenstein and Russell

One particular philosopher who was the target of Caudwell's criticism was Wittgenstein;[6] another was Bertrand Russell, the latter also being criticised on the issue of liberty in *Studies in a Dying Culture* when Caudwell says of him, '[a]nd Russell, who writes *In Praise of Idleness*, praises rightly, for he is clever because he is idle and bourgeois, not idle and bourgeois because he is clever.'(19) Caudwell finds Russell's 'idle, bourgeois cleverness' irksome but he also finds fault with his notions of language. In the Introduction to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Russell says:

> A logically perfect language has rules of syntax which prevent nonsense and has single symbols which always have a definite and unique meaning. Mr Wittgenstein is concerned with the conditions for a logically perfect language - not that any language is logically perfect, or that we believe ourselves

[6] This, of course, is the early Wittgenstein. Given that Caudwell was killed in 1937, it was impossible for him to deal with Wittgenstein's later works.

> capable, here and now, of constructing a logically perfect language, but that the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it fulfils this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate. *The essential business of language is to assert or deny facts.*[Emphasis added.](20)

This is quoted in *Illusion and Reality*(21) but Caudwell maintains that this is not the case at all, even though Russell himself admits that no such language exists, or is likely to exist in the near future. Caudwell says that facts assert or deny themselves; that is they exist or they do not exist, although it must be pointed out that for a fact 'not to exist' is, we must assume, an oxymoron. It, in itself, cannot *deny* itself if it does not exist.

For an account of the rather barren notion of the 'logical language' we should consider the words of Victor Kraft, a member of the Vienna Circle when he says:

> Number-properties cannot be predicated of things, by virtue of their definition. For this reason the sentence "Caesar is a prime number" could not be formulated in a logically perfect language. In such a language metaphysical sentences of this kind could not be formulated either. Thus the pseudo-statements of metaphysics cannot serve the function of the representation of facts at all; their function is quite different: they express an attitude towards life, what they manifest are affective and volitional attitudes towards the environment and society and the tasks of life.[Kraft's quotation.](22)

Rather than make the language logical and anti-metaphysical, surely it is more apt to change the society that uses such a language.

However, Caudwell says that the rôle of language, once again, is to be the best possible tool for placing the facts in an orderly world-view and that language should serve change in society and reflect that change, not by being 'logical' but by being firmly in touch with the society that produces it. I would argue that Russell's view is reflective

of the Aristotelian quest for the proper usage of words in their most appropriate place but that this quest has now developed into a logical-positivist concept. This is, from a Marxist standpoint, a subjective way of dealing with the very real problems besetting the world. Language cannot be reducible to a 'Holy Grail' of pure logic that 'prevents nonsense'. How is this ever going to be possible? We patently do *not* live in an unchanging world where 'nonsense' is reducible by the proper usage of 'perfectly logical' language. Such a thing is impossible. Caudwell says of such notions of perfection:

> This historical function of language explains why existing languages are so far from the 'perfect' language postulated by Wittgenstein.[7] Such a perfect language would be perfectly useless. It would be a picture of the world, standing in the same relation to external reality as a mirror-image to the thing mirrored. But then it would be an inferior thing to the thing imaged, and would be a useless construct.(23)

In the notion of the historical function of language Caudwell maintains that change can only come about through association and the use of language.(24) However, Caudwell was not the only one who argued from this standpoint. Thirteen years after Caudwell's death, Joseph Stalin wrote that the:

> [e]xchange of thoughts is a constant and vital necessity, for without it, it is impossible to co-ordinate the joint actions of people in the struggle against the forces of nature, in the struggle

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[7] Others, aside from Caudwell, have seen the problematical nature of the *Tractatus*. Donald Peterson in his work, *Wittgenstein's Early Philosophy: The Three-Sided Mirror*, comments: 'Nobody has ever seen an elementary fact, and equally nobody has ever seen a Tractarian object: they are theoretical postulates of Wittgenstein's account, and are to be encountered neither in everyday experience nor in the findings of science. *This is atomistic ontology at its most abstract.*'[Emphasis added.] Hemel Hempstead: Wheatsheaf Press. 1998. p. 28.

> to produce the necessary material values; without it, it is impossible to ensure the success of society's productive activity, and hence, the very existence of social production becomes impossible.(25)

Stalin also saw the necessity of the linguistic interaction of humans as a necessity for survival, and his view is remarkably close to that of Caudwell.[8] It is worth noting here that Sebastiano Timpanaro damns Stalin with the faintest of praise by saying that Stalin's work on linguistics is the only theoretical work of his worth studying.(26) Be this as it may, it should be said that Stalin's views have a refreshing clarity for a writer who admits that he is not an expert in linguistics.(27) Not only Stalin but Vološinov wrote in 1929 that the 'Marxist philosophy of language should and must stand squarely on the utterance as the real phenomenon of language-speech and a socio-ideological structure.'(28) Vološinov's view is that language must square itself with the political, social and economic reality - the 'socioideology' as he calls it - within *any* given society, not necessarily socialist. Caudwell is not out of step with either Stalin or Vološinov.

For an example of Wittgenstein's idealism and subjectivism in relation to the philosophy of language we should consider his words on the subject of confusion and enlightenment. He says in the *Tractatus*:

> Thus there easily arise the most fundamental confusions[9] of which the whole of philosophy is full. *The limits of my language* means the limits of my world. [Wittgenstein's emphasis.](29)

For Wittgenstein the problem lies in 'ambiguity' and, very much in the manner of a solipsist, his perceptions, his own language, are the absolute, ontological limits of his

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[8] See above.(1)
[9] Language ambiguity due to a lack of accurate symbology.

world. It can be argued that Wittgenstein, at least at this stage, was mystical and subjective. I agree with Wittgenstein that philosophy is full of confusion but his mysticism is developed further when he says towards the end of the *Tractatus*:

> My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands them has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must, so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)
> He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.[Wittgenstein's parentheses.](30)

And:

> Whereof one cannot speak, therefore one must be silent.(31)

It would be over-simplistic and even churlish to say that Wittgenstein is merely stating the obvious, so we should leave it to Caudwell to criticise these last two statements which are, I would suggest, portentous; indeed, they are a refutation of the logical positivist stance of Wittgenstein himself.

Caudwell points out that:

> *Wovon man niche sprechen kann, darüber muss mann schweigen* ("whereof one cannot speak therefore one must be silent"), ended Wittgenstein, asserting in a mystical form that since language corresponds to facts, it cannot speak of non-factual entities, but must fall back on mystical intuition. This is untrue. By arbitrarily limiting the function of language, Wittgenstein excludes it from the provinces it has long occupied successfully. It is precisely art - music, poetry and the novel - which speaks in the affective manifold what *Man nicht sprechen kann* in the logical manifold.[Caudwell's speech marks, parentheses, German.](32)

The Wittgensteinian limitation of language, as Caudwell has pointed out above, would render a language 'perfect' (even if such a thing were possible), but, by that same token, render it 'perfectly useless'. A language that is perfect would very soon be out of step with historical and scientific developments and would need constant upgrading in the manner of a computer programme. We would certainly need to do more than climb a ladder to a 'logical heaven of language' to understand its functions where only the initiated, those who have somehow 'climbed the ladder', may truly understand. This is anathema to Marxists as shown by Caudwell's condemnation of Wittgenstein. Caudwell's class analysis is clear enough when he says:

> Is it not plain that the error of the philosophers regarding language springs from the same source as religion - the cleavage of the subject from the object in a class society?(33)

iv - Class and Language Theory

It is obvious that there is, within the area of linguistics and semantics, a great deal of confusion and metaphysical idealism. If we are in agreement with the Caudwellian-Marxist analysis, are we to be surprised? An all-sided crisis, in the relation to capitalist economic collapse is exactly what it purports to be: all-sided. Language and its analysis is no exception. It cannot be anything but, for it is part of the bourgeois condition.

Caudwell was emphatic as were many other Marxists that 'Freedom and Necessity' were indivisible.[10] and that by recognising necessity we, as humans, would

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[10] See Engels *Anti-Dühring*. Moscow: Progress. 1954. *Passim*.

become more and more free, that is freer to determine our future course, freer to negotiate our way through the hazards of natural life, etc. For Caudwell freedom was inextricably bound up with consciousness and consciousness with language. He says:

> In the fashioning of consciousness the great instrument is language. It is language which makes us consciously see the sun, the stars, and rain and the sea - objects which merely elicit *responses* from animals.[Caudwell's emphasis.](34)

To be otherwise is to be a mere brute. This is not to suggest that animals do not feel, or do not communicate; they do, but the only creature known to communicate on a complex and abstract level is *Homo sapiens*. As Karl Marx pointed out in *The Economics*:

> Man is in the most literal sense of the word a *zoön politikon*, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society. Production by isolated individuals outside society - something which might happen as a exception to a civilised man who by accident got into the wilderness and already potentially possessed within himself the forces of society - is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another.(35)

Admittedly, Marx was discussing *economic* production here, but his words bear witness to the concept that man is unable to function socially without a developed language. It must not be supposed, however, that although there is a class element in language, i.e., certain pronunciations, favoured words and phrases, slang etc., that there is such a thing as a wholly class-based language. True, Norman French was the language of the upper classes of England for perhaps two hundred years but that was because the conquerors of the Anglo-Saxons came from Normandy and the usage of the language soon passed into

history;[11] also it has been pointed out by J. V. Stalin that although the language may have been that of the upper-crust in England, it was identical to that used by the lowest peasant in Normandy.(36) A little over two hundred years after the Norman Conquest in 1295, King Edward I was able to stir up antipathy for the French on the basis that one of the aims of the King of France was '[t]he detestable purpose which, God forbid, is to wipe out the English tongue.'(37) Needless to say there was no truth whatsoever in this claim. However, it is strong evidence that there is no such thing as an entirely class-based language, I would suggest, if the King of England, descended from French-speaking Normans and Angevins, can attempt to rouse the patriotism of his subjects with such an argument. Further afield, I can find no evidence in other societies of class-based languages. For example, if a high-caste Brahmin wishes to speak to a lower-caste person then he will speak their own language be it Hindi, Gujarati, Telugu, Malayalaam, etc. The Brahmin will *not* have to find an interpreter who can speak 'upper caste' and 'lower-caste'. Caudwell never made any such claims about the existence of class-based language as he was astute enough to realise the pre-class nature of the origins of language. He says that:

> [M]an's simple cries, born of feeling, of primitive sympathy, of gesture, of persuasion became plastic; the same cry now stood for a constant piece of external reality, as also for a constant judgement of it.(38)

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[11] Albert Baugh and Thomas C. Cable report that by October 1362 the *Statute of Pleading* was enacted, to be put into effect in January 1363, that all court cases were to be conducted in English due to the fact that French was largely unknown in England by then, except for the upper classes who were increasingly having to learn it as a foreign language more for the 'cultured' effect it gave (as it does even now), than to speak amongst the English people. '[H]earafter all lawsuits shall be conducted in English. But it is interesting to note that the reason stated for the action is that "French is much unknown in said realm." [Quotation, Baugh and Cable.] *A History of the English Language*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1986. pp. 148-149.

That language is not a product of class-schism and not a superstructure on the economic base - although it has changed as a result of class division - can be seen from Stalin's writings on the subject.[12] He says acerbically on the question of 'class' languages and the linguists[13] who perpetuated the idea in the early years of the Soviet Union that:

> Naturally. every 'class language' will have its 'class' grammar - a 'proletarian' grammar and a 'bourgeois' grammar. *True, such grammars do not exist anywhere.* But that does not worry these comrades: they believe that such grammars will appear in due course.
>
> At one time there were 'Marxists' in our country who believed that the railways left to us after the October Revolution were bourgeois railways, that it would be unseemly for us Marxists to use them, that they should be torn up and new 'proletarian' railways built. For this they were named 'troglodytes'.[Stalin's quotations. Emphasis added.](39)

If, as Marxists assume, economic exploitation will vanish with class exploitation then if a language was entirely class-based then that language itself would have to vanish too. Neither was Stalin the sole arbiter on the question of the non-existence of a purely class-language. In *Basis and Superstructures* V. N. Vološinov[14] says that:

> Existence in sign is not merely reflected but *refracted.* How is this refraction of existence in the ideological sign determined? By an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community, i.e., by *class struggle.* Class does not coincide with the sign community,

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[12] Stalin says 'Language is a product of a whole number of epochs, in the course of which it takes shape, is enriched and is smoothened. A language therefore lives immeasurably longer than any base or superstructure.' *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics. Selected Works of J. V. Stalin.* Tirana: 8 Nëntori. 1979. p. 508.

[13] Mainly N. Y. Marr whose views were criticised in *Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics.*

[14] Or, as is maintained by most experts now, Bakhtin.

> i.e., with the community which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus various classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle. [Vološinov's emphases.](40)

Caudwell shows that language is organised and ordered but cannot - of its own accord - be organised purely by symbology. Caudwell admits that this is a Wittgensteinian concept,(41) but maintains that there must be correspondence between the symbols and the outer reality. This refers to his work on poetry where he categorises the way that poetry is organised and makes some surprising observations. He says in *Illusion and Reality* that:

> *Poetry is non-symbolic.*[15]
> Here we shall not be accused of a commonplace. On the contrary, this is the negative of a commonplace, since the customary idealistic conception of poetry is of something vaguely symbolic.[Caudwell's italics.](42)

Caudwell was referring to a previous section when he stated that 'poetry is composed of words',(43) which is, one may agree with Caudwell, a commonplace. This previous statement is dealt with elsewhere but in reference to the non-symbolic nature of poetry it should be noted that Caudwell has made an accurate observation. His view is that symbolism by itself is not nearly enough to convey the affective-tonality of poetry. It is not merely a matter of mathematical symbolism, and he points out that logical and mathematical language can be symbolic because it deals with purely with quantity and not quality. He says that:

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[15] For further on this subject, see thesis chapter 2 'Caudwell, Poetry and the Marxist Aesthetic'.

> [I]f tomorrow we decided to abolish all words and give every word in the English dictionary its own number, the poetic content of speech in Hamlet would be expressed by a series of numbers. We should have to translate them mentally back into the original before attaining it.(44)

Caudwell's view is that the 'extreme translatability' of symbolic language has made it possible to evolve a universal mathematical language but that this stands in opposition to the language of non-symbolic poetry. Poetry is qualitative, mathematics quantitative and this, to return to the earlier premise, is why one cannot expect any language to be 'pure' and 'logical' as was posited by the Vienna Circle.[16] However, mathematics can never be the equivalent of language as it is a quantitative *versus* qualitative concept. Mathematical symbolism can never supplant the qualitative world of poetry, literature and philosophy.[17] As Caudwell comments in *Illusion and Reality*:

> The ordering or logical manifold characteristic of scientific language is that internal structure in its mock world projected from the relationships of external realty. The ordering or affective manifold characteristic of artistic language is that internal structure in its mock world projected from the relationships of internal reality.(45)

Ferdinand de Saussure points out in his *Course in General Linguistics*:

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[16] Julius Weinberg says of the Vienna Circle's attitude to language that '[t]he Vienna Positivists divide sentences into two mutually exclusive groups, namely significant sentences or propositions and non-significant sentences or pseudo-propositions. Significant sentences or propositions are capable of verification. This is a tautology since, by definition, a capacity for verification constitutes the significance of the propositions. Non-significant sentences are not capable of verification. In this latter case the incapacity of verification is not merely a practical impossibility.' *An Examination of Logical Positivism*. London: Kegan Paul. 1936. p. 182. Further, he says that '[t]hus for a given language the logical rules of which are known, syntax is formulable without taking account of the meanings of the expression of that language, i.e., account may be taken only of the arithmetical properties on the term-numbers, series numbers of sentences, and so on.' Ibid. p. 230. For further on this subject see C. J. Misak, *Verifications. Its History and Prospects*. London: Routledge. 1995.

[17] See Lenin above.(3)

> The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary.*[Emphasis, de Saussure's.](46)

That Caudwell saw the connection between arbitrariness and the symbol is clear enough, considering that De Saussure features in the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality.* But Caudwell uses the theories of de Saussure to illustrate the rôle of the symbolic as secondary and subordinate to the meaning that the sign conveys. For example, he says that there has to be a 'Common Perceptual World' [Caudwell's capitals.] that is shared by speaker and hearer, with Common Perceptual Symbols, for indicating entities in that common world, acceptable to both speaker and hearer.(47)

The arbitrary, agreed and conventional symbol is that which makes the word meaningful, since there is nothing in the word itself that will give the word meaning. However, we should consider the views of Vološinov who sees de Saussure and the Geneva School as 'abstract objectivists'.(48) Vološinov's argument is that while Ferdinand de Saussure was extremely thorough, and his works of clear and precise, he still had, essentially, a linguistic-rationalist approach and that his views on the history of language are:

> [e]xtremely characteristic for the spirit of rationalism that continues to hold sway in this second trend[18] of thought in the philosophy of language and that regards history as an irrational force distorting the logical purity of the language system.(49)

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[18] Abstract Objectivism.

This is germane to the question of Caudwell's view on linguistics. Granted, he is heavily influenced by de Saussure, particularly on the question of the arbitrary nature of *signifier/signified.* However, on the concept of language being somehow 'distorted' by history, he is very much in the same Marxist school as Vološinov and Stalin and decidedly against the logical positivist doctrine maintained by Russell and Wittgenstein that demands a 'perfectly logical language' whose job it is 'to assert or deny facts'. In spite of the de Saussurian influences so clearly set out in Caudwell's works on language and orthography, he is Marxist in his analyses.

v - Orthography

An important aspect of language touched upon by Caudwell is the art of writing. He says, in *Illusion and Reality*, that orthography is a direct result - a linear descendant - of the oldest form of Palaeolithic art, the natural and 'life-like' forms dealing with natural subjects.(50) However this soon changes because of the way that social form takes over from reality, the co-operative observation of nature. He says that the Neolithic tribal form of art becomes conventionalised, arbitrary and symbolic and prepares the way for writing. 'It also expresses a psychic change in culture similar to the passage from rhythm to poetry and to melody'.(51) Others have seen this. Hegel's view on writing is notable as he maintains that it is only in relatively static and stable societies that pictographic writing can maintain itself. He quotes China specifically, but Egypt can also be seen in this light. He says:

> It is only a stationary civilisation, like the Chinese, which admits of the hieroglyphic language of that nation; and its method of writing moreover can only be the lot of that small part of the nation which is in exclusive possession of mental culture. - The progress of the vocal language depends most closely on the habit of alphabetic writing by means of which

> only does vocal language acquire the precision and purity of its articulation.(52)

Caudwell and Hegel are in accord here, although Hegel's view that 'articulation' is only possible with an alphabetic system is decidedly Eurocentric. However, they both see a crucial rôle for orthography, and that orthography is conditional upon the nature of society. Thus, the more fluid and changeable a society is, the greater its need for language development accompanied by linguistic and orthographic adaptability. Stable societies such as the Chinese could do without an alphabet[19] partly due to the fact that there was - in the past - no need for widespread literacy. Egypt, also, managed for millennia with hieroglyphs for the same reason. We should consider Johannes Friedrich's views on the subject of ancient orthography. He notes that the Babylonian and Akkadian cuneiform 'alphabet', while cumbersome in our view with its complex polyvalence and determinatives, was still more flexible than the script of their Egyptian neighbours.(53) I would suggest that this is due to the necessity of these cultures to adapt and survive in a more hostile and less predictable environment than that of Egypt; this is reflected in a relatively simpler and more accessible orthography, which is why it may have spread widely throughout the Ancient Middle East. This environmental and economic unpredictability of the Mesopotamian Region is also connected to the crucial differences in Egyptian and Babylonian religion.[20] The end results, though, are the same; a writing system that is exclusive to a small literate hierarchy, once again reflecting the Marxist, historical-materialist view of history espoused by Caudwell. As he says in relation to the development of poetry:

> [t]he invention of writing, made necessary by the development of economy at a stage where records

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[19] Although it should be noted that the Chinese are now introducing a Roman alphabet based on the Pinyin transcription rather than the Wade-Giles.
[20] See, also, thesis chapter 5, 'The Inverted World', for further on this subject.

> and messages were essential because records were no longer the collective memory of the tribe, and men no longer lived in common, led to written poems, not simply because writing was invented, but because the needs that demanded writing also demanded that poetry be detached from the collective festival and enjoyed by men alone.(54)

Clearly, Caudwell saw that writing was borne out of *economic* necessity, and that it was not just simply a 'good idea' to write things down: it was crucial to socio-economic development. Both orthography and economics went hand in hand. Pre-literate societies, although they may be quite sophisticated, are less economically developed than literate ones and the level of literacy is very often concomitant with the educational needs of the people, i.e. training people to use machinery, complex financial, military and administration systems, etc.[21] That higher economic development and literacy are indivisible is clear, but it is also clear that, with literacy, oral tradition and folk-memory are irrevocably damaged. In his work *The Age of Arthur* John Morris says that:

> The oral Homeric tradition itself preserved accurate details for the best part of a thousand years; and Tacitus reports that the Silures of Roman Britain still remembered that their remote ancestors came from Spain, though four centuries of literate Roman civilisation soon obliterated their oral recollections.(55)

On the question of the Platonic attitude to poetry and writing Caudwell points out that the former is of an older and more intuitive style of thought and because of that he is

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[21] Diodurus Siculus wrote in the 1st Century BCE that the Egyptians of his era, (Macedonian-Ptolomaic) and no doubt of earlier periods, saw no need for the mass of the population to be educated in maths, reading and writing. He says in his *Library of History*: 'As to the general mass of the Egyptians, they are instructed from their childhood by their fathers or kinsmen in the practice of life... but as for reading and writing, the Egyptians at large give their children only a superficial instruction in them, and not all do this, but for the most part only those engaged in arts and crafts.' *Book I*: 81. 4-7. (Editor and Transl): W. A. Oldfather. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1933.

more barbaric. However, as Caudwell says, '[t]here is a cultured snigger behind the barbarity that is characteristically Platonic.'(56) This, according to Caudwell, is due to Plato being, essentially, a reactionary and was more at home in the pre-literate, aristocratic world where the memory was collective and the written word was treated with no little suspicion. Although the authorship of Plato's *Letters* is disputed, this excerpt from *Letter VII* is close enough to Plato's views on writing in general to be quoted, for if not of Plato's provenance, then the true author knew his works and opinions well enough to produce this letter in Plato's name.

> '[a]nyone who is seriously studying high matters will be the last to write about them, and thus expose his thought to the envy and criticism of men. What I have said comes, in short, to this: whenever we see a book, whether the laws of a legislator or a composition on any other subject, we can be sure that if the author is really serious, this book does not contain his best thoughts; they are stored away with the fairest of his possessions. And if he has committed these serious thoughts to writing it is because men, not gods, "have taken his wits away".' [Plato's quotation.](57)

Like many authors, Plato puts his own desires and fears into the mouths of others, in this case Socrates, but it reveals how the more reactionary upper stratum of the ancient Greeks distrusted writing and saw it as the death of memory. W. M. Urban has remarked with regard to the perceived mystical problem of language: 'Thus Plato wrestled with the problem of language, and it is clear that, with all his wrestling, he failed to solve it. As all the fundamental problems of the philosophy of language are already in germ in his treatment of the question, so also the two possible ways of solving the problem of the relation of language to reality are already struggling for mastery in his mind.'(60) Plato, already trying to deal with the problem of language, was faced with the additional and -

for him insoluble - aggravation of writing. Urban's argument gives strength - albeit unintentionally - to Caudwell's point about the close relationship of writing, language and socio-economic advance.

Caudwell compares Aristotle and Plato and says that Aristotle was more interested in the created thing - whether it was a play or poem - than the man who produced it, Plato took the opposite, and more intuitive, view.(59) For Caudwell the Aristotelian relationship to the Word was more forward-looking than the Platonic, although as we have seen above[22] Aristotle, too, was overwhelmed by the mystical power of words, that is the word as a thing-in-itself, powerful in its own right, rather than an information-bearing symbol. For Caudwell, Plato was a man harking back to a time of virtuous aristocrats lording it over peasants practising a primitive, Spartan communism. The written word would have no place in such as society, not because it was considered inherently evil, but because it was not necessary. Caudwell says of him:

> Plato is the most charming, humane and civilised of Fascist philosophers, corresponding to a time before the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War had made reaction murderously bitter. In this respect he is an Athenian Hegel. No reactionary philosopher of today could attain Plato's urbanity and charm.(60)

Caudwell points out that there was a time when the spoken word was valued far more highly than the written. Now this has changed. That this change is class and economically based is, for Caudwell, beyond question. Today, the written word has more 'power' than the spoken word. We are frequently told in common, everyday speech that 'it was there in black and white', or 'It was OK as I had it in writing', 'If you want to be taken seriously, get it in writing.', etc., etc. The concreteness of the written word

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[22] See (15)

supersedes the spoken even though, as Caudwell has pointed out above, the spoken word is antecedent. As Ferdinand de Saussure comments:

> [t]he spoken word is so intimately bound to its image that the latter has managed to usurp the main rôle. People attach even more importance to the written image of a vocal sign than to the sign itself. A similar mistake would be in thinking that more can be learned about someone by looking at his photograph than by viewing him directly.(61)

vi - Language and the Necessity for Change

As Caudwell has pointed in *Illusion and Reality* the problem stated above by de Saussure has created real problems in the philosophy of language and its study. Proceeding from a Marxist point of view, Caudwell says that:

> The division of labour, which no longer made all men concerned at the same time with the environment, again restored advantages to sight and the sounds became visual symbols - writing.(62)

As he has noted, the ignorance of this concrete function of language has caused philosophers to view language in a patronising[23] manner,(63) which is where Caudwell takes issue with Wittgenstein's and Russell's views that language should somehow 'mirror' reality. As Caudwell points out, this attitude to the sought-after 'perfection' in language is as unreasonable as a biologist demanding that here should be an 'ideal'

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[23] A case might be made for this statement in regard to the *spoken* word, but is far less tenable when discussing the *written* word.

species of animal and thus being offended when discovering there is no such beast.(64) From the analysis thus far we can see that Caudwell did not feel that language was somehow a passive representation of the universe and that neither is philosophy a contemplative art, whereby the philosopher sits back and 'takes it all in'. But it should be pointed out that others have taken part in this debate, besides Caudwell.

Roy Harris in his work *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein*, makes the point that the normative grammarians of the past, influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, treated language use as explicable by reference to universal operations of the human mind.(65) Such a concept, he says, goes back to a system of thought that tried to 'explain' thought as a rational system of expression and that there is a universal human grammar applicable to the whole of humanity.

He says:

> Within this rationalist perspective, the 'best' language tends to be seen as the one in which usage most conspicuously reflects the principles of general grammar. This in turn leads to the idea that it should be possible to construct an ideal language, based on universal grammar. Attempts to devise such systems (variously referred to as 'universal languages', 'philosophical languages or 'real characters') feature prominently in the intellectual activity associated with the birth and advancement of the natural sciences in their modern academic form. [Harris' parentheses, quotations, etc.](66)

Such efforts are doomed to failure because they are ahistorical. They will fail just as the logical-positivist notion of a 'logical' language has failed. As Caudwell points out throughout his works on language, there can be no universal 'logical' language, because the universe itself is changing constantly. We adapt to it, adapt it ourselves, or we face extinction. Universality implies a changelessness for which the mediaeval Aristotelian grammarians - the *modistæ* - can be forgiven, considering that they were living in a

relatively static, religious and metaphysically-oriented society where such things as the eternal nature of God were taken for granted, but now there can be no valid reason for such a view. We have only to consider the fate of that most universal European language, Latin. It was the *lingua franca* of an Empire that stretched from Hadrian's Wall to Mesopotamia. In areas where the Latin-speaking population was able to hold its own against the Germanic and other conquerors, it has now evolved into French, Catalan, Provençal, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish. True, there is some mutual intelligibility, especially in the geographical areas of isoglosses, but the fact remains that these languages are now independent tongues in their own right, evolved from a common source, due to military, social and, very importantly, economic factors. There is, of course, the use of Latin in Church and literature, but as Ferdinand de Saussure points out that this is the same for all states. He says: 'The Greeks had their *koine*, derived from Attic and Ionian, along with coexisting local dialects.'(67)

That Latin has survived for liturgical and legal purposes can, if we read Caudwell and dialectical materialism carefully, be shown to be an effect of religious obscurantism, an ossification caused by the effect of 'The Eternal Word of God' and, indeed, as the local Latin dialects developed into their respective languages it became necessary for the word of God to *be* in Latin, due to the increasing mutual unintelligibility of the regional languages. Consider the trouble caused when people attempted to translate the Bible into the vernacular; an often fatal enterprise. The evolutionary and revolutionary change within any given society will always affect language, and at a relatively concomitant rate, too, even in such relatively stable societies as Ancient Egypt. As Antonio Loprieno says of the changes within ancient Egyptian over the centuries:

> [M]ajor developments alter the vocalic system of Egyptian during the Late New Kingdom after Ramses II, i.e. from around 1200 BCE. Loss of

> dentals and of semivocal glides caused by strong tonic stress.(68)

This is evidence enough that no language, not even that of the 'God-like' Pharaohs, is immune to change. Egypt is considered by many scholars to be *the* society most resistant to any change but even *its* language had to alter as a result of the exigencies of historical dialectics. Language must mirror reality, true enough, but society is changing constantly. There is no 'bench mark' where we might say '*this* is the perfect language, *ne plus ultra.*' As Caudwell has emphatically pointed out, it cannot be done.

The Marxist anthropologist and historian George Thomson has shown that neither does a language need geographic proximity to be uniform. He maintains that uniformity is tied to cultural and historical development. Thomson says of the Polynesian language that it is the most uniformly linguistic domain in the world, covering a vast area of the Pacific Ocean, which the Polynesians colonised between the 10th and the 14th centuries CE. It was:

> [a] navigational feat which shows that their culture was more advanced than it is now. In other words, after reaching the zenith marked by the period of migrations their culture stagnated. That explains why their languages have suffered so little change during their period of separate existence.(69)

Language may not be a superstructure on the economic base but this does not deny its socio-political - or socio-idelogical - element.

vii - Linguistic Materialism - Conclusions

The argument that language is vital to human development is, of course, well-known and Caudwell was not the first to develop this thesis. However, I believe that he reached some important conclusions in this field, particularly in the way that orthography and the

spoken word are intertwined with each other and while language is not a superstructure upon a base, orthography, perforce, must be as it is part of a higher economic development. True, Hegel also noted the connection between society and its orthography, but the Hegelian view, although historical, does not take historical materialism into account as does the Marxist, dialectical analysis of consciousness which, as Leonard Goldstein says, '[r]ests on a kind of homology between the base and the superstructure, a relationship that is dialectical, for the concept reacts on the base, affecting it in one way or another, that is, accelerating the process which produced the concept in the first place.'(70)

This accords with Caudwell's view that the consciousness is conditional on the relationship of the concept and the base. Language, in this respect, has taken a primary rôle in the way that humans define themselves and their world-view, their *Weltanshauung*, although - as clearly noted by Stalin - there is no such thing as a purely 'class language'. Caudwell also points out that there is a close psychological connection between language and the mind and particularly through its relation to dream.[24] He says on the topic of the latent and manifest content of dream symbolism and the difference between these aspects:

> Psychoanalysts have not made this distinction because the analysis of dreams is done verbally. They have not seen that there is an epistemological leak. In language images and affects live simultaneously and cannot be separated; both are social and conscious. Ignoring this the psychoanalyst meets a contradiction: in probing the latent content of dreams he can never be given by the dreamer a bundle of "unconscious" affects as associations, for the dreamer can only communicate by language, and in language affect is always attached to an image, to a symbol of external reality,

[24] Dealt with in greater detail elsewhere in this thesis, chapter 7, 'The Necessity of the Dream'.

> and is itself a conscious feeling tone.[Caudwell's quotation.](71)

Caudwell is clear on the position that language holds within class society; a society that is marked by deep cleavages in its world outlook, epistemology and ontology. Although there is no exclusive 'class language' itself, language is affected by and effective on the divisions within class society and in the relationship of the word and the symbol, as Caudwell observes in *Illusion and Reality*. On the question of the differences between various disciplines in art and science, Caudwell says of them:

> And just as the technique of poetry demands an immediate concentration on the word, so the classificatory sciences, such as geometry and mathematics, demand an immediate concentration. The novel demands that we pass from the symbol to reality, and only then to the affective organisation; biology demands that we go first to the concrete objects, and only then to their rational organisation. Poetry passes straight from the word to the affective organisation, careless of the reality whose relation is it accepts as already given in the word. Mathematics passes straight from the symbol to the perceptual organisation, careless of the concrete object, whose important qualities (to it) are already crystallised in the symbol. Hence the vital importance of precise speech - of the absolute correct word or correct symbol - both to the poet and mathematician, contrasted with the looser speech permitted to the biologist and the novelist.
> [Caudwell's parenthesis.](72)

Caudwell's point is that the symbology of the word is not something applicable 'across the board', as it were. Each section of society and its arts and sciences demands a different rôle of the word and symbol. This, too, is a negation of Wittgenstein's logical atomism and more in keeping with an orthodox Marxist analysis, although the concept of language not being a superstructure on this base is more accurately called Stalinist. The

word, as noted by Caudwell, is the information-bearing symbol and that symbol must, perforce, be adequate to the task. And this is not to 'assert or deny facts' which as Caudwell has said, assert or deny themselves, but as an information carrier.

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10: The Philosophy of Reality

i - Reality *Versus* Unreality.

> The cause of the crisis in bourgeois physics is sometimes held to be the contradiction between macroscopic or relativity physics on the one hand, and quantum or atomic physics on the other. The concepts with which each domain works are irreconcilable. But it would be wrong to suppose that this contradiction is the real cause of the present crisis in physics. *The crisis is too general for that. This particular contradiction is only one of the forms in which the crisis comes to light.*[Emphasis added.](1)

Caudwell's views, written in the mid-1930s, are indicative of how seriously many saw the problems of realism *versus* anti-realism. As Caudwell said in *Illusion and Reality*, 'The struggle of man and Nature is a material movement which in the field of thought takes the form of the subject-object relation, the oldest problem of philosophy.'(2) Indeed, it would be rash to deny that there has been an ongoing crisis in physics, ever since Einstein published his theories on Relativity in the early part of the 20th century, although this crisis has its roots much further back in time than Einstein's theses. It might be said that it has divided both physicists and philosophers into two camps, the Realist and the Anti-Realist schools, although with many shadings, opinions and doctrines. We must ask if the world is somehow subordinate to our perceptions; i.e. that we, as conscious human beings, play some vital rôle in the structural ontology of the universe, or if it exists entirely independent of us and is supra-sensual, objective, antecedent to and not conditional upon our subjective consciousness. Of course, these questions have been raised many times over the centuries, ever since the era of Parmenides and Plato, Democritus and Epicurus. Since then Hobbes, Gassendi,

D'holbach, Diderot, *versus* Malebranche, Descartes, Berkeley, Hume etc. have all participated in the quarrel of Realist *versus* the Anti-Realist Schools of Thought. As Marx points out there has been an ongoing epistemological conflict between materialism and metaphysics over the centuries:

> Metaphysics of the seventeenth century, represented in France by Descartes, had materialism as its antagonist from its very birth. It personally opposed Descartes in Gassendi, the restorer of Epicurean materialism.[1] French and English materialism was always closely related to Democritus and Epicurus. Cartesian metaphysics had another opponent in the English materialist Hobbes. Gassendi and Hobbes were victorious over their opponent long after their death when metaphysics was already officially dominant in all French schools.(3)

Thus the problem is one that is rooted deeply within human society and history. Realism, it has been pointed out, may even be an evolutionary biological imperative. As Euaun Squires has said: 'it is easy to see why a tendency to think in terms of external reality is favourable to survival. The man who sees a tree, and goes on to the idea that there *is* a tree, is more likely to avoid running into it, and thereby killing himself, than the man who merely regards the sensation of seeing as something wholly contained within his mind.'[Squires' emphasis.](4)

There is little survival value, especially at the early stages of evolution, in a solipsistic point of view. Indeed, it could tend to cut short any further evolutionary development. In this vein, Caudwell says of the mathematical sciences[2] that they

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[1] Caudwell says of the historical progress of physics within society that: '[a]nimism, slave-owning teleology and fate, feudal teleology and Law, these then are the steps by which society in its development explains the world. It was the rôle of the bourgeoisie to carry a step forward, not only society's productive development but also, and necessarily so, its explanation of the Universe.' *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*. 'Consciousness'. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1949. p. 164.

[2] It should be noted that throughout his works Caudwell makes very little direct references to mathematics except in an historical sense and in relation to other sciences and arts such as psychology, linguistics and

developed early in the history of the human race as a survival technique. '[C]ounting, the herdsman's sciences (India) and geometry[3] the agriculturist's science (Egypt) emerge before the more qualified historical sciences.'[Caudwell's parentheses.](5) Even these early people, with their pantheons and metaphysical hierarchies, saw a need for the classificatory sciences if they wanted to progress and flourish; Indian mathematics along with Egyptian architecture and geometry are still amongst the most complex systems of thought in human history and it can be argued that, for all their class-based idealism, they never suffered from the ontological and epistemological schisms that are being suffered today in bourgeois society and physics. The problem of Realism *versus* anti-Realism, however, has deepened from the earlier years of the 20th century into a full-blown, epistemological and ontological crisis. As Karl Popper has said:

> The central issue here is realism. That is to say, the reality of the physical world we live in: the fact that this world exists independently of ourselves; that it existed before life existed, according to our best hypotheses; and that it will continue to exist, for all we know, long after we have been swept away.(6)

Caudwell, a Marxist, was a Realist, even though, it should be noted, the realist Karl Popper was avowedly anti-Marxist.[4] There are no truly clear-cut boundaries in this

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poetry. See *Illusion and Reality, Studies in a Dying Culture, Further Studies in a Dying Culture, Romance and Realism* and *The Crisis in Physics* on this particular matter.

[3] As a human response to vital necessity, not, as Aristotle believed, that leisure was the cause. He says in *Metaphysics*: 'Thus the mathematical sciences originated in the neighbourhood of Egypt, because the priestly class was allowed leisure.' *Book I. i. 15 - ii. 2.* 982b 24-26. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Editor: G. P. Goold. 1933. Aristotle has reversed cause and effect here, although this is hardly surprising. The Marxist analysis is that necessity is the driving force for progress and that, in fact, there is a leisurely, intellectual class *because* of mathematics, which allowed for a surplus to be created so that metaphysicians could exist. For further on this subject, see Friedrich Engels. *Anti-Dühring*. Moscow: Progress. 1954. *Passim*.

[4] See, especially, Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies. Vol. II. The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath.* London. Routledge. 1973. *Passim.*

particular field if Popper can find himself in agreement with Lenin[5] and with Caudwell who maintains that the problems within physics are not a crisis in physics itself, but something held within the grip of a greater, many-sided capitalist crisis. Indeed he maintained that physics could not stand above the economic problems, *mores* etc., that created the society which gave bourgeois physics its birth. Hence Caudwell's thesis: physics cannot be divorced from the 'real' world any more than can economics, sociology, psychology, art or literature; we cannot take an asocial, apolitical, positivistic and non-partisan stance on this or any other matter. This is not to say that the world is subordinate to our subjective desires, needs, etc., but that it only *appears* to be so through our imperfect apprehension of it.

ii - Historical Necessity and the Concept of the Physical World

Caudwell traces the origins of the crisis back in time beyond Einstein, Planck and Heisenberg. He says:

> There has been a contradiction between [the] two domains of physics[6] since the days of Huyghens. Newton's System of Nature, which included the corpuscular theory of light, formed a consistent scheme of the Universe, apparently free of contradictions, built up on an atomistic basis. All particles behaved according to a simple law of motion which uniquely determined the life-line of each particle. The system was of such a character that an 'initial push-off' and an initial fabrication of the atoms out of nothing was necessary. These initial acts were creative acts of God. God thus appears in the Universe as substance and force

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[5] See V. I. Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* from *Marx, Engels and Lenin on Dialectical Materialism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1978. *Passim.* Popper's view on the supra-sensual antecedent cosmos, non-reliant on human consciousness agrees with Lenin's on this matter.

[6] The two conflicting views such as wave *versus* particle physics, for example.

> alienated from Himself. But once created, these two categories are subject to law, the laws of conservation of matter and energy. Given its initial push-off and creation, the atomistic universe is self-running.[Caudwell's quotation.](7)

Caudwell, plainly, makes a distinction between this bourgeois Universe and the earlier, Aristotelian Universe of the Middle Ages where the Cosmos needed a continual inflow of Divinity as a Prime Mover to keep it going. Caudwell's view is clear. Mediaeval, Aristotelian physics requires God or the Feudal Lord or King in the guise of God to provide the continual impetus to drive the Universe, to 'crack the whip', so to speak, in the same way Divinity motivates the 'dead' matter of the Cartesian Universe. In the case of the Classical Period, the period where material existence was a question of 'Fate', 'Moira', 'Ananke' or 'Themis' we should note the Emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Antoninus Aurelius[7] on the subject:

> Things that share a common element feel the impulse of kind towards kind. The earthy ever gravitates towards earth, the aqueous seeks its own level, and so too the aerial; *nothing short of force can part them.*[Emphasis added.](8)

This view, which is a version of Aristotelian scholasticism, is certainly in keeping with the determinism of the Stoics,[8] and very much a doctrine of the ruling classes[9] of the Romano-Hellenic world. Do your duty, suffer bravely without complaint and all will be well for all is unified and ordered by the all-pervading World-Mind, the 'Nous'. Under

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[7] 121-180 CE.

[8] In particular the works of Epictetus. *The Discourses. Vols. I and II. As Reported by Arian.* (Editor and Transl.): W. A Oldfather. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1928.

[9] As F. H. Sandbach points out in his introduction to his work *The Stoics*: 'The belief that the world was ruled by Providence would have an appeal to the ruling class of a ruling people; but it was also a comfort to those for whom things went wrong.' p. 16. London: Chatto and Windus. 1975. See, also, Troels Engberg-Pedersen. *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis.* Copenhagen: University of Denmark Press. 1990.

Capitalism, however, things change. We now have a Universe that is, once the initial impetus is given, self-perpetuating, very much a paradigm of the capitalist system itself where every man 'makes his own way in the world', for good or for ill, and the cyclic oscillations of the planets are reflected within the classical Newtonian, i.e. bourgeois, philosophy and economics.[10] God, for Newton, was the prime mover and all else proceeded from God's ineffable Will. As Lucas and Hodgson have concisely pointed out:

> Newton's theology and physics were all of a piece. Believing in an omniscient God, it was natural to conceive that all points of space being alike are immediately present to His consciousness; and only by this arbitrary *fiat* of an omnipotent God could he explain the initial configuration of the atoms at the dawn of creation. The Newtonian scientist naturally takes the God's-eye view of nature and for him such a perspective is intuitively accessible.(9)

In *The Crisis in Physics* Caudwell points out that 'Newtonian physics excludes God from Nature, but not from Reality, because it makes Nature only a part of Reality as a result of its particulate conception of Matter.'[Caudwell's capitalisation.](10) Caudwell's argument is that:

> Nature looks a little queer to the bourgeois because he has a peculiar standpoint in society from which the machine, too, looks a little queer, and yet it is only through the machine that Nature enters into the consciousness of society.(11)

One must assume - if we are to agree with Caudwell - that there is a class-based schism in physics as in all aspects of human existence. This is inevitable, he maintains, because, since class society first appeared, some have had to be overseers, supervisors, etc., while

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[10] For an up to date account of the class nature of modern physics see Hyman Frankel's excellent work *Out of this World* in which he develops, further, the Marxist-Leninist-Caudwellian approach to physics. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press. 2003.

others worked. This gives those in the rôle of overseer a different view as 'consciousness' is polarised, hence the distortion of the appraisal of nature with the polarity of intellect and labour in any class-oriented society. Caudwell's argument is that while the bourgeois will look at Nature mechanistically, Nature is not constructed in this manner at all, which is why it looks 'a little queer'. Nature is - emphatically - not mechanical, but dialectical, not everlasting and unchanging, turning endlessly upon itself like a great wheel, but continually evolving, undergoing changes, both great and small. An acknowledgement of this does not, of course, make one a Realist, nor does rejection make one an ardent anti-Realist. Moreover, Realism is not the exclusive province of the Marxists, as can be seen in Karl Popper's position on the subject.[11]

iii - A Leninist Approach to the 'New Men' in Physics

Lenin, in particular, was forthright on the subject of physics and his work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, is quoted in the bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*. Lenin says:

> Do electrons, ether *and so on* exist as objective realities outside the human mind or not? The scientists will also have to answer this question unhesitatingly; and they do answer it in the *affirmative*, just as they unhesitatingly recognise that nature existed prior to man and prior to organic matter. Thus, the question is decided in favour of materialism, for the concept matter, as we have already stated, epistemologically implies *nothing* but objective reality existing independently of the human mind and reflected by it.[Lenin's emphases.](12)

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11 See Karl Popper. *Quantum Theory and the Schism in Physics.* London: Unwin Hyman. 1982.

Lenin, clearly a Materialist, sees the world as objective and supra-sensual. A little further on Lenin states: 'It is mainly because the physicists did not know dialectical materialism that the new physics strayed into idealism.'(13) Here - for Caudwell as well as Lenin - is the nub of the problem with the 'new' physics, which, when looked through the 'magnifying glass' of dialectical materialism, is the old metaphysics dressed up in smart new clothes. As Caudwell says of the 'new' men of the period such as Heisenberg, Schrödinger and Dirac, their achievements are of a 'revolutionary' character. [Caudwell's quotation.](14) By this he means that their work is opposed to the 'Old Guard' of Einstein and Max Planck but that their work itself rejects Causality and Determinism, replacing it with Non-Causality and Indeterminism, concepts which both Planck and Einstein find 'incomprehensible.'

In 1936 Planck said of the problem:

> At this point it must suffice to point out that even in mathematics, the most exact of the sciences, the controversy about the origin and meaning of the fundamental concepts is more violent today than ever before.(15)

Caudwell, too, while not finding the new men's work 'incomprehensible' in the manner of Planck and Einstein, says of them that:

> [i]t would be wrong to regard this new school as revolutionary in a real sense - as men who can renew the fabric of physics.(16)

So, they are revolutionary in the sense that they oppose the Einstein-Planck 'Old Guard', but they are not truly revolutionary. Why? Because, Caudwell says, in a very anti-positivist manner, '[i]t is impossible to have a theory without a philosophy; the

philosophy is implied in the theory. It is impossible even to have a practice without a theory: one is implied in the other.'(17) something that he finds particularly lacking in the 'new' men. John F. Kiley says of Einstein's faith in causality that:

> Einstein's scientific methodology is predicated upon the strongest faith in causality but not as conceived by Hume in subjectivist terms, stabilised by Kant and later practised by Mach. His view was first of all an empirically determinable connection between a scientifically calculated event, and the future state which it logically implies.(18)

Consider Gary Zukav on the subject of 'new' physics being similar to Hindu mythology:

> Imagine that a group of young artists have founded a new and revolutionary school of art. Their paintings are so unique[sic] that they have come to share them with the curator of an old museum. The curator regards the new paintings, nods his head, and disappears into the vaults of the museum. He returns carrying some very old paintings, which he places beside the new ones. The new art is so similar to the old art that even the young artists are taken aback. The new revolutionaries, in their own time and in their own way have rediscovered a very old school of painting.(19)

Zukav's view is that the new physics is in fact a very old form of philosophy. Caudwell would no doubt agree, but whereas Zukav uses the comparison favourably Caudwell would not. In Caudwellian terms Zukav's theory - such as it is - is seriously out of touch with objective reality. It cannot be argued too strongly that the connection between reactionary, imperialist economic collapse and idealist, reactionary trends in science - in this case physics - has become even more pronounced since the time when Caudwell wrote; indicative that the crisis has deepened to an even greater extent that in the early

and mid 20th century. To be sure there are coincidences of Hindu philosophy mirroring modern scientific thought, such as the time scales involved in the creation and continuation of the universe, such as the Kalpa which is 4320 million years long and is remarkably similar to the modern time scales applied to the age of the earth, a far cry from Biblical tradition and Christian eschatology and thus arguably 'more accurate';[12] however the Kalpa, it should be pointed out, is merely a day's length to Brahma and I feel it is purely coincidental and should, as such, be treated with some caution. True, it matches modern physics and its associated time scales but from a purely subjective point of view.[13] Coincidences are, I feel, as might Caudwell, not good physics although serendipity can never be entirely ruled out. There is a profound difference between Zukav's overview and Caudwell's. Zukav has, if the phrase may be permitted, 'hitched his wagon to a star' just as did Caudwell, but these stars shine in very different skies. There are various ways to find truth, but I feel that Caudwell's, while by no means perfect, is superior to Zukav's.

J. D. Bernal said of Caudwell:

> The 'crisis in physics' discussed years ago by Christopher Caudwell is now officially admitted on all sides. Caudwell, in view of his lack of scientific training, could hardly be expected to appreciate the technical niceties of the difficulties that faced the physicist. The fact that he hit the nail on the head showed that the problem lay as much in society as in physics. [Bernal's quotation.](20)

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[12] Surendrenath Dasgupta, in his work *A History of Indian Philosophy Vol. I*, says of time that '[t]hey [the philosophers of Nyaya-Vaisesika. k. m.] admitted the existence of time (*Kala)* as extending from the past through the present to the endless futurity before us. Had there been no time we could have no knowledge of it and there would be nothing to account for our time notions associated with all changes.' p. 313. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1922. Thus we see that the early Indian philosophers had a well-developed sense of time, but that it was, it has to be said, based on a limited view of the universe, which is understandable given the era when these doctrines were formulated and laid down, and hardly applicable to the modern age. Interestingly, this work features in the copious bibliography of *Illusion and Reality*. See, also, the comments made on p. 321, this chapter, regarding Indian mathematics.

[13] Such as the Atomism of Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius for example.

Grudging and qualified praise it may be from a professional scientist but Bernal is objective enough to admit that Caudwell got it right, and that, no matter what the methodology used, Caudwell saw the problem as more than something grounded exclusively within physics.

iv - Class Struggle and the Physical World-View

Due to class-schism in bourgeois society, as Caudwell sees it, physics becomes excluded from life as a whole, becomes specialised, empiricist and positivistic; idealistic, sterile and one-sided; theory becomes alienated from practice, philosophy from theory. Yet the 'new men' of physics are, obviously, highly-educated intellectuals; therefore they must find some *raison d'etre* for their particular world-view. They did not - or *could not* - follow Marxism and dialectical materialism, therefore they had to fall back into idealism and mysticism. This problem can be seen not so much as a crisis in physics itself, but as stemming from the capitalist crisis that Caudwell saw going on in its most acute form (for him) in the 1930s. It shouldn't cause too much surprise to find that bourgeois physics, for all its vaunted 'Objectivism', would also fall prey to this crisis. Caudwell is not alone in this view. Maurice Cornforth who once castigated him for his supposed idealism takes Caudwell's side when in 1968 he says of the crisis in science:

> Of course, scientific understanding of ourselves relies on already achieving understanding of Nature, for man becomes what he is and lives by his interaction with Nature. At the same time (and this is the point our English Marxist critic Christopher Caudwell explained in *The Crisis in Physics*) by understanding the relationship of men with Nature it enhances and corrects the concept of Nature, which

> is to some extent distorted so long as man's intercourse with Nature is misconceived. [Cornforth's parenthesis.](21)

There is a sharp irony here in that Cornforth was using the reputation of a writer about whom he had serious misgivings as a Marxist theorist and a literary critic, to defend Marxist ideology against Karl Popper, an avowed anti-Marxist who was, nevertheless, a Realist[14] in science and physics. But it is clear that Cornforth is echoing the Marxist - and, for that matter, Caudwellian view - that human beings can never be objective while the distortion of the dominant world-view continues within what Caudwell terms the 'notorious subject-object relationship, the most famous problem of bourgeois thought.'(22)

To quote Karl Popper:

> A very serious situation has arisen. The general anti-rationalist atmosphere which has become a major menace of our time, and to combat which is the duty of every thinker who cares for the traditions of our civilisation, has led to a most serious deterioration of scientific discussion.(23)

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[14] But see, also, *The Open Universe: An Argument for Indeterminism*. London. Hutchinson. 1982.. p. 1. *ff*. Popper's stance here is not so much idealistic, in that indeterminacy means 'anything goes' in the sense of modern ontological-relativism, but his position is that the 18th century mechanical materialist style of determinism, *á la* Pierre-Simon Laplace is patently untenable, with which I agree, as would, I think, Caudwell, Engels, Marx and Lenin. Of course, Popper's view is not so much an argument from the point of view that the laws of causality and that the recognition of necessity should be seen as the source of freedom, but that the rejection of determinism is decidedly in the interest of human 'freedom' and an 'open society', a subject very important to Popper's bourgeois ethical system. Further, on this subject, Mario Bunge in his work *Scientific Materialism* writes in regard to Popper's 'Three Worlds Theory' that in promulgating this thesis Popper has had a late conversion to Platonic Objective Idealism which is entirely at odds with the views espoused in the two volumes of *The Open Society and its Enemies*. It might be argued, with support from Bunge, that Popper's views on bourgeois 'freedom' are more readily strengthened by such a 'conversion', although it must be pointed out that Marxist causality and bourgeois determinism are in no way the same thing. *Scientific Materialism*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Group. 1981. pp. 137-157.

Popper's 'call to arms', as it were, is possibly alarmist but it does reveal how very seriously philosophers, even those who find Marxist ideology absurd or offensive, consider the present situation which has, in my view, deteriorated even further since the death of Caudwell.

v - A Multiplicity of Universal World-Views

The two camps seem as far apart as ever, even allowing for the various interpretations and overlaps within the epistemological framework. It has to be said that much of the work done by the 'New Men' has been pounced upon in an opportunistic way; that is, they would themselves refute much of what has been said or interpreted in their names. The highly obscurantist 'theories' such as the multiplicity of universes that derive from Hugh Everett's interpretation of the collapse of the quantum wave packet readily spring to mind, where each quantum possibility is played out 'somewhere else'. However there are some very serious problems with this theory. As Christopher Norris notes:

> [t]he explanation is that we have no means of epistemic access from one such world to another except through the fleeting glimpses offered by localised interference effects, themselves unnoticed except under special conditions (i.e. experiments of the single photon type) that paradoxically render such access impossible.[Norris' parenthesis.](24)

In any case, Popper observes that the whole theory is untenable as it does not take into account the laws of mass/energy conservation. Popper says:

> Of those conflicts which can be resolved by special pleading are those which are connected with the conservation laws - the conservation of energy (energy-mass) - of momentum, of angular momentum, etc. These laws would be, quite

> obviously, drastically violated by every split. [Popper's parenthesis.](25)

The subjective relativism within quantum physics clearly exposed by Norris, Popper and others is indicative of the crisis illustrated decades ago by Caudwell and is, I would argue, symptomatic of the growing trend of irrationality, arbitrariness and mysticism not only within scientific circles but in a wider cultural context. According to Everett's theory the wave packets would go on and on and on, collapsing into a plethora of Universes where all possibilities are realised, that is, the Nazis won the war, America is the United Socialist States of America and so on *ad infinitum.* It may work very well in science fiction but it doesn't make very good scientific theory and it certainly attacks - intentionally or not - the foundations of a supra-sensual, dialectal, materialist-grounded ontology. As Christopher Norris has pointed out:

> [I]ndeed, it involves a baroque proliferation of 'worlds'[15] that will surely strike the classical realist as a piece of sheer ontological extravagance of the kind that is best left to speculative metaphysicians. [Norris' quotation.](26)

To give an example of 'baroque metaphysics' we should note Zukav on the subject of Heisenberg's Indeterminacy. To 'see' an electron we must bombard it with gamma rays. However, this bombardment will alter the electron's momentum, *ergo* we cannot know the position *and* the speed simultaneously. To use a weaker source of illumination so as to avoid disturbance will not reveal the electron, so we cannot see it *and* know its position. Zukav says:

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[15] As Alastair Rae has humorously but accurately observed, quoting the physicist Paul Davies, such a theory is 'cheap on assumptions but expensive on universes!' *Quantum Physics: Illusion or Reality?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986. p. 79.

> This is the primary significance of the uncertainty principle. *At the subatomic level, we cannot observe something without changing it.* There is no such thing as the independent observer who can stand on the sidelines watching nature run its course without influencing it.[Zukav's emphasis.](27)

This is an extrapolation of an astounding magnitude. Zukav is saying that a method of observation - that is the bombardment of an electron by gamma rays so that it may be seen - will inevitably alter its position so both may not be known. Therefore, he says, the observer will always influence the result. This is perfectly rational and nobody could really argue against it. However to apply the same concepts of the microphysical universe to the macrophysical universe is untenable. The fact remains that the observer of the electron is *actively* observing it, that she or he is firing gamma rays at it to illuminate it. The observer in this particular instance is not passive, unlike somebody who may watch the sea, the moon or the stars. In this case the observer participates, provides a conscious, active input.

Roger Penrose, in his book, *The Emperor's New Mind* gives a very clear example in lay terms of how the Heisenberg Indeterminacy Principle works. He says: 'According to this principle, it is not possible to measure (i.e. to magnify to classical level) both the position and the momentum of a particle at the same time. Worse than this, there is an *absolute limit* on the product of these accuracies, say Δx and Δp, respectively, which gives the relation

$$\Delta x \ \Delta p \geq h$$

This formula tells us that the more accurately the position x is measured, the less accurately can the momentum of p be measured and *vice versa*. If the position were measured to *infinite* precision, then the momentum would become *completely* uncertain; on the other hand, if the momentum is measured exactly, then the particle's location becomes completely uncertain.' [Penrose's emphases, parenthesis.](28)

Zukav says we cannot apply Newton's laws of motion to an individual particle and that it is impossible, even in principle, to know enough about a particle in the subatomic realm to apply Newton's laws of motion.(29) Very good, but it does *not* follow, therefore, that Newton's laws are unsound, certainly on the macrophysical level. Not, to be sure, that Zukav himself says they are.(30) But he does maintain the notion that we are all - by our observation of the object - somehow partaking, perhaps mystically - in the said object's position within the framework of the universe. The argument that classical physics somehow 'doesn't work' at the *micro*physical level, can be readily countered with the argument that quantum physics 'doesn't work' at the *macro*physical level. Jennifer Trusted says on the question of observer dependency that:

> It must be stressed that the observer-dependence is not a matter of complete subjectivity, a matter of the response of different *individuals*, because, *for all observers in the frame of reference* there can be objective and agreed values. [Trusted's emphases.](31)

She says it would be better to use Christensen's term 'observation-frame-dependence' which does away with the metaphysical assumptions of a *perceived* indeterminacy and ontological relativism. As Dmitri Blokhintsev said in 1968 when writing on the wave function problem:

> The entire essence of the contraction of the wave function is expressed in the fact that the microparticle produces a macroscopic effect, and the latter is of an entirely objective significance, *being quite unrelated to any information the observer may have on the occurrence of the event.* [Emphasis added.](32)

Blokhintsev rejects any subjectivist argument for indeterminacy in physics. He maintains that while indeterminacy indeed exists at the microphysical level, it *cannot* be applied to the macrophysical world. This agrees with Caudwell who says of the subject of Heisenberg's Indeterminacy Principle:

> If a quantum of action is involved in all electronic transactions, as now securely established, any observation of a particle must involve the release or addition of a quantum of action to the particle observed. This will affect the particle correspondingly, like the recoil of a gun.(33)

Thus the frame of reference is not just reliant on the solitary individual; there is still an outside world beyond the observer. Einstein pointed out in his introduction to Max Planck's *Where is Science Going?* that the problem of the Indeterminacy question is not a mysterious, fundamental question that somehow makes reality dependent on consciousness but rather results from the present[16] human inability to analyse the problem in more detail. He says:

> [b]ut this does not mean that the causal sequence is not actually verified objectively. It means that we cannot detect its operation; because as things stand today our research instruments and our mental equipment are not adequate to the task.(34)

Caudwell says that according to physicists such as Jeans and Eddington the conclusion to be drawn is that causality and determinacy can be eliminated and that it is possible to understand how the human will can be free.(35) Another example of idealism, as represented by the Indeterminacy Principle.

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[16] 1931.

Eddington himself said in *The Nature of the Physical World*:

> It will perhaps be said that the conclusion to be drawn from these arguments from modern science, is that religion first became possible for a reasonable scientific man about the year 1927.[17](36)

Eddington's words are indicative of a man desperately searching for a hidden God within the interstices of quantum physics, a 'God of the gaps', so to speak, where the lacunae of human knowledge are 'explained' *via* metaphysical speculation.[18] Caudwell's answer to this is clear:

> The personal God is the mutilated end of subjectivity. Yet if they could be fused,[19] if the underground connections between objectivity and subjectivity could be dragged to light (because the exploited class has come into possession of consciousness) then everything would be plain, and there would be no need to give the mysterious name God to a clearly revealed process of society. [Caudwell's parenthesis.](37)

Caudwell's observation, that God is a product of class-schism,[20] the nature of which changes with the nature of class society, is more plausible, I feel, than Eddington's view and those of modern physicists such as Gary Zukav whose anti-Realist, theistic views run counter to that of the Marxists and the Realists. Zukav quotes the 14th century Buddhist monk, Longchenpa:

> Since everything is but an apparition
> Perfect is being what it is,
> Having nothing to do with good or bad,

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[17] The year of the Copenhagen Declaration.
[18] See this chapter.
[19] Objectivity and subjectivity.
[20] See this thesis chapter 5, 'The Inverted World'.

Acceptance or rejection,
One may well burst out with laughter.

Zukav goes on to say, in agreement with Longchenpa, that:

> What it is, is perfectly what it is. It couldn't be anything else. It is perfect. I am perfect. I am exactly and perfectly who I am. You are perfect. You are exactly and perfectly who you are. [...] That which is not is that which is. [...] There is nothing than that which is. Everything is that which is. We are part of that which is. In fact, *we are that which is.* [Zukav's emphasis.](38)

Why an apparition should be 'perfect' Zukav doesn't deign to tell us, but we must realise that this is a Panglossian[21] attitude, which allows (though to be fair to Zukav he might be horrified at the indictment) barbarism, fatalism and passive acceptance of the *status quo.* After all it *is* perfect. Caudwell's answer to 'Zukavian' metaphysics is clear and uncompromising. He says:

> In the bourgeois era religion loses its artistic myth-creating power and merely preserves the myths and hagiography of the classical and mediaeval eras: and equally theology cannot escape from musty Platonism and scholastic reasoning. The life has gone out of both, and this life reappears elsewhere as science and art of an unprecedented luxuriance, even though both the science and the art are still distorted by the necessities of appearing in a class society, and cast a shadow in which mysticism is bred.(39)

For Caudwell the world was real, antecedent to humanity and therefore any theories we might have about the world had to be grounded in the objective observations of the world

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[21] See the novel *Candide* by Voltaire. Ware: Wordsworth. 1993. This satirical exposition of Leibnizian theory is still apposite in relation to this (obviously) still prevalent form of thought.

about us. As Trusted has pointed out, that '[i]f thrown out of the house, metaphysics has a tendency to enter through the back door.'(40)

Caudwell would maintain that this particular door has been opened by the bourgeoisie. Caudwell makes no apologies for this view, indeed, he saw it as an essential part, not only of being a Marxist but a forward-looking, progressive and conscious human being. He says of the class-nature of bourgeois physics that the proletariat do not stand in God-like isolation from the physical world - the machine - but:

> [a]re arranged about it like iron filings along the 'lines of force' round a magnet. For they work the machine: they form one producing complex with it. They cannot regard Nature as a passive shut-in object of contemplation.(41)

vi - Quantum Politics

That there is a significant political dimension to this problem is clear enough. Karl Marx made it clear that materialism was one of the key foundations of a future social order when he wrote, 'As Cartesian materialism merges into natural science proper, the other branch of French materialism leads directly to socialism and communism.'(42) Lenin and others in the old Soviet Union found the concept of quantum indeterminacy in physics unacceptable, arguing that it was an idealist 'foot in the door' which had no place in a state and system basing itself on the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism.[22]

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[22] Caudwell observes that '[A]ccording to various physicists such as Jeans and Eddington, the conclusion to be drawn from this [quantum indeterminacy] is that causality and determinism are no longer principles of physics, and it is possible to understand how human will can be free.' *The Crisis in Physics*. London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1939. p. 97.. I would suggest that the idealism of Jeans and Eddington is a good indication as to why a society and state with dialectical materialism and historical materialism as its foundations, would find quantum indeterminacy wholly unacceptable.

James T. Cushing in his book, *Quantum Mechanics: Historical Contingency and the Copenhagen Hegemony*, points out that:

> There is a tension between scientific materialism and the Copenhagen interpretation over the existence or non-existence, respectively, of objective, mind-independent matter. In the Soviet Union, party philosophers effected a split among physicists there over the Copenhagen dogma. The pro-Copenhagen school included Vladimir Fock, Lev Landau and Igor Tamm, while those who attempted to fashion a materialist quantum theory included Dmitri Blokhintsev and Jacob Terletski. The *motivation* for this critical approach to the Copenhagen orthodoxy was ideological not scientific (in any narrow sense of that term). [Cushing's emphasis, parenthesis.](43)

This has also been pointed out, in a different scientific context, by Philipp G. Frank in his contribution to *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist* where he points out that:

> [b]ecause of the close connection which obviously exists between Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Mach's philosophy, Lenin feared that Einstein's theories might become a Trojan horse for the infiltration of idealistic currents of thought among Russian scientists and amongst educated classes in general.[23] This suspicion accounts for the bittersweet reception which Einstein's theories

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[23] Lenin says of Einstein in relation to an article written by the physicist A. K. Timryazev for *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* [Under the Banner of Marxism] that while Einstein himself is in no way making an attack on materialism his work has been used for that very purpose. Lenin says: 'Timryazev was obliged to observe that the theory of Einstein, who, according to Timryazev, is himself, not making an active attack on the foundations of materialism, has already been seized upon by a vast number of bourgeois intellectuals of all countries; it should be noted that this applies not only to Einstein, but to a number, if not the majority, of the great reformers of the natural sciences since the end of the nineteenth century.' *On The Significance of Militant Materialism.* From *Marx, Engels, Lenin on Dialectical Materialism.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1977. p. 386.

> frequently met in the first years of the Soviet régime in Russia.[24](44)

Blokhintsev said of quantum physics that it was, essentially, reducible to scientific practice, that is, there was nothing in it that could not, eventually, be discovered given the proper approach.

> Iolanthe, blind from birth, would have found a way to distinguish a red rose from a white one, had she been a physicist.(45)

This shows the faith that Marxists and Realists put in science rather than in metaphysical speculation. Lenin says of the German physicist Hartmann:[25]

> According to Hartmann, three epistemological systems constitute the basis of modern physics - Hylo-kinetics (from the Greek *Hyle* = matter and *kinesis* = motion - i.e. the recognition of physical phenomena as matter in motion), energetics and dynamism (i.e., the recognition of force without substance). Of course the idealist Hartmann favours "dynamism" from which he draws the conclusion that the laws of nature are world-thought, in short, he "substitutes" the psychical for physical nature. [Lenin's quotations, Greek, parentheses, etc.](46)

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24 'Energy is a pure symbol! After this Bogdanov may dispute as much as he pleases with the "Empirio-Symbolist" Yushkevich, with the "Pure Machists", the empirio-criticists, etc. - from the standpoint of the materialist it is a dispute between a man who believes in a green devil and a man who believes in a yellow devil. For the important thing is not the differences between Bogdanov and the other Machists, but what they have in common: the idealist interpretation of "experience" and "energy", the denial of objective reality, adaptation to which constitutes human experience and the copying of which constitutes the only scientific "methodology" and scientific "energetics".'[Lenin's quotations throughout.] V. I. Lenin. *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. From *Marx, Engels, Lenin on Dialectical Materialism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1977. p. 340

25 Edouard Hartmann, 1842-1906. Hartmann is described in the index of *Marx, Engels and Lenin on Dialectical Materialism* as an idealist, irrationalist and mystic. p. 414. Moscow: Progress. 1977.

Lenin's waspish condemnation of the positivists, the Machists and subjective idealists who were very much in vogue in scientific circles at the end of the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries is toned down by Caudwell but the fact remains that, as a materialist and a Marxist (the latter should always be the former but the former not necessarily the latter), he finds himself on the same side as Lenin. Caudwell was downright suspicious of anything that smacked of idealism, clericalism, Thomism and mediaevalist dogma and his Leninist-based distrust of positivism is clearly demonstrated throughout his works, particularly *The Crisis in Physics* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture.*

vii - The 'Mock Ego' of Physical Analysis

However, we find another aspect of Caudwell's analysis that is certainly not in keeping with Lenin, although allowing for some speculation as to whether Lenin might have agreed at a later date had he lived longer. Caudwell says of the new physics that there has been, in effect, an idealised but objective observer and that:

> The scientist has tended to regard this understood observer[26] as just a piece of scaffolding, and to assume that, if it were necessary, the scaffolding could be knocked away - it would make no difference but the latest developments of physics [Caudwell cites the Heisenberg Indeterminacy conflict with relativity physics in a footnote] have shown that if this scaffolding is knocked away nothing is left. The building absolutely depends on the scaffolding for its support. This queer, universal "Mock Ego" of science is illusory and yet necessary: all the reality which science's language symbolises is attached to "him".[Caudwell's, quotation, parentheses.](47)

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[26] Neutral and judicious in attitude.

The use of the phrase 'Mock Ego' is indicative of Caudwell's psychological background. He is using the Jungian (we might say) *persona* here, to give a distinctive psychoanalytical flavour to his Marxist critique. It is widely accepted - certainly amongst Marxists - that Caudwell was somehow 'heretical,' that he was more of a psychoanalytical thinker than a dialectician. Such arguments have been explored elsewhere in this thesis[27] but in passing it should be noted that, while Caudwell's works are 'tainted' with this 'heresy', his analysis has shown far greater resilience than many others who have 'fallen by the wayside.' Earlier in this chapter I quoted Maurice Cornforth using Caudwell against Karl Popper, even though elsewhere Cornforth is scathing about Caudwell's abilities. Speaking of Caudwell's analyses he says of them, in comparison to Ralph Fox's *Novel and the People*:

> [b]ut Caudwell gave it[28] an idealist development. His preoccupations with the instincts and genotype, his inability to emancipate himself from Freudism and Weismannism, prevented him from understanding "man as an active historical agent, man at work and struggling with life" in a materialist way.[Cornforth's quotations.](48)

This must be challenged. I find Caudwell's analyses of physics and the natural world particularly apposite. True, elsewhere he does use telling psychoanalytical phraseology such as the "Mock Ego"[29] but one may doubt that this is such a grave shortcoming.

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[27] See the thesis chapters 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate' and 7, 'The Necessity of the Dream'.

[28] Marxism.

[29] See *Illusion and Reality* for Caudwell's explanation of the "mock ego". It is seen by him to be an abstract notion used by science an 'observer' for bourgeois science. That it has a Freudian aspect is understandable, I would suggest, as Caudwell sees a multiplicity of connections between bourgeois psychoanalysis and the other sciences. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 172.

Caudwell himself would have been the first to rebut any suggestion that he was a trained physicist or that he had specialist knowledge of these subjects, but his works reveal a clarity often lacking in other Marxist analysts and, to be fair to Caudwell, he at least is still studied, by Marxists and non-Marxists alike. The fact remains that Caudwell's analysis of physics is wide-ranging, imaginative and thought-provoking. That he was a Realist, and a dialectical materialist, even with a nod or two to Freud is plain enough. Caudwell was a class-conscious, materialist revolutionary, not only in politics but also on the front-line of physics and reality. One cannot be anything else if one is to be a Marxist and this is what Caudwell was, certainly within the realm of physics. That he used other sources is a strength and not a weakness and should be accepted as such.

Caudwell, while no scientist in the trained and professional or academic sense, was alert enough to recognise that there was something seriously amiss within this philosophy of science, that is, science could never function objectively while there were major social, ideological and political problems within society.

viii - The World as Machine

> [b]ut in fact phenomena emerge from the concrete living of society, and this is an active struggle of Man and Nature. If Man and Nature are ruled out as unreal and non-existent, phenomena all have absolutely equal validity: hallucination and real perception, scientific theory and barbarous logic, there is no means of choosing between them. We are in fact - if positivism is carried out logically - back in the subjective idealism of Berkeley and the scepticism of Hume. Positivism is solipsism. *Nothing exists but my experience.* [Emphasis added.](49)

Of course, Caudwell was not the only critic who saw a danger in positivism. Edmund Husserl's last work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* is also highly critical of the doctrine. Both saw a need to combat what they regarded as a menace in the European, Western sciences, that is positivism[30] which was particularly prevalent from the end of the 19th to the mid-20th century. The quotation above from *The Crisis in Physics*, gives a clear indication of how Caudwell felt about the contemporary -1930s - state of science and while he and Husserl would not have agreed on most things, they are in agreement on this particular matter.

He says of the subject of the scientific inquiry of the period that:

> From here on this much is certain: that all problems of truth and of being, all methods, hypotheses and results conceivable for these problems - whether for worlds of experience or for metaphysical higher worlds - can attain their ultimate clarity, their evident sense or the evidence of their nonsense, only through this supposed intellectualist hypertrophy. This will then include, certainly, all ultimate questions of legitimate sense and of nonsense in the busy routine of the "resurrected metaphysics" that has become so vocal and bewitching of late. [Husserl's quotation.](50)

Certainly, for both Husserl and Caudwell, metaphysics can be very closely linked to positivism and the problems inherent within that theory. Husserl saw that this predicament was grounded within the wider social context that had been shaped by the First World War. Husserl wrote:

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[30] It would be a gross error, of course, to assume that because there are elements of positivism in the foundations of reaction, then *all* positivists are reactionaries. Far from it. Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap and Moritz Schlick certainly represent the 'Left Wing' of the movement based around the Vienna Circle. They saw themselves, essentially, as social reformers. Indeed many had to flee Austria after the *Anschluß* in 1938 for their own safety. We should also note the murder of Moritz Schlick by one of his students in 1936. Although this last was in itself not political, the response to Schlick's death in the Austrian Government press was, implying that it was 'all right' for positivists to be murdered and that they somehow 'had it coming to them'.

> The change in public evaluation[31] was unavoidable, especially after the war, and we know that it has gradually become a feeling of hostility among the younger generation. In our vital need - so we are told - this science has nothing to say to us. It excludes in principle precisely the questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of human existence. Do not these questions, universal and necessary to all men, demand universal reflections and answers based on rational insight?(51)

Caudwell regarded this as a very serious - though not insoluble - problem, and this theme runs like a thread throughout his critical works, whether on physics, psychology, biology, politics or the arts and literature. His answer to Husserl's question would, I'm sure, have been an emphatic 'yes'. He saw a fundamental flaw in positivism that led, almost inexorably, to irrationalism, mysticism, racism, blind subjectivism, the 'worship' of the ego and a fatal cleavage of subject from object.[32](52) Caudwell traces, no doubt under the influence of Marx[33] and Lenin,[34] the root cause of this back to the 17th century and to René Descartes whose doctrines, it can be argued, paved the way for the positivists and idealists of the following centuries.

Christopher Norris, in his work *Quantum Theory and the Flight From Realism*, says of the problem that:

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[31] Of the sciences.

[32] A cleavage that in the 19th and 20th centuries led to, amongst other things, a resurgence of witchcraft, Satanism, various types of astrology and divination, theosophy, theories of Atlantis, Hyberboria and Lemuria, pan-psychism, the '*Thule*' Movement, Monism, 'race-memory', reincarnation and racist somatology as seen in the *Ahnenerbe* of the NSDAP. See, in particular, Nicholas Goodricke-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology*. London: I. B. Tauris. 1992 and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and other Essays*. London: Routledge. 1994.

[33] See Marx's *The Materialist Concept of History. Selected Writings*. (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977.

[34] See Lenin's *Collected Works*, especially *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and *The Need for Militant Materialism. Passim*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1978.

> [A]s these thinkers[35] saw it, the enlightenment project of reason in the service of emancipatory values had turned into an 'iron-cage of rationality' that excluded all reference to human ethical values and socio-political interests. Their account thus jibed with the widespread conviction - copiously documented by Cushing[36] - that science and technology were part symptom, part cause of that descent into the barbarism of World War One that already looked like repeating itself with the breakdown of social-democratic values in 1930s Weimar Germany.[Norris' quotation.](53)

Caudwell says when discussing the bourgeois, capitalist attitude to the sciences - in this instance psychology - that:

> The bourgeois, freely wandering the world he dominates, acquires images of it or ideas, and these interact and live their lives, and combine and move by virtue of causal laws, parallel to but different from those that rule the world of particles in the closed world of physics. This closed world of Ideas, foreshadowed in Locke, reaches its final development in the associationists, with whom everything is explained by the 'association of ideas'. It still represents an important influence in all modern psychologies, for it appears to solve the problem of the closed worlds by creating two parallel worlds, *quite in the manner of Descartes.*[37] [Caudwell's quotations, capitalisation. Emphasis added.](54)

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[35] Edmund Husserl, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Max Weber.

[36] James T. Cushing, author of *Quantum Mechanics: Historical Contingency and the Copenhagen Hegemony.* Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press. 1994. Cushing's thesis is that while the Copenhagen Declaration of 1927 has gained ascendancy this is due, mainly, to its having being promulgated first, and that other theories about sub-atomic physics have an equal claim to consistency, as well as far greater causal-explanatory power, with the empirical evidence such as those put forward by David Bohm.

[37] See also, on this particular subject, René Descartes' statement 'Cogito Ergo Sum'. *Discourse on Method. Part IV. 33. Key Philosophical Writings.* Ware: Wordsworth. 1997.

Caudwell, in *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*, again in relation to psychology, says of the Cartesian dualist approach:

> On the one hand the body is composed of particles subject to physical laws, on the other hand as aphasia and cerebral injuries show, disturbance of particles of the body leads to a disturbance of 'ideas'. *the two absolute worlds must be joined.*[Caudwell's quotation. Emphasis added.](55)

ix - Positivism, the Sciences and the Arts

Why is this a serious problem? Positivism, according to Caudwell, leads in poetry to *surréalisme,* wherein the writer is cut off from the external-objective realities of the world.(56) Caudwell's analysis, though seemingly far-fetched, is tenable if we consider the André Breton-led Surrealist Movement which was prominent in the early to mid-20th Century as were the Russian Futurists such as Mayakovsky. But of course, retreating into positivism only reinforces slavery to subjectivism if we are to agree with Lenin and Caudwell. The latter says of the nature of positivism in art and aesthetics that it engenders the concept of the 'pure' act of enjoyment, of 'Art for Art's Sake'[38] because it gives no standard of discrimination between art works and the enjoyment of art works,(57) There is, if we are to agree with the Marxists and other critics of this mode of thought, no possibility of theoretical discrimination in positivism. Therefore the same

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[38] In *Illusion and Reality* Caudwell says: 'The *surréaliste* is somewhat equivalent to the craftsman who makes trifling models in his spare time to exercise his skill. This is the way he expresses his revolt and secures some free outlet for his craft by deliberately making something of its nature useless and therefore opposed to the sordid craftlessness of mass production.' London: Lawrence and Wishart. !977. p. 126. Cynical and condemnatory as this is, there is more than a grain of truth here, seen from a Marxist perspective: if positivism is a menace and surreal art flourishes - directly or indirectly - as a result of it, then that art must be seen as a menace, too. See, also, Peter Fuller's *Beyond the Crisis in Art.* London: Writers and Readers Publishing House. 1980. *Passim.*

will have to be said of the physical sciences, psychoanalysis and other related disciplines such as biology and linguistics. An example of this last will be seen in logical positivism, particularly in the linguistic analyses of the early Wittgenstein, associated with the Vienna Circle and the works of I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden.[39] In his work, *Reconsidering Logical Positivism* - which is, to be sure, a qualified defence of this doctrine - Michael Friedman says that '[W]ittgenstein was the first to articulate the true nature of logical truth itself.'(58) Friedman's position is that logical positivism grew out of the empiricist and verificationist movement of Hume, Mach and Russell.(59)

But wherein lies the foundation of this logic? If Caudwell is right, then this logic is rooted, ultimately, in a subjectivism that leads from the time of Descartes onwards through Berkeley and Hume up to and including Ernst Mach. Hume says in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*:

> It must be certainly allowed, that nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial quality of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles, on which the influence of these objects entirely depends.(60)

Hume's view is that we cannot, in the final analysis, ever *know* the truth for his philosophy is rooted in solipsism which we can see as symptomatic of the general problem of the subject and the object and the cleavage between the two due to the schism endemic within bourgeois society. Hume's theses, I would argue, are superficially rational and seem very much the product of the Age of Enlightenment, particularly in his view on the rationality of animals[40] and miracles,[41] but there is an

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[39] See this thesis chapter 9, 'Caudwell and Wittgenstein's Ladder'.

[40] We should compare Hume's views here with those of Descartes. The latter says in the *Discourse on Method* that: '[i]t is very remarkable fact that there are none so depraved and stupid, without even excepting idiots, that they cannot arrange different words together forming of them a statement by which they make known their thoughts; while, on the other hand, there is no other animal, however perfect and fortunately

element of *ir*rationality and *un*reason that runs throughout Hume's works. He says, on the subject of scepticism and the trustworthiness of our senses, that:

> Our reason must be considered to be as a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect; but such a one as the irruption of other causes, and by the inconstancy of our mental powers may frequently be prevented. By this means *all knowledge degenerates into probability*; and this probability is greater or less, according to our experience of the veracity or deceitfulness of our understanding, and according to the simplicity or intricacy of the question.[Emphasis added.](61)

Thus we can see a fundamental problem within Humean theory; if all must be doubted then how, we might ask, can we even trust our doubts?

x - The Triumph of Subjectivism

Of Hume's subjectivism[42] Caudwell says of it that it is, indeed, deterministic, but that it devolves upon the mind of the individual rather than an external influence, in this case, God.(62) It is subjectivism to the exclusion of God.

Caudwell says that '[a] positivist will always aim to smuggle some form of co-ordinating principle which in fact presupposes the existence of the very things he

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circumstanced it may be, that can do the same.' René Descartes. *Key Philosophical Writings. Discourse on the Method: 57.* Ware: Wordsworth. 1997. p. 108. Hume's view is contrary to that of Descartes. He says: 'A horse that has been accustomed to a field, becomes acquainted with the proper height, which he can leap, and will never attempt what exceeds his force and ability. An old greyhound will trust the more fatiguing part of the chase to the younger, and will place himself so as to meet the hare in her doubles; nor are the conjectures, which he forms on this occasion, founded in anything *but his observation and experience*.'[Emphasis added.] *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1894. p. 79-80.

41 Chapters VIII and IX respectively in *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals.* Oxford: Clarendon. 1902.

42 Caudwell says that Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel represent the stages by which the subject is cut completely free from the object. *The Crisis in Physics.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1939. p. 56.

which ultimately will lead to solipsism, bourgeois individualism and fascism. Comte says in his work *A General View of Positivism*: '[t]hat the errors of Communism must be rectified but there is no necessity for giving up the name, which is a simple assertion of the paramount importance of Social Feeling.'[Comte's capitalisation.](67) Further, he says that '[t]he the people will gradually find out that the solution of the great social problems which Positivism offers is better than the Communistic solution.'(68) For Comte, then, the problems are more likely to be solved under Positivism rather than Socialism and Communism. Caudwell brackets Comte with other bourgeois philosophers when he says of the bourgeois' notions of objective reality that:

> He has no guarantee that the environment known by him has an independent existence. If it determines his knowing, even as his knowing determines it, this would perforce constitute independent existence on its part. But the bourgeois denies this! Hence Berkeley, Hume, Kant and Comte.(69)

Caudwell sees Comte, amongst others, denying objective reality along with the social motion that accompanies it. Comte's anti-communism, while nowhere near as reactionary or as virulent as Nazi-Fascism was to become less than a century later, is no less unequivocal. Communism, the term at least, was to be permitted only on a sentimental, perhaps even nostalgic, basis. This runs entirely counter to Marxist dialectical and historical materialism. However, it should be noted that an anti-Communist attitude then, as now, is no indicator that the antagonist must, perforce, be a hard-line fascist or a reactionary. Therefore I feel that, in this instance, Sartre's condemnation (even allowing for the fact that it was made in October 1945, not long after the defeat of Nazi-Fascism) of Auguste Comte and Comtean positivism is somewhat too sweeping for comfort and accuracy. Nevertheless it has to be said that given the anti-Communist stance of Comte, the Marxist Sartre would be bound to

polemicise against the doctrine of what Comte in 1830 called the *Philosophie Positive*, in which, amongst other things, all of the sciences, including physics, sociology, psychology and politics would be unified(70) and, I would suggest, subordinated to a rigorous scientific analysis.

Lenin wrote in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* that Karl Marx:

> [c]ontemptuously brushed Comtean "positivism" aside and dubbed as wretched epigoni the contemporary philosophers who imagined that they had destroyed Hegel when in reality they had reverted to the pre-Hegelian errors of Kant and Hume.[Lenin's quotation.](71)

Marx wrote Engels on 7th of July 1866:

> I am studying Comte on the side because the British and French make so much fuss over that fellow. What captivates them is the encyclopaedic about him, the synthesis. But compared with Hegel it is wretched (in spite of the fact that Comte as a professorial mathematician and physicist is superior to him, i.e., superior in details; but even here Hegel is infinitely greater on the whole). And this trashy positivism appeared in 1832! [Marx's parenthesis.](72)

Max Horkheimer says, in relation to Comtean Positivism, that scholars often confuse planning with thinking and this in itself has positivist roots. Horkheimer's view, similar to that of both Sartre and Caudwell, is that:

> Shocked by social injustice and by hypocrisy in its traditional religious garb, they propose to wed ideology to reality, or, as they prefer to say, to bring reality closer to our heart's desire, by applying the wisdom of engineering to religion. *In the spirit of*

> *August Comte, they wish to establish a new social catechism.*[Emphasis added.](73)

Caudwell makes an unfavourable comparison between Berkelian and Humean[44] positivism and against the doctrines of bourgeois revolutionaries such as Voltaire[45] and La Mettrie[46] who, he says, have stripped down God as much as possible, divesting Him of as much matter as possible, becoming theists or even atheists. Berkeley makes God synonymous with matter[47] while La Mettrie does the opposite equating not-mind with not-god,(74) that is God does not, and never has, existed.[48] To be sure, Caudwell is dealing with a number of diverse concepts here, but his argument is clear: no matter the actual philosophy it can be traced back, ultimately, to 17th century metaphysics.

Berkeley, in his *Commonplace Book* says, in contrast to La Mettrie, that '[t]he notion of Ideas constitutes the soul.'(75) As Caudwell points out:

> It is true that from Newton to Berkeley that there has been a change from corpuscles to phenomena (*esse est percipi*) as the basis of events, but this merely represents the divorce of the philosophy from experimental physics.

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[44] 'Hume unconsciously sought for determinism and uniformity in natural phenomena and having found them believed them to be primary because of his mechanistic bias.' Christopher Caudwell. *The Crisis in Physics.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1939. pp. 100-101.

[45] Voltaire, while no atheist in the manner of d'Holbach, certainly had doubts about religion and particularly the religion of his day. He says in a letter to Frederick the Great: 'I find a principle - thinking, free, active - almost like God himself: my *reason* tells me that God exists, but it also tells me that *I cannot know what he is.*'[Emphases added.] François-Marie Arouet Voltaire. *Voltaire: Selections.* (Editor): Paul Edwards. London: Macmillan. 1989. p. 209.

[46] La Mettrie says: 'The Leibnizians with their monads have set up an unintelligible hypothesis. They have rather spiritualised matter than materialised the soul. How can we define a being whose nature is absolutely unknown to us? Descartes and all the Cartesians among whom the followers of Malebranche have long been numbered have made the same mistake. They have taken two distinct substances in man, as if they had seen them, and positively counted them.' *Man a Machine.* La Salle, Ill.: Open Court. 1912. p. 85-86.

[47] Caudwell's statement here is questionable for, if this were true, then Berkeley's solipsism would still have a material foundation.

[48] But, as Jean-Paul Sartre pointed out at the *Club Maintainent* in 1945, these philosophers still believed in the Primacy of Spirit. He says: 'In the philosophic atheism of the eighteenth century, the notion of God is suppressed, but not, for all that, the idea that essence is prior to existence; something of that idea we still find everywhere, in Diderot, in Voltaire and even Kant.' *Existentialism and Humanism.* London: Methuen. 1973. p. 27.

[Parenthesis, Latin, Caudwell's.](76)

Berkeley, then, should be considered as an extreme solipsist. Lenin is in no doubt with regard to Berkeley's idealism. He says:

> Materialism is the recognition of "objects in themselves", or outside the mind; ideas and sensations are copies or images of those objects. The opposite doctrine (idealism) claims that objects do not exist "without the mind"; objects are "combinations of sensations". [Lenin's parenthesis and quotations throughout.](77)

Lenin is particularly clear on this issue. There is no such thing as matter dependent upon the human mind; it is supra-sensual and *not* conditional upon our cognition. His great positivist adversary Ernst Mach, in his work *The Analysis of Sensations*, is likewise perfectly clear in regard to his own philosophical roots. He says: 'That my starting point is not essentially different from Hume is of course obvious. I differ from Comte in holding that the psychological facts are, as sources of knowledge, at least as important a the physical facts.'(78) Lenin agrees with Mach on his self-comparison to Hume, although he gives the comparison a negative twist. He says of the question of Machist positivism in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* that:

> [t]here is no need for materialism ("nebula of atoms" or electrons. i.e., the recognition of the objective reality of the material world), there is no need for an idealism which would recognise the other world as "the other being" as spirit; but there is possible an idealism which recognises the world as *will*! We are superior not only to materialism, but also the idealism of a Hegel; but we are not averse to coquetting with an idealism like Schopenhauer's![49] [Quotations, parentheses, emphasis Lenin's.](79)

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[49] It should be pointed out that this more than a little unfair to Mach and it would seem that Lenin is mainly trying to score a sectarian political point against him.

Caudwell notes that the 17th and 18th century philosophers, be they materialists or idealists were, in fact, strict determinists and this is an absolute determinism which can be applied, universally, to matter.(80)

He says:

> They are materialists if, like d'Holbach and Diderot, they regard the stuff to which these categories apply as being the sole objective reality; they are idealists if they believe like Berkeley that the stuff to which these categories apply is God.(81)

Berkeley wrote in 1709 that there are '[N]o broken intervals of Death or Annihilation. Those intervals are nothing. Each Person's time being measured to him by his own Ideas.'(82)[Berkeley's capitalisation.]

This is, by any standard, a subjective idealism of the most radical form and much the same can be said of Hume's views although, it has to be said, his arguments were never as extreme as that of Berkeley. Hume, for all his 'reasonable' scepticism, is firmly entrenched in the Berkeley camp rather than with the materialist revolutionaries such as Voltaire or La Mettrie. For Caudwell, Hume is the first positivist.(83) This much is agreed by Richard von Mises who says that the concepts of Mach[50] were partly anticipated by Hume,(84) although von Mises says that it is also commented upon by Thomas Hobbes nearly a century before Hume. Von Mises may have a point in that Hobbes was a materialist thinker before dualist metaphysics became ascendant in France in the latter half of the Seventeenth Century but there is a marked divergence now between materialist dialectical thinking and idealistic positivism. I feel that the central problem, both with Hume and Berkeley, is their scepticism, their deep mistrust of

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[50] See Mach's own views above.(78)

anything but the senses and, then, even of the senses themselves. That nothing can theorised upon and even the senses are to be doubted; that is nothing can be known from reason or intuition separate from direct experience. Caudwell notes that:

> [B]erkeley and Leibniz[51] both believe that lying behind phenomena, and necessarily determining them, is an objective reality broader, prior and simpler than mind, although discoverable by it. With Berkeley this reality is spiritual substance; with Leibniz it is the God to whom all windows open.(85)

Accordingly, far more hinges upon the Berkelian ontology than upon the Cartesian. It is more than 'pictures of the world' in a human brain: now the pictures have 'become' the world along with all the myriad problems entailed in such a view. Thus, if we are to agree with Caudwell, we have to admit that positivism and empiricism are replete with metaphysical inconsistencies and amount to:

> [a] confused, amateurish and dishonest philosophy. It makes a degradation of bourgeois thought as compared to the simple grandeur of Newtonian physics[52] and the world-dominating insurgence of

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[51] Leibniz raises the question thus: 'If there were no necessary being, there would be no contingent being; for a reason must be given why contingent things should exist rather than not exist. But there would be no such reason unless there were a being which is in itself, that is, a being the reason for whose existence is contained in its own essence, so there is no need for a reason outside it.' *A Specimen of Discoveries About Marvellous Secrets: Philosophical Writings.* pp. 76-77. (Editor.): G. H. R. Parkinson. (Transl.): Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson. London: Dent and Co. 1973.

[52] The notion of 'back door metaphysics' *via* positivism and, I might add, logical positivism is illustrated in William E. Carlo's foreword to John F. Kiley's work, *Einstein and Aquinas: A Rapprochement.* 'It was only yesterday that logical positivism in the person of one of its founders attempted to purify physics of alien metaphysical notions, but then went on to nominate physics as an alternative metaphysics. It is true that development in logical positivism through logical analysis, culminating in linguistic analysis, has begun to some extent of rehabilitating metaphysics. But the strongest evidence for the existence of metaphysics is the rôle which it plays in the evaluation of scientific theories. Of course, metaphysical principles are not usually present in an obvious and explicit fashion in physical science but they are there as implicit principles. *Metaphysics went underground with Newton but it has always been present implicitly in physical science.*' [Emphasis added.] The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. 1969. xvii.

> Hegelian dialectics This confusion is very clear in the writings of the older positivists, Mach and Pearson,[53] and the newer positivists, Jeans and Eddington. Their writing is full of contradictions, they shift from one premise to another without realising: their writing is a mesh of excluded middles and non sequiteurs, directly it deals with philosophical questions.(86)

Essentially Caudwell views the Machists as a group of muddle-headed idealists, grasping at any doctrine, be it idealism, pragmatism or dialectical materialism to shore up their epistemologically flawed arguments. It must be pointed out that the question of positivism is not merely a scientific problem. If we are to take the Caudwellian approach to this problem then we have to agree that it is part of a wider crisis in society and must affect *all* aspects of it. As J. D. Bernal said, he may have hit the nail on the head only because the sciences at the time - and, I would argue, now - were in a parlous state. If anything was wrong, according to Bernal, it was the condition of the sciences that, to be frank, allowed a non-professional outsider to criticise it so forcefully and effectively. We may see this as a sign of the Einstein-Planck 'bewilderment' so clearly noted by Caudwell. Since then the crisis has deepened until now we can have respected institutions and scientists speculating on the possibility of 'other worlds'. This I would argue is Leibnizian theology dressed up in modern style, but the result is still the same: a turning away from the concrete problems that face humanity and looking 'out there' or, in the case of parallel universes 'over there' for the answers. In short, then, we owe a real debt to Caudwell. His contribution in this field is important because he rejects the apolitical and asocial theses of the positivists and the Machists.

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[53] Karl Pearson 1857-1936. A British biologist and mathematician with whom Mach is '[i]n agreement with his epistemological (*erkenntniskritischen*) views on all essential points.' V. I. Lenin. *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. Marx, Engels, Lenin on Dialectical Materialism.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1978. p 214. [Lenin's parenthesis, German.]

Chapter End Notes

1. Christopher Caudwell. *The Crisis in Physics.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1939. p. 4.

2. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 154.

3. Karl Marx. *The Materialist Concept of History. Selected Writings.* (Editor): David McLellan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977. p. 150.

4. Euaun Squires. *The Mystery of the Quantum World.* London: Institute of Physics Press. 1994. p. 5.

5. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1977. p. 210.

6. Karl Popper. *Quantum Theory and the Schism in Physics.* London: Unwin Hyman. 1982. p. 2.

7. Christopher Caudwell. *The Crisis in Physics.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1939. p. 5.

8. Marcus Antoninus Aurelius. *Meditations. Book IX.* (Editor): Gerald H. Rendall. London: Macmillan. 1898. 9-13.

9. J. R. Lucas, P. E. Hodgson. *Spacetime and Electromagnetism.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1990. p. 241.

10. Christopher Caudwell. *The Crisis in Physics.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1939. pp. 5-6.

11. Ibid. p. 37.

12. V. I. Lenin. *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1977. p. 329.

13. Ibid.

14. Christopher Caudwell. *The Crisis in Physics.* London: John Lane and Bodley Head. 1939. p. 3.

15. Max Planck. *The Philosophy of Physics.* London: Allen and Unwin. 1936. p. 43.

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11: Conclusion

> [i]t is especially incumbent on those who claim to represent a 'critical' consciousness to follow Caudwell in developing a cultural theory which does not capitulate to a dehistoricised, alienated concept of humanity.[Pawling's quotation.](1)

The words of Christopher Pawling at the end of his work, *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature* are a fair summation of the Caudwellian thesis; an all-encompassing socio-political synthesis of the human condition. We should never underestimate the depth and breadth of Caudwell's analyses, be they literary, scientific, or psychological. Caudwell was not only a revolutionary and activist of his time; he must also be seen as a figure of crucial significance to the world as it stands now. None of the problems Caudwell identified have gone away, indeed they have become more acute and exacerbated in the almost seventy years since his untimely death at Jarama. There are no metaphysical answers to these problems as Caudwell noted in the 1930s. If, indeed, the Devil has come amongst us with great power[1] then the Devil is one of our own making. We ignore Caudwell and people like him at our peril, for we live in perilous times, perhaps worse, even, than Caudwell's era for the stakes are infinitely higher; one of the possible results being the extinction of human civilisation, if not human life itself. The central problem, if we are to agree with Caudwell, is the cleavage between reality and the perception of that reality. When he says that:

> Science and art, separated out from mythology by an initial division of labour so that each can be better developed, keeps as a souvenir of separation a kind of scar or blind side like the Norwegian trolls which are hollow behind. This hollowness or blind side is

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[1] See this thesis chapter 1, 'Introduction' (13) p. 5.

> the mock ego of science and the mock world of art.(2)

he is stating something not unique to his analysis but part of a wider, encompassing thesis held by most Marxists and certainly the truly influential ones such as Lenin, though the latter might well not have put it in such a way. This statement is a reply to those who are eager to dismiss Caudwell as a 'vulgar, economic' Marxist. a 'Stalinist' who had no finesse or subtlety. It is distinctly Benjaminesque in its approach to the matter in hand. We should compare it to Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' when he says:

> The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answering each move of an opponent with a countermove. [...] Actually a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win every time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know is wizened and has to keep out of sight.[Benjamin's quotation.](3)

Caudwell, I would suggest, can be favourably compared with that most subtle, erudite and sophisticated of Marxist thinkers.

I hope to have shown that while Caudwell was, certainly, influenced by Freud and, to a lesser extent Jung, he was in no way a Freudian or Jungian in his analyses; he was *always* a Marxist of the highest calibre. Robert Currie's inaccurate dismissal of Caudwell as a crypto-Jungian and Cornforth's, Heinemann's and Bernal's unjustified views that he was tainted with non-Marxist bourgeois values may well have damaged Caudwell's reputation in the short term but, historically, there can be no doubt of the influence that Caudwell has had and *will* have in the future. We have seen throughout

this thesis that Caudwell took account of a diverse range of authors, philosophers and thinkers when developing his synthesis. Caudwell's great strength is as a synthesiser, for although Marxism-Leninism is rightly viewed as a revolutionary doctrine it is also a great synthesiser of knowledge and experience, an aspect which is not always acknowledged so explicitly, even by Communists. We have seen, in his analyses of Descartes, Hume, empiricism and positivism, that Caudwell draws a firm line between determinism and causality, the latter being quite distinct from the former and acceptable from a dialectically materialist standpoint instead of mechanically materialist in its outlook and approach to the nature of the physical world. The influence of many writers and thinkers are obvious when reading Caudwell, from Lenin, through Engels to Freud, Jung, and members of the 'Cambridge School of Anthropology' Jane Harrison and Francis MacDonald Cornford.

His various critiques of writers as diverse as Wells, Lawrence and Shaw are on somewhat more uncertain grounds, mainly because of his across the board condemnation of the three as bourgeois failures. By bracketing the somewhat progressive writers, Wells and Shaw, alongside Lawrence he does rather damage his case, not only against Wells and Shaw, but Lawrence, too and this is, unfortunately, an example of the ultra-Leftist approach in certain matters, which does sporadically surface in his work.(4) However, this is does not detract in the least from the contributions Caudwell has made to the historical-materialist school of thought, and though he studied philosophers and writers as diverse as Nietzsche, Plato, Jung, Harrison, Cornford and Freud, he rejects a good deal of their doctrines, strengthening rather than weakening his Marxist standpoint. He refutes in *The Crisis in Physics*, *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* and *Illusion and Reality* both idealist and mechanical materialism, critical idealism and behaviourism as all, in the end, bourgeois and thus unworkable. He says:

> We know the dilemma of the critical idealist, who cannot know what matter is like in itself, and so denies matter, and of his opposite the behaviourist, who cannot know how other men are for themselves and so denies consciousness. Now the idealist is refuted by practice, by showing that matter can be made to exhibit certain phenomena by certain operations, and when all these possibilities of change have been explored the thing-in-itself becomes a thing-for-us.
> In the same way the behaviourist is refuted by practice, by our relation with our fellow men, in which we count on their having instinctual drives like ourselves, leading to like actions, and "feel ourselves" into them sympathetically, so that consciousness of themselves becomes behaviour for us.[Caudwell's quotation.](5)

Not restricting himself to a Marxist analysis of psychology, he has provided a counter, decades ago, to the ontologically-relativistic, positivistic and mystical doctrines that were becoming prevalent from the 1920s onwards, ever since the Copenhagen Declaration[2] of 1927. Since the death of Caudwell this particular problem has been exacerbated by the question of the so-called 'non-objectivity of observation' at the sub-atomic level, that is the fact that we can never know the position *and* speed of a particle at this level. Observer-based subjectivism is only caused by the methodology of the observation changing the course of the particle, and *not* by the observer.[3] Even if this exists at the microphysical level, it most certainly does *not* exist at the macrophysical level. The superficiality and confusion of these views only go to show the depth of the crisis not merely in this sphere but in many others, symptomatic of the bourgeois illusion so clearly exposed by Caudwell. Ontological relativism is, at best irresponsible, at worst thoroughly

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[2] And, as we have seen, this was much influenced - indirectly - by the doctrines of Søren Kierkegaard *via* Nils Bohr's tutor Harald Høffding. See thesis chapter 8, 'The Philosophy of Reality', and *Quantum Theory* and *The Flight From Realism: Philosophical Responses to Quantum Mechanics.* Christopher Norris. London: Routledge. 2000. p.186.

[3] See this thesis, chapter 10, 'The Philosophy of Reality'. (33) p. 331 and *Passim.*

dangerous as it engenders an irrationalist approach to reality and its apprehension: something that Caudwell fought resolutely against until his untimely death in Spain. And untimely it most certainly was; there is no end to the speculation on 'what Caudwell would have done had he lived.' But it is merely speculation, after all, though perhaps not entirely pointless. However, to extrapolate, we might expect him to have produced a tidier, more developed version of *Illusion and Reality*, with far greater prominence given to *Studies* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*, further works upon psychology and art with more elaboration of the questions raised by quantum physics and, no doubt, further works on biology so promisingly initiated with his unpublished work *Heredity and Development*. Beyond the end of the Second World War and into the Cold War the thread of conjecture must needs become more tenuous, what with the Khrushchev 'denunciation' of Stalin at the XXth Congress of the CPSU(b) in 1956, the transformation of the Soviet Union into an aggressive, imperialist superpower and so on. Nikita Khrushchev, at the Congress(6) cited Stalin's boorish and insulting behaviour to Krupskyaya, Lenin's 'warning' with regard to Stalin's personality. I would argue that part of the denunciation of Caudwell in the early 1950s stemmed, in good part, from what the Communist Party of Great Britain saw in Caudwell's thesis; an in-depth analysis of the human condition, based upon the 'eternal' genotype which, to Communists of that period, was entirely unacceptable. This 'Weismannism,' 'Morganism' and 'Mendelianism' in Caudwell's works, recognised by the Party Black Coats especially in *Illusion and Reality*, is a major reason for the rejection of Caudwellian thought. The CPGB intellectuals wrongly identified original, ground-breaking research as a 'heresy' within the ranks of the Party; a wholly unfounded yet highly destructive accusation, even allowing for the fact that many notable academics and party members and supporters rushed to Caudwell's defence. The attack on Caudwellian Thought, based on a (quite possibly wilful) misreading of and an over-reliance upon *Illusion and Reality* caused lasting damage to Caudwell's reputation,

even amongst those most sympathetic to him.[4] As has been noted in this thesis[5], if Lysenkoism had been accepted as the ideological template for all sciences, not merely biology, then any theorist whose works ran counter, in any appreciable way, to Lysenkoisim - as did Caudwell's - would be ostracised. Given when this happened, just after the most bloody war in human history when genetics and eugenics were used to destructive ends by the nazi-fascists, it understandable that the intention of the CPSU(b) and allied Communist parties was to eradicate this trend, certainly within their own ranks and amongst those organisations and individuals supportive to them.[6] I would argue, strongly, for this conclusion because of this pressure being placed on the Left and because of the mechanistic and vulgar theses that were being promulgated by the CPGB in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

However, it cannot be stressed too strongly that Caudwell was *not* arguing for a genotypical explanation for *all* human cultural phenomena; far from it and, just as importantly, even his most severe critics never accused him of any form of racism which is, of course, completely untenable. Caudwell never claimed, and I believe he never would have claimed in the future had he lived, that the biological foundation was the sole driving force in human existence any more than a good Marxist would ever make a claim that *economic* determinism was the singular cause of human progress. However, the Second World War, of which Caudwell knew nothing, although he took part, fatally, in a forerunner of the wider conflict, was the cause, indirectly, of the rejection of his theses in the aftermath of the destruction and the ensuing Cold War.

E. P. Thompson says that '[T]he entire body of Caudwell's work may be read as a polemic against mechanical materialism of this kind, masquerading as Marxism.'(7)

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[4] See E. P. Thompson's dismissal of Caudwell's works as potential Marxist classics. Thesis chapter 4 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate'. (150) p. 137.
[5] Chapter 8, 'Heredity and Development'.
[6] See 'The World Congress for Peace' Wroclaw, August 1948. Thesis chapter 8, 'Heredity and Development'. p. 266. (71)

Indeed. Thompson, after quoting Cornforth,[7] notes that, '[w]e have come a long way from those happy days of Marxist certainty',(8) which I agree with, although the scientific foundations of Marxism, make it, for millions the most reasonable, rational and progressive doctrine for the advancement of humanity; Caudwell was the living proof of this in the manner in which he conducted his researches, his political work and, indeed, his life[8] itself, even to its tragic end. As E. P. Thompson has said of the 1950s Caudwell Controversy '[f]inally, it will be argued, Caudwell's heresy, or his creative impulse, is not exhausted yet.'(8) It is without doubt that, in the words of Peter Fuller and Christopher Pawling, Caudwell was one of the best and finest[9] of Marxists. His refutation of mechanical materialism may well have led to his damning in the eyes of the CPGB but this is no diminishment of Caudwell as a critic or a Marxist; rather it is to his credit that he wrote and acted thus.

To end, let Caudwell's words give credence to his exceptional powers of insight and intellectual creativity:

> That everything which comes into being must pass away; that all is fleeting, all is moving; that to exist is to be like the fountain and have a shape because one is never still - is the theme of all art because it is the texture of reality. Man is drawn to life because it moves from him; he has desires as ancient and punctual as the stars; love has a poignant sweetness

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[7] 'The energy of a man[sic] is itself a form of the motion of matter, just as the consciousness of man is a reflection of matter. Any other idea of energy or consciousness is idealism and mysticism.' 'Caudwell and Marxism'. *The Modern Quarterly*. 6. 4. p. 266. *Winter. 1950-51.*: London.

[8] These words readily apply to Caudwell: 'It is not enough to know what ought to be done - one must also have the courage to carry it out. One must be ready to do anything, at any cost, which is of real service to the working class. One must be capable of subordinating one's whole personal life to the interest of the proletariat.' Georgy Dimitrov. Preface to *The Life of Ernst Thaelmann* Quoted in: *For the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism. Report to the 7th Congress of the Communist International. Moscow. 1935.* London: Red Star Press. 1975. p. 7.

[9] *Beyond the Crisis in Art.* London: Writers and Readers Co-operative, Ltd. 1980. p. 32. See this thesis chapter 1, 'Introduction' (6) p.3, and *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature.* London: Macmillan. 1989. p. 118. This thesis chapter 4, 'Caudwell, his Critics and the Caudwell Debate.' (77) p. 112.

> and the young life pushes aside the old; these are qualities of being as enduring as man. Man too must pass away.(10)

Man too must pass away, both collectively *and* individually and Caudwell's individual loss was an incalculable tragedy for the collective. Caudwell's prodigious creativity, his scrupulousness and his unorthodoxy still have, and no doubt will have, a powerful appeal, but we cannot know the future or what might have been. Had Caudwell lived what would he have said and, just as importantly, what would he have *done*? Nobody knows or *can* know. Let Caudwell's works and his life stand as they are, for they are truly monumental.

Chapter End Notes

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5. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. p. 169.

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7. E. P. Thompson. 'Caudwell'. *The Socialist Register.* (Editors.): Ralph Miliband and John Saville. London. Merlin Press. 1977. p. 248.

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9. Christopher Caudwell. *Illusion and Reality.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. p. 329.

12. Appendix: Caudwell Obituaries

We should never make the mistake of considering Caudwell a merely obscure, bookish individual who vanished without a trace. The copious obituary notices that followed his death bear witness to the extraordinary concern many felt at the loss of this extraordinarily gifted young man. The *Evening News* of the 11th of March, 1937 reported that 'Mr. Christopher St. John Sprigg has lost his life while fighting with the International Brigade near Madrid it is announced to-day. Mr Sprigg was aged 28[sic] and lived at Ruxley Heights, Claygate, Surrey.[1] He went to Spain last December.'(1)

Luminaries such as W. H. Auden, J. B. Priestley, Julian Huxley, Storm Jameson and D. N. Pritt K. C., put their names to a Christopher Sprigg Memorial Fund which was:

> [A] fund to provide an ambulance for the International Brigade in Spain is being raised in memory of Christopher St. John Sprigg, the young poet and novelist who died heroically in February on the Jarama River fighting with the English[sic] Battalion.[...] A comrade, describing his death wrote: 'Sprigg had been doing great work with his machine gun. The company commander, Briskey the Dalston busman, gave the orders to retire.
>
> 'Sprigg stayed behind and covered the withdrawal with the Moors less than 20 yards away. He died fighting on the hill.
>
> 'Of the 600 hundred who went into battle only 200 hundred are left.'[Quotations, editor's.](2)

The *Daily Herald* announced that a ward in a new base hospital for the Spanish Peoples' Army between Valencia and Madrid was to be named after Christopher St. John Sprigg.(3) *British United Press* and *Reuters* also reported his death in much the same manner.(4)

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[1] Obviously the Press, in this instance, had one of Caudwell/Sprigg's previous addresses here.

The Times notes that:

> [H]e had corrected the proofs of his most ambitious work "Illusion and Reality." This is a history of poetry through the ages bound up with a survey of man's[sic] constant struggle to be free.(5)

The New Statesman says that 'The *Punch* reviewer has written: 'The country has lost with "Christopher Caudwell" an original and constructive thinker, and just possibly the human race in an hour of change a potential leader.'[Editor's quotation.](6) Also noted is Caudwell's activism in the Peace Council.(7)

Throughout, Caudwell/Sprigg is described as 'heroic', 'gifted', 'committed' and brave', and '[a] man whose quiet charm was allied to a remarkable intellect.'(8) There was a Memorial Meeting at Bow, East London, for Caudwell and another fallen Comrade, Ernest Paul. The Chairman, E. B. Sell, said 'We say definitely that these two comrades have set an example to the whole of the working class in the world. Their example should be followed. Where they have led our steps, we will also follow.'(9) These comments would not have been made had Caudwell been the recluse that he is, even now, purported to be. Caudwell's loss was, as noted in this thesis' 'Conclusion' and throughout was, indeed, incalculable.

Chapter End Notes

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2. Ibid. *Evening News.* 11th March, 1937.
3. Ibid. *Daily Herald.* 21st December, 1937.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. *The Times.* 11th March, 1937.
6. Ibid. *The New Statesman.* 26th June, 1937.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. Various.
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