JAMES LESLIE MITCHELL (LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON):
A STUDY IN POLITICS AND IDEAS IN
RELATION TO HIS LIFE AND WORK

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The research and writing of this thesis were undertaken entirely by myself. To the best of my knowledge, all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed
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Abstract of Thesis

James Leslie Mitchell (1901-1935), alias Lewis Grassic Gibbon, produced 14 full-length works of fiction and non-fiction, two volumes of short stories, co-produced a book with C.M. Grieve, and contributed articles on a diversity of subjects to a variety of magazines and periodicals. Born into a crofting environment in the north east of Scotland, he is best known for his trilogy, *A Scots Quair* (1932-34), set in that part of the world and written under his pen-name. Yet Mitchell spent all his adult life away from the croft, including nearly ten years in the armed forces, before he settled in Welwyn Garden City where he produced the bulk of his work as a writer. Mitchell and his work are grounded in the politics and intellectual preoccupations of his time so it is the nature, source and transmission of certain dominant ideas which are given prominence in this study.

Following some preliminary remarks in the Prologue, Chapter One provides a biographical sketch and then proceeds to discussion of the reasons why Mitchell was attracted to socialism from an early age.

Chapter Two investigates the parallels which it is held exist between his first two novels and the writer's own life.

Chapter Three examines the way in which Mitchell's ambivalence to the country and to the city gains expression in his work.

Chapter Four attempts to locate his work and his own political development in respect of the leftward shift of opinion associated with the 1930's.

Chapter Five contrasts the two antagonistic world views which gain expression in *A Scots Quair*.

Chapter/
Chapter Six investigates Mitchell's appreciation and transmission of the ethical difficulties involved in a hardening of revolutionary political attitudes.

Chapter Seven concentrates on the theology of Manicheism and how Mitchell, possibly following the example of H.G. Wells, found in the central tenet of that belief a source of solace in respect of the shortcomings of the Modern Age.

Chapter Eight extends this argument by seeking to show how Mitchell sought to accommodate the political perspectives of Marxism with the perceived moral validation provided by the Manichean schema.
I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of the following institutions for the assistance they rendered in relation to my research: The National Library of Scotland; Edinburgh Central Public Library (especially the staff in the Scottish Library); Edinburgh University Library; The University of Illinois; Aberdeen University Library; Aberdeen Trades Council; Aberdeen W.B.A.; The Northeast of Scotland Library Service; Grampian Regional Archives; BBC Radio (Scotland); and The Ministry of Defence, Army and Airforce Records Sections.

In addition, I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of individuals who rendered assistance in a variety of ways. In this respect I wish to thank Professor Shepperson, Reverend Dr. Andrew Ross along with other members of the University staff. I am also grateful to Mr. J S Munro; Dr. D.F. Young; Dr. W.J. Donnelly; Mr J Gray, and Mr R McLuckie. I also wish to record my appreciation of the guidance provided by Mr Owen Dudley Edwards.

I am indebted to the following people who were kind enough to reply to my enquiries seeking biographical and other material relating to Mitchell: Viscount Arbuthnott; Robert Cooney; Lord Ritchie-Calder; J. Randall Evans; Howard Fast; Margaret Fraser; Cuthbert Graham; C.M. Grieve; Nan Jeans; Robert Lemon; Walter Marsden; Helen Riddoch; R. Geoffrey Trease, and Rebecca West.

I am particularly indebted to the following: Mrs Anne Donnelly, who typed this thesis, bringing order out of chaos. Mrs Ray Mitchell who granted me access to private and unpublished material and whose kindness in inviting me into her home and sharing her memories of her late husband exceeded the normal bounds of hospitality. My parents for their confidence and support over many years. Finally, I owe the greatest debt of all to my wife, Rose, and our children, who shouldered the burden this project imposed with humour and support.
Two theses and one full length book, along with a number of articles and references are all that exist in respect of scholarly analysis of Mitchell's work. Both D.F. Young and G.A.J. Watt's theses, completed within the Departments of English Literature of, respectively, the Universities of Aberdeen and Exeter, adopt a predominantly literary perspective in their investigation of Mitchell's work. In his thesis and his book Young advances the argument that Mitchell's work is informed by the Diffusionist interpretation of man's pre-history. Watt follows Young in the conviction that Diffusionism provided Mitchell with an emotionally satisfying explanation in respect of the shortcomings of modern civilisation. The latter augments this argument with the contention that Mitchell displays evidence of two antagonistic elements in his psyche identifiable as intellectuality and humanitarianism. The former is held to have led Mitchell towards revolutionary politics and the latter to an advocacy of the need for individual self-realisation. While it is undeniable that Mitchell was attracted to Diffusionism, and particularly the notion of man's essential benevolence and innocence, I believe that the distinction between intellectuality and compassion advanced by Watt is a false dichotomy. Moreover I believe that Diffusionism provided Mitchell with only one element in an amalgam of beliefs which are conveyed through his work and which provided meaning and sustenance for a basically unsure individual. The other and to my mind more important/

1. These are D.F. Young, "The Relevance of the Non-Fiction Works to the Novels of Lewis Grassic Gibbon", Ph.D., Aberdeen University, 1969, and G.A.J. Watt, "Paths to Utopia - A Study of the Fiction of James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassic Gibbon)", Ph.D., Exeter University, 1977. To the best of my knowledge one other thesis has been submitted (October, 1982), within the Department of English Literature at Aberdeen University. This thesis, by Mr D Malcom, bears no relation to my own.
important aspects of his thought are to be found in his immersion in and conception of the left-wing politics of his time, particularly those deriving from Marxism. The other and ultimately related aspect is the extent to which Mitchell was disposed towards the spiritual and moral values contained in Manicheism which is both an extension and variant of Christianity. I believe it to be the case, that in his attempt to reconcile the teleological and soteriological aspects of Marxism and Manicheism, Mitchell was attempting the unification of the material and spiritual aspects of man's quest to understand and to change the world.

It is appropriate that in the last year of his life Mitchell should have produced *Scottish Scene* with C.M. Grieve. Throughout his long career Grieve may be seen as having attempted to sustain a conception of life from the basis of a materialist cradle, even if in poems like the early lyrics, "On a Raised Beach" and "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle", he clearly broaches the metaphysical and spiritual. Despite, in a sense, trying to out-do Grieve in the strength of his invective against the perceived ills besetting Scotland and the world besides, Mitchell's left-wing perspectives were yet intimately enmeshed in his acute sense of the moral validation to be derived from spiritual values. The fine counterpoints provided in *Scottish Scene* between Mitchell's and Grieve's treatment of urban life and the depression, the contemporary literary scene, modern Scotland, the land and the Scottish past, political leaders and political beliefs is a remarkable feat given that Mitchell produced his contribution in Welwyn Garden City, and Grieve his, in the far north of Scotland. Underlying the differences of emphasis and belief manifested in *Scottish Scene* - Mitchell demolishing Ramsay MacDonald and Grieve praising Major E.H. Douglas under the/

2. The simplified spelling of Manichean has been employed throughout.
3. Published under their pen names in 1934.
the shared title of "Representative Scots" in a book typified by Christopher Harvie as "shooting-up bourgeois Scotland" both men can be seen seeking not so much to analyse modern Scotland, but what made them both hurt and hope for humanity in general. The nature of Mitchell's emotional intolerance of suffering co-mingled with a hope that the finer aspects of humanity would ultimately triumph is a key consideration leading to an appreciation of the man and his work. There is a distinct movement in his fiction from concern for the self and personal satisfaction towards self-abnegation and sacrifice for the sake of humanity. I have tried to relate this movement to his youthful attraction to socialism and how, as he grew older, his appreciation of the moral basis upon which much of left-wing politics rests helped shape the nature of his work. It has also been my purpose to show how the transition from a rural background to urban life affected Mitchell and also how we may view him in terms of the left-wing pre-occupations of his day. The use to which he put the Manichean notion of a real and enduring struggle between good and evil - possibly absorbed from some of the work of H.G. Wells - when combined with his political views provided him with a vision of man's salvation which was to be effected by revolutionary political struggle.

I have approached this study of Mitchell's life and work with a sympathy for the man and his ideas because I believe there is something of relevance to the present age in his thought. I have not however forfeited critical judgement. Because I have been fortunate in having interviewed and corresponded with a number of his friends and acquaintances, including his late wife, I have been aware of the dangers of adopting a reductivist approach from such testimony. I have tried to/

to be as fastidious as possible in using unsubstantiated testimony. By
and large therefore personal and written testimony has only been used
where more than one respondent has attested to a particular view, or
where Mitchell's own work suggests a particular perspective or con-
clusion. Nonetheless, since Mitchell wrote in order to give expression
to his emotions and ideas I have found the testimony of those who knew
him to be a valuable resource. Since some of the information received
was superfluous or inappropriate to my needs I have included it in a
short appendix.

I have tried to relate Mitchell's views to his historical location
and to expose certain themes, motifs and, in the case of his attitude to
pain and suffering, obsessions. To a large extent the manner in which
Mitchell expressed his views has determined the structure of this thesis.
It would have been possible to attempt a novel by novel, work by work
approach after the manner employed by Young and Watt. Whereas I have
accorded Mitchell's major fiction detailed and sustained attention, to
have emulated the example of the aforementioned throughout would have
been to ignore the extent to which dominant ideas are found dispersed
across almost the entire range of his work. In this respect it can be
asserted that Mitchell sometimes displays an exasperating tendency to
introduce an idea in his work, develop it to a certain point and then
retreat from the edge, as it were, before the nature and extent of
that idea becomes manifest and therefore amenable to critical evalu-
ation. In general therefore I have found the most profitable method
has been to range across the breadth of his work in the context of cer-
tain themes. In so doing I have applied the criteria of literary
criticism where it has a bearing on the formulation and transmission of
certain dominant ideas. Since a major aspect of my task has involved
an investigation into the historical conditions within which his ideas
originated I have also utilised the methodology applicable to historical/
historical analysis. I have tried to ensure that this cross-disciplinary approach has strengthened my thesis.

Page references to Mitchell's work are in all cases, with the exception of A Scots Quair, to the first editions. In the case of the Quair they are to the Pan paperback edition of 1976. In addition some of his short stories were first published in The Cornhill magazine under different titles from those assigned them on their later inclusion in The Calends of Cairo and Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights. I have used the titles given them in the above two volumes.
CHAPTER 1:
Leslie Mitchell

a) A Sketch of his Life and Background

James Leslie Mitchell was born on February 13th, 1901 at Hillhead of Segget, Auchterless in Aberdeenshire, the third son of a crofter, James Mitchell, and his wife, Lilias Grassic Gibbon. Previous to his marriage James Mitchell had been a farm labourer and crofter. After a brief stay in Canada he worked for a time as a foreman with a firm of Aberdeen building contractors. Shortly before Leslie was born James Mitchell took a seven year lease on the small croft of Segget. Mitchell's mother was herself the daughter of a crofting family from nearby Kildrummy.¹

For the next seven years Mitchell lived with his parents and two older brothers, George and John, at Segget until his father's lease expired and they were forced to move to Bloomfield, an equally small and unrewarding farm in the neighbouring county of Kincardineshire. Bloomfield lies some three miles outside the village of Arbuthnott with Inverbervie three miles to the east and Laurencekirk five miles south-west. Stonehaven, the nearest town of any size, is ten miles distant and Aberdeen is about twenty-five miles to the north. Except for occasional visits to an aunt and uncle in Aberdeen, Mitchell's experience of life was almost entirely centred around the neighbourhood of Bloomfield until his mid-teens.²

¹ I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell: Lewis Grassic Gibbon, (Edinburgh, 1966) p.3. Munro's work remains the only authoritative account of Mitchell's life, and it is from this source that the following biographical background is derived. Throughout this thesis, however, the personal and written testimony of some of Mitchell's friends and acquaintances are introduced where it is felt they add new perspectives to our understanding.

² Ray Mitchell, personal testimony to present writer. Although Ray Mitchell did not know him well during his youth, she was sure that the family would not have visited their relations in Aberdeen more than once or twice a year at the outside. Mitchell stayed with his parents in Aberdeen for a short time during 1908 and 1909. See Appendix III.
Mitchell's life on the croft in the inhospitable environment of the north-east of Scotland was typical of the area and the time. Ian Carter has argued that the vicissitudes of the crofters' struggle for existence helped create a people of stubborn and determined independence. If this is so, Mitchell may be seen as having inherited much of this independence of manner, but he was not to follow in the footsteps of his father by working the land. In the struggle for survival everyone was expected to lend a hand around the croft, but the young Leslie Mitchell was, at best, a reluctant helper. More often than not, it is reported, he was to be found with his 'head buried in a book', having deserted his duties around the croft. By nature a thoughtful and studious boy, Mitchell recalled later how, at the age of nine, he:

"developed a passion for archaeology"

According to some of his contemporaries he was often to be seen searching for the stone age flints which were sometimes to be found in the locality.

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Robert Lemon, written testimony to present writer 7/3/78, Mitchell's boyhood friend in his Bloomfield days agrees that the Mitchells seldom went far from their croft. Henceforth personal and written testimony to the present writer is indicated thus: the name of the respondent is followed by the letters 'PT' to indicate personal testimony, and 'WT' for written testimony. In the latter case the date of the respondent's letter is cited. The date of meetings with individuals supplying personal testimony is to be found in the Note on Sources, Appendix I.

3. I.Carter Farm Life in North-east Scotland, 1840-1914; The Poor Man's Country (Edinburgh, 1979), passim.
Mitchell's independence of manner is discussed in the context of his feelings for the land in Chapter 3 following.

James Kidd challenges this view of Mitchell's attitude to working on his father's croft in a letter to The Scotsman, 1/6/66.
My contacts with Mitchell's friends of this period tend to substantiate Munro's claim, Robert Lemon contending that as he got older Mitchell actually refused to work on the croft. Robert Lemon, WT, 24/11/77.

5. Quoted from an interview with Mitchell by Louis Katin transcribed in an article entitled "Author of Sunset Song", The Evening News, Glasgow, 16/2/33.

6. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.11.
His interest in archaeology suited his solitary instincts, remaining with him for life and, along with his voracious reading, tended to cut him off from his fellows, so much so that he described himself as having been a "boor" at school. To the anguish of his parents it became increasingly apparent that their third son was not like the other children around him as his interests continued to centre around the world of books and ideas. There was therefore a certain amount of tension between Mitchell and his parents as he grew into adolescence.

When he was twelve years old a new headmaster was appointed to the school at Arbuthnott which Mitchell attended. This was significant for the boy as Alexander G-ray helped develop his intellectual interests where his previous teachers had concentrated on little more than the traditional 'three R's'. G-ray took a particular interest in Mitchell and soon the boy was working his way through the contents of the school library as well as borrowing books from the local Church of Scotland minister, the Reverend Peter Dunn. Having recognised his potential, Alexander G-ray put his own library at Mitchell's disposal, and sometimes even defended Leslie against his parents' complaints that their son neglected his duties on the croft because of his fondness for reading. The result of this was a friendship between Mitchell and his dominie which lasted until Mitchell's death.

7. Louis Katin, "Author of Sunset Song".
8. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.23.
9. Mitchell's relationship with the Reverend Peter Dunn is discussed in Chapter 8.
10. Alexander G-ray, from the text of an interview with Dr D.F. Young, conducted in 1967, which Dr Young has been kind enough to permit me to reference. It is due to Alexander G-ray's perception of Mitchell's talent that some of his school essay books have survived. Extracts of these are to be found in Lewis Grassic Gibbon, A Scots Hairst, (London, 1967).
The sensitivity and perception noticed by Gray in the young Leslie Mitchell tended to isolate him from his classmates and force him increasingly into literate and informed adult company. From the age of twelve or thirteen Mitchell was engaging local people, like Charlie Smith the roadman, Robert Middleton and Robert Lemon senior, in discussions which ranged over such diverse topics as religion, politics, inventions and primitive man. Robert Lemon, Mitchell's only close boyhood friend, recalls how Mitchell would converse with his (Lemon's) father and other adults with little sense of his own precocity. 

Although not unkind, Mitchell's parents seemed to have lacked an understanding of their son's perception and sensitivity. Alexander Gray remarked that Mitchell would often turn to his books for comfort as "he had a very unhappy home". The Bible was one very important source of comfort for Leslie Mitchell in these formative years. Even although he later came to disavow organised religion, the legacy of this early exposure to the teleological promise of Christianity made a profound and lasting impact.

11. Charlie Smith, the Council roadman, had socialist sympathies, Robert Middleton was to be Mitchell's future father-in-law and Robert Lemon was a local crofter, and father of Mitchell's schoolboy friend, Robert Lemon. See Appendix I.


13. Ray Mitchell, PT.


15. Mitchell's early exposure to religion and its effect on the development of his thought is discussed in Chapter 8.
It is recorded that as he grew older Mitchell spent "every penny" he could earn on books. Running errands and doing odd jobs for George and John, his brothers, provided the money for such acquisitions, and in particular the work of his favourite author, H.G. Wells. Where the measured prose of the Bible offered the hope of perfection in the next world, the work of H.G. Wells added the weight of science to Mitchell's growing belief that earthly prospects could and should offer a better future for mankind. Robert Lemon recalls that Mitchell talked at length to his (Lemon's) father about Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), which Mitchell had read before the age of thirteen, and H.G. Wells' *Mankind in the Making* (1914) which elaborated on the Darwinian hypothesis. His reading material was, however, not always this heavyweight, and his youthful imagination was fired by the science-fiction and adventure novels of H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard.

It is, of course, most unlikely that the claims upon religious belief advanced by the Bible seemed to Mitchell in any way epistemologically incompatible with the scientific bias of Darwin and Wells. This factor was to become of some importance later in life when Mitchell sought an interpretation of existence which would sustain both aspects of knowledge.


18. Alexander Gray from the interview with D.F. Young, attests to this interest.
Robert Lemon, *WT*, 16/11/77, confirmed that Mitchell was fascinated by the prospect of all types of exploration and adventure.
As it was, Wells' vision of man risen from the beasts, but on his way to conquer the universe, was a thrilling and invigorating concept which, when he began writing, Mitchell partially adopted and adapted for his own purposes.

In 1915 Mitchell's parents were successfully prevailed upon to allow Leslie to accept a bursary, enabling him to attend Mackie Academy in Stonehaven. However, what should have been the start of a promising and enjoyable period in his life turned out to be something of a nightmare. Without the steadying influence of Alexander Gray, Mitchell's period at Stonehaven lasted no more than a tempestuous ten months. Mitchell excelled in English to the detriment of his other school subjects and, in consequence, he soon fell foul of a number of his teachers, including the rector of the Academy. Branded a truculent and fractious pupil, Mitchell displayed his deep unhappiness during this period by running away twice and attempting to enlist in the Army. Frustrated in his attempts to escape, what was for him the oppressive atmosphere of the Academy, he returned to school under an even greater cloud than that under which he had departed. He was involved in a scene concerning a stolen book before the inevitable happened: after a furious row in the classroom he walked out, never to return. By the time Mitchell began attending Mackie Academy he had developed a keen interest in left-wing politics which may have had something to do with his abrupt departure from the school. In The Thirteenth Disciple Mitchell portrays Malcom Maudslay as storming out of the classroom following an altercation with the rector of the Academy at Dundon/
Dundon when his anti-war arguments are interpreted as "pro-German" sentiments. Given that Mitchell had actually tried just a short time previously to enlist in the Army and the fact that Maudslay is later described as being in favour of the war effort it is perhaps best to discount politics as being the immediate cause of Mitchell's departure from Stonehaven Academy. Yet, while not precipitating his departure from the school, Mitchell's left-wing politics did have a bearing on his unpopularity with his critics and detractors among teaching staff and classmates.

In his parents' eyes Mitchell's actions at Stonehaven were inexcusable, having 'brought disgrace to their door'. His relations with them worsened perceptibly and the atmosphere in the Mitchell household was decidedly unpleasant. In the light of these circumstances, the following exchange between Malcom Maudslay and his father would certainly seem to indicate the depth of the real-life rift which existed between parents and son following his flight from Mackie Academy:

"'Foe did ye do it laddie? Could ye no think o the disgrace to yer fouk? ... Ye'll get out o this as soon as ye can get a fee. D'ye hear? I'll no hae ye bidin at hame, livin' aff yer fouk, nae use to anybody. Ye can get a fee'. 'You can go to hell', said Malcom, and rose up and left the kitchen".

21. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.64. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, (Aberdeen, 1973) pp.38-40, argues convincingly that the early part of The Thirteenth Disciple is markedly autobiographical. This aspect of Mitchell's work is dealt with in Chapter 2.

22. The Thirteenth Disciple, pp. 61, 64.

23. This is discussed in section b) of the present chapter.

24. I.G. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.31, claims that during this period 'harsh words were passed' between Mitchell and his parents.

It is unlikely that, in real life, Mitchell managed to act as complacently as Maudslay appears to do after such a heated exchange. In any event Mitchell resisted his father's attempts to make him take a "fee", and in the summer of 1917 he found a job with the Aberdeen Daily Journal as a junior reporter. Removed from the immediate ambit of his parents' concern and recriminations, he seems to have spent a happy two years lodging with the family of a fellow junior reporter in Aberdeen until early 1919.

In February of that year Mitchell took up a post with the Scottish Farmer in Glasgow, again as a junior reporter, but within months he was dismissed for padding expense accounts. Of this period in his life practically nothing is known.

He arrived in Glasgow friendless, and we know from his essay on the city that he came to hate the poverty that he found there. Perhaps Mitchell's attempts at fraud can be attributed to the emotional strain which the transition from Aberdeen to Glasgow involved for a still unsure youth, although it is impossible to make any accurate judgements in this respect. Perhaps, had his indiscretion amounted to the 'normal' padding of expense claims, Mitchell would have been subjected to discipline short of dismissal. As it was, his alteration of some receipts accompanying/  

26. Fee, used in this sense, indicates the payment of a fixed wage to a farm labourer or servant for his services. In the context of the crofting community it can also entail the radically different right to land held in freehold, or land rented for a fixed period. Given John Mitchell's economic situation, it is safe to assume that his urgings were intended to make his son take a job as a farm labourer.

27. According to I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.24, these lodgings were with George MacDonald and his parents in St Mary's Place, Aberdeen.

28. I.S. Munro, ibid, p.28, gives Mitchell's Glasgow address as 152, High Street. There is no account of his activities, apart from those connected with his employment, during this period.

accompanying his claims were so clumsily done that it attracted immediate attention and retribution. He almost certainly did not need the money for necessities, as he was paid a wage of £2 5s Od per week. The igno-
miny of discovery and dismissal plunged Mitchell into new depths and, as a result, he rather clumsily made an attempt on his own life.

Leslie Mitchell moved back to his parents' croft at Bloomfield, only to be met with the full force of their anger at his behaviour and the embarrassment it had caused. So just when the eighteen year old youth needed the help and reassurance of family, he was effectively deprived of it. His recuperation at Bloomfield was further hampered by his father's continuing insistence that he should take a fee and work the land, as his brothers, John and George, were doing. Mitchell, how-
ever, resisted these efforts and, with a career in journalism closed to him, opted for the classic course of escape.

By September 1919 Mitchell was aboard ship, bound for Mesopotamia, having joined the British Army in August. While staying with his parents following the suicide attempt he had met a former classmate from the neighbouring farm of Hareden. It was the growth of his friendship with/

30. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.28. Mitchell was able to supplement his wages with free-lance work, including theatre reviews. That he did not need to 'fiddle' his expenses is indicated by the fact that five years later the average wage of an employed adult male worker was only £3. See E.J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.221. £2 5s Od per week for a teenager in 1919 was a fair wage. A.L. Bowey, Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom 1914-1920, (Oxford, 1921), p.113 gives building labourer's weekly summer wages as between £1 9s Od and £3 5s 2d in 1920.


32. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p. 32. See also Mitchell's Army and Air Force Service, Appendix II.
with Rebecca (Ray) Middleton which helped see Mitchell through his tour of duty which lasted until 1923. Throughout his travels with the Army in the Middle East he corresponded with Ray Middleton and, on August 15, 1925, they were married. 33

Mitchell's Army service involved him in extensive travel in the Middle East, and especially Egypt. While life in the British Army was hardly idyllic at this time he was invigorated by his new experiences. This is clearly seen in one of the letters he wrote to Ray Middleton from Egypt. The gloom and despondency which marred some of his adolescence had by now evaporated as he relished the intellectual stimulus of travel. Yet the sentiments expressed in the following letter betray something of his continuing emotional instability and may, indeed, amount to an exercise in self-deception, given the realities of life in the British Army:

"Do you know what I did last Sunday? Rode across the desert on a camel to Hebron. ... And my city prototype ... was in church in England, or taking his girl to some idiotic haunt, or yawning over a novel. Ye gods! I can see him! To think I might have been as that! Middle class, smug, respectable, self-satisfied, with an assured position and a comfortable bank balance. Right glad I am to be what I am: without a future - or care of it; disreputable, a careless dreamer of dreams and a maker of songs that will never be sung; desiring always what I have not ..." 34

33. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.42.

34. Letter from J Leslie Mitchell to Ray Middleton, 19/12/21. Also quoted, in part, in Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.34.
It is of interest to note in passing that in this letter Mitchell should compare himself with the "middle class, smug, respectable and self-satisfied", and omit any mention of his peasant origins or political and emotional sympathy for the working class. Mitchell could, of course, have been doing what we all do from time to time: hiding from a painful reality. He was, after all, a private soldier in the British Army, with a record of dishonesty and attempted suicide in civilian life - hardly the background for his visions of himself as "a careless dreamer of dreams and a maker of songs". Underlying the heady self-confidence of this letter existed a much less sure individual who was anxious that he should not lose contact with Ray Middleton, his one firm friend at home.35 When his initial four year engagement came to an end in March 1923, Mitchell decided that he had had quite enough of army life in the Middle East and he declined to re-enlist.

Following his demobilisation Mitchell spent the next six months in London. Describing his experiences of this period, some ten years later in 1933, he revealed that he had not grown out of deceiving himself and others. Of these six months, covering the summer of 1923, Mitchell is recorded as having said that he:

"... lived in London and free lanced with short stories and archaeological articles no editor would take. In six months nearly starved to death. Managed to get on a ship bound for Yucatan where I roamed around studying ancient Mayan civilisation."36

35. Mitchell was capable of displaying quite distinct extremes of emotion in his letters to Ray Middleton during the period of his overseas service. This aspect is considered in Chapter 2.

36. Louis Katin, "Author of Sunset Song".
Ray Mitchell lost contact with her future husband at this time but she was sure that he did in fact try to live by his writing. But she also added that he was forced into a number of odd jobs, including that of a door-to-door salesman. As for his claim to have spent time in Yucatan, this is best discounted. Ray Mitchell was certain that her husband had never set foot in South America despite the fact that he seemed intent on propagating this myth. He even planned to include a photograph in his autobiography of:

"the author mapping in Yucatan" 38

It may be that this intended deception was designed to achieve practical results. At the time he was claiming to have been in Yucatan, in the interview with Louis Katin, he was also beginning work on his scholarly anthropological work, The Conquest of the Maya, published in 1934. It would certainly have given the work the mark of authority were it believed that the author had studied the area at first hand, rather than, as was the case, it having been written from sources available in the British Museum Library. 39

Whether or not Mitchell had been to South America, within six months of his having left the Army he had re-enlisted, this time as a clerk in the Air Force. 40 Any notions that Mitchell was pleased to once again be a member of the Armed Forces is qualified by a short sentence/

37. Ray Mitchell, PT.
38. Unpublished synopsis of autobiography entitled "Memoirs of a Materialist".
40. See Appendix II.
sentence in a letter he wrote to Ray Middleton shortly after his
re-enlistment on 31 August 1923. Gone is the romantic picture of him-
self as a "careless dreamer of dreams and a maker of songs" and in its
place the rather more accurate statement that:

"we are, nearly all we
soldiers, failures in life" 41

This time there was to be no exotic foreign posting; instead Mitchell's
service in the Air Force was spent at bases in or near London. There
were compensations, however, one of the most significant being that he
could treat his occupation more on the lines of a civilian job. He had
access to libraries and could pursue his literary interests and after
his marriage in August 1925 he was able to travel home at weekends, or
if their digs were convenient and his duties permitted, he could be home
at the end of each day. But even the occasion of his marriage was
tinged with sadness. Five months after setting up home, Ray Mitchell was
taken to Purley Cottage Hospital seriously ill. On 13 January 1926 she
gave birth to a boy, also called Ray Mitchell, who died after three days.42

Ray Mitchell's own life hung in the balance for several days, during
which her husband waited anxiously at her bedside. She recovered, and
in the early spring Leslie Mitchell used some of his leave to take his
wife on a short convalescent holiday in Devon. With the trauma of the
death of their first child behind them Leslie Mitchell pressed ahead
with his writing. Access to local libraries as well as the British
Museum Library was a consideration which became increasingly important
as he developed from writing pure fiction, in the form of short stories,
to the time when his first book, entitled Hanno, or the Future of
Exploration was published in 1928.

41. Quoted by I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.37. I can find no trace of
this letter among Mitchell's papers. See Chapter 2, Footnote 8.

42. The child was born 13/1/26 and died 16/1/26. From The General Register
1926; d.16. February, 1926," remains among Mitchell's papers. The opening
lines testify to the wretchedness of a baby's death: "Now that we've made
our sacrifice of mirth/ To agony, we'll seek respite in pain".
Mitchell had actually enjoyed his first success as a fiction writer just over a year after joining the Air Force. In October 1924 he won a short story competition in T.P.'s and Cassell's Weekly with an entry entitled "Siva Plays the Game". But, apart from the publication of the discursive, adventure-based Hanno, in 1928, it was 1929 before Mitchell succeeded in getting anything else into print.

Ray Mitchell recalled that these were lean years for her husband and his ambition to become a writer. But Mitchell persevered, pounding away at the old black typewriter which took pride of place on the dining table of their numerous digs. Some ten months before his period of service in the Air Force was due to end he achieved the breakthrough he had been waiting for. Leonard Huxley, the editor of The Cornhill magazine, agreed after a meeting with Mitchell to publish a series of short stories with an Egyptian setting. The first of these, "For Ten's Sake", appeared in the January 1929 issue of The Cornhill. Thirteen more followed under the title of Polychromata. Even so, the publication of one short book, Hanno, and the appearance of his short stories in The Cornhill could hardly be deemed sufficient evidence of Mitchell having attained the status of professional writer. But he was faced with a dilemma: on 31 August 1929 his engagement with the Air Force came to an end, and he had to choose between re-enlistment or seeking to achieve such status. After much uncertainty he chose the latter course.

Mitchell disliked life in the Air Force but he was also acutely aware/

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43. T.P.'s and Cassell's Weekly, 18 October 1924.

44. Ray Mitchell, PT. Some of the rooms they lived in from their marriage until the move to Welwyn Garden City late in 1931 were "just dreadful", according to Ray Mitchell.

45. Mitchell wrote fourteen stories for The Cornhill, not twelve as I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.56 contends.

46. Mitchell left the Air Force with the rank of Corporal and with good conduct reports.

47. Despite his dislike of Air Force discipline Mitchell was himself punctilious about certain matters. See Appendix I.
aware that it had provided the financial security which enabled him to pursue his writing.\textsuperscript{48} Despite the precarious nature of his financial position it must have seemed to him that he had spent enough time in the armed forces. Since leaving school late in 1916 until his twenty-ninth birthday in 1930, Mitchell had enjoyed just three and a half years as a civilian. He enjoyed only another five years of life, during which he worked indefatigably on stories, articles, books and pursued his interest in anthropology and revolutionary politics.

With the birth of their second child, a daughter, late in 1930, the Mitchells felt it essential to escape from the dreary round of digs in London.\textsuperscript{49} The chance of escape presented itself in the form of Welwyn Garden City, a new town then under construction on the outskirts of London. Mitchell was probably able to undertake this move as his first novel, \textit{Stained Radiance}, had been published in September 1930.\textsuperscript{50} He also remained in the Air Force Reserve until March of that year which meant he had some income apart from that accruing from sales of his works. It had, however, been a long haul as \textit{Stained Radiance} had been under preparation from 1927, and since its completion in 1929 had suffered rejection by numerous publishers. During Christmas 1931 the family moved into a flat in Edgar's Court, and from there to a semi-detached house in Handside Lane owned by the New Town Commission. In/

\textsuperscript{48}. Perhaps John Garland, the semi-autobiographical hero of \textit{Stained Radiance}, p.31, might have been speaking for Mitchell when he stated that "his stomach had conscripted him more surely than any Man Power Act could have done".

\textsuperscript{49}. Ray Mitchell, PT.

\textsuperscript{50}. \textit{Stained Radiance, A Fictionist's Prelude}, published by Jarrold's in September 1930. There is no way of telling how much this, nor the majority of Mitchell's work, yielded the author. Jarrold's, who published fourteen of Mitchell's seventeen books, had their records destroyed during the blitz in the Second World War. Letter from Jarrold's, 7/4/78.
In the pleasant surroundings of Welwyn, Mitchell gradually established himself as a writer, producing seventeen books, articles and short stories on topics as varied as anthropology and romantic science fiction. His death on 7 February 1935 came at a time when he seemed on the verge of realising his potential as a great and influential writer.

Mitchell experienced life in such differing locations as the northeast of Scotland, Glasgow, London, Cairo and the Middle East, before he finally settled in Welwyn Garden City. During his short life his childhood was tinged with the unhappiness which lack of understanding brings, his adolescence was marred by a suicide attempt, and his marriage began with the death of his son. Mitchell would never have made a crofter, like his father, nor was he able to develop through a career in journalism, while as a serviceman he was competent but unenthusiastic. Despite these tribulations he matured into a considerate husband and father and also went on to reach the brink of success as a writer. The nervous energy which had sparked-off his love of books and which, in his earlier years, brought him into conflict with parents and teachers, found an outlet in his work. It was to the shortcomings of life that Mitchell turned in his books. It would perhaps have been surprising if he had not, given that his life and experience were bounded and informed by the First World War, the emergence of Fascism, Nazism and the increasing economic dislocation of the Depression. But it was not simply that such momentous events informed and coloured Mitchell's outlook; ever since his early youth he was attracted to the doctrine of socialism and he never lost his commitment to the belief that contemporary class divisions were unnecessary and evil. As he grew to maturity it became increasingly apparent to Mitchell that there existed no essential difference between, for instance, the oppression of the Scots peasantry by landlord or factor/
factor and the plight of the urban working class condemned to long
shifts when work was plentiful, and idleness when it was not. This was
essentially the point C.M. Grieve made when he said of Mitchell that:

"He had a very strong social conscience
and was genuinely moved by the hardships
that the people round about him in
Kincardine and the Mearns were suffering
and he extended that, of course, by a
logical process, to include all the
unemployed and the destitute ex-soldiers,
and the destitute ex-soldiers' families
and so on, and it was widening out from
its purely local sentimental basis to
a real compassion against injustice
or poverty whenever he encountered it,
and that was the basis of his socialism."[51]

As Grieve remarked, the basis of Mitchell's socialism was the existence
in the writer of a deep-seated compassion coupled with a belief that the
struggle for justice transcends national boundaries, and even time itself.
It is held that Mitchell's work exemplifies a highly developed conscious-
ness of ethical considerations which may be identified as stemming from
the notion that it is the duty of the individual to help make the world
better for himself and others.

51. Hugh McDairmid (C.M. Grieve) from the talkscript of "The Reality
and the Romance", broadcast on Radio Four, BBC Scotland, 10 November
1971.
b) Mitchell and Socialism: An Outline of his Development

In common with many others, Mitchell was attracted to the doctrine of socialism, seeing in its promise a refutation of the more palpable evils of the world and a plan of action against them. Socialism also provided some indication of what a better future might hold. Quite what is implied by the term 'socialism' is dependent on many factors, not the least of which being the sheer diversity of opinion definable as socialist. This problem of definition is referred to in the introduction to Fried and Sanders' Documentary History of Socialist Thought:

"Some socialists are so committed to a rigorous use of state power to achieve their ends that they must be considered as more or less totalitarian, or, at any rate, quasi-totalitarian, but others are radically anti-authoritarian and some of these even want to eliminate the state altogether. Some are revolutionary (émeutiste would be a better word) and others are parliamentary; some are oracles of class struggle and others of class collaboration ... The variety is so great that one might be tempted to ask is there any such thing as socialism at all?"52

As Fried and Sanders point out, there are very real difficulties with an ideology where means and ends, their definition and inter-relationship are at once so diverse and, sometimes, imprecise. In addition to Fried and Sanders' observations it is necessary to consider the two rival definitions of socialism advanced by Raymond Williams.

The first of these/

these envisages socialist society as:

"a continuation of LIBERALISM: reform, including radical reform, of the social order to develop, extend and assure the main liberal values: political freedom, the ending of privileges and formal inequalities, social justice ..."

The second definition differs radically from the above in its conception of socialism as involving a complete restructuring of the class relationships - and arguably the abolition of class - within society. Thus, Williams contends that in terms of this alternative view:

"Real freedom could not be achieved, basic inequalities could not be ended, social justice (conceived now as a just social order rather than equity between the different individuals and groups produced by the existing social order) could not be established, unless society based on PRIVATE property was replaced by one based on social ownership and control." 53

Nowhere in his work does Mitchell attempt an outline of his political beliefs, 54 so it is inappropriate to attempt a too rigorous evaluation in terms of the definitions supplied by Fried and Sanders and by Williams. For the time being, bearing in mind Fried and Sanders' observations, it may be stated that Mitchell did come to believe in the validity of using revolutionary means on the basis that they were justified by the ends they were designed to achieve. 55 Moreover, his vision of a future society, although...
although only alluded to in his work, would seem to indicate that his conception of socialism was closer to the second aspect of Williams' definition than to the first. For the moment it is necessary to take one step back from the overall complexity of the issue in an attempt to establish why Mitchell should be attracted to socialism at all. In this respect his very personality and perception of life may be seen as underlying the growth of his commitment to revolutionary politics. From his early youth Mitchell was a sensitive and perceptive individual, and such characteristics coupled to the realities of his time and place seem to have attracted him to, and sustained him in, his socialist beliefs. Both from the testimony of his friends and through indications in his work, it may be seen that Mitchell was impelled towards socialism through an empathic response to suffering.

According to Alexander Gray, Mitchell became a socialist in his youth:

"from a fundamental hatred of suffering", 58

while Robert Lemon, Mitchell's schoolboy friend, recalls that:

"as a schoolboy he certainly had strong socialist leanings stemming from the social injustices of the time, like bad housing, health, etc" (sic) 59

56. Communist and Communism have been avoided in relation to Mitchell, the more general term socialist being preferred. This is because of the sectarian association of the term Communist with the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Great Britain. See R. Williams, Keywords, p.64.

57. See, in particular, chapters 5, 6 and 8.


Some thirteen years after his death Mitchell's widow, like Gray and Lemon, identified his compassion for suffering humanity as residing at the heart of his belief in socialism. According to Ray Mitchell his beliefs were motivated by:

"torment at the stupid cruelties and injustices of the world and (he) sought a philosophy for a new and better social order". 60

Similarly, Dorothy Tweed, a friend of the Mitchells in Welwyn Garden City, recalled an incident which is significant for its revelation of Mitchell's horror of suffering and its location as the basis for his political belief. According to Miss Tweed a story had appeared in the Daily Worker involving a young child who had been gnawed by a rat in the night. 61 This incident found its way into Cloud Howe where it serves the crucial role of impelling the Reverend Colquhoun to advocate revolutionary political change. 62 Miss Tweed recalled that Mitchell had been discussing the newspaper report with a friend who said he could not have felt worse about it had a hundred children undergone such torment. Mitchell's reply was that he would have felt a hundred times worse. The point of Mitchell's reply was not intended to diminish the level of his friend's compassion, but to emphasise the extent of his own. Mitchell was so affected by incidents of suffering he heard about that, as Ray Mitchell recalled, he quite regularly suffered nightmares as a result. 63 While Anne Shearsby recalls that:

"He was sensitive, to a point of hysteria, sometimes, to the suffering of the human race". 64

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61. Dorothy Tweed, "Reminiscences of Dorothy Tweed". I can find no such story in the Daily Worker although such a story may, of course, have appeared in another left-wing paper of the period.
63. Ray Mitchell, FT.
64. Ann Shearsby, "JT, 23/5/73."
Psychologically, empathy has been defined as:

"The term used to denote the ability to understand others through being able to call out in oneself responses identical with or similar to the responses of the others".\(^5\)

When Oscar Wilde, in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", wrote the lines:

"And through each brain on hands of pain
Another's terror crept",

he might have been describing Mitchell's empathic feelings for the agonies suffered by others. Mitchell did not call up an empathic response to suffering, one which he could control at will for the purposes of his writing. His feelings and their articulation, (certainly in terms of his nightmares) were located deep in his psyche to such an extent that one might be forgiven if, like C.M. Grieve and Ann Shearsby, we think we detect evidence of an unwholesome tendency in his work to amplify pain and suffering.\(^6\)

Many writers have been moved to use their work to rail against injustice and suffering and the fact that Mitchell should do so is not remarkable in itself. What is worthy of comment is that he apparently could not distance himself from the suffering he knew to exist with the consequence that his feelings emerge across the entire range of his work. This is so in the adventure-based *Nine Against the Unknown*, and it is no less evident in the ancient Rome of *Spartacus* or the twentieth century industrial Scotland in which *Grey Granite* is set.

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\(^6\) C.M. Grieve, PT. A Shearsby, WT, 5/11/77. Certainly E.B. Cruickshank thought that in *Spartacus* Mitchell had overstepped the mark in his depiction of suffering. This is dealt with shortly.
The urge to help those whose life is one long bout of torture lies behind the actions of several of the main characters in Mitchell's fiction. Pending a fuller investigation of each of the following characters and works, John Garland in *Stained Radiance*, Malcom (sic) Maudslay in *The Thirteenth Disciple*, Spartacus, the eponymous hero of Mitchell's historical novel, and Ewan Tavendale in *A Scots Quair* can be mentioned in this context. Thus, Malcom Maudslay, the central character of *The Thirteenth Disciple*, is tormented by his conception of the mass of humanity as:

"The dehumanized and wandering crucified". 67

Malcom's instinctive emotional response to suffering is reinforced by his friend Meierkhold's revulsion at the horrors of the Great War. Meierkhold is emotionally devastated at the news of each new casualty in the trenches of the 1914-1918 war. He is affected on a level that is almost physical by each single incident in a manner which mirrors Mitchell's own instinctive horror at the thought of rats feeding on a child's flesh, and Wilde's chilling expression of empathy with the condemned prisoner. Thus, the unfortunate Meierkhold:

"suffered agonies from the War. Each recorded battle, each list of casualties made him wince as if from a personal hurt". 68

Malcom is in complete sympathy with Meierkhold's feelings and it is from their friendship that he comes to the realisation that, although it is necessary to empathise with those who suffer, it is equally necessary to search for explanations and solutions. It is in fact the realisation that he must find an explanation for the existence of suffering which exists on/
on such a massive scale, and affects him so deeply that it eventually leads to Maleom's death.

Gershom Jezreel, the central character in *Image and Superscription*, is equally tormented by the existence of cruelty and suffering, although his response is ultimately to turn his back on it. Nevertheless, like Maudslay, Gershom's empathy with those who suffer can again be seen as reflecting Mitchell's own emotions. This is indicated by the depiction of Gershom's reactions when, as an adolescent, he reads Caesar's account of the campaign in Gaul. Gershom, like Mitchell, is actually physically affected:

"It made you go white, you closed your eyes, but again you'd go back, read on, nobody had ever felt it as you, Caesar wrote it cool and quiet, and his English editors penned calm notes, it was right, it was just, it was nothing. Nobody had ever seen it as you, the blood, how it spouted in a red-black stream, sprouting from a dozen pipettes ... nobody but you had heard the gruntings of agony, the screams of the weak, or thought of the horror and fear on the faces of those men who waited by the block for their turn ..."

Comparison between the immediacy of Mitchell's account of Caesar's barbarity and Arthur Koestler's depiction of those awaiting crucifixion in his novel *The Gladiators* is illuminating. Gershom's visualisation of the horror and fear on the victims' faces and the comparison with the calm detachment of the notes supplied by the English editors, allows Mitchell simply to state the fact for the passage to invite a similar visualisation in the mind of the reader. In contrast, Koestler distances both himself/

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(London, 1978), p.246, describes the emotional impact on the reader of published lists of casualties from the First World War: "Each page had photos of the faces ringed in black, beardless, adolescent faces unmarked by the bolder features of manhood. The sheer quantity still has power to numb the mind as one goes through the files of yellowing papers from every part of the country".

69. *Image and Superscription*, p.119-120.
himself and the reader through the depiction of a comparable scene and the almost calm, common-sense, observation of Fulvius, himself a victim:

"The black man's pupils have rolled behind his lids, he has covered up his nakedness; he has thrown himself back on the ground and groans and prays to the dismal gods of his homeland.

"That's no consolation', said the chronicler, Fulvius, hoarse with fear, for he could see the mail-clad soldiers coming towards them'."

It is perhaps unjust to compare these two passages and suggest that Mitchell possessed a compassion which Koestler lacked. Yet, the difference in tone and emphasis in the depiction of an almost parallel set of circumstances serves to draw the reader into visualisation of the awful terror of those who await mutilation in Mitchell's account. In Koestler's, our sympathies are somewhat dissipated by his virtual caricature of the negro who, eyes rolling grotesquely and naively covering his nakedness, abandons himself to the gods of his belief (as well he might in the circumstances!) and Fulvius' superior, realistic, but terribly cynical comments about a fellow human being in extremis. Such a comparison invites the conclusion that Mitchell felt too deeply about suffering to depict it in the dispassionate manner favoured by Koestler in the preceding passage.

The inclusion in Image and Superscription of the passage on Caesar not only exposes Mitchell's empathic response to suffering but may also indicate his antagonism to the glorification of the "strongman of destiny" discernible in the nineteenth century in the work of those like Thomas Carlyle and George Bernard Shaw. Such a conclusion may be drawn from Thomas Carlyle's "The Hero as King", Heroes and Hero Worship, (1841). Thus, "The Commander of Men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally/


71. Such a conclusion may be drawn from Thomas Carlyle's "The Hero as King", Heroes and Hero Worship, (1841). Thus, "The Commander of Men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally/
of Mitchell's depiction of Meierkhold, Maudslay and Jezreel's torment - suffering at the thought of suffering - is that by so doing the hurt of those actually involved might, in some way, be lessened. Perhaps this consideration goes some way to explain the preoccupation with suffering to be found in Mitchell's work. The fact that terrible events had befallen nameless individuals over countless years did nothing to diminish Mitchell's compassion. On the contrary, for Spartacus and Ewan Tavendale it is the very anonymity of such victims of history which impels each to seek revolutionary solutions. The heroes of Spartacus and Grey Granite, although separated by two millenia, nevertheless continue the identification with history's victims seen in the characters of Meierkhold, Maudslay and Jezreel. Indeed, despite the awesome historical gap separating them, Spartacus and Ewan undergo a remarkably similar identification with the dispossessed and downtrodden. Thus Spartacus feels:

"As though he were all of the hungered, dispossessed of all time ...", 72

while Ewan comes to a realisation of his perceived revolutionary duty in

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loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of Great Men". Heroes and Hero Worship, (London, 1897 edition), p.196.

In relation to George Bernard Shaw, V.G. Kiernan, "The Socialism of G.B.S.", New Edinburgh Review, No. 29, April, 1975, argues that Shaw displays a similar enthusiasm for the "man of destiny". In the context of Gershom's impassioned disgust at the "calm notes" of "English editors" on Caesar's atrocities in Gaul, it is appropriate to recall that Shaw thought Caesar to have acted with "a wise severity" out of "a duty of statesmanship". Quoted by Kiernan, ibid, from Shaw's Misalliance (London, 1932), p.185.

Mitchell's view of "Great Men" would seem to have more in common with the perspective which emerges in Bertold Brecht's poem "A Worker Reads History":

"Who built the seven towers of Thebes?
The books are filled with names of kings.
Was it kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone? ...

Caesar beat the Gauls,
Was there not even a cook in his army?

Every ten years a great man,
Who paid the piper?"

72. Spartacus, p.173.
in a passage laden with symbolic catechism. Like Spartacus, Ewan actually becomes as one with the victims as he feels:

"as though you were every scream and each wound, flesh of your flesh, blood of your blood ..." 73

There is an obvious, yet unobtrusive, political dimension to these instances of Maudsley, Meierkhold, Jezreel, Spartacus and Ewan's emotional involvement with those who suffer. In all cases it is the powerless majority who suffer at the hands of the powerful minority: for Maudsley and Meierkhold it is the nameless soldiers in the trenches of wartime France, for Gershom Jezreel it is the Roman legionaries of the Gallic Campaign, while for Spartacus and Ewan - the gladiator and the twentieth century political activist - it is the oppressed of all places and all time. Mitchell's depiction of suffering is almost always linked to the perceived class antagonisms of the world even when overt political comment is absent in particular instances. One of the best examples of the association of suffering with class antagonisms in a passage, where overt political comment is missing, is to be found in *Sunset Song*.

Even Chris Guthrie, though far removed in characterisation and temperament from Spartacus and Ewan, finds herself possessed by the awful realisation of what the Scots ruling class had inflicted on the Covenanters:

"...The Covenanting folk had screamed out and died while the gentry dined and danced in lithe, warm halls. Chris stared at the places, sick and angry and sad for these folk she could never help now, that hatred of rulers and gentry a flame in her heart, John Guthrie's heart." 74

Chris's instinctive "hatred of rulers" is inherited from John Guthrie, her father, having passed to her in the symbolism of the heart that is as one - "her heart, John Guthrie's heart" - in its bitter anger at the thought of/

73. *Grey Granite*, p.80.

74. *Sunset Song*, p.123
of the foul deeds of the gentry. It has passed down through the years in the same way that the rage of Spartacus against Roman slavery is transmitted and redefined in Ewan's rage against contemporary capitalism. Chris's angry compassion spills and tumbles out, the result of feelings deeper than political consciousness, although it is upon such emotions that the class consciousness of her son is based. Despite Chris's essentially class-based feelings towards the gentry and their victims, she never makes the transition to political activity and yet, from the evidence of the above passage, all the ingredients, in the form of pity, compassion and anger, are present for her to do just that.  

This angry compassion against injustice and suffering which underlies Mitchell's work, making implicit political comment upon class divided society, is also present in his non-fiction. Again, in the juxtaposition of the rich and powerful with the fate of their victims, Mitchell strives to make the same indictment of class divided society. In his biography of Mungo Park, the Scots explorer, the ruling class are epitomised by Park himself. Mitchell's portrait of Park in *Niger* reveals the latter as a cold and callous individual with few saving, humane graces. Mitchell has been criticised for his hostile portrait of Park. The reason for his unflattering portrayal of the Scots missionary explorer may be seen to reside in Mitchell's perception of Park's haughty behaviour and lack of compassion. For instance, Mitchell lays great emphasis on Park's decision, on his second trip to discover the source of the Niger, that anyone not able to carry on should be left behind to almost certain/  

75. Chris and Ewan are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.  
76. I.J. Munro, *Leslie Mitchell*, p.140-143 mentions some of the mixed reviews *Niger* received and quotes from Mitchell's reply to his critics contained in "I Kent his Father", *Evening News*, Glasgow, 24 February 1934.
certain death in the jungles of central Africa:

"Mungo had no time to bother on the ailments of private soldiers". 77

Moreover, Park is depicted as curing himself of dysentery while his soldiers die of it for want of medication and of having his brother-in-law carried by the beleaguered soldiers when they would have been left to die of their ailments. In this context Mungo Park may be seen as representative of the powerful who act with scant regard for the lives or welfare of those who serve them. However, the opening chapter of Niger, with its treatment of Park's childhood and the parallels suggested with Mitchell's early life, provides a clue as to why he should find it necessary to depict Mungo Park with an almost unrelenting hostility. It is likely that Mitchell used his account of Park's early years - based, he concedes, on scant evidence 78 - as a means of relating some of the experiences and emotions of his own not wholly happy childhood. Casting Park in his own childhood image meant that when he reached the better documented period of his subject's adulthood and found there a less than pleasant individual (to Mitchell's mind at least) his reaction would be more severe as a result. For where Mitchell had emerged from childhood into a compassionate individual, Park seems to have displayed a streak of ruthless individualism which entailed a lack of consideration for those surrounding him. Probably because of the parallels with Mitchell's own childhood the opening chapter of Niger comprises the most sympathetic portrayal of Park in the entire work.

Mitchell shared with Park both nationality and rural origins, although the latter's father was a minister, not a crofter. Yet, even in this respect Mitchell appears anxious to trace a common social origin by contending/

77. Niger, p.287.

78. ibid, p.13.
contending that Park's father had come:

"from the soil, up out of its darkness 
with that horde of men of like kind, the 
dour even-tempered peasants of Scotland". 79

As Mitchell had been different from other children in his youth, so he portrays the young Mungo Park, advancing as a reason the "play of chance":

"Those multitudes of impressions ... - such 
the play of chance - alien and different". 80

As a schoolboy at odds with his peers and elders, Park is described as doing precisely as Mitchell himself had done, withdrawing into himself and his books:

"he kept his own council, dark and grave". 81

Similarly, in moments of stress and crisis young Mungo Park seeks respite, turning (as Mitchell had) to the land as he:

"fled often to the hills and the peace of 
them". 82

Thus the twin sources of comfort, books and the land, are common to Mitchell and the early biography he constructed for his subject. During these troubled early years we find Mitchell portraying Park as yearning for the comforts of his mother's love and understanding, perhaps as Mitchell himself may have felt such a need. But, as Mitchell had been largely denied this comfort, 83 so we find Park similarly deprived except for:

79. Niger, p.10. Later, on page 86, Park is actually described as "the son of a peasant from the valley of the Yarrow", even though Mungo Park senior was a minister of the Church of Scotland.


82. Ibid, p.23.

83. Although Mitchell was very fond of his mother, Lilias Mitchell could not be described as a demonstrably affectionate parent. According to Ray Mitchell, PT, she was "sharp-tongued and energetic".
"perhaps, though seldom, the touch of a rough grained hand... of unnecessary affection, none".

In later years as is often the case, children and parents attain a greater degree of understanding, each of the other. This too is reflected in *Niger*. The hostile reaction given to *Sunset Song* and the *Quair* as a whole by some of the Mearns folk and the local press has been well documented by Ian S Munro. Although Lilias Mitchell certainly shared in the general outrage at the scandal her son's writing had caused, she nevertheless was proud enough of him to keep a copy of the *Quair* in the house, albeit in a cupboard and in a plain brown wrapper. This ambiguity finds its way into *Niger* as towards the end of the biography Mitchell has Park's mother pass a judgement on her son which might have issued from Lilias Mitchell, concerning her own writer son:

"A braw son hers, though he wasted his time with his writings and rubbish".

Given the absence of any evidence as to what Park did or thought during his childhood and adolescence, it is perhaps not surprising that Mitchell should have drawn from his own youth for his portrait of these early years. He could, of course, have omitted that period or sketched it briefly with relative impunity. That he chose not to do so perhaps tells us about his motives since, given the parallels with his own life/

86. In *The Thirteenth Disciple*, p.20, Malcom Maudslay describes his mother in terms which might be seen as applying to Lilias Mitchell: "her hands were too roughened and too busy to be kind for long".
88. Ray Mitchell, PT.
90. Mitchell may have uncovered some evidence during his researches into Park's life which he was unable to reference directly since he mentions being allowed to read a collection of private letters on the understanding that he might neither quote from them nor reveal their source, *Niger*, p.7.
life mentioned above, he was enabled to write of his own experiences and emotions through the persona of Park while retaining the safe distance of biographer and subject. This was all very well for Mitchell until he moved from the almost pure fiction of Park's childhood and youth to the more substantial and well documented remainder of his subject's life and activities. Having created the young Mungo in his own image, Mitchell found it necessary to berate the rather callous individual he saw Park as having actually become.90 Where Mitchell himself had developed into a deeply compassionate individual from, so to speak, common origins, Park had become a single-minded and ruthless explorer, capable of sacrificing the lives of others for his own ends. Mitchell continually berates Park for his lack of sensitivity to suffering in the pages of *Niger*, continually using the word "cold" to describe Park in almost every conceivable context: Park is "a tall cold-eyed Scot",91 "a prig"92 who faced danger "coldly and cold-bloodedly",93 who witnessed deprivation and death on the African sub-continent with a "cold-composed mask"94 and who wrote with a: /

90. Explaining his hostile treatment of his subject in a "Preliminary Note" *ibid*, p.8, Mitchell wrote "Most biographers, it is true, instead of looting these rich galleons of the requisite treasure, (that is, the source material Mitchell used) cower down in the shadow of their hulks, shamefacedly. I have been moved to no such shame. Similarly in their acceptance of the explorer's view of his own rectitude in the conduct of the Second Expedition, I have found the attitude of other writers impossible. The worst example is T.B. Maclachlan in *Mungo Park* (1898), the last attempt at a more or less, full-length biography. A much better book is 'H.B.'s' *Life of Mungo Park* (1835), sincere and serene in the conventions of camouflage peculiar to its age". It might be remarked that Mitchell is somewhat brutal in his removal of this "camouflage".

91. *Niger*, p.253


"strange mixture of genteel admonition and genuine cold-blooded impartiality, the first overpowering the second in just the places where it should not."  

The reviewer in the Glasgow Bulletin who described Niger as:

"just a scunner. Park was a genuinely religious man and Mr Gibbon can never refer to his religion without a gibe".

was right, in a way, but for the wrong reasons. Mitchell did make adverse comment on Park's rather overbearing Presbyterianism throughout the book, but he was concerned with the individual rather than his professed Christianity. The reviewer found Niger "a scunner" because Mitchell used his opportunity to "debunk" the accepted version of Mungo Park's life. Mitchell in fact says as much himself by taking a tilt at previous biographers who, he asserted:

"attempt to make of Mungo what he most certainly never was, a humanitarian or even a sociologist. There can be little doubt that he accepted slavery as a divine institution ... had he himself been enslaved he might have pitied himself ... attempted escape, but... His was perhaps the stuff of an Aesop; certainly never a Spartacus ...

It is this indictment of Mungo Park which lies at the heart of Mitchell's portrayal: because he reacted to slavery and other forms of oppression with such strength and feeling - in the mould of a Spartacus - he could not forgive Park for "being" an Aesop who saw in:

"The dirt and disease and ... torture ... the glamour of a far off tale".

95. Ibid, p.218.


Couched on an almost personal level, especially in the opening chapter on Park's youth, even such an unlikely subject as a biography of an eighteenth century Scots explorer returns to Mitchell's starting point of compassion. Park, as a potentially powerful figure for good, exploring and discovering the source of the Niger and writing on the customs of the peoples he encountered, thus adding to man's knowledge of the world, yet exhibited, for Mitchell at least, the crucial weaknesses of being unable to empathise with those less fortunate than himself. Mitchell possessed this facility, and he went to the trouble of ensuring his fictional characters, Malcom Maudslay, Gershom Jezreel, Anton Meierkhold, Spartacus and Ewan Tavendale, among others, did so too. But he could not portray Park in such a manner, despite grafting onto the explorer's early life the experiences of his own youth. It was this perceived shortcoming that led to the three hundred page rebuke of Mungo Park that is Niger.

In contrast to Niger Mitchell's next published work, The Conquest of the Maya, contains many passages of closely argued detail seeking to prove that the civilisation of the ancient Maya had originated in Egypt, having spread from there in congruence with the Diffusionist theory. Yet, even in the context of a scholarly exegesis Mitchell could not distance himself from the wanton cruelties of life. Where Niger is concerned with, to an extent, the minutiae of Mungo Park's life and emotions (or lack of them) The Conquest of the Maya is concerned about the way in which individuals of an oppressed class are sacrificed by others in oppressive social structures. The normative cruelty of exploitation or direct calculated barbarity suffered by individuals caught in a social framework permeates The Conquest of the Maya. It does so whether Mitchell is commenting/

99. Mitchell saw physical exploration as being a positive benefit to mankind in a number of ways. See Chapter 2.
commenting wryly on the direct, palpable unfairness of prejudice used by the rulers to deprive the ruled:

"Dog is very good eating, but the Gods have said that only the Masters and Godmen may eat of it, except at the great sacrifices. Nice to be a Godman", 100

or where comment is directed at severe religious codes which require the propitiation of the gods with human sacrifice, so that:

"agony was the tribute that humankind paid to divinity", 101

But, ultimately, apart from the anthropological, Diffusionist arguments presented in The Conquest of the Maya, one passage stands out as an explanation offered by Mitchell to the reign of callousness and cruelty on earth:

"The sacrificers who ripped the hearts from the victims on the Tikal altars or the legionaries who drove the nails through the hand and feet of the Spartacist slaves by the Appian way are not remote and freakish aliens, beasts and strange monsters normal to their day doing normal acts, abnormalities we have passed beyond. They were merely, as we are, primitives enlightened, darkened, upraised or bedevilled by the codes and circumstances of a civilisation". 102

In this context we may be entitled to ask why Mitchell did not extend his understanding of this process of conditioning to the unfortunate Mungo Park. The answer is to be found in the fact that in every age, despite the process of conditioning, some individuals, like his own portrayal of Spartacus and/

100. The Conquest of the Maya, p.156.

101. Ibid, p.116. This same phrase is used by Mitchell in his article "Religions of Ancient Mexico", in Religions: The Journal of Transaction of the Society for Promoting the Study of Religion, no. 13, October 1935. This article goes into gruesome detail describing what Mitchell imagined to be the scene of human sacrifice.

102. The Conquest of the Maya, p.149.
and Swan Tavendale, can be seen as transcending the norms and values of
their age and from a basis of pity, compassion and anger at injustice
developing an awareness of the necessity to combat such evil. This was
effectively the transition which Mitchell himself made and which we will
see several of his main characters also undertaking.

As I remarked earlier, the source of Mitchell's empathy with suffer-
ing humanity was probably very deeply located in his psyche and, although
it emerges across the range of his work, forming the basis of his politi-
cal commitment, in some instances a rather unhealthy sadomasochistic
quality can be detected. The following harrowing excerpt from Nine Against
the Unknown helps demonstrate that, whatever else, Mitchell was sincere in
his revulsion at the suffering undergone by anyone, regardless of place or
time. In his essay on Magellan in Nine Against the Unknown he appears to
have invented a horrible example of cruelty for no better reason than, it
would seem, to make the readers' flesh crawl. The passage describes
Magellan's suppression of a mutiny at St Julian, off the east coast of
South America in 1524, and how he has one mutineer skinned alive and mar-
ooned along with a priest:

"That skinless body which squirmed and screamed on the
sheet it died haunts us still (its) cries of
agony ... ring painfully down four centuries".103

Mitchell found it necessary to bring suffering to a very personal
level because this was the medium in which he perceived it. While such/

103. Nine Against the Unknown, p.182. Mitchell's somewhat morbid imagin-
ation appears to have over-ridden a commitment to historical accuracy.
There is no evidence to suggest that the unfortunate Cartagena was
skinned alive, although he was marooned. The accounts of the occur-
rence vary in detail but concur in their omission of any such barbar-
ity being committed by Magellan: The Hakluyt Society, Voyage Round
the World by Magellan, (London, 1874), p.250,
Mitchell references this latter work in his bibliography in
Nine Against the Unknown, p. 318.
such instances of his characters' reaction to suffering make the specific point in the context of the particular work, cumulatively, they serve to make the greater point that only active political and, if necessary, revolutionary action will be sufficient to bring about its eradication.

Mitchell saw socialism as the means by which this end could be achieved, even if as I shall argue later, he found it necessary to redefine Marxism and Christianity to do so.

If Alexander Gray and Robert Lemon are correct and Mitchell was attracted to socialism from, as Gray put it, "a fundamental hatred of suffering", there is at least one other factor which might have played a part in this process. The available evidence indicates that Mitchell became a socialist around the period of his unhappy experiences at Mackie Academy in 1916. He was then fifteen years of age, precocious and inclined to an aloofness many adults, including in particular the staff at the Academy, found rather irksome. Ray Mitchell recalled that during this period of his life Mitchell was known to have:

"strange socialist ideas which were not always appreciated by those around him".

Alexander Gray, as the one adult close to Mitchell at this time probably came nearest to identifying a tangible reason for the growth of socialist and even discernibly revolutionary sentiments in the boy. According to Gray, even Lenin and Trotsky were heroes of Mitchell's, and it was Gray's opinion that his identification with these revolutionary figures helped the boy through his turbulent period at Mackie Academy.

104. See above, p. 20.

105. In the main this consists of the personal and written testimony to the present writer of Ray Mitchell, Robert Lemon and Kellie Riddoch in conjunction with Alexander Gray's testimony to D.F. Young referred to earlier. This is substantiated by passages from The Thirteenth Disciple, considered shortly.


107. From the transcript of D.F. Young's interview with Alexander Gray.
Lenin and Trotsky were individuals who made his superiors shake their heads in horror. As such, the alternatives proposed by these figures were a comfort to a boy who was — as they were in a wider context — 'beyond the pale' in the view of traditional authority. It would however be quite wrong to see in the unsure, and to an extent unstable, fifteen year old a person with consistent political views. In the discernibly autobiographical opening to The Thirteenth Disciple Malcom Maudslay, looking back on his political views while at Dundon Academy (the fictional equivalent of Stonehaven Academy) recalls that:

"The only socialist periodical procurable in Dundon was Justice, (afterwards, the yearbooks, to urge its pathetic claim to fame — 'though Socialist was pro-Ally during the War') and through its influence Malcom imagined himself a National Socialist as patriotic as anybody".

It has been mentioned that while at Mackie Academy Mitchell twice ran away in attempts to enlist in the British Army, then in France. This would tend to suggest that Mitchell's portrayal of Maudslay as a pro-War supporter of the British Socialist Party is an accurate representation of his own views in 1916. No records exist for the periodicals taken by the library in Stonehaven for 1916, but it is likely that Justice's pro-War stance would have commended it to the library authorities of the day.

108. Discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
109. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.22, makes this judgement.
110. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.64.
112. According to the North East of Scotland Library Service, 14/7/78.
There is perhaps nothing ultimately incongruous in Mitchell's schoolboy support of the British Socialist Party and its pro-War politics and his attraction to the revolutionary aura of Lenin and Trotsky (though how much he actually knew about them must be doubtful) but it does indicate his eclecticism as well as possible confusion. Each suited a purpose for Mitchell; the use to which he put Lenin and Trotsky has already been mentioned while his support of the pro-War British Socialist Party meant he could still be a socialist of sorts and also attempt enlistment, and by doing so achieve escape from his troubles at school and home, albeit via the British Army.

As it was, Mitchell developed decidedly anti-War views, so that Maudslay's bitter recollection of his own youthful support of the First World War matches Mitchell's own change of views when he came to realise the carnage that the conflict had entailed. Malcom imagining "himself a National Socialist as patriotic as anybody" may be seen as the expression of Mitchell's own guilt at his adolescent support of the War finding an outlet in the character of Malcom Maudslay. As he is portrayed by Mitchell, Maudslay really should have known better than to support the War, since during his latter school days he is described as having been well-acquainted with a whole range of socialist thought, some of it distinctly anti-war, in the form of the work of Paul Lafargue, Daniel De Leon, H.K. Hyndman, Robert Blatchford, Karl Liebknecht, George Bernard Shaw, Karl Marx and (like Mitchell himself), in particular, H.G. Wells. The young Malcom had not seen the connection between these different thinkers, all socialists of one kind or another, but the mature Maudslay can, in retrospect, make this crucial deduction:

113. Dealt with in Chapter 2.
"Here were people who, like himself, had shuddered in sick horror at sight of the dehumanized and wandering crucified ...".  

In having Maudslay reach this conclusion Mitchell is, of course, grafting onto socialists as diverse as Lafargue and Wells, Blatchford and Marx, his own innate compassion for suffering humanity and the mainspring of his own attraction to socialism. Thus, in the midst of Maudslay's guilt-ridden recollections concerning his youthful support of the War-effort, Mitchell exposes the central tenet of his socialist belief: compassion must be the underlying, the dynamic principle overriding both the nuances and major differences which might otherwise divide those calling themselves socialists.

With the job on the Aberdeen Daily Journal in 1917 Mitchell's horizons widened considerably and it was probably only from this period that he actually became acquainted with the ideas of men like Lafargue, De Leon, Marx and the others he describes Maudslay as being familiar with during his school days. For practically the first time, Mitchell was able to converse with a wide range of people on a number of topics, including left-wing politics. He was also able to engage in political activity and, as a young reporter, he was elected to the Council of the Aberdeen Soviet which had been formed in hopeful anticipation of the effects the Bolshevik revolution in Russia might entail in other countries. Mitchell mentions his membership of the soviet in his essay "Aberdeen", \(^{115}\) and Ian S. Munro claims that Mitchell had addressed/ 

\(^{114}\) The Thirteenth Disciple, p.60. Mitchell was not averse to associating a diversity of individuals with a tradition which their differences of background and thought might ostensibly deny. In Chapters 7 and 8 it is argued he does much the same in relation to Spartacus, Christ, Akhenaton, Marx, Buddha and others.

\(^{115}\) "Aberdeen", Scottish Scene. There is no mention of the Aberdeen Soviet in the Aberdeen Trades Council Records, or the Aberdeen Daily Journal during this period.
addressed meetings and appeared on "a Communist platform" before he was seventeen.116. Mitchell's membership was short-lived, and in any case, according to Robert Cooney, the Aberdeen Soviet had a relatively brief existence before it fragmented in a welter of sectarianism.117

Mitchell enjoyed his period of just under two years in Aberdeen as a junior reporter: such was his enthusiasm for the cause of revolution that everytime he passed the red flag which in the north-east signalled the occurrence of an auction, he saluted it, while at considerable risk to his health he smoked Russian cigarettes in order to show where his sympathies lay.118 Unfortunately even this fragmentary knowledge of Mitchell's involvement in politics comes to an end when in February of 1919 he left Aberdeen bound for Glasgow and a better-paid job as a reporter on The Scottish Farmer. His brief membership of the Aberdeen Soviet seems to have led to no permanent affiliation and his stay in Glasgow is marked by an almost total absence of information as to what he did at all. In The Thirteenth Disciple Mitchell has Maudslay sacked from his job on a Glasgow paper for forging his expense claims in order to finance a left-wing political group.119 Mitchell too forged expense/
expense accounts and was sacked from his job with The Scottish Farmer but there is no evidence to suggest that he used the proceeds for political purposes. Both Emmanuel Shinwell and C.M. Grieve were actively engaged in radical politics in Glasgow in 1919 but neither recalls Mitchell as having been involved or prominent in any of the organisations they were associated with. His stay in Glasgow was over in a few months and the details of his political and other activities are effectively lost to us. Mitchell had arrived in February 1919, just one month too late to witness the turbulent "Battle of George Square" described by William Gallacher in Revolt on the Clyde, (1936), but it is unlikely that he would have remained totally uninvolved in the aftermath of such events. In any event a deeply unhappy Leslie Mitchell was back on his father's croft by mid-1919 to face the parental recriminations his dishonesty inevitably entailed.

Overt political activity was effectively closed to Mitchell from his entry to the army in 1919 and his demobilisation from the air force ten years later. These years in the armed forces inevitably broadened Mitchell's horizons, especially his tour of duty with the army in Egypt and the Near East where the stories in The Calends of Cairo, (1931) and Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights (1932) and the novel The Lost Trumpet (1932) are set. Thus, while socialism provided Mitchell with/

120. C.M. Grieve, FT. E. Shinwell, WT, 11/6/79
This does not prove, of course, that Mitchell was not politically involved in Glasgow at this time. Neither Shinwell nor Grieve could recall the existence of a Left Communist Group of Glasgow which is the beneficiary of Malcom Maudsley's fraudulent activities in The Thirteenth Disciple, nor is the Group mentioned in Gallacher's Revolt on the Clyde, (London, 1936), or Last Memoirs of William Gallacher, (London, 1966); N. Hilton, John McLean, (London, 1975); S. McAllister, James Maxton: The Portrait of a Rebel, (London, 1935) or T. Johnson, History of the Working Classes in Scotland, (Glasgow, 1929).

121. See Appendix II.
with a refuge when his compassion was aroused at the thought of the cruelties of world and continued to sustain him during the troubled times of his youth and early manhood, his political development really only dates from the period of demobilisation and the start of a career as a full-time writer, living in the stimulating environment of Greater London.

As the departure from his parents' house early in 1917 and his job as a reporter had allowed Mitchell to develop a sense of confidence and self-esteem so his release from the air force in 1929 offered a new and exciting freedom. It also signalled the beginning of the most prolonged period of happiness Mitchell was to experience. From late August of that year Mitchell had the time at his disposal to make use of the material, political and otherwise, gathered in the British Museum. Supplementing his research and fuelling his interest in, and knowledge of politics, Mitchell bought and read as many political papers, journals and magazines, including The Daily Worker, Reynolds News, Forward and The Left Review, as he was able to afford. He was also a frequent visitor to Lahr's the bookshop in Red Lion Street, Holborn in central London, which specialised in left-wing political theory and propaganda.

122. British Library Reading Room request slips covering the period 1930-1934 remain among Mitchell's papers. The books Mitchell consulted are largely on anthropology and history, some of which may have provided source or background material for The Conquest of the Maya, Niger, Nine Against the Unknown and the historical essay "The Antique Scene" in Scottish Scene. Unfortunately no record of any political works he may have consulted remain.

123. Ray Mitchell, PT. These papers and journals were mentioned specifically by Ray Mitchell. The Daily Worker was the organ of the Communist Party (Mitchell had formerly read its predecessor Workers' Weekly); Reynolds News was run by the Co-operative Society with help from the Labour Party; Forward was the weekly paper of the Independent Labour Party and The Left Review was a left-wing literary and political journal which Mitchell was himself to contribute to. See Chapter 4 following.

One expression of this degree of political interest was the often hectic discussions which took place in the Mitchell household on many weekends and which often went on into the night. These discussions ranged over every conceivable area of interest, Ray Mitchell recalling that they centred around:

"the usual problems troubling us all: politics, religion, Marxism, Diffusionism, socialism and so on, all churned over - ...". 125

There can be little doubt that after his long service in the armed forces such an environment helped shape and sharpen Mitchell's political ideas. According to Ann Shearsby, herself a citizen of Welwyn and member of the Communist Party at that time, 126 the Garden City attracted a number of "left-wing political and arty types" anxious to escape from the hustle, bustle and smoke of London. 127 Mitchell came into contact with some of these exiles from London - he met John Paton, the ex-Independent Labour Party M.P. for Norwich, in a Welwyn street simply by introducing himself - but it was largely the growth of his reputation as a writer with left-wing views which brought him into contact with some penetrating minds on the left of the political spectrum. C.M. Grieve, James Barke, Edwin and Willa Muir, H.B. Cruickshank, T.H. Winteringham and other less well-known but nevertheless stimulating people were to become friends of the Mitchells in their Welwyn home. These and others tested their wit and intellect in the Mitchell household and such was Mitchell's enjoyment of the cut and thrust of debate that he formed a "Twelve Club" which he described as:

"a collection of the sharpest and most irreverent minds in Welwyn". 128

125. Ray Mitchell, "WT, 29/10/77.
126. See Appendix I.
128. Louis Katin, "Author of Sunset Song".
Mitchell certainly found these sessions agreeable: according to Ann Shearsby:

"Leslie was at his best at the centre of an argumentative mob laying the law down, bandying insults... many a row I've had with him!"\(^{129}\)

As Ray Mitchell said, much of the discussion during these sessions centred around politics and political themes.\(^{130}\) But where precisely Mitchell stood on the left is a controversial matter.

Speaking on a radio programme C.M. Grieve described Mitchell as:

"a Socialist Internationalist",\(^{131}\)

by which Grieve meant Trotskyist. In an article twelve years previously Grieve had made a similar assessment contending that:

"From the political angle, the principal objection to be levelled against him is that which the Communist Party themselves levelled when they expelled him as a Trotskyist".\(^{132}\)

It is difficult not to feel that Grieve's own membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.) and own anti-Trotskyist sentiments might have somewhat clouded his views in this matter. However, shortly before his death, Grieve stated that he had been wrong to say Mitchell had once been a member of the C.P.G.B. who suffered expulsion for his Trotskyist sentiments.\(^{133}\) He did recall, nevertheless, that he and Mitchell attended open meetings of the Communist Party while he was in Welwyn early in 1934 on business relating to the publication of *Scottish/"*

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130. Above p.44.


133. C.M. Grieve, FT.
Scottish Scene. Ray Mitchell was emphatic on the point that from the time of their marriage in 1925 her husband was never a member of the C.P.G.B. Ann Shearsby, Cuthbert Graham, Walter Marsden and C.M. Grieve have all expressed the opinion to me that it is at best unlikely that Mitchell was ever a card-carrying communist "sympathetic", as C.M. Grieve put it, "to the ideals of Communism though he was". Mitchell in fact cast an intriguing perspective on the issue when, in a letter to Neil Gunn written just three months before his death, he declared:

"I'm not an official Communist. They refuse to allow me into the Party".

Precisely who Mitchell was referring to as denying him membership is not clear, but given that the letter was written when he had been in Welwyn for almost three years it is possible he was referring to the Welwyn Garden City branch of the C.P.G.B. Yet, Ann Shearsby, herself a member of the C.P. branch in Welwyn at this time cannot recall Mitchell's presence at any meetings nor any application for membership having been made by him. Considered in the light of Grieve's belief that Mitchell had Trotskyist sympathies it is perhaps likely that Mitchell knew he/

134. C.M. Grieve, PT.
135. Ray Mitchell, PT.
135a. Ann Shearsby, WT, 19/12/77.
135b. Cuthbert Graham, PT.
135c. Walter Marsden, WT, 14/12/77.
135d. C.M. Grieve, PT.
The Communist Party did not answer my enquiries on whether Mitchell was a member or not.
137. Ann Shearsby, WT, 7/10/78.
he would be refused membership if he ever applied to join the C.P. 138
It is unlikely that Mitchell was a Trotskyist in the accepted sectarian sense of the term, where specific ideological and tactical positions are advanced both in terms of revolutionary theory and against the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership. 139 Grieve would not be drawn on the question of precisely what he had meant when he called Mitchell a Trotskyist. On being reminded that he had accused Mitchell of "Left-Wing Infantilism", 140 he replied that the phrase was "a catch-all" intended to describe left-opponents of the Soviet Union. 141 Therefore, it is probably best, for the moment at least, to describe Mitchell as a socialist, critical to an extent of the Soviet Union, but prepared to discuss, debate and argue his views with fellow socialists of different opinion. That he was not a member of the C.P.G.B. is almost/ 138. There was no mention of entry tests as a requirement for membership of the C.P.G.B. in L.J. MacFarlane, The British Communist Party. Those Communist Party members I have talked to on the subject who are old enough to remember this period agree that a known Trotskyist or Trotskyist sympathiser would not have been admitted to the C.P. Some felt that entry tests, that is, an interview with branch officials, were practised in the twenties and early 1930's.

139. Trotsky's conflict with Stalin was on the three particular issues of inner party (C.P.S.U.) democracy; the doctrine of 'socialism in one country' as opposed to the 'export of revolution', and Trotsky's condemnation of Stalin's treatment of the kulaks, the former holding to the opinion that Stalin was 'compromising' by permitting the existence of the agricultural economy on the basis of peasant proprietorship. When Stalin reversed this policy in 1928 and proceeded to eradicate the kulaks as a class, Trotsky changed his ground and launched a fresh attack on Stalin. See J.H. Carr, The Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin, (1917-1929), (London, 1979), pp.115, 118, 163-165.


141. The phrase originates from V.I. Lenin's "Left-Wing Communism": an infantile disorder, (C.P.G.B., London, 1920). This work was used against those critics of the Soviet Union on what might be termed the far-left.
almost definite. As Ann Shearsby says:

"He himself said he was a Communist, but
one who didn't always accept the Party line.
I suppose that, basically, he could be
called a 'revolutionary idealist'". 142

It is not possible to be precise about Mitchell's political affiliations and sympathies in the period between his demobilisation and his death five years later. In this respect his work affords a valuable perspective and this aspect is considered later, but it must be remembered that the events under discussion took place nearly half a century ago in a climate of political turbulence. It is not simply these predictable problems which lead to imprecision - Mitchell's own intellectual disposition played its part too.

Cuthbert Graham and C.M. Grieve both described Mitchell as an eclectic thinker. Graham described the way in which he believed Mitchell would select certain ideas and concepts from works with which he would otherwise profoundly disagree:

"I do know that he read Spengler's Decline of the West and was rather impressed by it ... though this does not mean that he swallowed it whole. All sorts of books which he could not have accepted did colour his thought". 143

Grieve, rather unkindly, described Mitchell as "a muddled thinker sometimes", attributing this directly to eclecticism. 144 Mitchell's involvement with an organisation called the Promethean Society perhaps indicates the validity of Graham and Grieve's observations.

The Promethean Society was formed in July 1930 and the first issue of its monthly magazine the Twentieth Century was launched in March 1931. In the first issue the journal's editor, Jon Randall Evans,

143. C. Graham, WT, 11/2/77.
144. C.M. Grieve, PT.
Evans, revealed eclecticism as a central tenet of the Society. In a statement on aims he argued that the Prometheans' main function was to cut across narrow party-political lines:

"accepting here, rejecting there, but always after detailed and impartial research." 145

The one firm belief which the Society expressed from the outset however was its total opposition to war. Given the eclecticism Graham and Grieve detected in Mitchell and the latter's condemnation of war, seen in The Thirteenth Disciple and Image and Superscription, the appeal of the Prometheans was perhaps predictable. Yet Jon Randall Evans recalls that Mitchell was neither actively involved in the formation nor subsequent running of the Society. 146 Just as it is now almost certain that he was never a Communist Party member, albeit he was a supporter, so although Mitchell never actually joined the Prometheans, he nevertheless expressed high hopes for the society. He did so in a letter to H.G. Wells thanking him for his complimentary opinion of Stained Radiance, a copy of which Mitchell had sent him. In the letter Mitchell credits Wells with the opinion that "anti-militarists" could ultimately only combat war and the threat of war by:

"propaganda and the passing of the usual resolutions".

After excusing, as he put it, his own "impertinent cocksureness of youth" Mitchell went on to claim that he had a much more effective/


146. Jon Randall Evans, WT, 8/3/79.
"Mitchell was never at all active in the Promethean Society". Geoffrey Trease, secretary of the Society's Active Peace Group recalls "I was very much in the centre of the Promethean Society. ... Had Mitchell been in London and active in the Society I do not think I could have missed him". G. Trease, WT, 17/2/79.
effective anti-war plan than had Wells:

"I think I know, and I preach the idea in my spring novel of 1931, and I'm to go on preaching it in others. This summons it up, inadequately: The international organisation of associations pledged to resist war both by passive resistance and sabotage.

If people are ready to risk their lives and liberties for tawdry red and parti-coloured causes innumerable, why shouldn't they risk them in the anti-war cause? And they would; indeed, without such risks I can't see anti-militarism summon to its standard any other supporters than pious protestors. Why, in the interests of the unhappy romantic young men who'll otherwise glut the recruiting offices at the outbreak of the next war, shouldn't anti-war be made as desperate and splendid a thing to fight for as any war? 147

In fact, although Mitchell did preach his views that war should be actively resisted, by violent means if necessary, in The Thirteenth Disciple (the spring novel referred to in the letter), the growing menace of Nazism and Fascism saw an evolution of his views in this matter. 148 Nevertheless, the letter to Wells with the stirring "call to arms" to the anti-militarist is significant for the way in which "the international organisation of associations pledged to resist war both by passive resistance and sabotage" can be seen to be based on the Promethean Society. Mitchell said as much himself in the covering letter he sent to Wells with a copy of the newly published Thirteenth Disciple.

In it he explained that the fictional "Secular Control Group" in The Thirteenth Disciple had a real-life counterpart:

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147. Mitchell to Wells, 25/10/30. Eight letters written by Mitchell to Wells are in the possession of the University of Illinois, Urbana, Champaign, U.S.A. The letters were written between 12 June 1928 and 27 October 1932.

148. Chapter 4 outlines Mitchell's growing awareness that the descent into Fascism and war was a symptom of capitalism itself.
counterpart:

"there is actually in existence an organisation approximating to the Secular Control Group. It's the Promethean Society (still very shy and self-conscious in spite of its name) and is about to issue the first number of its journal."

According to Geoffrey Trease, the secretary of the Promethean Society's "Active Peace Group" the Society's name had been chosen because:

"Prometheus, in his defiance of the Olympian establishment, seemed to us a suitable hero."

The Prometheans embraced a remarkable number of 'progressive' causes, from resistance to war and support for homosexual law reform to easier divorce and advocacy of the Social Credit ideas of Major H.C. Douglas, reasoning that the more ideas which were professed, the greater support would accrue to the Society. As Geoffrey Trease wryly recalls in his autobiography:

"Our major prophets were Freud, Marx, Wells, Shaw, Lenin, Trotsky, Gandhi and D.H. Lawrence. We did not worry unduly about reconciling the contradictions."

The inspiration of such a varied range of preceptors must have appealed to Mitchell's eclecticism, not to mention catholicity of interest - W.H. Auden contributed a poem to the first issue, and Leon Trotsky wrote a double article entitled "Communism and World Chaos."

The latter contribution provoked an extremely irritated letter from Maurice Dobbs of the Communist Party (himself an occasional contributor)/

149. Mitchell to Wells, 15/1/31. The Secular Control Group is an organisation set up by Halcon Maudslay in The Thirteenth Disciple with the specific aim of opposing war by, if necessary, violent means. See Chapter 2 following.


151. Ibid.


153. Ibid, April and May 1932.
contributor), complaining about the use of column space for attacks on the Soviet Union, by which he meant Stalin. But Mitchell's enthusiastic support of the Prometheans waned. He contributed no more articles to The Twentieth Century after his second piece appeared in March of 1932, while the aggressively anti-war tactics which he advocated in his letter to Wells and reflected in The Thirteenth Disciple through "The Secular Control Group" are never again couched in the same form, nor are they ever again associated with the Promethean Society. The most likely reason for this disaffection is to be found in a controversy which monopolised the letter columns of The Twentieth Century in the first five issues of its existence.

The controversy began over the challenge by one contributor (Max Nicholls) that the Promotheans' rejection of violence as an anti-war tactic was a crucial and debilitating weakness. The Society's Active Peace Group had adopted Fenner Brockway's Pacifist opposition to war, outlined in an article in the first issue and restated by the Active Peace Group's secretary, Geoffrey Trease, in the following issue. Nicholls' letter sparked off a debate which attracted a total of seven letters and articles from six contributors. However, in issue number five of The Twentieth Century Geoffrey Trease again restated the Society's belief in pacific, albeit direct action, in the anti-war/peace movement.

156. Max Nicholls, Letter to The Twentieth Century, June 1931.
157. The six contributors consisted of Fenner Brockway, Geoffrey Trease, H.A. Phillips, Reginald Reynolds, Max Nicholls, and Max Plowman. The contributors split two to one in favour of the Promotheans' pacifism, the minority view being expressed by Nicholls and Reynolds.
war cause by comparing Lenin's "contempt for Pacifism (and) contempt for the spiritual value of the individual" with Gandhi's "contempt of spiritual independence and its insistence that "violence most violates the man who uses it". The controversy waned after this, the last words, so to speak, falling to Max Plowman in the penultimate edition of The Twentieth Century, in which he related the Prometheans' original belief in the necessity for pacifism. In his autobiography Trease describes the tactics he envisaged using against the threat of war in the following terms:

"War could be abolished by disarmament, if necessary unilateral, and by non-violent demonstrations such as lying down in front of troop trains".

Given Mitchell's belief, expressed in his first letter to Wells, that sabotage as well as passive resistance was a justifiable tactic in the anti-war cause and his views that the Prometheans seemed capable of making a contribution in this direction, the result of the controversy in the July issue of The Twentieth Century must have been something of a disappointment for him. Indeed, Mitchell had indicated as much in the pages of The Thirteenth Disciple. In an uncanny display of foresight Malcom Maudslay leaves the Secular Control Group (the equivalent, it will be recalled from Mitchell's second letter to Wells, of the Promethean Society's Active Peace Group) over the Secular Control Group's decision to abrogate the use of sabotage as an anti-


160. G. Trease, A Whiff of Burnt Boats, p.131
war weapon. 161 *The Thirteenth Disciple* was published in January 1931, two months before the launching of *The Twentieth Century* and seven months before the conclusion to the debate. Mitchell seems to have anticipated not only the existence of strong disagreement on the question of tactics in this matter—perhaps predictable enough since he must have been in contact with members of the Society during its formation—but more surprisingly he accurately predicted the result of the ensuing debate. Maudslay's disgust therefore at the fictional Secular Control Group's eschewal of sabotage is nothing less than Mitchell's anticipation of the Frometheans' decision on the matter and his own consequent disenchantment.

Mitchell did not however abandon his belief that the anti-war cause should be as gloriously militant as his letter to Wells suggested. In *Three Go Back*, written during his flirtation with the Frometheans in 1931, and published in January 1932, we can see Mitchell weaving his anti-war sentiments into his fiction. Dr. Keith Sinclair, one of the two main characters in the book, is an uncompromising and even ruthless anti-militarist. To be sure the romantic science fiction of *Three Go Back* is an entirely different medium for the expression of Mitchell's political views from its predecessor, the semi-autobiographical *The Thirteenth Disciple*. Where *The Thirteenth Disciple* is set in the recognisable social and political matrix of the 'twenties and early 'thirties the action of *Three Go Back* takes place against a pre-historical background. The device of time travel also used in *Gay Hunter* of course allows Mitchell to air his Diffusionist views, 162 but/
but of equal importance, the bringing together of Claire Stranlay, a young, unsure journalist and writer, Dr Keith Sinclair, the leader of the "League of Militant Pacifists" and Sir John Mullaghan, a Conservative M.P. and arms manufacturer in the distant past, sets the scene for some interesting and fiery exchanges of political views. Unlike Claire Stranlay, Mullaghan and Sinclair concur about man's innate bestiality but disagree violently over how best it should be dealt with. Mullaghan favours the ultra-Conservative virtues of "force and discipline" while Sinclair contends that:

"We know that man's a fighting animal by nature, that cruelty's his birthright; and we also know that what keeps us in the pit as animals are the armies and the armaments. We're out to smash both, we who have had some personal experience of both. And we'll do it. There's a league of men coming into being that'll send a bullet into the brain of every clown who preaches war in future, Sir John - and a bomb into the office of every armaments manufacturer who trades in blood and human agony ... It is you and your kind who will not let the ape and tiger die".

Contact with the contented and pacific hunters of pre-history change both Mullaghan and Sinclair's pessimistic view of human nature, but significantly it does not undermine Sinclair's absolute opposition to war or his advocacy of militant tactics. The story moves to a climax with the Cro-Magnard hunters pursued by wicked beast-like Neanderthals bent on their destruction. D.P. Young has contended that Mitchell's inclusion and portrayal of the Neanderthals:

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163. Three Go Back, pp. 91-92.

164. Ibid, pp. 91-92.
Neanderthalers:

"... is a serious flaw in the book, for it involves a complete contradiction of the ostensible meaning of the action: what it amounts to is an admission that war and terror and suffering did exist in primitive times and that Sir John's view of primitive life was really the true one".165

Young is quite right to contend that the existence of the war-like and aggressive Neanderthalers undermines Mitchell's picture of a perfect Golden Age, but their inclusion serves an important function in the explication of Mitchell's political thought. This can be seen at the conclusion to Three Go Back. Returned to their own time Claire and Keith Sinclair ponder what their glimpse of the distant past implies for their future action, a repentant Mullaghan having died in the Golden Age. Before the adventure Claire had been apolitical, disliking Sinclair's dogmatism and advocacy of violence. Now she is prepared to help a wiser but just as militant and uncompromising Sinclair. Rejecting the idea that they settle down to placid domesticity, Claire announces:

"We can't desert the world - we've no right to ... Not while there are still Neanderthalers alive - in generals' uniforms. Not while they can lie about the everlastingness of rich and poor and innate human ferocity. Not while our hunters are still in the world - somewhere out there, Keith! - chained and gagged and brutalised, begging in streets, cheating in offices, doing dirty little cruelties in prison wards. ... Remember that world you planned beyond the southern mountains? It's still a possible world and a possible civilization".166

What is of note about Claire's plan is her definition of contemporary society divided between wicked latter-day Neanderthalers and/

165. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, PP.50-51.

166. Three Go Back, p.252.
and innately good if brutalised Cro-Magnards. What Claire seems to be suggesting is that the present day equivalent of the Neanderthalers of pre-history cannot change their base nature. So that if Sinclair's dream that man can live in peace and harmony is to be realised, the Neanderthalers will require eradication.167 Thus, although apolitical at the outset of the adventure, Claire emerges convinced of the essential rightness of Sinclair's initial uncompromising political line. That is to say what Claire is effectively advocating is the prosecution of a class war against present day Neanderthalers on behalf of the brutalised and degraded descendants of the Cro-Magnards of the vanished Golden Age.

Although in *Three Go Back* the struggle is couched in anti-militarist terms - "Neanderthalers alive - in generals' uniforms"168 - it has nevertheless acquired an extra dimension having broadened into a struggle between contending classes. This is a development which requires emphasis. On his release from the air force late in 1929 Mitchell's involvement in revolutionary politics was revived from the inevitable dormancy which life in the armed forces entailed. So it is that less than a year from his demobilisation he was writing enthusiastically to H.G. Wells of his hopes for the Prometheans. As we have seen however:

167. In the introduction to *Three Go Back* Mitchell writes that there is no evidence to suggest that Neanderthalers were as ferocious as he suggests in the story. In this respect he would seem to be in tune with G.K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* (London, 1925), pp.25-28 and R. Leakey's *The Making of Man* (London, 1981), p.159, who agree that the available evidence suggests pre-historic man's passivity.

however Mitchell drifted away from the Prometheans in all likelihood as a result of their eschewal of violence as an anti-war tactic. The corollary of this development was that Mitchell moved away from the belief that war could be combated specifically by anti-war groups like the Society's Active Peace Group or his own fictional Secular Control Group. By early 1932, therefore, with the publication of Three Go Back Mitchell is writing a novel in which the hero begins by advocating violent opposition to war to a less than impressed, rather apolitical heroine. The same novel culminates not only with the heroine in full agreement with the hero's militant tactics, but it falls to her to define the coming struggle in class terms.

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Mitchell's innate hatred of suffering and empathic response to it first led him to embrace a brand of socialism in his youth which was wide enough, by the evidence of The Thirteenth Disciple to include Lenin, Trotsky, Marx, Blatchford, Shaw, De Leon and others. Later, with the lacunae of his service in the armed forces behind him, Mitchell was attracted to the Promethean Society, a political organisation inspired by almost as many prophets.169 Socialism, of however imprecise a nature, helped Mitchell through those troubled parts of his life, but of crucial importance, it imparted a class-based view of society which he/
he never abandoned. This is why, in the majority of instances in which he depicted suffering in his work, he was careful to expose the underlying and implicit class-based relationships of power and powerlessness. This was a positive but essentially limited response since Mitchell wanted to eradicate suffering altogether. His shift however towards a more militantly class-based opposition to war and his later attraction to the strong leadership strategy of the Communist Party brought with it certain problems. Foremost among them was what is perhaps the classic dilemma of the political activist: in order to bring an end to suffering it might be necessary to inflict suffering.170

Before he could contemplate this particular dilemma in his work, his semi-autobiographical first two novels reveal the existence of a tension he found it necessary to address his energies to resolving. This tension also involved a political consideration however. On one level Mitchell craved adventure and freedom of the kind he had experienced during his overseas posting and which later led him to invent his participation in the exploratory adventure in Yucatan. On another, from his youth, his compassion for suffering humanity had led him in the direction of socialism and from there to an interest in revolutionary political solutions. The problem for Mitchell was that these two aspects of his personality entailed contradictory allegiances: the one to the satisfaction of self; the other to the self subordinated through political activity for the benefit of others. To add to this problem there was yet another consideration which rendered the practical application of either aspect somewhat hypothetical. By 1925 Mitchell had a wife and by 1930 a family to support. Yet if in practical terms adventure and political activity (except of the most superficial kind)/

kind) were effectively closed to him, this seems to have made it all the more important for him to depict John Garland and Malcolm Maudslay - his semi-autobiographical characters and heroes of his first two novels - as seeking a resolution to such tensions.

The relationship of an author to his work is always problematic, especially perhaps where it is possible to discern the transmission of themes and preoccupations in a fictional form which can be seen to reflect the writer's own feelings. This consideration is particularly pertinent in relation to Mitchell who may be seen as an author who wrote in order to give imaginative form to ideas preoccupying him. Stained Radiance and The Thirteenth Disciple certainly fall into this category but although further details of his personal life are introduced where it is held they shed light on his purpose, the dangers of a reductivist approach have to be acknowledged. Pending a fuller discussion on Mitchell as writer something of his approach to his semi-autobiographical novels, Stained Radiance and The Thirteenth Disciple, may be gleaned from Garland's conception of what the world demands from the modern novelist:

"'We'll accept the puppets - if they're projections of yourself', it cries. 'Live through them. Make them tell us your thoughts, your vision of life, your hopes, your hates, your beliefs. Never mind them acting in character - damn their sawdust little characters - it's you we want, if you're worth the having ...'."

It will be argued that Mitchell used John Garland and Malcolm Maudslay as the vehicles for the transmission not only of some of his thoughts, hopes, hates and beliefs, but for the elucidation of the tensions affecting him as an individual.

171. Chapter 4.
172. Stained Radiance, p.88.
CHAPTER 2:
From Adventure to Politics

a) A Three-fold Tension: The Home, Adventure and Politics

As both Stained Radiance (1930) and The Thirteenth Disciple (1931) are at least semi-autobiographical, their underlying themes afford a valuable insight into the tensions which Mitchell was himself experiencing. Although The Thirteenth Disciple was written after Stained Radiance and despite some chronological overlap it nevertheless can be seen to deal with the earlier part of Mitchell's own life, up to the point, in fact, where Stained Radiance takes over. That is, The Thirteenth Disciple takes the reader from 1898, the year of Malcom Maudslay's birth, to the mid-1920's when he departs for adventure and an untimely death in the jungles of Yucatan. Stained Radiance covers a much shorter period in the later 1920's when John Garland is an air force private, and following his demobilisation it concludes with his commitment to a stirring politico-religious creed at the end of the decade.

One means of locating these novels historically is that The Thirteenth Disciple, although centring around politics, omits any mention of the General Strike of 1926. It could, of course, be that the narrative is located in the period after this date. Certain factors invite the opposite conclusion. The Thirteenth Disciple deals with Maudslay's background and childhood in some detail. Thereafter it chronicles his life as a young reporter along with his involvement in left-wing politics in Glasgow, his service in France in the 1914-18 war, his demobilisation and subsequent engagement in political activity.¹ Chronologically, the/

¹. Like Mitchell, Malcom Maudslay is born in north-east Scotland, is misunderstood by his parents, has an unhappy time at school, takes a job in journalism, cheats his employers, returning home in disgrace prior to joining the army. Unlike Mitchell, Maudslay fights in France. Following/
the narrative may therefore be seen as commencing in 1898, concluding in the 1920's before the occurrence of the General Strike of 1926.

In contrast, in *Stained Radiance* the General Strike is mentioned in the first chapter of the novel and is firmly located in the past. Describing James Storman and the Anarchocommunist Party (A.P.) the narrative explains that:

"He had been secretary of the Anarchocommunist Party for five years. In the days of the General Strike it had been the spearhead of the movement to transform sporadic revolt into active revolution ... Emerging from those May days of 1926 with an enhanced reputation and dour éclat, the party had since devoted its energies to publishing portraits of the wives of Labour leaders wearing furs and diamonds and seeking affiliation with the Labour Party".

Following his demobilisation Maudslay becomes politically involved with the Secular Control Group (S.C.G.). This latter involvement is the only major chronological inconsistency in *The Thirteenth Disciple* as it relates to Mitchell's own life, as the Promethean Society, upon which the S.C.G. is based, belongs to the 1930-31 period. *The Thirteenth Disciple* is considered in more detail in the following section.

2. *Stained Radiance*, p.21. The A.P. may be seen as the fictional equivalent of the C.P.G.B. The C.P.G.B. emerged from the defeat of 1926 with what could be described in Mitchell's phrase as "an enhanced reputation": in 1925 party membership stood at 5,000; following the General Strike it stood at 10,730. The circulation of *Workers' Weekly* had risen to 80,000 and it claimed (22/10/26) "at every point in the struggle - the rank and file have followed the lead of the Communist Party". See L.J. Macfarlane, *Communist Party*, p.173. In *Stained Radiance*, pp.54, 58, 100, 104 the A.P. is both closely associated with the Soviet Union and is depicted as seeking affiliation to the Labour Party. These two factors are characteristics of the C.P.G.B. in the 1920's. In between bouts of seeking affiliation the C.P. would, like the A.P., attack the Labour Party. See Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party*, (London, 1958), p.20, 24. See also L.J. Macfarlane, *ibid*, p.50-55. One final point links the A.P. with the C.P.G.B. In the description in *Stained Radiance*, p.100, of the A.P.'s Tenth Congress three policemen hide under the stage, one of whom is overcome by the heat and faints. Henry Pelling, *ibid*, pp.28-29 describes an identical real-life incident in relation to the C.P.G.B. in 1924. As this incident was reported in the *Workers' Weekly*, 18/4/24 and *The Times*, 19/11/25 it is likely Mitchell used it as the basis for the account contained in *Stained Radiance*. 
The narrative action of *Stained Radiance* thus begins in the period following the General Strike with its central character, John Garland, a private in the air force, just as Mitchell had himself been in the later 1920's. Because of the actual historical location of the action in these two novels and their relationship to Mitchell's life I propose to deal with them in reverse order to their dates of publication. When treated in this way they may be seen as having more relevance to Mitchell and to the tensions he was striving to articulate and resolve through his work.

Ian S. Munro, D.F. Young and Ian Campbell acknowledge the biographical parallels between John Garland, Malcom Maudslay and Mitchell himself. Yet they perhaps fail to recognise the extent to/

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3. Thus I.S. Munro, *Leslie Mitchell*, p.55 states: "In *Stained Radiance*, on which his hopes of starting this career (i.e. as a writer) were founded, his own Scottish childhood, his experience in the services, his married life in and around London, all figured largely". I have to take issue with the contention that Mitchell's "own Scottish childhood" is dealt with in *Stained Radiance*. All that is said in *Stained Radiance*, p.23, about Garland's childhood is that he "was the son of a Unitarian minister. He has been born near Bulford, in Salisbury Plain ...". On page 60, *ibid*, Munro argues that "Like its predecessor (i.e. *Stained Radiance*), *The Thirteenth Disciple* was largely autobiographical. The adventures of the central character follow Mitchell's own exploits with remarkable exactitude, featuring the troubles of the Stonehaven schooldays and his unhappy experiences on the *Scottish Farmer*".

4. D.F. Young, *Beyond the Sunset*, p.34, contends of *Stained Radiance* that "Thea's boyfriend is John Garland, a private in the air force who bears a remarkable resemblance to Mitchell himself". Similarly, Young, *ibid*, pp.38-39, argues that in *The Thirteenth Disciple* "it soon becomes clear that what Mitchell is doing is tracing his own spiritual and intellectual development, and the first half of the book at least is closely autobiographical ... The opening chapters, which deal with Malcom's childhood on a small farm in the north-east of Scotland and his reactions to farm life, are the most successful ... Malcom is born in 1898 at the farm of Chapel o' Seddel in the Leekan valley, the same district as appeared in *Stained Radiance* (where Thea Mayven's parents stay) but now it is made clearer that Leekan is based on the parish of Arbothnott, down to the yew trees at the manse ...".

to which these novels represent the systematic attempt to reconcile the author's own psychological dilemmas. In this respect the central argument of Kiyoshi's *The Divided Self*, that in some works of literature the author is in fact engaged in an explication and, it is hoped, resolution of tensions which exist in himself, would seem to be of some relevance here.6 This is certainly true of *The Thirteenth Disciple* and *Stained Radiance* in which Mitchell chose fictional modes well suited to the expression and working out of tension within their creator. Thus, *The Thirteenth Disciple* is written in the form of a confession or fictional autobiography with Mitchell in the role of editor and interpreter of the Maudslay diaries, manuscripts and papers from which he relates the life story of Malcom Maudslay. Mitchell settles a few old scores in *The Thirteenth Disciple*, against the rector of his old school and the editor of the *Scottish Farmer* who had given him the sack, but the theme of the novel resides in Maudslay's search for an explanation of, and solution to the evils of the world. Hence the narrative action recounts the attraction of the central character to various ideologies, beliefs and inclinations in this search for understanding. In this respect *The Thirteenth Disciple* may be seen as corresponding to Northrop Frye's definition of the confessional autobiography:

"Nearly always some theoretical or intellectual interest in religion, politics or art plays a leading role in the confession. It is success in integrating his mind on such subjects that makes the author of a confession feel that his life is worth writing about".7

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In contrast to the more straight-forward confessional mode of The Thirteenth Disciple, its predecessor, Stained Radiance, had employed a derisive and ironic style. The derision and irony directed by John Garland, both against himself and the world in general, recedes as he moves towards an understanding of the existence of evil and his role in the struggle against it. Through confessional and ironic modes, then, Mitchell relates the existence of a tension in Maudslay and Garland, and in so doing permits an insight into his own thoughts and inclinations.

For the time-being the distinct aspects of this tension may be stated as follows. Garland and Maudslay find themselves at the centre of a field of tension, the poles of which can be defined as the attraction of adventure in opposition to the comforts of domesticity and family life. Complicating this, in itself unremarkable, bi-polar tension is the emotional impulse impelling each to the recognition of his duty to combat the evils of the world for the sake of humanity in general. With this latter aspect assuming a political character a tri-polar tension—adventure, the home, political action—may be seen as the source of Maudslay and Garland's anxiety and efforts to make sense of their own lives. Complicating the issue each pole of this tension demands from the individual a different form and level of commitment: adventure, to the self alone; domesticity, to another individual and family; politics, to humanity itself. At the heart of this tension is the dilemma that, for Mitchell, these categories appeared as mutually exclusive. It is evident that one facet of this three-fold tension had been with Mitchell from his youth, in the form of his love of adventure and exploration.

It is not uncommon, for boys in particular, to be enthralled by the thought of adventure as the young Leslie Mitchell was. What is/
is perhaps less usual is for such a disposition not only to survive into adulthood but to exert a profound influence on the character. The result of this consideration forms the basis for the distinct tension between Mitchell's own attraction to adventure, considered in relation to the ties of domesticity, the home and family. The letters Mitchell wrote to his fiancee during his overseas duty with the army help shed some light on the nature of this tension. Unfortunately, only four letters survive from this period. Those which do reveal a young man in a foreign environment somewhat at odds with himself. The first of these, written by Private L Mitchell, S/9068 R.A.S.C. (Supply), Main Depot, Jerusalem, on 16 January 1921, is best described as a 'homely' letter. In it he appears lightheartedly to agree with an earlier communication from his fiancees that the word "obey" should be omitted from her marriage vows before going on to write more seriously about the prospects of them having children in the future. In reply to Ray Middleton's fears that she might not be able to have a family Mitchell writes rather frankly concerning the mechanisms of reproduction, explaining that it was:

"Better to face facts squarely than live in poetic illusion. ... Life has a purpose and plan ...", before observing optimistically:

"But why should we not have children? Both of us are young, healthy ...".

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8. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, pp. 34, 36, quotes from four other letters dated 16/11/21, 24/11/21, 12/12/21 and 17/12/21. From what I can gather the quotations attributed to the letters dated 24/11/21, 12/12/21 and 17/12/21 are actually from a letter of 19/12/21 with the quote from a letter dated 16/11/21 being located in a letter of 27/3/22. The four letters among Mitchell's correspondence covering his army service are dated 16/1/21, 12/12/21, 20/12/21 and 27/3/22. My references are accordingly taken from these sources. Three postcards also survive: 20/10/21 from Gibraltar, 30/10/21 from Constantinople and 24/11/21 from Jerusalem.
By the end of that same year however relations between the engaged couple were not quite so amicable. In a letter written in December 1921 an obvious rift had developed over Mitchell's apparent reluctance to accept that he would have to settle down to married life, a factor which seems to have exasperated his fiancée into writing a less than friendly letter - hence Mitchell's rather sour reply:

"Today I received your exceedingly bad tempered letter of the 7 December, and beg herewith to acknowledge receipt of the same ... My dear you have been loving a dream, not the real Leslie Mitchell. For your sake I have tried to be as you would have me - serious, in search of betterment, preparing for a home, aiming to secure the position of an honest citizen. And I begin to realise the folly and the unfairness to you - of it. A child of the wanderlust I would be cramped and stifled in one position all my life, would hunger for the freedom of the wider spaces of the earth ...

I am far better at building castles in Spain, than laying down the foundations of a four-roomed cottage ... Dear, you know me now. One who, if you go on loving him, you will see once in every few years; one who will ever hear and listen to the call of the Little Voices".9

Whatever "the call of the Little Voices" amounted to - perhaps the call from "the wider spaces of the earth" to "A child of the wanderlust" - Mitchell seems to have almost immediately repented this reply. In a letter dated the following day a contrite Leslie Mitchell craved forgiveness:

"Only last Saturday I sent you a letter which, dwelling upon yours of the 7th I now bitterly repent. Doubtlessly its coarse animalism has appalled you. Consider it withdrawn.

I/"
I shall not write you again 'till I receive a reply to this letter. May it be propitious'.

The letter closes with a display of Mitchell's affection for his fiancée who must have been sufficiently impressed by his recantation of the excesses in the letter of 19 December to continue writing. The couple doubtless had more ups and downs but in any event the following extract from the last remaining letter serves to indicate that by March 1922 Mitchell had eschewed "the wanderlust" for domesticity, contenting himself that his marriage would not be of a conventional kind. Thanking Ray Middleton for sending a photograph of herself "to cheer this lonely exile" he continued:

"When you and I are married and we go to the theatre I will sit in the gallery and throw orange-peel at you in the pit, or vice-versa. Anyhow, we shall never be conventional".

Solely in the context of these letters the differences of outlook manifested by Mitchell could be interpreted as amounting to no more than the strain inevitable in a courtship conducted over a long duration and at great distance. Yet the contrast of Mitchell's conception of himself as, at one moment, "A child of the wanderlust", and at the other displaying all the characteristics of a home-sick and love-lorn serviceman planning for marriage and domesticity must be seen in the context of the ideas transmitted in his work. When Mitchell did marry, it must be said that the occasion was probably precipitated by his fiancée's pregnancy. So, although by all accounts he was a good/

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10. Ibid, 20/12/21.


12. Perhaps Mitchell's description of John Garland and Thea Mayven in Stained Radiance, p.27, could apply to his own courtship of Ray Middleton: "In love, they quarrelled continuously".

13. See Chapter 1.
good husband and, later, father, it would have been surprising had he not craved what he described as the "freedom of the wider spaces of the earth" in his letter of 19/12/21, which his marriage and air force postings in and around London effectively denied. Given his youthful love of adventure, and the fact that it was nourished by his tour of duty overseas it would be surprising if Mitchell had not sought to catharise through his work any feelings of frustration which his domesticity might have entailed. The extent to which adventure continued to hold a fascination for Mitchell well into adulthood can be seen in his adventure and exploration-based non-fiction.

Mitchell wrote four full length non-fiction works concerned with the topics of exploration and adventure. These are Hanno, or the Future of Exploration (1928), The Conquest of the Maya, Niger, the Life of Mungo Park and Nine Against the Unknown (all 1934). He also planned to write at least another two works of non-fiction dealing with related topics as synopses for works entitled "A History of Mankind" and "Beginnings in America" remain among his papers. Hanno, "A History of Mankind" and Nine Against the Unknown share an almost laudatory regard for the explorers which is of prime consideration in the present context. As his portrait of Mungo Park in Niger revealed, Mitchell was far from uncritical concerning the actions of individual explorers, yet he perceived them collectively as participating in a quest mitigating any individual defects of character, personality or behaviour.

With the prospect of adventure denied him, even of the limited and constrained type he had enjoyed with the army, it is perhaps not without some significance that the first book he should have had accepted for publication had exploration and adventure as its subject.

Hanno was published in June 1928 and in the opening pages the author sought to define the impetus underlying the exploratory urge:

"One stresses in the explorer's mental equipment that half-unreasoning dream-pursuit, that aching wonder, that nameless urge", 15

Hanno is a short, allusive work which deals with adventure and exploration as both a physical and abstract concept neither of which are really ever adequately defined. It was not in fact until six years later that Mitchell was to attempt a clarification as to what, precisely, the "dream pursuit" and "nameless urge", expressed in Hanno, actually referred. Clearly, in terms of his harsh treatment of Park - repeated in the essay on the Scottish explorer in Mine Against the Unknown - and his revulsion at the cruelty of Magellan 16 and Cabeza de Vaca, 17 Mitchell would have been hard pressed to define the activities of the afore-mentioned as a "dream pursuit". And, indeed, the motivating "dream pursuit" is intended, at least in part, as a metaphor for the underlying compulsion which Mitchell perceived as being at the source of the explorer's actions.

His use of the term "dream pursuit" is however appropriate for the extent to which it implies an unconscious or sub-conscious compliance with some underlying force or principle. For Mitchell, the/

15. Hanno, pp.11-12.
16. See Chapter 1.
17. Mine Against the Unknown, "Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca", p.131, Mitchell describes the cruelty of the Spanish soldiers to the South American natives.
Apart from the above the other explorers dealt with are Leif Ericsson, the Norseman who discovered America, Marco Polo, the Venetian merchant adventurer, Christopher Columbus, Cabeza de Vaca and Ferdinand Magellan, the Spanish Conquistadores, Vitus Bering, the 17th century seaman from Jutland, Mungo Park, Richard Burton, who explored North Africa and Fridtjof Nansen, the Arctic explorer and politician.
the explorers in *Nine Against the Unknown*, from Leif Ericsson to Fridtjof Nansen seem to have been acting in concert with just such an underlying motivation. This contention becomes clearer if we turn to the introduction to *Nine Against the Unknown*. It is here that Mitchell revealed that his somewhat eccentric conception of exploration owed something to his Diffusionist views on the origins of civilisation.

According to the Diffusionist view civilisation arose on the banks of the Nile in Egypt by the chance realisation on the part of nomadic man that crops could be grown every year as the flooding of the Nile was a predictable and therefore an ultimately controllable event. 18 So it was that the seeds for the next year's crop were saved and planted, land further from the Nile banks irrigated, villages built and civilisation established. For Mitchell the net effect was nothing short of disastrous:

"So classes came into the world with the differentiation of men into Kings (Chief Irrigators), Priests (Followers and Tenders and Interpreters of the Kings) - and Plebs (the Labourers at the Sowing and Reaping). In a few hundred years there came into being on our planet - and at the time on no other portion of it than the Nile basin - civilisation: not slowly evolved from barbarism as barbarism was once supposed in its turn to have sprung from savagery, but a direct transition from the life of wandering, carefree Natural Man.

Now, godless and devil-less though he had been, Natural Man, like all other animals had always sought to avoid death, and had reasoned that the cause of death was the loss of blood, that blood itself, in fact, was Life. Consequently, long before the coming of civilisation, he had in various parts of the world greatly prized objects and materials the colour of blood - red carnelian and the like".19

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18. Diffusionism is considered in Chapter 8. D.F. Young, *Beyond the Sunset*, passim, argues the case for the influence of Diffusionism on Mitchell's works, but it will be seen that this was only one aspect of a distinctly idiosyncratic world view constructed by Mitchell.

If this search for life-giving objects and substances pre-dates civilisation it is perhaps not unreasonable to posit the existence of some conflict over ownership of such a prized commodity, which is, of course, entirely out of keeping with Mitchell's Diffusionist notion of a tranquil Golden Age of pre-history. In any event, according to Mitchell in the opening chapter of Mine Against the Unknown, the quest for these life-givers intensified and diversified until it was corrupted by civilisation. The desired colour changed with the passing years: from red to green, and from green to gold because of its association with the life-giving sun. Where in the Golden Age man had pursued this quest peacefully, with the coming of civilisation the emphasis inevitably changed:

"With the surplus of energy and population that agriculture created the ancient Nilotic kings sent out their captains and mariners far and near in quest of these seemingly necessary things".20

The events following this development are predictable: gold comes to be prized because it confers and buys privilege; explorers followed by armies are despatched by rulers and what had began as an innocent quest for what were conceived of as life-giving substances ironically ends in a welter of blood, exploitation and territorial aggrandisement. Such, for Mitchell, was the ancestry of the modern explorer. Yet even when the explorer was ostensibly engaged in a venture with a basis of even blatant self-interest Mitchell was anxious that he should be seen to be acting in accordance with a more fundamental and laudable urge:

"A man set out on a new trade route in the hope as a remote ambition, of finding the Golden Land of Youth. If he failed en route he might at least fill his pouch with good terrestrial treasure on the way".21


Quite how Mitchell could know that the explorer who was ostensibly after riches of some kind was actually searching for this "Golden Land of Youth" is rather dubious. It is clear from the following however that the Golden Land of Youth is intended to refer to the pre-history of man and not to an individual wistfulness for the explorer's own lost youth. Furthermore, the source of this quest is seen as residing in an atavistic "race memory":

"That belief was built on vague race memories of the world that once had been - that world of Early Man whose first civilisations (even while they enjoyed the fruits of civilisation) looked back on the vanished Golden Age when good King Cronos reigned in heaven and Zeus the war-like usurper was still unapparent. Some fragment of that ancient world, went the poet's misty dream, might still survive - far off under the setting sun."

Quite how the reader is expected to be able to reconcile the distinctly abstract concept of "the poet's misty dream", derived from some vague shared race-memory with the, for the most part, historically accurate definitions as to the rather less elevated (economic) motivations of explorers like Magellan and de Vaca is rather doubtful. The fact is that the "misty dream" and the "race memory" are simply devices used by Mitchell to convey the idea that the urge to physical exploration held a wider and greater significance for mankind. Despite the fact that he describes how some of the explorers find pockets of primitive peoples living in a manner suggestive of communal peace and happiness, it is only in the most limited sense that he can claim the explorers were searching after the Golden Age as such.

22. Ibid, p.17.

23. Ibid, pp.101, 107, 139, Mitchell describes Columbus as discovering natives living in a mid-way stage between Golden Age and civilisation on Concepcion Island, and the Bahamas; while de Vaca's expedition is helped by natives who "coddled them and doctor them in the true style of the Golden Age that was vanishing so quickly ...", (p.139).
Mitchell did provide an indication, of sorts, as to the way in which he viewed exploration in the context of man's greater quest for an overall understanding of the world. He did so in the synopsis for his proposed "History of Mankind". This work was to be a history of man's development from earliest times to the present day. Brief definitions of the first seven of fourteen proposed chapters comprise the extent of the synopsis. Chapter One, entitled "The Background to Human Life", consists of three initial sections arranged as follows:

"I Men have been considering the size, the shape and appearance of their background for some 300,000 years.

II For 297,000 out of that 300,000 it was probably no more and no less than the average mammal bestows on his habitat.

III Civilisation the origin of "cosmic curiosity". 24

These three initial components of a sixteen-section first chapter appear as if they were intended to provide the theme for the proposed work. Not only is a fourth component separated from the first three by double-spacing in the typescript, but its subject matter - "the earth some two-thousand million years ago" - suggests that it was to be the chronological beginning to the work with the preceding sections providing some comment on the thematic unity of the work. A closer look at these opening three sections, although they are by no means as comprehensive as could be hoped, nevertheless reveals that the theme of "A History of Mankind" was to be the very development of the exploratory, questing zeal of the explorer first alluded to in Hanno and then in parts of Nine Against the Unknown. Thus, Section One defines the existence of a natural human curiosity about the world in general, while Section Two/

24. Unpublished synopsis entitled "History of Mankind".
Two qualifies this contention by claiming that such curiosity was essentially animal-like and distinctly limited. The point requires to be made here that Mitchell's depiction of the inhabitants of the Golden Age portrayed in *Three Go Back* and *Gay Hunter* 25 corresponds to this rather unflattering definition. Because they are happy and contented, naturally good without fear or vice, they have no cause to be insatiably curious about anything. In these books they are, consequently, rather bland, being distinctly secondary to the main action and focus of attention provided by the respective groups of time travellers. It is therefore no accident that, as has been seen from the outline concerning the onset of civilisation in the introductory chapter to *Nine Against the Unknown*, the growth of real curiosity coincides with the demise of the Golden Age. So it is that in the third section to Chapter One of "A History of Mankind" the onset of civilisation is directly linked to what is called the awakening of man's "cosmic curiosity". The breed of men this gives rise to may have their origins in the search for life-givers, but the explorers, although earth-bound physically, are the tangible manifestation of the growth of this "cosmic curiosity", 26 struggling to make sense of the world, or, in Mitchell's own phrase, battling "Against the Unknown". 27 Thus, civilisation is a mixed blessing: it may have brought about the fall of man from the Golden Age but it compensates by bestowing the insatiable curiosity about his world which may, just, provide the way for a return to the principles, if not the actual physical re-emergence, of some/

25. *Gay Hunter* is considered in Chapter 4.

26. "History of Mankind".

27. That is, from *Nine Against the Unknown*. 
some future Golden Age. The "half unreasoning dream pursuit" is therefore at one and the same time man's curse and prospect of salvation. This is the essence of which Mitchell writes, towards the conclusion of his introductory essay, in *Nine Against the Unknown*:

"It was a quest curiously mixed and - by the time of the last of the Nine - transmuted. Yet Leif Ericsson and Fridtjof Nansen, separated by a space of nine hundred years, both quested the unattainable same. They did it under different names and guises: the essence remained".28

It is in this area that Mitchell encounters a very real difficulty - the essence remains the same, but ultimately it can only be defined as an essence serviced by the self-interest (however defined) of the individual explorer. To be sure, the efforts of those explorers who found the new trade routes benefited mankind by enabling the creation and distribution of wealth to ever more people, though colonial peoples might well dispute their share of the benefits. The real question is whether or not Mitchell actually expected the reader to believe that exploration - the quest after "the poet's misty dream" - actually benefited mankind in anything other than the most transmuted way. Ultimately he could not and although, much of the time, he tried to keep the notion of the "half-unreasoning dream pursuit" on an abstract and metaphysical level, he was forced to come down to a rather more mundane level of explication. He did so at the conclusion to his very last essay in *Nine Against the Unknown* on Nansen the Arctic explorer. The fact that he waited until the last gasp, so to speak, to do so is perhaps indicative of his own dissatisfaction with the general and abstract nature of his central contention that the explorer's cosmic curiosity was actually of benefit to mankind both as an ideal and in an economic sense.

From the outset Mitchell's portrait of Nansen is sympathetic, partly because the explorer's expedition is organised in a determined but egalitarian manner which commended itself to him. In Hanno, published six years previously, Mitchell had predicted that future exploratory expeditions should be:

"disciplined by knowledge and self-training, not the monkey-adornments of uniform and the clownish posturings of enforced 'respect'"30

In Nine Against the Unknown this negative aspect of discipline is counterposed with Nansen's strict but egalitarian leadership:

"Nansen had promulgated and was to enforce strict enough discipline but little on military or naval models, it was a discipline imposed by a directing equal upon fellow equals, eating, sleeping and working were much in common, there was little of wardroom and forecastle spirit in the ship..."31

For a socialist whose notions of equality had been confounded by the discipline of the services such egalitarianism held an obvious appeal.32

But, just like the other eight explorers considered, Nansen's venture is also defined in terms of the grand design, the "dream pursuit".

29. Of the nine essays those on Cabeza de Vaca, Vitus Bering, Richard Burton and Fridtjof Nansen are largely sympathetic to their subjects, not because Mitchell was blind to their personal faults but because they are depicted as being neither wantonly cruel or harsher than was normal for their time. Those on Ericsson, Christopher Columbus, Magellan and Park are rather less favourably disposed to their subjects for the adverse reasons. The essay on Marco Polo is near neutral in tone, the vibrant commercialism of Renaissance Venice drawing from Mitchell some reluctant admiration.

30. Hanno, p.34.

31. Nine Against the Unknown, p.305.

32. See Appendix I on Mitchell's ambivalence to discipline.
Thus Mitchell depicts Nansen pondering the possibility of failure and consoling himself with the thought that all exploratory ventures had been worthwhile attempts, even if:

"... Man and his strange adventure cease for ever, that Earthly Paradise unattained. Yet it had been attempted".33

Admiration for a vainglorious attempt is a common enough sentiment. What requires comment in the present context is the assertion that Nansen and, by implication, all other explorers, were seeking the attainment of an "Earthly Paradise". The reader might be forgiven for the comment that, on the evidence Mitchell advanced in Nine Against the Unknown, or rather lack of it, Nansen and his fellow explorers had been doing nothing of the kind.

As if in recognition of the outrageousness of this statement - this striving for "the Earthly Paradise" - Mitchell included a section at the very culmination of the essay which revealed that the "dream pursuit" might be acceptable as an abstract concept but it was distinctly lacking as a method of achieving an "Earthly Paradise" of almost any definition. The most significant passage in Nine Against the Unknown concerns, ironically, Nansen's career after his exploratory ventures are at an end, Mitchell describing how Nansen returned home to:

"a mean and petty squabbling on home politics, to helping Norway attain her nationhood and all the prides and prejudices that went with that attainment --- to that ten years' spurt of energy in Russia and at Geneva which awoke for the world again the magic of the Earth Conqueror's name - this time the conquest of pity and compassion, perhaps the truest conquest of all, the strait and undeniable way to those Fortunate Isles that his countryman Leif Ericsson first set forth to seek nine hundred years before".34

33. Ibid, p.309.
34. Ibid, p.316. (continued ........)
Thus it may be contended that it is politics - "the conquest of pity and compassion" - which will lead to the "Fortunate Isles" rather than the "half-unreasoning dream pursuit" and its manifestation in the actions of the explorers. For Mitchell, Nansen may have seemed the embodiment of adventure and politics but how these two factors were to gel is something of a mystery. Three and four years earlier in The Thirteenth Disciple and Stained Radiance respectively, Mitchell provided an answer, of sorts, as to how the urge toward adventure and exploration and the political impulse might be reconciled. In these novels the lure of adventure and the commitment entailed by political action are joined by the third consideration comprising the ties of home and family.

Fridtjof Nansen, (1861-1930) was the first Norwegian minister to Great Britain serving for three years between 1905 and 1908. After the First World War he devoted his time first to the repatriation of prisoners of war and then to the relief of Russian famine sufferers and Armenian refugees. He headed the Norwegian delegation to the League of Nations in 1920 and was responsible for the development of internationally acceptable credentials for displaced persons leading to the adoption of the "Nansen" passport. In 1922 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
b) Malcom Maudslay and the Quest for Understanding

The Thirteenth Disciple recounts the life story of Malcom Maudslay from his private papers, journals and diaries with Mitchell taking on the role of editor and interpreter. Viewed as a whole the novel reveals Malcom's oscillations between adventure and political action, and his conception of them as polar opposites. Adding to the problem the ties of home and family threaten his quest for understanding of the world and his role in it. It is with a definition of Malcom's quest that the story opens. Like Mitchell's definition of adventure used in relation to the lives of the great explorers, the central element in Maudslay's quest is the presence of a gnawing curiosity about the world, intermingled with a vague and indeterminate desire to help mankind. Like the explorers, the young Maudslay is enthralled to the point of obsession by the world beyond his own immediate environment.

Chastised for stealing oatcakes, the five year old Maudslay decides on suicide by drowning in a well near his home. However, just as a childish pique might have had tragic results, he is vouchsafed an experience which he is to retain for life:

"... he raised his head and suddenly became aware of the long wall of the autumn day, a quivering, bubble wall, resting on the hill brow just above his head.

It was his first conscious awareness of the wonder of the horizon. He lay and stared at it and forgot his intention of drowning himself. Instead a great resolution came upon him. He would creep up through Stane Muir and touch the Thing, perhaps throw a stone against it and see if it would crack ... he stooped and picked up a large and companionable-looking stone with which to batter in the Walls of the World". 35

This passage effectively sets the tone for the novel. Malcom's infant resolve to pierce the "bubble wall" of the autumn day is simply a metaphor for the desire which grows steadily within him as the years pass, becoming his "life's passion", to escape his early environment and actually "batter in the walls of the World". As such this desire may be seen as corresponding with Mitchell's definition of the explorer's motivation as an "aching sense of wonder" and the consequent commitment it entails. Had the translation of Maudslay's youthful resolve to confront the unknown, or "the Thing" as he calls it, been simply to find adventure, he could have done so in much the same manner as the explorers whose lives are recounted in Nine Against the Unknown. But, unlike these explorers, Maudslay, like Mitchell, had to contend with the existence of powerful emotions of empathy for the poor and oppressed, whose very existence acted as a constant remonstrance to the escapism and selfishness implicit in the ultimately personal gratification provided by adventure and exploration. It is this consideration which may be seen as residing at the heart of Maudslay's dilemma. To satisfy his own urges would involve the sacrifice of the needs of others, while to serve those needs - through political action - would mean the sacrifice of the self by the eschewal of adventure. The dynamic tension arising from this conflict, acted out in the latter stages of Maudslay's life against the background of the third conflicting element comprising the ties of home and family provides the dramatic framework of The Thirteenth Disciple.

I have tried to indicate in the previous chapter how Mitchell, like Maudslay and other central characters in his fiction, exhibited an empathic response to suffering and how this contributed to their awareness of the evils of class divided society. Malcom cannot escape from/

from the terrible burden his compassion involves. As a young reporter Maudslay catches sight of an old beggar in the street, Mitchell adding in explanation that:

"All his life the people of the abyss, the cheated of the sunlight, were so to haunt his happiest moments and dreamings: these the eternally crucified ...".37

If there was to be no release from this emotional commitment to the downtrodden and underprivileged and his quest for understanding of the world by "battering-in" the restraining "Walls of the World" remained as strong as ever, it is perhaps not surprising that Maudslay should see in the politics of socialism a potential fusion of the adventure and his need to help mankind:

"he had discovered the socialists and their gigantic, amorphous literature. Here were people who, like himself, had shuddered in sick horror at sight of the dehumanised and wandering crucified; people who had also known the challenge of the winter's stars and seen solution of all the earth's bitter cruelties in a gigantic expedition against the World's Walls ... though they seemed vaguely in dispute over plan of campaign".38

Maudslay's innate compassion and his early reading of socialist works had introduced him to the doctrine of socialism, but apart from seeing in the socialist thinkers and pioneers kindred spirits who, like himself, had been sickened by the "dehumanised and wandering crucified", his socialism is never accurately defined. Linked with his angry compassion, his socialism is of such a general nature that he can translate it as the adventure of mankind to overcome evil and, therefore, as in some way analogous to the notion of his own destiny garnered from the epiphanic moment on Stane Muir that he experienced as a child.

37. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.77.
38. Ibid, p.60.
However, when Maudslay actually participates in political activity, with the Left Communist Group of Glasgow, he is depicted initially as rejecting socialism through his disillusionment with the Group's leading members. Certainly the portraits provided of the economically deterministic Marxist, the infaffectual Christian socialist and Meierkhold, the gentle and humanitarian anarchist, while not mordantly unkind, are mockingingly ungenerous. Yet it is in the context of a key exchange with the Meierkhold, the anarchist member of the Group to whom Maudslay is drawn by their shared compassion for humanity, that it becomes clear that the reason for his disillusionment resides in himself. This is so because his definition of socialism is too abstract, too related to his confusion concerning the place of adventure, the existence of suffering and his own role to be of much value in day to day political struggle. Unburdening himself to Meierkhold Maudslay articulates this disillusion and confusion:

"that thing beyond the horizon was the Galaxy, the universe we focus, and we'd go out and conquer it yet'. He fumbled for words. There/

39. Ibid, pp.85-6: "The Group chairman was an engineer from the shipyards, an orthodox Marxist who believed that Marxians should breed like rabbits and encourage the rest of the proletariat to do the same. Thus, in congestion, overcrowding and unemployment, conditions would become so terrible that revolt would be inevitable. Then the capitalist system would be overthrown and the workers take control and the capitalists with their whores and harlots set to working in mines and puddle-pools. He had a large, damp wife who breded vigorously and whom he frequently beat. This was his vision and this was his life. The Group Treasurer was an evicted schoolmaster, an enthusiastic and ambitious and robust young conscientious objector. He had not repudiated his Christianity ... impervious to all arguments on behalf of the materialist conception of history, for he would prove that God had always been on the side of the workingman, that Isaiah was an early Engels, Christ a practical revolutionist, St Paul a more enthusiastic socialist than Proudhon. ... he was afterwards to rat to the Labour Party, the comforts of an Under-Secretaryship and a belief in the inevitability of gradualness. Meierkhold was a sentimentalist, a gentle soul as much out of place in the Left Communist Group of Glasgow as he was to prove in the blood and iron government of Stalin".
There was something else, some abyssal, haunting, forgotten thing on which he had built his vision. He found his ideas tongueless foeti. "Socialism - I thought it was a planning for that somehow'.

'Akh God, it is the Satanists, not the socialists to whom you belong. And even among them - '. The Professor looked at him wonderingly, kindly. "Per ardua ad astra. Young men shall see visions ... This sky-storming: if it is poetry, dream of a struggle more remote from human purpose than any dream'.

'It is a dream worth following'. Meierkhold nodded. 'As you will follow it - if you remember - alone ...' 40

It is thus Maudslay after all, and not socialism, however defined, that is found wanting. After all it is Malcom, rather than a shortcoming in socialism, who is at fault since it is he who cannot identify, as yet, how the conquest of the galaxy is related to the struggle of socialism for a more just world. As it is, Maudslay decides to act on Meierkhold's advice - which actually defines the true nature of the struggle in such a way as to make socialism integral to it, though this is not apprehended by Maudslay at the time 41 by leaving the Left Communist Group and striking out on his own desiderata: "per ardua, ad astra", as Meierkhold puts it.

If the problems of his disillusionment with socialism and failing loyalty to the Communist faction are resolved by this decision, Maudslay is almost immediately faced with a cruel personal dilemma which calls into question the probity of following such an individualistic path. This dilemma is expressed in the person of his girlfriend, Rita, who becomes pregnant just as Maudslay determines to take Meierkhold's advice/ 


41. The meaning of Meierkhold's statement that Maudslay has more in common with the Satanists than the socialists and his belief that the struggle is "more remote from human purpose than any day dream" is dealt with in Chapter 8.
advice and follow his "sky-storming" dream alone. The irony of this turn of events is nicely judged: just as Maudslay is resolved to eschew the collective mode of action implicit in political activity in favour of a decidedly individualistic course, the threat of domesticity and the inevitable ties of wife and family intrude with the effect of immediately recreating and redefining the tension within him. Maudslay cannot follow his "sky-storming" inclinations - however he decides to translate them into practical actions - with a young family living in Glasgow and working as a reporter. He decides therefore that "He must break with Rita". Returning home that evening Maudslay discovers that Rita has fallen down the stairs of their rented rooms and, wrongly believing her to be dead, flees Glasgow in order to avoid the publicity attendant upon the inquest.

Even granted that there was little that Maudslay could have done to alter the situation, his hurried departure from the still warm body of his girlfriend and their unborn child is a somewhat callous act. At first Rita's death seems like providence removing the constraints from his desire to take part in the great sky-storming quest. Yet, far from grasping this opportunity, Maudslay effectively eschews the prospect of adventure, reacting to his unhappy experiences in Glasgow - sacked from his job for falsifying an expense claim, followed that same evening by his finding Rita's body - by joining the British Army in November 1915.

42. Ibid, p.102.
42a. Quite whether Rita and her unborn child die as a result of the fall is open to doubt. In The Thirteenth Disciple, p. 114, Mitchell describes how Maudslay apparently sees Rita in a restaurant in the South of England in 1916, while in 1923 or 1924 Maudslay tells some friends that Rita had died in an accident, (p.173).

43. The Thirteenth Disciple, pp.116, 118. The text is somewhat confusing as to how old Maudslay actually is on enlistment. Born on 24 December 1898, he changes his birth certificate to read 1897 (p.116) so his actual age on enlistment on 28 November 1915 (p.118) would be seventeen. Yet Mitchell describes Maudslay as an eighteen year old (p.118).
Posted to Salisbury Plain en route for France Maudslay retreats into himself in a welter of self-recrimination and doubt. Among the lowest elements of the lumpen proletariat Maudslay loses the last vestiges of his socialism and his grand concept of life as an adventure. Tormented by his callousness towards Rita, self-denigratingly he belittles the erstwhile high estimation of himself and his destiny. Supplementing this masochistic mental anguish with a practical contribution are Sergeant Morgan and Private Wilson, the latter being described as "an atavistic little pervert who found a strange, mouth-drooling pleasure in blood and suffering" and who:

"baited Malcom with zest and without provocation".44

Paradoxically it is this victimisation which helps Maudslay out of the morass of self-hate when, in the best tradition of such conflicts, Maudslay inflicts a severe beating on his persecutor. The incident serves the purpose of awakening Maudslay to the fact that turning his back on the evils of the world is no solution.

It is not, however, until Sergeant John Metaxa, a drill and arms instructor at the camp, and Maudslay come into contact that his rehabilitation is complete. It is Metaxa, a Diffusionist, who corrects Maudslay's pessimistic view of human nature; a view emanating from the residue of his own self-hate and supplemented by his contempt for the degenerate squaddies who share his billet. Malcom has therefore two conceptions of man to choose from: the Diffusionist creed of Metaxa which sees man as naturally good and kind but brutalised by the impositions of civilisation, and his own neo-Darwinian conception of life as a brutal dark business with, in the context of his struggle for survival in the barrack room, ethical considerations a misplaced weakness. Inevitably/

44. Ibid, p.125.
Inevitably, Maudslay is won over by Metaxa's arguments, in part because they offer an explanation of the world's ills which shows them to be contingent and therefore capable of being challenged and changed. In part also because even in his deepest pessimism Halcom refuses to believe that "Blood lust was our heritage". But, in equally large measure, Metaxa rehabilitates Maudslay because the two become lovers.

Mitchell is unequivocal about this. In the passage leading up to the description of their first meeting he prepares the reader for the startling contention that a sergeant and a private soldier in the British Army are to fall in love with each other:

"The love of a man for a man has small place in English literature. Men in our books do not love: they like each other, are pals and pals and chums and what not, in the queer, rickety jargon of the second and third decades. Our books find a pleasure... in the inability of Englishmen to love. The word is tabu — perhaps because of classical homosexual associations. But without a doubt those two loved each other at first glance. Halcom had no feeling of meeting a stranger and they twinkled to a mutual smile as he clicked his heels".

Despite the difference in rank Maudslay and Metaxa are constant companions, one benefit of which is that the former is treated with undisguised favouritism. Yet there is no indication that their love is anything other than chaste and non-physical. It is interesting to note in this context Paul Fussell's contention that in post-First World War literature there is a distinct association between war and sex and that:

"Given this association and given the deprivation and loneliness and alienation characteristic of the soldier's experience — given, that is, his need for affection in a largely womanless world — we will not be surprised to find both the/

46. Ibid, p.128.
The actuality and the recall of front-line experience relate with what we can call the homoerotic. I use that term to imply a sublimated (i.e. "chaste") temporary form of homosexuality. Of the active, unsublimated kind there was very little at the front. The presence of this homoeroticism is just one instance of the way in which Mitchell, through *The Thirteenth Disciple* and other of his works, deserves for the moment to be considered in the context of Fussell's main contention.

According to Fussell the impact of the Great War was not just felt by and reflected in the work of those writers and poets who actually took part in the fighting. On the contrary, the First World War bequeathed the perception of an experience so fully and deeply absorbed that it was (and continues to be) "lived" by subsequent generations of writers, some of whom were even too young to fight in the Second World War. Too young himself to join the fighting in France, a scan of Mitchell's work reveals the impact the war made on his consciousness.

The heroes of both *The Thirteenth Disciple* and *Image and Superscription*, Malcom Maudslay and Gershom Jezreel, are depicted in the muddy trenches of France in the First World War. When Maudslay's lover, Sergeant John Metaxa, becomes hopelessly entangled in the barbed wire in No Man's Land, Maudslay has to kill him in an act of mercy. Gershom Jezreel is nearly castrated when he is propelled into the barbed wire entanglements/

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48. In this particular context Fussell, ibid, pp.34-35, 324-328, argues that the works of contemporary writers like Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* (1961), although ostensibly concerned with the Second World War actually derive themes and certain idioms transmitted by the 'memory' of the 1914-1918 War.

entanglements by a shell blast while the image of a German soldier crucified, upsidedown, on the wire haunts him as a grim symbol of the utter wretchedness of war. The theme of humanity abandoned utterly by God and fellow man on the hideous entanglements in the appositely named 'No Man's Land' re-emerges in Three Go Back when Clair Stranlay reveals in a pitiful outburst that her lover had died on the wire at Hametz because she had taunted him into enlisting. Fussell contends that a distinct theme running through post-1918 fiction with war as its topic is the crucifixion motif, derived from the widespread use of barbed wire entanglements and the widely credited story that in 1915 the Germans had crucified a young soldier in full view of his horror-stricken comrades. There are clearly symbolic evocations of Christ's passion in Mitchell's depiction of Metaxa, Gershom, Clair's lover and, in particular, the inverted crucifixion of the unnamed German soldier whose manner of death is a parallel to the death of St. Peter. The lack of belief in terms of organized religion manifested by Maudslay, Metaxa and Gershom Jezreel stands in marked contrast to the sympathetic associations with Christ involved in the depiction of the deaths of Metaxa, Clair's lover and the German soldier. Furthering this association of Christ's passion with the sufferings of the ordinary soldier, Sergeant Sebright, the equivalent of Maudslay's "snarling half-wit" Sergeant Morgan, torments Gershom/

51. Three Go Back, p. 92.
52. Paul Fussell, The Great War, p. 117. Some accounts of the story involve a Canadian soldier, others a British soldier.
53. Paul Fussell, ibid, p. 118-119, argues that the war caused a widespread rejection of organized religion among the troops, but that Christ was conceived of as a friend, because he, too, was a fellow sufferer.
54. The Thirteenth Disciple, p. 119.
Gershom Jezreel, calling him "Jesus" in imagined insult. In a cruel exchange Gershom may be adjudged as getting his own back on a badly injured Sebright. In the midst of the carnage the Sergeant calls: "Oh Christ, some water!" to which Gershom, with evident satisfaction, replies:

"No water, no Christ, either, Sebright. I'm only Jesus, Sebright, Gershom Jesus Jezreel. No water ... I bring not peace, but a sword". Moreover it is indicative of the aforementioned association of Christ and the soldier that in Cloud Howe Mitchell depicts Chris pondering Robert Colquhoun's definition of the Great War dead as:

"the million Christs who had died in France".

A related aspect of the crucifixion motif as it is used by Mitchell may be discerned in relation to Clair Stranlay and her guilt at having caused her lover's death. Clair's confession effectively juxtaposes the awful reality of the war, her lover dying on the wire at Mametz, with her own, erstwhile "civilian" view of the conflict which had led her to taunt him into doing his 'patriotic duty'. Mitchell's indication that Clair did have an unrealistic conception of the war is certainly an accurate observation of public opinion at the time which was actively manipulated by government, newspapers and army censorship of letters from the front.

Of all Mitchell's work Sunset Song has received by far the most critical attention and acclaim, chiefly in the context of the

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56. Ibid, p.201.
57. Cloud Howe, p.36.

In Sunset Song, Mitchell mentions the newspapers (p.105) in this context with the Chairman of the wartime Exemption Board described as "a wee grocer man that worked night and day to send other folk out to fight the Germans", (p.205).
the relationship of Chris and others to the land. It is however obvious
that the First World War underlies the dramatic movement of the novel,
causing the death of Ewan, Chae Strachan and Long Rob, and bringing about
the changes in agriculture accelerated by the conflict. Moreover, Ewan
Tavendale senior needs to be considered in the specific context of another
of Fussell's Great War themes, that of the pastoral reference located in
an overall and contradictory context of violence:

"The standard Great War memoir generally
provides a number of such moments sandwiched
between bouts of violence and terror".60

A Highlander moved south to the Mearns, Ewan is described as a
child of the soil:

"calm as you please, but an awful good worker,
folk said he could smell the weather and had
fair the land in his bones".61

Courtship and early married life with Chris is as near idyllic as the
demanding routine of the croft will permit. It is his enlistment in the
Army, undertaken without reference to Chris, which signals the beginning
of the end for their marriage. Ewan's basic training, in the lowlands of
Scotland, has a distressingly brutalising effect, expressed in his brut¬
ish treatment of Chris while on his last leave prior to departure for the
Front. In France a suddenly repentant Ewan is driven by remorse to set
out on the hopeless quest of reaching Blawearie and Chris, on foot. What
is of note is that it is not the thought of Chris which initially/

59. Chris Guthrie and Ewan Tavendale Junior are discussed in the
context of the Quair in Chapter 5.

60. Paul Fussell, The Great War, p.236.
Among those mentioned by Fussell using the "bucolic interlude" or
"pastoral oasis" in this way are Lord Dunsany in the short story
"The Prayer of the Men of Daleswood", Wilfred Owen, in the poem
"Exposure" and Hemingway in A Farewell to Arms (1935).
One of the most evocative uses of the pastoral reference in the
visual arts must be the closing scene from the film of Erich Maria
Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front (1928) where the soldier
is shot as he clutches for a butterfly on the lip of the trench.

61. Sunset Song, pp.21-22.
initially motivates Ewan to his act of hopeless desperation, but the thought of his croft, his home:

"It was that wind that came with the sun, I minded Blawearie, I seemed to waken-up smelling that smell. And I couldn't believe it was me that stood in the trench, it was just daft to be there. So I turned and got out of it."  

Ewan is caught, court-martialled and shot as a deserter, but it is the guilelessness and innocence of his actions that is striking: actions determined by the realisation that it was, indeed, "just daft to be there" in the mud and carnage of the trenches when the memory of Blawearie had been invoked with such clarity in his mind by the wind, the sun and imagined smell of his home. In similar fashion Maudsley in _The Thirteenth Disciple_, meets his brother, Robert, quite by chance in the course of a friendly football match between regiments. The two pages comprising subchapter II of Chapter Six in _The Thirteenth Disciple_ opens with Malcom's recollecting the fierce fighting at Delville Wood, Trones Wood, Longueval and Ginchy and how:

"they were relieved and marched out and gave place to battalions of felt-hatted Australians who were to die in the mud and rains and futility of the Ancre".  

Maudsley's thoughts then shift to his meeting with Robert. Malcom listens contentedly as his brother recalls their home in Leekan, how he had married "Jean, the bonniest" of the Murray sisters and how far away in the north-east, at a seeming remove of a million miles from the dirt and death:

"They'll be bringing hame the kye the noo".  

It is this last remark which shatters Malcom's composure and which causes the reality of the war to reassert itself in a powerful passage/  

63. _The Thirteenth Disciple_, p.147.  
64. Ibid, p.149.
passage reflecting and augmenting the one with which the sub-chapter had opened:

"And suddenly all that was peasant in Malcom wept for his brother, this strayed, lost peasant. He sat and gripped his hands in his pockets and held himself from speaking and went out to the darkness and the homeward journey with his heart wrung in a passion of pity and rage.

Ten days later, in the attack on Thiepval, he saw his brother, thrusting his gasping face from the port-hole of a tank, go by into the hell of bright fires and smashed entanglements where the Wurtembergers had died. He caught sight of Malcom, shouted something, and passed, a man in a dream.

Malcom never saw him again". 65

The peasant enclosed in the machine of death may be seen as paralleling the parenthesis of the pastoral reference by the violence and death with which sub-chapter II opens and closes.

Although Malcom Maidsley and Gershom Jeesel are profoundly affected by their harrowing experiences in the trenches it is doubtful whether The Thirteenth Disciple and Image and Superscription can be called war memoirs, even in terms of Fussell's liberal definition. 66 Yet the impact of the War on Mitchell's consciousness and its transmission into his work is clear and unmistakable. Quite apart from the examples already drawn from The Thirteenth Disciple, Image and Superscription, Three Go Back and A Scots Quair, the ubiquitous impact of the war is to be detected elsewhere in his work. In Three Go Back it is the trenches that impel Keith Sinclair to espouse the murderous anti-war strategy of the League/...
League of Militant Pacifists, while Harrot, the stern Communist in The Lost Trumpet, is concerned, practically to the point of obsession, about the "cruelty of employer to employed". But, as his companion explains, the arrogance of his wartime superiors lies at the heart of his obsession, Harrot having:

"Had some pretty shocking experiences of it himself in the war - he enlisted as a private in the army".

So not only are Keith Sinclair's politics shaped by his wartime experiences, but Harrot's Communism likewise is determined, to an extent, by the conflict. At the other end of the political spectrum, the Fascist Major Ledyard Houghton in Gay Hunter suffers terrible headaches as a result of wartime nerve gassing. Similarly, the effects of nerve gassing are to blame as Robert Colquohoun in Cloud Howe expires at the culmination of his final revolutionary sermon, spewing crimson blood over the text.

Returning to The Thirteenth Disciple, Maudslay is, predictably, shattered by his experiences in France. As he had done previously, as a result of his callous treatment of Rita and related misdemeanours, Maudslay withdraws into himself. Gone, however, is the self-hate which had accompanied his previous withdrawal, which is replaced by a general indifference to everything, including his own future. Consequently, Maudslay remains in the British Army of occupation until 1923, after which he drifts into a variety of jobs including that of a door to door salesman. This aimlessness and indifference are effectively a

67. Three Go Back is considered further in Chapters 4 and 5.
68. The Lost Trumpet, p.66.
69. Maudslay's feelings may be seen as an accurate reflection of the despair felt by many ex-servicemen after the Great War. Denis Winter, Death's Leaf, p.242, relates the existence of these negative emotions using evidence gathered from the reminiscences of those involved.
a defence mechanism against the memory of the ills that have befallen him, his previous passionate questioning of life seeming to have led him into the blind alley of revolutionary politics with the Left Communist Group, to Rita and her accident and the full barbarity of the War, culminating in his mercy killing of the crucified and horribly injured John Metaxa. But Maudsley cannot escape his destiny to seek the meaning to life and he is jerked back to his quest with the arrival from home of a letter from his brother and sister.

The content of the letter is unremarkable, prosaic even, telling of events of the recent past in the neighbourhood of his home, but its function is to act as a catalyst. It saves Malcolm from the torpor of post-War disillusion and for the first time in the six years since the War had ended he is forced to consider his obligations to those he had known and loved. Moreover, their existence is interpreted by him as contributing to the definition of his personal destiny:

"His father, his mother, dark and still, his boyish 'Azilian' - that boy who had practised gentlemanly gestures on Stane Muir - Rita - Metaxa - Robert: if they were of him, living and undead, all of them? For what? What had they laboured to shape and bring to birth through him? Something surely, after all ... For what equipping of what dream-adventure, all unknowing, had they lived and died?

And then, before his eyes, a vision in the sunlight weather, a boy of five came up out of the years, stumbling and plodding, a stone clasped in each small fist, his gaze upon the horizon ...".70

Even his conception of himself as a boy at the time of his vision on Stane Muir is pressed into service in order to convince Maudsley of his undoubted duty to re-engage in his quest for understanding and the assault on "the Walls of the World".

70. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.179.
The "dream adventure", as Maudslay calls it, is a phrase very close in essence to Mitchell's definition of the explorer's "dream pursuit" encountered in *Nine Against the Unknown*. It is not however to physical adventure that Maudslay turns at this stage but to political activity of the kind he had eschewed in Glasgow nine years earlier. This time his political initiative is to be underpinned and informed by the Diffusionist conception of man.

Back at home in the Leelan valley Malcom falls in love for the second time in his life, this time to a woman - his relationship with the unfortunate Rita having fallen some way short of love. The woman is Domina Riddoch, the daughter of the local schoolmaster, and it is she who advances a definition of "the Adventure" which is comparable to the "sky-storming" vision advanced by Maudslay to Meierkhold many years earlier:

"Why, then, somewhere beyond the rim of the Galaxy and the rims of time, ten million years and a day away, men'll reach the palace of God and storm it, and capture the engine-room and power-house, ..." 71

Like the key exchange with Meierkhold it is not Maudslay but his partner who makes the theological assumption that the struggle or quest Maudslay is involved in is inextricably related to God as the ultimate source of power in the universe. In this context it will be recalled Meierkhold had contended Malcom had more in common with "the Satanists" than "the socialists". This time in the sense that Domina now defines Maudslay's quest as an attack on God, albeit ten million years from fruition, the designation Satanist would seem appropriate. It is necessary, for the moment, to leave this particular consideration aside, except to say that since Maudslay's experiences of the world have taught him that it is an/

an evil place, and "God" rules over a kingdom of evil, then the designations of God and Satan need to be re-thought to the point of inversion.72 Mitchell's entitlement of the chapter concerning Maudslay's final involvement in political action as "The New Satanists" is not without some significance.

Having previously been disappointed with an existing political organisation in the shape of the Left Communist Group, Maudslay does the predictable by founding a political grouping to his own specifications. According to Maudslay the premises of the Secular Control Group are a: "'belief in modern ability to organise and direct Adventure of Mankind' coupled with ... 'complete scepticism of all traditional authority, codes, conventions and dignities of civilization unamenable or hostile to constant re-testing and re-stating'.73

Apart from the parallel already drawn between the Secular Control Group and the Promethean Society, it can also be seen that Mitchell's definition of the Group's questioning, critical and systematic approach is, in essence, that employed by the real-life Promethean's commitment to "detailed and impartial research".74

Despite ostensibly being a political faction the Secular Control Group actually amounts to Maudslay's attempt to combine and reconcile his concept of the "Adventure of Mankind", his Diffusionist-inspired questioning of civilisation and its customs in general and his broadly based socialism. It is so because in the Secular Control Group, Maudslay sets out to succeed where he identified the Diffusionists as having/

72. This distinctly Manichean conclusion is touched on in the next section of this chapter and given fuller consideration in Chapters 7 and 8.

73. The Thirteenth Disciple, p. 244.

74. See Chapter 1, p. 49.
having failed:

"for not following out their conclusions to the logical extreme and attacking contemporary religion, morals, ethics, politics".75

Hence the Secular Control Group's "complete scepticism of all traditional authority, codes" and so on, may be seen as Maudslay's attempt at politicising the Diffusionists' rejection of civilisation and what it had done to mankind. Unfortunately for him, Maudslay's creation is destined to disappoint since the growth of the Secular Control Group brings other minds and viewpoints into conflict with his own. As has been seen, the actual point at issue precipitating Maudslay's resignation from the Group is its decision to reject sabotage as an anti-war tactic. Because war is, for Maudslay, the culminating horror of civilisation, he cannot accept any half-measures against it. But, in reality, his resignation ultimately stands as the rejection of political activity as the means of pursuing his own very personal concept of the "Adventure of Mankind". The adventure will continue but, even as he abjures the political mode of action, he reveals his own uncertainty through the annunciation of a classic dilemma:

"I'm deserting, I know. No excuse - except that as I sat and listened to the Conference's decision I saw I could never have any hand in planning the Adventure. Not for me. Realised I could never do anything in policy and tactics. And then I looked out of the window and saw those chaps in the Square and - God, the faces of every one of them seemed the face of Metaxa that last time".76

Maudslay's is the dilemma of the concerned and compassionate individual who, disillusioned with trying to put to rights the evils of the world, rejects the struggle and in so doing guarantees himself a massive/

75. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.223.
76. Ibid, p.257.
massive guilt complex. The crowd in the square pricking Maudslay's conscience are the poor and unemployed, whose cause the Secular Control Group is designed to champion. Rather pointedly they are associated with John Metaxa and his agony just before Maudslay had killed him. This symbolic association of Metaxa's death with Maudslay's rejection of the Secular Control Group suggests that by his actions he is killing the organisation just as surely as he had once had to kill Metaxa. Worse still, his actions entail a continuation of the suffering the Secular Control Group had been founded in order to bring to an end. To drive the point home the poor and oppressed assume in Maudslay's mind the tortured look of Metaxa just prior to his death. The only difference is that while he had killed Metaxa, he is prepared to leave "those chaps in the square" 'hanging on the wire': like "the eternally crucified" who had earlier aroused his compassion.

Given this virtual recognition that he is reneging on the struggle to help mankind, Maudslay's subsequent actions bespeak sheer self-indulgence. Yet, his departure for the jungles of Yucatan in search of a legendary "lost city" is also in keeping with Meierkhold's advice of many years before that Maudslay should pursue his quest alone. Maudslay does so leaving Domina, his bride of ten days, to bear the son that will be born at the instant of his death in Yucatan. The death of Maudslay and the birth of his son perhaps symbolises that the quest will continue, the more so as Maudslay expires within one mountain range of his goal. And there we could leave The Thirteenth Disciple, describing it in D.F. Young's words:

"Malcom/"

77. Ibid, p.77.
"Hale is a disciple in the sense that he shares in the messianic sense of mission to save the fallen world, but he cannot accept any orthodox solution to this problem and searches for a new and revolutionary answer, making his own journey through the darkness to his personal vision of the City of Light".78

However, The Thirteenth Disciple is something more than the Diffusionist propagandising and quest-orientated novel Young describes it as being. Maudslay's life may be seen as the battleground upon which vie the conflicting impulses which lead him to crave physical exploration and adventure at the same time as he feels the moral duty to help mankind through the medium of political activity. Complicating this tension and adding to it he also experiences the urge to settle down to a life of domesticity, first with Rita, then with Domina. Each of these categories involves a definition of the self in relation to others: in the first the self reigns supreme, in the second the self is subjugated to the needs of humanity in general, while in the context of the third the individual must tend the needs of wife and family. While Maudslay finds it comparatively easy to flee the latter set of responsibilities - forsaking Domina for his great adventure - ultimately he cannot escape his own conscience as it relates to his responsibilities to mankind. In The Thirteenth Disciple Mitchell moved to the very brink of asserting that the individual's quest for meaning - the adventure - is his ultimate goal, before drawing Maudslay back, having him reassert the political dimension in relation to the struggle.

It is necessary to go back to the very beginning of the novel and take a close look at the use of language in Maudslay's epiphany on Stane Muir as a child. This reveals an implicit indication that combating the evils of the world must take precedence over individual fulfilment through

78. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, p.39.
through adventure and exploration. It will be recalled that Mitchell describes how the young Malcolm Maudslay becomes aware of "The long wall of the autumn day, a quivering, bubble wall resting on the brown of the hill just above his head". This is Maudslay's first "conscious awareness of the horizon" and it leads him to resolve to "creep up ... and touch the Thing, perhaps throw a stone against it and see if it would crack". Consequently Maudslay picks "a large and companionable-looking stone with which to batter in the Walls of the World".79

Using the horizon to indicate the restraining "Walls of the World", which Maudslay must reach and penetrate in order to find meaning, carries with it certain implications. Foremost among these is the conclusion that, try as one might, it is quite impossible to reach the horizon. As any hill walker knows, (and Mitchell's homes at Hillhead of Segget and Bloomfield are surrounded by hills), the brow of one hill has a disquieting habit of revealing another hill on an ever-receding horizon. So that when just before his death Maudslay has a vision of the splendid city of his quest ("no doubt a dream city" as he had earlier called it)80 it is a glimpse permitted by the lifting of the mist from the horizon of the "last" range of mountains; and it is no more than that - it is a vision which lives only in his pain-wracked mind.81 Mitchell's use of the horizon as the location of the restraining Walls of the World is well chosen implying that the struggle - the "Adventure of Mankind" as Maudslay calls it 82 - is of central importance even though the destination is all but impossible to reach. In this regard it is important to understand Mitchell's choice of definition in relation to the Walls/

81. Maudslay's vision of the city is considered in Chapter 3.
82. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.244.
In the first part of Maudslay's epiphany, not only are the Walls of the World almost within reach above his head, but they are of very insubstantial material: a "bubble wall resting on the hill brow just above his head". The description invites the picture of the young Maudslay crouched over the well raising his head suddenly and receiving a distorted view of spatial relationships as a result. With the wall a mere "quivering bubble" above his head one poke of his finger would be enough to breach it, but as he straightens and regains a proper perception, not only does the Wall recede, but it takes on a more durable, even impregnable aspect. The fragile, quivering bubble Wall becomes a menacing "Thing" which it is necessary to attack with the "companionable-looking stone". In this brief opening passage to *The Thirteenth Disciple*, Maudslay's life is related in microcosm, as he straightens from the foetal-like crouch over the well to the selection of an implement with which to attack the Walls of the World. As a child it is easy to conceive of finding the answers to life's mysteries; as an adult, especially one with as highly a developed conscience and perception as Maudslay, the emphasis shifts to combating the evils of life. The "companionable-looking stone" in the young Maudslay's hand may therefore be seen as the symbolic equivalent of the political activity in which he will later become involved. Maudslay's search for the ultimate horizon in the jungles of Yucatan may be seen as the reification of one aspect of his youthful fascination. The urge to "batter in the Walls of the World" will however, only be achieved through political means: the stone in the young Maudslay's hand is an imperfect implement in relation to the task, just as later, as an adult, he will find the "Left Communist Group" and "Secular Control Group" similarly deficient. Yet, crucially these are all Maudslay, or/
or anyone else who would challenge the shortcomings of the world, actually has available.

In one sense Maudslay's life may be seen as a flight from responsibility which brings with it remorse. Thus, his flight from the responsibilities of a home and family, from Rita, their unborn child and the politics of the Left Communist Group is exactly paralleled in his later flight from Domina, their unborn child and the politics of the Secular Control Group. As a result of the first sequence of events, Maudslay's guilt leads him to a purgatorial spell in the army where a certain perverse retributory justice forces him into killing Metaxa. Having regained his self-esteem, he in turn does to Domina what, in essence, he had earlier done to Rita, by deserting the former for the jungles of Yucatan. One clue as to why Maudslay should act in such an apparently selfish fashion is provided by a definition, albeit tantalizingly brief, of adventure which Mitchell intended to expand upon in his proposed autobiography. In the synopsis "Memoirs of a Materialist" Mitchell intended writing:

"An essay on the further bounds of the physical world; on exploration as the escape from self; ...").

Since the central aspect of Maudslay's personality is his compassion for others:

"all his life the people of the abyss, the cheated of the sunlight were so to haunt his happiest dreamings: these the eternally crucified ...").

It may be contended that it is from the terrible self-imposed burden of his empathy that he flees. But he cannot escape from his essential self since it is his compassion which, from his teens at least, has shaped and/
and guided his quest for meaning and search for an accommodation of politics and the "Adventure of Mankind". Maudslay can physically flee Domina and the Secular Control Group for Yucatan, but ultimately he cannot escape his own over-riding compassion. So it is that for the third and last time Maudslay turns to advocacy of politics and a wistful expression of longing that revolutionary activity might yet be compatible with "The Adventure". Mitchell attempts this in a passage which requires some elaboration.

Mitchell, as narrator, relates one of the last entries in Maudslay's journal concerning a description of the latter's Mayan guide, Ramon Pech:

"Ramon discovers himself as a vigorous proletarian. He tells me he always votes on the progressive ticket and that the present Governor of Yucatan is not only a pure-blooded Mayan but an equally pure-blooded socialist. When the shades of Karl Marx and Ahmekat Tutul Xiu join hands it is time to sing Nunc dimittis". 85

As to why it should be time to sing anything of the kind it is necessary to say something regarding the Latin quotation and the meaning of the reference to Ahmekat Tutul Xiu. The quotation is derived from the Gospel of St Luke, ii:29 and means "now dismiss thy servant". In the Biblical story Simeon is spared from death so that he can see Christ. Having done so Simeon begs Christ to dismiss him and affirms his belief in redemption in the next world by indicating his willingness to die. Thus, as Simeon's life on earth comes to an end so the promise of life in the next is presented as reality, just as Maudslay's life and quest is continued in some way by the birth of his son at the moment of his death. Beyond this, just as Simeon's Nunc Dimittis signifies the resolution of human existence in the person of Christ, so Maudslay envisages the possibility of/

85. Ibid, pp.278-279.
of the realisation of that resolution in an earthly context through
the implicit evaluation of Marx in relation to the virtues of the Xiu.
The intrusion and association of Karl Marx with Ahmekat Tutul Xiu
reintroduces the by now familiar juxtaposition of politics and adventure.
Following Haulslay's epiphany in the jungle, they are treated as being
compatible rather than, as previously, as irreconcilable opposites.

Marx's name is virtually synonymous with revolutionary politics,
but the relationship between Ahmekat Tutul Xiu and adventure requires
some explanation. The Tutul Xiu were the foremost tribe of Mayans in
the millennium prior to the Spanish conquest of South America. They gain
several mentions in The Conquest of the Maya, which is indicative of
their importance to Mitchell. When three of the more substantial of
these references are considered together it emerges that the Xiu posses-
ess distinct qualities which, for Mitchell, raised them above the other
tribes of Yucatan. According to him the:

"Maya originators of the Old Empire civilisation
were nomadic, hunters and fisher primitives ...". 87

They were, in short, hunters of the Golden Age before civilisation
arrived to enslave men to agriculture, and a sedentary existence of
classes and oppression. The Xiu are notable for their resistance/

86. Mitchell's treatment of this formidable clan in The Conquest of the
Maya accords with their importance in Mayan history. See, for
instance, B.M. Norman, Rambles in Yucatan, (New York, 1943);
T. Gann, Ancient Cities and Modern Tribes, (London, 1926);
T.A. Willard, The Lost Empires of the Itzaes and Mayas, (Glendale,
U.S.A., 1933).
I can find no reference, however, to 'Ahmekat' Tutul Xiu in The
Conquest of the Maya or in any of the above works. It can only
be assumed the Ahmekat was a leader of the Xiu at some time in their
history.

87. The Conquest of the Maya, p.57.

88. Nine Against the Unknown, p.13, quoted earlier in this chapter.
resistance to those unwholesome aspects of civilisation and for an independence setting them apart from other Mayans. For Mitchell the Xiu are the adventurers of Mayan history; they are a wandering, pugnacious tribe who almost triumph in their quest for dominance in Yucatan. Thus, the first substantial reference to the Xiu describes:

"the wanderings of that remarkable family the Tutul Xiu whom we have already encountered erupting through the stagnant peace (or at least silence) of Old Empire history". 89

The following pages of The Conquest of the Maya catalogue the wanderings and pugnacity of the Xiu, Mitchell delivering his final verdict on the tribe in the following manner:

"The Xius are the most sane and understandable of all the warring little tribes that endured in Yucatan. Their history was one of dogged independence and resolution. Only time and circumstances defeated their attempt to establish a hegemony over all the other states of the Peninsula". 90

Thus, while civilisation enslaves the rest of the Mayan population the Xiu retain a "dogged independence", they are "those Maya Spartans", 91 with tribal leaders who have the true calibre of the adventurer - men like Holon Chantepeuh, "a warrior, a leader of men, the captain of his tribe". 92

The sudden insertion in The Thirteenth Disciple of Ramon Pech, described as a "proletarian Mayan guide", the socialist Governor of Yucatan, Ahmekat Tutul Xiu and Karl Marx and rounded-off by the Biblical quotation is almost totally confusing unless the passage is seen in the light of Mausiolay's previous alternation between political activity and/

89. The Conquest of the Maya, p.205.
90. Ibid, p.225.
91. Ibid, p.265.

This evolution of the Xiu is repeated by Mitchell in his article "Yucatan: New Empire Tribes and Culture Waves". Antiquity, Vol. 4 no. 16, 1930.
and a collective mode of action, and a thirsting for fulfilment and understanding through adventure and exploration. Thus, Karl Marx is the embodiment of the collective mode of political action, while Ramon Pech, "a vigorous proletarian" and the socialist Governor of Yucatan stand as the inheritors of this tradition. But Ramon Pech is a Maya, and the Governor, in particular, is "a pure-blooded Mayan" and as such both may be seen as the embodiment of the Xiu's "dogged independence and resolution". So, when Mitchell wrote that "when the shades of Ahmekat Tutul Xiu meet the shades of Karl Marx then it will be time to sing Nunc dimittis", he is indicating that when the adventure-spirit of the Xiu meet revolutionary socialism then the new age will have dawned. Through this device Mitchell's intention may be seen as the rehabilitation of the political mode of combating the world's evils at the culmination of Maudslay's adventure-quest. The passage may be seen as indicating Mitchell's desire for the resolution of the tension between the attraction of physical adventure and the impulse towards political activity which has caused Maudslay so much doubt and distress. It is only when Stained Radiance is considered that it becomes clear that, although such a resolution is achieved, it is at the expense of actual physical exploration being redefined as something more akin to Maudslay's conception of "The Adventure of Mankind" with a distinctly ideological political bias.
c) John Garland and the Attainment of Understanding

Where in *The Thirteenth Disciple* Malcom Maudsley is the subject of a three-fold tension between home, politics and adventure, in *Stained Radiance*, John Garland has to contend with the relatively simple dilemma posed by the choice between domesticity and children, and a distinctly political definition of adventure. While Maudsley leaves for the jungles of Yucatan sometime in the mid-1920's, in the reality of his own life Mitchell was married and resigned to domesticity by late summer 1925. So it could be said that *Stained Radiance* parallels Mitchell's life from the point where *The Thirteenth Disciple* departs into the pure fiction of Maudsley's grand adventure in Yucatan. The more overt parallels between Mitchell and Garland can be summarised thus: both are privates in the air force in the 1920's, are aspiring writers, marry a girl from north-east Scotland, and lose their first child through premature birth, an experience from which their wives only just survive. Thus, with the prospect of actual physical adventure denied Mitchell from the time of his marriage, so adventure does not impinge on the consciousness of John Garland. Instead Mitchell depicts Garland as developing a definition of adventure which has as its essence, not the physical adventure which leads Maudsley to Yucatan, but the revolutionary politics of Communism combined with a religious-philosophical dualism of a kind already glimpsed in *The Thirteenth Disciple*. While Maudsley's life is characterised by his inconsistency of action, Garland undergoes a linear three-stage development from cynical detachment to a commitment to revolutionary politics which he interprets in terms of the existence of a cosmic struggle between good and evil.
Like Maudsley, from an early age John Garland is troubled by a gnawing curiosity about the meaning to life:

"... a damnable, ceaseless, hopeless curiosity which had wrung him like a pain throughout his thirty years of life".93

But, unlike Maudsley, there is no epiphany at an early age to which Garland can return in later years as a source of consolation during periods of doubt and depression. This "hopeless curiosity" makes Garland an unpredictable and difficult person, as Thea Mayven, his girlfriend, reveals:

"In his jesting she sensed falseness, just as in his bitterness, a tongue-in-cheek insincerity".94

While never driven to attempt suicide as Maudsley does, from the outset of *Stained Radiance*, Garland is very definitely an unhappy and troubled individual. That both the central characters of Mitchell's first two semi-autobiographical works are depicted as being affected by some form of psychological imbalance cannot be allowed to pass without comment.

As has been indicated previously Mitchell himself displayed a certain emotional instability in his adolescence, running away from school, 'fiddling' expense accounts, attempting suicide and enlisting in the British Army, which, in 1919, was a desperate thing to do. As his letters to Ray Middleton disclose, he was capable of displaying conflicting emotional states. Nor did this aspect of his behaviour improve on his demobilisation from the army and subsequent enlistment in the air force. In a telling phrase Ray Mitchell described her husband in the period up to their marriage as having been:

"embittered and cynical about everything".95

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94. Ibid, p.28.
95. Ray Middleton, PT.
Thus, Garland's cynicism and Maudslay's periods of deep pessimism may be seen as reflecting an aspect of Mitchell's own psychological orientation in the years up to his marriage. Yet Mitchell conquered this negative aspect of his personality and two factors were important to him in doing so. His marriage provided a stability he had previously lacked and his growing interest in left-wing politics consumed a restless energy which might otherwise have destroyed him. It is therefore perhaps not surprising to find John Garland maturing as the result of the application of just such influences.

The questions of marriage, domesticity and children are central in relation to John Garland's development. The stages of his progression are quite distinct and require some comment as they parallel and replicate in different contexts Maudslay's illuminating experience on Stane Muir. Garland's decision to marry Thea is the precondition for the first of these epiphanic experiences. Journeying to Aberdeenshire by ship to meet his fiancée's parents he decides to put behind him the "gnawing curiosity" which had caused him so much unhappiness and uncertainty. Garland invests all his hopes in Thea:

"... she was real; the only reality in life; and the simple things - love, ambition, children, toil. He knew it now. He would forsake the Outer Wastes forever. He also would be simple, guarded; think her thoughts, laugh with her, dislike with her. Work like hell he would, now, so that they could build up a home together. A home, comfort, tenderness; the weeping horrors of life locked out".96

Unlike Maudslay, Garland does not perceive his role as being to combat the "weeping horrors of life" in terms of the empathic identification with suffering humanity which leads Maudslay to political activity. Yet it is just these "horrors" that are at the heart of Garland's/

96. *Stained Radiance*, p.112.
Garland's problem. The "tongue in cheek insincerity" noticed by Thea helps shield him from the "gnawing curiosity" but ideally, he wants to be rid of it altogether. The prospect of marriage to Thea seems to offer precisely such an opportunity. Gazing out to sea, Thea asks Garland what he is thinking about, but before he can answer he goes rigid with fear as he apprehends a fantastic vision:

"For towards them like a rider upon the spindrift, was leaping a wild radiance, menacing, unearthly. Garland caught his breath in something that was half a sob".97

The unearthly manifestation is like a remonstrance: how dare he think of turning his back upon "the weeping horrors of life" just because they perturb him? Garland is physically affected by the incident (which Thea is apparently unaware of) as he draws her to him:

"... suddenly, passionately, pitifully, as though hiding his face from a blow".98

The importance of this passage is two-fold. The profoundly unnerving vision paradoxically relieves Garland of his anxiety about the "weeping horrors of life", since it legitimises the presence of his concern. It does not provide an answer as to what he should actually do, but it marks him out for an, as yet indefinite role. One thing is clear however, which is that his marriage to Thea is destined not to be about, as he had put it, "the simple things - love, ambition, children, toil". Because the existence of his "gnawing curiosity" has been vindicated, a much more stable Garland emerges from now on, and as a reflection of this new found stability Mitchell gradually abandons the ironic mode behind which his hero had sheltered. Garland marries Thea and they take rented accommodation in London before he is posted to a/ 57. Ibid, p.112.

98. Ibid, p.113.
a tour of duty in Jerusalem. His happiness is shattered however when he hears of Thea’s eviction from her rooms, the shock of which causes her to go into premature labour. Mitchell contrasts Thea’s eviction with Garland’s presence in Jerusalem, on Christmas Eve, in order to achieve the maximum ironic effect. On hearing of Thea’s hospitalisation, Garland fakes an accident to his hand and is invalided back to London.

While the vision of the rider on the spindrift had acted as a remonstrance to Garland’s plans to insulate himself from life through marriage and domesticity, the loss of his child and the danger to Thea’s life mark the second stage of the transition from his earlier doubt and despair. It is while walking aimlessly in London during the most crucial part of Thea’s illness that he is granted an explanation to “the weeping horrors of life”:

"He became profoundly convinced of the existence of God. In the thinning and thickening snowfall as he walked the Victoria Embankment he knew that there was verily a Deity.

Only, God was a Devil.

All the legends and tales were true. Created not by their own forces, but by a reasoning mind, had been the universe, all the stars, life, movement, sensation. Created by a super-scientist eternally experimenting. And at the beginning he had set aside the earth for his experiment in organic life.

Sometimes, busied elsewhere amongst other jars in that giant laboratory, he forgot this planet and the thing labelled Life mouldered forth unforeseen growths - pity, compassion and star-wonder, the adventure-soul and love".59

This is Garland’s first glimpse of what was, for Mitchell, the reality underlying life. Garland’s identification of the Deity as remote and uncaring may be seen as paralleling the similar conceptions provided by Meierkhold and Domina for Malcolm Maudslay in The Thirteenth Disciple. Unlike Maudslay however Garland is granted an absolute realisation of the/

the lordship of evil at the conclusion of *Stained Radiance*. Prior to this juncture, however, Garland identifies the human virtues of "pity, compassion and star-wonder, the adventure-soul and love" as mitigating the effects of the Satanic creator. It is significant that "the adventure-soul" should emerge in *Stained Radiance* in the context of a virtue oppositional to the lordship of evil: unlike Maudslay, Garland never interprets this "adventure-soul" as actual physical adventure. Instead he is relentlessly impelled towards an overtly political definition of the adventure as comprising the struggle against life's evils. Thus it is shortly after Thea's illness that Garland joins the Anarchocommunist Party, becoming its secretary in the belief that:

"Perhaps, somehow, I'll help a little to change things, to clean and fumigate the rat-run. No individual can, but some brotherhood of the shamed and tortured may do it yet ...".100

Summarising the development of John Garland in *Stained Radiance* so far, it may be said that he has changed from being introverted and incapable of an open relationship even with Thea, the person closest to him, into a compassionate individual capable of identifying with and being prepared to fight on behalf of "the shamed and the tortured". This metamorphosis is achieved by the granting of knowledge through pain: the blow accompanying the remonstrance of the rider on the spindrift; the death of his child and near-death of his wife, not to mention the self-mutilation which provides the means of his escape from the air force.

At this stage it is necessary to look at James Storman, Garland's predecessor as secretary of the Anarchocommunist Party. Storman's conversion to communism had been on utilitarian grounds: a former engineer, he sees communism as a means of effecting massive social engineering. He is almost entirely without compassion, or even fellow-feeling for/
for suffering humanity, his belief being described as:

"a doctrinaire's dream that shed itself in blood and iron and climbed through wreckage and destruction to Purpose, pitiless, selfless, sane".101

Like Garland, Storman undergoes a three-stage development which, in contrast to the former, ends with the renunciation of a political mode of action.

Initially Storman is the tireless leader of the Anarchocommunist Party, organising demonstrations, keeping order at Labour Party election meetings and, alternately, harassing Labour leaders when it suits his purpose. In all his dealings as a political activist Storman acts with an eye to tactical advantage, feeling no empathy for those his cause is ostensibly meant to benefit - he is:

"An autocrat, contemptuous of democracy, he had little faith in the ability of the unemployed to evolve spontaneously a scientific blackguardism".102

It is, however, following a visit to the Soviet Union that the first seeds of doubt are planted in his mind:

"his visit to Russia had stirred in him anew his old passion for accurate blue-printing of a project. Further, that visit had aroused within him a destructive sense of humour. Now he sat sardonic over the planlessness of his own plans".103

His belief in Communism is thus no more than commitment to "a project", and paradoxically it is not the Soviet state as such which is the cause of his doubts, but "the planlessness of his own plans". His "old passion for blue-printing of a project" is "stirred anew" but his doubts reside in his capacity, or more accurately the five thousand strong/

102. Ibid, p.82.
103. Ibid, p.166.
strong Anarchocommunist Party's ability to be the instrument capable of reifying that blueprint. Indeed, in the past, despite his leadership of the Party, Storman has found it difficult to control events with the precision he would have liked. In one instance where he had planned the systematic baiting of a Labour M.P. the demonstration had erupted into a pitched battle with the police, much to Storman's disgust. While Garland is moved to an identification with the "shamed and tortured" and the development of a political creed, Storman, in contrast, is moved to reject political action through a similar identification. He does so after seeing an impoverished old man in the street:

"I never realised it before - the abyss of poverty. It might have been my father - that old man with the eyes of a sick bird. I've done nothing for him or his like. Communism's done nothing. All the world goes by ... I've schooled myself to be cool and unwavering - for what? There's a greater cruelty - the Cruelty of the Streets, senseless, unemotional as that of an octopus. There is something worse that (sic) the beast in man - an evil older than Life itself." 104

The "evil older than Life itself" can only refer to Garland's conception of the lordship of evil, the Devil as creator, apprehended it will be recalled, during his wife's illness. Despite stumbling on this 'truth', Storman, unlike Garland, never develops an understanding of what the lordship of evil implies. He makes the necessary emotional transition by his identification with suffering humanity, but he never fully perceives the reason for the existence of the "abyss of poverty", save by identifying it as having an existence prior to creation itself. Storman's identification with the poor and suffering is to be contrasted favourably with the sterility of his erstwhile politics, but his failure to apprehend the cosmic dimension of the nature of evil leads him into a blind alley.

In the construction of Storman's ultimate rejection of politics Mitchell contrives to place the question of home and family versus political activity squarely before the reader.

Thus it is the news that Norah, Storman's wife, is expecting a baby which finally convinces him to eschew politics altogether. It is necessary to recall that it is the death of his child which precipitates Garland's realisation of the lordship of evil and his and Thea's subsequent conversion to Communism. As Thea puts it:

"... we're young yet, and bitter and hurt.Both of us. And we want to hurt the world as well. But there's more in life, there'll be more in our Communism than just that ...". 105

In contrast, Storman's rejection of Communism is based on his hopes for his wife's child. The sting in the tale is that the child is not his own:

"The days of mass enthusiasms, of mass achievements were indeed over for ever ... His son - his immortality, blood of his blood, flesh of his flesh ... His son would carry him on, would, in the years to come, presently bear out into the world a torch to add to that light that has so often flickered and seemed to fail, yet is inextinguishable - ... And, as Storman stood dreaming there again penetrated to his ears a sound as old in essence as the stones that paved the streets of Peckham - the thin, mammalian wail of Norah's bastard child seeking the breasts of its mother". 106

Thus Storman's dreams, once vested in his belief in Communism now become invested in the lie of his son's paternity. It is, in a sense, a fitting end for Storman since his Communism had, at its best, been pure but sterile.

Garland develops from a cynical and egocentric individual through the trauma of the death of his child to the belief that the/

106. Ibid, pp.278-279.
the satisfaction of his gnawing curiosity concerning life is intimately related to the struggle against evil. The conversion from egocentricity to compassion is effected through personal tragedy; Storman's conversion from political commitment to individualism leads ultimately to the egocentricity of his lust for immortality through his wife's child. Storman pays the price of egocentricity through his loss of faith in political action; Garland reaps the reward of knowledge of the lordship of evil and the belief that it might yet be combated by political means.

_Stained Radiance_ closes with a scene which highlights the meaning to be drawn from the parallel but inverted paths followed by Garland and Storman. It involves one Andreas von Koupa, a secondary character, who makes periodic appearances throughout the novel. In this particular scene the comforts of home and family - of Storman's ultimate resting place - are juxtaposed with John Garland's choice of the adventure of commitment to a political cause in the struggle against evil. Koupa is a one-time revolutionary and member of the Anarchocommunist Party who finally eschews politics by marrying the wealthy, but undesirable Mrs Gayford, for her money and also in the hope of fathering a child. Koupa's paternal instincts are not even as high-minded as Storman's, but the similarity of his hopes of immortality point-up the paucity of such a desire. Koupa is a calculating and shrewd individual but he is not totally insensitive to the fact that his marriage is a repudiation of his one-time revolutionary principles and beliefs. Preparing for bed and the prospect of visiting a child on his wife, the room is flooded with a strange white light, reminiscent of the "wild radiance" of Garland's earlier vision on the spindrift. Two lines from Shelley's "Adonais" come to Koupa's mind:

"Life, like a many-coloured glass Stains the white radiance of eternity". 107

The novel's title and meaning is derived from these lines, which become clear when Koupa's decision to reject them is examined. With the satisfaction of his lust and the creation of a child in his own unwholesome image uppermost in his mind, he tries to dismiss the lines from "Adonais" thus:

"S/pg, forget it as did Shelley. Thou livest.
Life is yours, comfort, the padded belly. You are clad in purple and fine raiment. You may build you wall on wall till you shut out the radiance forever, and in the end pass as a mindless beast through the suttee yourself, with the debt of your blood paid out in replenishing faggots ...".108

But, although Koupa believes that he can build "wall on wall" to shut out the radiance, he is troubled by the lines from Shelley. And well he might. They only become clear when they are seen in the context of Garland's earlier vision of the rider on the spindrift. The rider - "a wild radiance, menacing, unearthly" - represents the "white radiance of eternity" of the quotation from "Adonais". The vision reproves Garland for thinking of forsaking the quest for meaning, of forsaking, as he puts it, "the Outer Wastes",109 in preference for the comforts of a home and family. Yet this is precisely what Koupa and Storman do. Each yearns for immortality through the birth of children building around themselves the "wall on wall" of home and family. The very walls which Maudsley vows to break down in The Thirteenth Disciple, and the comforting walls by which Garland is tempted to keep "the weeping horrors of Life locked out", just prior to his vision of the rider on the spindrift. Garland finds the answer to his "damnable, ceaseless, hopeless curiosity" 110 in his commitment to revolutionary politics but without an added/

110. Ibid, p.23.
added dimension, this might have proved as transitory as Storman's and Koupa's one-time beliefs. For Garland, Communism is the means by which "the brotherhood of the shamed and tortured" will attempt to right the wrongs of the world, but this struggle needs to be placed in the overall context of the struggle between good and evil. This third and final stage of his development arrives in a moment of clarity and understanding at the climax to the novel as Garland apprehends the 'truth' that:

"... perhaps it was God, not Satan, who in times long ago was overthrown, and we rebels against Life are the champions of the dethroned God".112

Significantly, John and Thea Garland, childless and pledged to fight evil, are to be "rebels against Life" in distinction to Storman and Koupa who have succumbed to Life's attractions in the form of home and family. Or, as Koupa puts it:

"Life is yours, comfort, the padded belly".113

Storman and Koupa can never be part of the great struggle or adventure against evil as they implicitly exclude the overall dimension apprehended by Garland at the conclusion to Stained Radiance.

The attempted reconciliation of exploration and politics at the conclusion to The Thirteenth Disciple becomes, at the culmination of the hero's progression in Stained Radiance, an avowal that adventure and politics are one when considered in the light of Garland's virtually cosmic definition of the struggle against life's evils. It has been necessary to view these novels in reverse order to their dates of publication, not only because to have done otherwise would have been to make nonsense of the biographical parallels between them and the author but because/

111. Ibid, p.283.
113. Ibid, p.228.
because the progression from a hunger for exploration and adventure towards political commitment may be seen as applying to Mitchell himself. On his marriage Mitchell was obliged to forsake "The Wanderlust" for domesticity, but in the last five years of life he made politics his 'adventure essence' producing a number of works striking for the extent and breadth of their political commitment - a commitment which may be seen as the extension of John Garland's ideological stance at the conclusion to Stained Radiance.
CHAPTER 3:
The City and the Country

a) The City

Apart from the period in 1908 to 1909 when the Mitchells stayed in Aberdeen, Leslie's experience of life was practically confined to the countryside around his father's crofts in Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire. His voracious reading helped broaden his horizons during this period but it was not until his job on the Aberdeen Daily Journal that he was to gain any real experience of city life. By the time of his enlistment in the air force some six and a half years later, however, he had lived in locations as diverse as Glasgow, London and Cairo. The effect of this stark and, by any standards, rapid transition from a rural environment to such a diversity of urban settings helped colour and determine his perception of the relative merits of city and country.

Mitchell's feelings concerning the city and city life are characterised by predominantly negative emotions of the kind noted by Morton and Lucia White in relation to the American intellectual's view of the city:

"enthusiasm for the American city has not been typical or predominant in our intellectual history. Fear has been the dominant reaction. For a variety of reasons our most celebrated thinkers have expressed different degrees of ambivalence towards the city."

Such hostility, tempered by ambiguity, noted by the Whites and also indicated by Raymond Williams in relation to the British writer, is to be seen reflected across the range of Mitchell's work in a number of works.

number of different ways. Interestingly, given Mitchell's knowledge of
the Bible, the following observation by Alan Richardson also has some
relevance to the depiction of the city in Mitchell's work. Thus,
Richardson describes:

"The equivocal attitude of the Bible towards
that culminating point of human organisation,
the city, constitutes a good example of the
biblical dialectical point of view. On the
one hand, a city may be a lovely and noble
place: the earthly Jerusalem is to be God's
dwelling place; it has often been noted that
the Bible story begins in a garden and ends
in a city - the New Jerusalem coming down
from heaven. On the other hand, cities may
become the habitation of all that is vile,
oppressive and horrible in human life:
various cities in the Bible become symbols
of different aspects of human depravity -
Sodom and Gomorrah and the "Cities of the
Plain"."

Leaving aside for a moment a certain ambiguity towards the city to be
found in Mitchell's work it can be seen that his anti-urbanism, when in
full-flow, was capable of expression in a manner akin to the prurience
and moralistic fury found in the Old Testament.

Mitchell used the science-fiction format of Gay Hunter to project
the city of the future from trends present in his own day. During the
rule of the Fascist Hierarchs, at a time not too far distant from
Mitchell's own, London is depicted as a city bursting at the seams with
highly developed technology, racked by class conflict and debased by
moral turpitude. It is this latter aspect of moral degeneracy which is
most pertinent in the present context as one technique used by Mitchell
is to associate the city with sexual depravity linked with uncomplimentar-
y animal imagery. Then the two twentieth-century Fascists accompanying/

3. A Richardson, (Ed) A Theological Word Book of the Bible, (London,
1950), p.49.

4. Gay Hunter is set in two time locations: Gay's own time in the early
1930's, and in a period 20,000 years in the future when man has rever-
ted to nature following the effects of atomic war. From the future/
accompanying the eponymous heroine of the novel are transported forward to a time when the London of the Hierarchs is a deserted ruin. Mitchell wrote in explanation of their deaths:

"as once with the Cities of the Plain, God smote on the Shining Place".5

The retribution which overtakes Major Ledyard Houghton and Lady Jane Easterling is a clear allusion to the Old Testament account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the "cities of the plain".6 The reason for this becomes clear by consideration of the sexual practices relating to the Hierarchs' rule and the way in which the two 1930's Fascists are associated with the attitudes and values implicit in that degenerate order. In all this the city is the focal point, almost the embodiment, of the Hierarchs' diseased civilisation.

During her adventures Gay learns about the nature and extent of the Hierarchies' sexuality from a recording device surviving the period of their rule:

"That Voice whispered of the Hierarchies' triumphs, their tremendous wars, their passions and pleasures.

... Once Gay fainted while it told of their pleasures".7

The excessive nature of these "passions and pleasures" is suggested in two ways. Firstly, because although she faints (presumably in shock) Gay/

future world of 'primitive' hunters Gay is enabled to look back to a time not too far removed from that of her own, when the rule of the Fascist Hierarchies in Europe and North America had ended in class-conflict followed by atomic war. Gay Hunter is considered in relation to the threat of Fascism in Chapter 4.

5. Gay Hunter, p.273.


7. Gay Hunter, p.137. Mitchell uses the term Hierarchs to describe the British ruling class of the period, and the Hierarchies when referring collectively to those of Britain, Europe and North America.
Gay can hardly be described as sexually naïve since she has already happily indulged in a sexual relationship with Rem, one of the Golden Age hunters. She is also attracted, in a distinctly sexual manner, to Liu, one of the women of Rem's group. Secondly, earlier in her adventure, Gay had actually seen with her own eyes a representation of the Hierarchs' repugnant sexual mores sculpted in a cliff wall. The sculpture involved figures undoubtedly engaged in sexual activity:

"Gay lowered her eyes, in sickened shame ...
And all the world, whatever the names and sickened stomachic dreamings of gods and heavens and hells and codes they had shielded behind, had believed with her in the tremendousness of lust and love. Even this sculptor had believed.

But he had made of them a foulness and a Satanic abomination on this cliff-face. ... It was hate, hate insane and dreadful from which Gay turned shamed eyes".

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9. Mitchell seems to have felt such relationships to have merited some mention in his work. Thus something has already been said concerning Maudslay and Metaxa's feelings for each other in The Thirteenth Disciple while in relation to Gay Hunter the heroine and Liu are attracted from their first meeting: "As Gay sank down beside her she turned round and took Gay in her arms. ... If she were a man she would flirt with Liu from dawn 'till dusk - and do more than flirt' ...")(p.117). Perhaps Gay does more than flirt as later in the story she exclaims "... you look good enough to eat. I almost wish I were a man when I see you "(p.189). Moreover, while lying with Liu, Gay is described as being "suddenly and waywardly desperate for companionship of her own gender", finally observing "We don't want men with us, this once. And we've two or three hours until sunset"."(p.181). Gay's infatuation with Liu, preceded by the suggestion of an attraction to Lady Jane Easterling (p.56), is paralleled by the thinly disguised sexual awakening Pelaguaya effects in Aslaug Simonsen in The Lost Trumpet, pp.145-149, and may explain something of Chris's "strange and shameful" feelings on being kissed by a girlfriend in Sunset Song, p.146. Male homo-eroticism comprises the theme of the short story "The Lovers", in Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights, while Castus's distinctly sexual feelings for the slave leader in Spartacus, pp.42, 46, 138, 238, ends with the former detesting Spartacus when his feelings are not reciprocated. Mitchell's synopsis entitled "Stained Radiance Sequel" was to elaborate on such relationships and promised to be something of a 'shocker'. The synopsis contains a note on Kouns's rape of a hotel maid; Storeman's sexual liaison with a Russian prince; Garland's adultery with a friend's wife along with details of the following characters: "A female Lesbian waiter ..., a dissolute Neanderthaler South African newspaper proprietor ..., the Dean of Thameside and his sexual obsessions, genitalia swung between him and the cross (sic) ..." and "a Jew reviewer ... a homosexualist who loved little boy authors".

9. Gay Hunter, p.36.
In order to link the Fascism of her own time with that of the Hierarchs' distorted sexuality, Mitchell contrasts the repressed sexuality which is displayed by Houghton and Easterling with Gay's more 'liberal' behaviour. Thus, where Gay readily adapts to the nakedness of the hunters (and their sexual liberality) the Fascists cover themselves up with clumsy grass skirts and go through the charade of a wedding ceremony in legitimation of their sexual liaison. As 1930's Fascists, Houghton and Easterling contain within themselves the seeds from which the future will emerge - the future of the Fascistic Hierarchs. Their wedding, with the implicit threat of regeneration, is symbolic of the threat posed by twentieth century Fascism but it may also be seen as indicating that it is contemporary hypocritical "civilised" codes of behaviour and the attitudes associated with them which will lead to the moral degeneracy of the Hierarchs' evil society and not the open flamboyance of Gay's nakedness, promiscuity and homosexual feelings. Given Houghton and Easterling's passion to re-build London on sound Fascist principles, and the association of the Hierarchies' civilisation with sexual depravity, it is significant that Gay, the epitome of natural goodness, should come to face a death resonant with overtones of sexual violation in London, the culminating achievement of the Hierarchs. Thus, Gay is tied to the central column of the massive phallic tower dominating the ruins of Hierarchs' London to await her fate at the teeth and claws of giant sewer rats. Gay escapes this fate, but the symbolic association of death with depravity in the phallic tower, although directly related to the perceived menace of Fascism, can also be seen as the culminating of the dominant view of the city portrayed through Gay Hunter.  

10. An alternative view of the city does gain expression in Mitchell's work, but it is neither so widespread nor is it so vehemently advanced. See final section of this chapter. The rats in Gay Hunter bring to mind the giant rats in H.G. Wells' The Food of the Gods.
ruins of the dreadful London of the Hierarchs was to have been the scene of Houghton and Easterling's attempt to resurrect civilisation on Fascist principles: that it is destroyed in a conflagration caused by the Fascists tinkering with machinery not quite so defunct as they had imagined is a telling end for one of the premier cities of the modern world.

It should be noted in relation to the association of sexual depravity with the city and the nemesis befalling Houghton and Easterling in the remains of the Hierarchs' evil London that the Biblical allusion used in that context:

"as once with the Cities of the Plain, God smote on the shining place" 11

has a direct link with a story originally entitled, appropriately enough, "Ten Men of Sodom". With the exception of "Siva Plays the Game" this was Mitchell's first published work which the editor of The Cornhill, no doubt with an eye to the magazine's reputation, insisted should acquire another title. 12 So it was that "Ten Men of Sodom" became "For Ten's Sake" and was duly published in the January 1929 issue of The Cornhill. 13 "For Ten's Sake" is an overt translation of the Sodom and Gomorrah story into the twentieth century with the Egyptian town of "Mevr, the Hell-Gate of the East" 14 cast as the city of utter depravity and evil. Mevr's very existence is threatened by the "Street of Ten" located/

13. "For Ten's Sake" forms the proem to The Calends of Cairo, published in July 1931.
located in its 'down-town' area:

"a loathsome resort of thieves and murderers, where practiced unnamable vices of which even Mevr talked under its breath".15

Given the putative reason for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, it doesn't require a great imaginative leap to deduce the nature of Mevr's unnamable vices. In any event, it is worthy of note that both Mevr and the London of the imaginary Hierarchs are depicted in terms which reflect the biblical association of the city with depravity and evil, a factor to which we will return shortly. In view of this unsavoury association it is predictable that Mitchell should display other distinctly negative emotions in relation to the city. Indeed it must be stated that the city has been a central problem to writers for the past hundred years and more.

In this respect Raymond Williams argues that one standard literary device used by writers with an antagonism for city life is the depiction of the city as comprising a trapped and enclosed amorphous mass of humanity which, in total, assumes a distinctly inhuman existential essence.

Among such writers, Williams quotes Thomas Carlyle on the living conditions of the Londoner:

"... in their little cells, divided by partitions of brick or board ... it is a huge aggregate of little systems ..." 16

In like vein Thomas Hardy represents London as:

"a monster whose body had four million heads and eight million eyes. ... As the crowd grows denser it loses its character of an aggregate of countless units, and becomes an organic whole, a molluscos black creature having nothing in common with humanity ..." 17

15. Ibid.


Mitchell employs techniques and imagery similar to those used by Carlyle and Hardy, and like them he tends to distance himself from the loathsome city by the nature and manner of such observations. Thus, Mitchell is the outsider, superior to the city dweller in all aspects, as he reveals in a letter (with the cadence of a poem) written at the age of twenty which reflects Carlyle's conception of the citizen imprisoned in "little cells". From the expanses of Egypt, Mitchell condescendingly typified the "town dweller" as:

"Cramped and confined by miles of bricks and mortar, with their cramped little pleasures, their cramped little minds, their cramped little hates and loves!"18

This somewhat contemptuous view of the citizen and the city is reflected in his fiction where the animal imagery Williams notes in Hardy gains similar expression.

Such imagery is indicated in Image and Superinscription when Gershom finds himself in New York where the skyscrapers appear to him as monstrous and frightening. Asking Ester, his girlfriend, about one particular tower block, Gershom makes his own judgement on the building:

"'Is that the Woolworth building?' and stared at the monster. Ester peered by his shoulder. 'So they say ...!'"19

Gershom's vague discomfort in the city elicits no sympathy of response from Ester. So it is that, disillusioned by what he sees as her absorption of the city's values - fine clothes, fashionable society, the good life - he returns to London and enlists in the army. But London is/

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18. Mitchell to R. Middleton, 12/12/21. Part of this letter has been quoted in Chapter 2. Thomas Wolfe, You Can't Go Home, (New York, 1937), p.151, uses language very similar to Carlyle and Mitchell in this respect: "It was order that made the millions swarm at morning to their work in little cells, and swarm again at evening from their work to other little cells".

is another city, and, moreover, it is a city at war. In this context London is depicted as frightening and comfortless. It is not the abode of the monster as Gershom comes close to typifying New York, but it is a dark, disorientating and uncaring entity. Gershom and a prostitute he takes for the night cling together in an insane city in an unstable world:

"... they held each other in a kind of fear, London wheeling in its darkness into the East, London silent, a mad city on the verge of a world gone mad".20

Gershom had been looking for solace and companionship and where else but in the city of teeming millions could he hope to find it? Instead he and another "lost soul" find themselves thrown together, alone in the midst of millions, cut off from the rest of humanity as they are from each other by the "little cells" of which Carlyle had written a hundred years earlier. When Gershom finally settles on a course of action it is to the jungles of South America he flees, but in a gesture denoting the aforementioned ambiguity of modern writers towards urban life, Mitchell depicts this journey, not as a quest to find some unspoiled paradise, but as an effort to discover "Lorrilard", the lost city of the Maya.

Returning to Gay Hunter, the London of the future is not depicted in terms of restricting cells, isolation and loneliness, but as a massive, loathsome beast. As Gay approaches it she is struck by the great towering phallic structure thrusting a full mile into the air in a seemingly permanent spasm, connoting the eternal evil of the city:

"Even at this distance she could see its shape and symbolism. So that was what had replaced the cross.

The Phallus.

Leftwards rose a building like a Keltic cross - square-pillared up to an immensity of gleaming platforms that shone many-holed, as with dead eyes. Those had been the windows once, those holes of many rooms ... Far Down, in the estuary of the Thames, a thing, squat and immense, dwarfing the temples of Egypt, but carved in like mould, bestrode the sky".21

Gay is almost mesmerised by the evil grandeur of the Hierarchs' London, styled the "Shining City" in a direct association with Sodom, Gomorrah and the degenerate Mevr of "For Ten's Sake". The symbolic use of language in this passage is striking: the only association with life is the evil portent of the thrusting phallus protruding from the city containing a "squat, immense" and "dwarfing" entity which seems to survey her "as if with dead eyes".22 This evocative imagery of the city as a monstrous, diseased animal is completed when it is recalled that the ruins of the Hierarchs' London are virtually over-run by giant sewer rats. It is the rats, emanating from the bowels of the city itself like some extant deadly virus who transmit the danger and violence implicit in the Fascism of the Hierarchs and the city itself. Although Mevr rivals the Hierarchs' London in its "unnamable vices", the London of the future is distinctly more repugnant. While there is a reprieve for Mevr, London disintegrates in the conflagration caused by Houghton and Easterling. Yet, Mevr, too, like New York and the London of the future/ 


22. Mitchell's association of the city with such characteristics as squat, immense and dwarfing, evokes an echo of one of Karl Marx's poems to his fiancée in which he equated the city with a man-made prison declaring in one line "Let the giant-dwarf collapse and scream". Quoted by S.S. Praver, Karl Marx and World Literature, (Oxford University Press paperback edition, 1973), p.11. The poem loses something in translation.
future is depicted as an unlovely animal:

"like an obscene, sated animal it sprawled under the vacant, grey eyes of the watcher".\(^{23}\)

When the eyes of the watcher were those of Mitchell the city emerged in a very poor light indeed.

In *Spartacus* animal imagery and sexual depravity are likewise combined as defining characteristics of the city. The slaves' realisation that Rome must be captured is not simply based on the knowledge that it is the source of the power which has enslaved them but because:

"unless the Beast that squatted in the Seven Hills were killed there would be no possible life again for men while the world endured".\(^{24}\)

Thus where in the London of the future it is the Hierarchs who befoul the city, leaving their verminous remnants as a reminder of their baseness, and Mevr itself "sprawls like an obscene, sated animal", so in the Eternal City there squats a brutal ruling class depicted with a harshness which suggests a consanguinity with the Beast of the Apocalypse itself. Suggesting this baseness, from the outset of *Spartacus* the unnatural sexual predilections of the Roman patriciate are made explicit, not only by reference to Kleon's castration and fate at the hands of a sexual sadist,\(^{25}\) but also by mention of the contemptible use of children for sexual purposes.\(^{26}\) Such is Mitchell's depiction of a disease-ridden and callous patriciate that the terrible orgy of vengeance which the slaves are depicted as embarking upon appears as a justifiable emetic with which to treat the Beast in its lair. So it is appropriate, if less than pleasant reading, when the slaves smear the faces of/

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23. "For Ten's Sake". See also Chapter 7 where "For Ten's Sake" is considered in more detail.


26. Ibid, p.176. "A patrician, Gaius Cassius was a man of culture, and he knew that without the strong hand of Law men would live in misery and fear. And, groaning in pleasure, he would fondle the horrified children".
of beautifully carved statues with excrement in an eloquent comment on the city as the highest point of a civilisation which produced great art from the obscenity of slavery.\textsuperscript{27}

Venice is another city which Mitchell sought to depict in terms of uncomplimentary animal imagery, though his emotions are nowhere as fiercely aroused as they were when dealing with the city of Rome in \textit{Spartacus}. Thus, in his essay on Marco Polo in \textit{Mine Against the Unknown}, Mitchell typified 11th century Venice as:

"the great Moloch of Trade, wealth her aim, her being and her justification ... she crouched in the warm malarial hazes of the summer ... looking with cruel eyes at the prizes of the Levant ...".\textsuperscript{28}

Mitchell spent the majority of his adult life in and around London, so it is not surprising that we should find him directing some of his anti-urban invective against that city. Even by comparison with medieval Venice and Rome in the first century BC, twentieth century London emerges in a poor light. Gone is the severity and sadistic brutality of the patriciates' Rome; gone is the implied calculating tenacious acquisitiveness of the Venetian merchant class - "looking with cruel eyes at the prizes of the Levant". In their place is the some of capitalism's first city - London - portrayed in \textit{Stained Radiance} as a diseased and frowsy harlot:

"The Great Mother. Bedecked in her whiskey advertisements, her lighted ships, her roaring factories, her creeping clouds of disease, her whimperings of song and her tolling of death bells ... Murderous, pitiful, whimsical: with a song in her heart and a sneer on her harlot's lips".\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Spartacus} is considered in Chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Mine Against the Unknown}, p.54.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Stained Radiance}, p.42.
London - "The Great Mother" - whose position at the centre of a vast commercial empire exposes the hypocritical nature of her implied maternal instincts as her children toil in factories but go hungry, and the enveloping clouds of disease speed them to an early grave. Even the Thames, London's trading life-blood, is elsewhere summoned to account for the unhealthy fogs which descend on the city. In the short story entitled "Dawn" Mitchell belittles the river to such an extent that two lovers are described as going to London:

"... in the season of the fogs which rise from a blind little river amidst the streets".30

Even the malarial swamps of Venice seem preferable to the dense, choking fogs of the Thames. As Rome had once been so now London was at the centre of an empire, but compared to the severity and strength of Rome, a London bedecked in her whisky advertisements takes on the aspect of a slovenly, inebriated but dangerously unpredictable prostitute. Further down the same page in Stained Radiance, however, Mitchell returns to animal imagery to describe an integral aspect of London life, the Underground:

"Like a serpent, undulating, the stair arose out of blackness, and like a belly-tender serpent, climbed. Mounting a serration on the monster's back Garland was borne aloft into Waterloo station".31

For Gershom Jareel, New York is represented by its monster-buildings; for Garland, the monster is located in the bowels of London itself. It may be contended that, having been largely imbued with the patterns of meaning of the country in his formative years, Mitchell tended to see the city, whether London, New York, the imaginary Mevr; Rome or any/

31. Stained Radiance, p.42.
any other, as an unnatural distorted entity; in short, as a monster.

Even given this unflattering portrayal, for Mitchell all these cities offered something in mitigation of their diseased being, whether it be the uncompromising strength of Rome or the tawdry grandeur of 20th century London. When Mitchell depicted Glasgow, however, any hint of ambiguity evaporates. Indeed, it is as if he simply could not find it within himself to pen one flattering word about the city in which he had spent the first half of 1919. One reason for this undoubtedly resides in his unhappy experiences during this period. But another explanation for this enduring hatred of Glasgow is to be found in his general antagonism to industrial capitalism, seen in his essay on that city, written during the depth of the Depression:

"The bourgeois returns at evening these days... to Woodsidehill, to Hillhead and Dowanhill with heavy and doubting steps. The shipyards are still, with rusting cranes and unbefouled waters nearby, in Springburn the empty factories increase and multiply, there are dead windows and barred factory-gates in Bridgetown and Mile End. Commercialism has returned to its own vomit too often and too long still to find sustenance therein".

The picture thus invoked is one of hopeless, terminal decline: of a bourgeoisie looking on helplessly as their city of modern capitalism, and as such the source of their privilege, becomes a decaying ghost-town before their eyes. It is the inevitability of decay - the bourgeois 'feeding' on commercialism's vomit - which is so striking about this passage. In the following pages Mitchell turns to the denizens of the diseased city and again the process of decay is invoked to

32. See Chapter 1.
to describe the fate of the slum-dweller:

"There is nothing in culture or art that is worth the life and elementary happiness of one of those thousands who rot in the Glasgow slums". 34

Glasgow is, in terms of this view, a massive living organism in a terminal state of rotting degeneration and decay. Mitchell portrayed no other city with a hostility so unremitting. Indeed, his essay "Glasgow" opens with a comparison which puts Glasgow in an unenviable category of its very own:

"Glasgow is one of the few places in Scotland which defy personification. To image Edinburgh as a disappointed spinster, with a hare-lip and inhibitions, ... So with Dundee, a frowsy fisher-wife addicted to gin and infanticide, Aberdeen a thin-lipped peasant-woman who has borne eleven and buried nine. But no Scottish image of personification may display, even distortedly, the essential Glasgow". 35

The brief portrayals of Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen may hardly be complimentary, but at least they are accorded human characteristics. Not so Glasgow, which he goes on to describe, using the words of one he calls "his distant English cousin, Mr Leslie Mitchell", as "the vomit of a cataleptic commercialism". 36 Glasgow thus stands represented in the most uncomplimentary of images as the egestion of some loathsome substance. Mitchell does not personify Glasgow, for to do so would be to suggest humanity and thereby the possibility of redemption.

34. Ibid, pp.140-141.
36. Ibid. This expression is first used by Mitchell in The Thirteenth Disciple, pp.57-68, where Maudslay is described as arriving in Glasgow "- that strange, deplorable city which has neither sweetness nor pride. The vomit of a cataleptic commercialism".
Nevertheless, however much he disliked Glasgow Mitchell must have been aware he was doing the city a great disservice in at least two respects. After all, Glasgow could boast a revolutionary tradition second to none in post-war Scotland. For Mitchell it is as if McLean, Gallacher, Maxton and the "Red Clyde" had never existed, while one of the most 'class-conscious' of proletariats are portrayed in "Glasgow" as rotting away hopelessly and helplessly in slum dwellings. Nor does he seem able to concede to the city what Ian S. Munro has termed:

"the character, humour and kindliness of the Glasgow folk".37

Despite the one-sidedness of his view of Scotland's leading city, it is apparent that it is not just industrial capitalism he was reacting against, but the nature of its painful decline and possible demise. Thus, for example, the evocation of derelict industry - "dead windows and barred factory gates" - is distinctly resonant of, not only W.H. Auden's "The Dog Beneath the Skin", but of an earlier poem by that poet on the same theme:

"Smokeless chimneys, damaged bridges, rotting wharves and choked canals, Tramlines buckled, smashed trucks lying on their side across the rails; Power-stations locked, deserted, since they drew the boiler fires; Pylons fallen or subsiding, trailing dead high-tension wires; Head-gears gaunt on grass-down pit-banks, seams abandoned years ago; Drop a stone and listen for its splash in flooded dark below.

"...".38

37. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.29.

38. W.H. Auden, untitled poem, The Twentieth Century, Vol. 1., No. 1, March 1931. This poem appeared in the same issue as Mitchell's article "The Diffusionist Heresy". It might be noted in passing that the picture of industrial desolation contained in "Glasgow" accurately anticipates the theme of George Orwell's The Road to Wigan Pier, (1937).
Written in the same year as the essay "Glasgow" the quite different format of Gay Hunter is used to reflect this theme of urban desolation and abandonment. Only, in Gay Hunter, the city is placed in the distant future after the great war of the classes. Gazing out over London on the night previous to her planned attack on Houghton and his followers, Gay is overcome by a vision of London as:

"... an infernal city limned by Doré. It was filled with the rustle and murmur of multitudinous voices - ".39

Thus the diabolical city of the Hierarchs, of brutal class oppression and sexual licence, that has taken capitalist civilisation to its most exploitative and hideous extent seems peopled with the souls of its former denizens in an agony of purgatory - "the rustle and murmur of multitudinous voices" in "an infernal city". Perhaps this is a portrayal of the fate Mitchell saw as awaiting the apprehensive Glaswegian bourgeois of Hillhead and Dowanhill.40 The Hierarchs' London may be deserted and decaying but Mitchell continues to foster the presence of a discernible after-image, comprising the purgatorial murmurings of multitudinous voices, so that the reader, like Gay, will be aware of the end to which urbanisation could lead.

The depiction of London in Gay Hunter is, in part, a warning against increased urbanisation and it can be seen from the following brief extract from a posthumously published article that Mitchell thought the unwanted trend to be well advanced in his own time. Writing in the unlikely medium of Cinema Quarterly, he complained that the travelogues he watched in his local cinema never dealt with the awful reality of:

"the dead cities of Northern England, cities of more dreadful night than that dreamt by Thomson ...".41

40. See extract from "Glasgow" on p.134.
Here again the city is portrayed as a dead, empty shell and is significantly associated with the work of James Thomson, (E.V.) the Scottish poet whose work is one of the most unremittingly pessimistic products of the entire Victorian period.42

However unpleasant the effects of the Depression and its debilitating effect on the city, life under a functioning capitalism remained Mitchell's main concern. In order to emphasise the undesirability of urban capitalism Mitchell used the technique of contrast to heighten the reader's awareness of its intrinsically alien quality. Thus in Cloud Howe in the semi-rural, semi-urban Segget, the peace and tranquility of the country and the noise and disruption of industry are contrasted. Unable to sleep, Chris rises early and makes her way up to the Kaimes where she can oversee the town, "watching the east grow pale in the dawn". Her reverie is shattered and with it the whole order of nature as:

"Suddenly, far down and beyond the town there came a screech as the morning grew, a screech like a hungered beast in pain. The hooters were blowing in the Segget Hills".43

According to Leo Marx, the depiction of such a stark intrusion of industrialism into the order of nature is a standard device by which the essentially alien quality of industrialism is made apparent.44 Certainly, the juxtaposition of Chris rising in the quiet of the morning with that of the hills starting up presents two distinct images, the one of Chris representing the peace and tranquility of the country, the other of the hills representing disruption, noise and industry. Extending this contrast a little further it can be seen why Chris should be startled by the intrusion of the hooters, shattering her reverie in mid-thought.

42. James Thomson's poems on the city are "The Doom of a City", 1853, and "The City of Dreadful Night", c. 1870.

43. Cloud Howe, p.36.

It is Ewan, her son, who will later be one of those sacrificed to the enervating overwork of the factory system - or as Mitchell has it, to the "hungered beast". For when Chris and Ewan move from the one-industry, semi-rural Segget to the industrial city of Duncairn, the association of industrial capitalism with predation and sacrifice is continued. As in Cloud Howe, so in Grey Granite the still of the early morning is used to convey the impending stark intrusion of industrialism into the lives of the city's inhabitants. This time, however, Chris will not be taken by surprise as, busying herself with early morning tasks in the boarding house, she keeps her:

"... eyes on the clock and ears wide open for the first stir of life in the morning's morgue".

A morgue peopled by the "undead" is what the city represents to Chris and it even has an effect on her as she undertakes her work rhythmically but mechanically. Mirroring this and with symbolism resonant of Fritz Lang's film "Metropolis", is the image of the city's workforce performing the morning's necessities before shambling off to a monotonous task which at the end of the day will leave them a little more exhausted and nearer to death.

Grey Granite opens with Chris's first experience of city life,

45. In a "Cautionary Note" preceding Grey Granite Mitchell describes Duncairn as "... merely the city which the inhabitants of the Mearns (not foreseeing my requirements in completing my trilogy) have hitherto failed to build".


47. "Metropolis" was made in 1926 though when it was first shown in Britain I have been unable to determine. See P.M. Jensen, The Cinema of Fritz Lang, (New York, 1969). According to his wife, PT, Mitchell was keen on the cinema. In his article in Cinema Quarterly, (p.137, ft/notice41) he describes his visits to the local "bug house".
and a comfortless experience it is too:

"All around her the street walls were dripping with fog as Chris Colquhoun made her way up the Gallowgate, yellow fog that hung tiny veils on her eyelashes, curled wet, and had in her throat the acrid taste of an ancient smoke".48

In his short story entitled "Dawn" Mitchell used fog to signify the dirt and disease of a London winter, now, as in Dickens' novel Dombey and Son, it is used to invoke not only the comfortlessness but isolation of city life.49 Chris is cut off from the country and, just as disorientating for her - as was Jezreel and the prostitute in London - she is separated from all the other inhabitants of the city, as they are separated from each other. These feelings of isolation and discomfort found in the opening paragraph of Grey Granite are compounded in the second as Chris is depicted:

"Standing still so breathing that little while she was suddenly aware of the silence below - as though all the shrouded town also stood still, deep-breathing a minute in the curl of the fog - stilling the shamble and grind of the trams, the purr of the buses in the Royal Mile, the clang and swing of the trains in Grand Central, the swish and roll and oily call of the trawlers taking the Forthie's flood - all pausing, folk wiping the fog from their eyes and squinting about them an un-eident minute -.50

So it is as if Chris's fellow-citizens are too busy with their tasks, expressed in the movement and noise of the trams, buses, trains and trawlers and the enshrouding, obfuscating fog, that they function as/ 

48. Grey Granite, p.l. Mitchell continues the paragraph with another example of the animal imagery used to depict the city and features of city life. Thus, the handrail on the steps Chris is climbing is "like a famished snake. She put out her hand on that rail, warm, slimy".

49. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, p.132, advances this argument in relation to Dombey and Son. Inevitably also the famous "Fog Everywhere" opening to Black House comes to mind.

50. Grey Granite, p.l.
as single-minded automata. Chris's feeling that the rest of the city-dwellers also stop, and in so doing still the trams, buses, trains and trawlers, is the symbolic expression of her desire that they, too, might apprehend the truth of their situation, by, as Chris puts it, "wiping the fog from their eyes". This they never do and in consequence her sojourn in the city is a lonely experience.

Chris makes no real friends in Duncairn, save the kindly Ma Cleghorn; Ewan grows up and, inevitably away from her, and even her third marriage fails. It does so, because it is entered into by two uprooted peasants in the unfertile ground of a city environment.51 Chris never really settles in Duncairn, her mind constantly travelling back to her youth on the land as the burden of city life becomes more and more onerous.52 She manages to keep her city life and her remembrance of her past separate, drawing on the latter when the reality of the city threatens to overwhelm her.

In real life however the city and the country could never be kept separate and it is the intrusion of the urban areas and its effects on the rural hinterland which requires attention now. So far Mitchell can be seen to have defined the city as the home of sexual depravity, disease and evil in language suggesting its bestiality, while in Cloud Howe and Grey Granite the city and industrialism are portrayed as intruding on the very order of nature itself. Following from this it should not be surprising to learn that, although he nowhere used the term himself, Mitchell perceived the city in the metaphor of an octopus, thrusting its unwholesome tentacles deeper and deeper into/

52. Chris and Ewan are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
into the unspoilt countryside.  

Improved farming methods of the kind mentioned in Sunset Song, increased the ability of the land to support growing urban populations, adding to that growth with the exodus of people from farming. Hence the movement of the Quair from the croft, through the intermediate Segget, to the city of Duncairn. One implication of this change which concerned Mitchell was the accompanying revolution in transportation. As in Dombey and Son, Dickens represented the railway as both the country's life-blood and as a death-signifying monster, so Mitchell tended toward a similar ambiguity in relation to the growth of road transport. He was exceedingly fond of the convertible sports car he had been able to purchase when his books began to sell. Ray Mitchell recalled that he would take the car for ludicrously short distances (for supplies of the cigarettes he smoked continuously) as well as revelling in the freedom it allowed him to travel at speed along country roads. Like Mitchell, Gay Hunter has a fast and sleek "Morgan" sports car she loves driving at speed, and as such the spatial liberation provided is a reflection of her own liberated and carefree nature. Yet, as with Mitchell, so with Gay, there is another side to the story. Modern industrialism could provide the sensuous luxury of high speed travel, but progress had its price. Speaking of her own time in the early 1930's, Gay's definition is/  

53. One of the classic works of American anti-urban, anti-industrial rhetoric is Frank Norris's The Octopus, (1901).  
54. Sunset Song, pp.154, 252. It is significant that mention of improvements in farming - the "great machines" - and therefore the implicit suggestion of mechanisation and urbanism, should obtrude at periods when Chris's life changes profoundly, at her wedding and during the service for the last of the old Scots folk.  
55. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, p.200, mentions Dombey and Son in this respect.  
56. Ray Mitchell, PT.
is of society on the verge of congestion and collapse:

"... long roads that scarred the countryside, the massed chimneys of factories, unemployed men in long queues awaiting tokens for the purchase of food "."57

The sentiments expressed by Mitchell through Gay are something more than pro-country, anti-urban views. Gay's description amounts to a commentary on the breakdown of industrial capitalism. The roads which, in real life, Mitchell so much enjoyed speeding along become in the overall context of his anti-urban feelings a desecration of the countryside. In the context of Gay's statement the road's one redemptive feature might have been the transportation of food for the urban masses, but, with the entire system in disfunction, this one positive function is negated.

Pointing up the redundancy of road transport, the unemployed are depicted awaiting the distribution of tokens permitting access to a limited supply of food. Thus, instead of the arteries of the nation conveying its life-blood, the roads appear as ribbon-like scar tissue emanating from the diseased cities into an atrophying land.

Just as W.H. Auden's untitled poem 58 expressed sentiments reflected by Mitchell in "Glasgow" on the decaying industrial base, so his later work "The Dog Beneath the Skin", is appropriate comment on Gay's views:

"I see barns falling, fences broken, Pasture not ploughed, and weeds not wheat".59

Similarly, prior to her journey in time, Gay:

"... looked back over her twenty-three years of life, to crowded cities and desolate countryside".60

57. Gay Hunter, p.126.
58. See p.136.
60. Gay Hunter, p.6.
If rural depopulation carries on apace with the growth of the cities, so in his juxtaposition of "crowded cities" and "desolate countryside" Mitchell imputes responsibility to the city. Then the city is not depicted as reaching out and desecrating - "scarring" - the countryside, another image of it is evoked as sucking the country dry, leaving it "desolate" and abandoned. Nor, judging by the observations of Gay Hunter and Clair Stranlay is life in the engorged urban centres at all pleasant. As the heroine of Gay Hunter settles down for a rest in a field of clover the pastoral is starkly contrasted with the bustling, unhealthy world of motor transport:

"Late bees were homing laden from that hay-field, and Gay picked a head of the clover and chewed it for the honey in it. A queer feeling came upon her that she knew this place ...".  
Gay might well remember this location which had not always been as tranquil and pleasant as it was in the distant future of her journey in time:

"She remembered a Sunday she had driven the Morgan out that Great West Road, and the seething, endless snake-belt of traffic, the smell, the heat, the great arrow-straight road now long gone and past, with only the curlews crying there".  
Similarly, it is with some apprehension and distaste that Clair Stranlay anticipates her impending tour of the American lecture circuit as it would involve:

"Miles and miles of ferro-concrete, magadan, pelting rush and automobile slither".  

63. Three Go Back, p.29.
Although lacking the parenthesis of the pastoral reference, Clair's thoughts reflect Gay's dislike of roads and motor transport. In each case Mitchell is moved to use the device of animal, or more precisely, reptilian imagery - the "endless snakebelt" of "automobile slither" - to distance the reader from the road, and by implication, from the city.

In Gay Hunter, the heroine's vision of the future extends the trend towards greater urbanisation and industrialisation to a logical extreme. Written in the same year as Grey Granite, which has previously been mentioned in the context of "Metropolis", Gay Hunter presents a distinctly pessimistic vision of a future earth reduced to the one great destructive mechanism suggested by Lang's film:

"the world was one great pounding machine, pounding the life out of humanity, making it an ant-like slave - crawl on an earth turned to a dung-hill of its own futilities ...".\(^64\)

Given the strength of Mitchell's anti-urban, anti-industrial bias, it is not surprising that he should be concerned that Gay's vision of the future should not be allowed to come to pass. So it is that commenting on a suggestion that areas of Northern England be added to Scotland because of ethnic and geographical considerations, Mitchell again reveals an abhorrence of large scale industrialisation:

"If I look out on the land of Scotland and see it fouled by the smoking slag-heaps of industrialism rightwards and leftwards, a long trailing rift down the eastern coast and a vomiting geyser in Lanarkshire, I feel no stirrings of passion at all to add those tortured wastes of countryside, Northumbria and Lancashire, to the Scottish land".\(^65\)

As in Gay Hunter, roads "scar" the countryside, so here industrialism creates only "tortured wastes of countryside". In this sense then industrialism is a major culprit, a conclusion suggested by Mitchell/
Mitchell himself when in *The Conquest of the Maya* he observed:

"Industrialism, even in a minor form, knows no ruth".\(^6^6\)

Mitchell's antagonism to the city and industrialism is a consistent theme in his thought, yet two quite distinct images of the city emerge in this context. On one hand the city is the deserted, decaying ghost-town of modern capitalism: Glasgow during the Depression, the "dead cities of Northern England" and the deserted London of the Hierarchs. On the other, the city is a bustling, crowded, unhealthy, evil commercial or industrial entity with its population in thrall to its, usually, beast-like collective will. Rome, Venice, London, "Duncairn" and the city in general share these and other equally unenviable characteristics. On balance it is the latter conception of the city and city life which Mitchell projects.

Despite the somewhat contradictory nature of these images it may be contended that both views of the city correspond to Alan Richardson's definition of the Biblical view of it as "the habitation of all that is vile, oppressive and horrible in human life".\(^6^7\)

If Mitchell's depiction of the city reflects something of Richardson's uncomplimentary definition then the proletariat, as the class comprising the major element in the modern city, fare commensurately badly. Mitchell's attitude to the proletariat as a class, as distinct from his own origins in the peasantry, is discussed elsewhere in the context of the *Quair*.\(^6^8\) His origins and his experience of the working/

\(^6^6\) *The Conquest of the Maya*, p.91. Mitchell ventures this opinion almost casually after describing how, on a site in Yucatan, "fine pottery has been found in great quantities", along with evidence of social division and class rule in the form of "crudely and carelessly built temples and 'palaces'".

\(^6^7\) Alan Richardson, *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, p.49, quoted in full on p.122 above.

\(^6^8\) Chapter 5.
working class, particularly in the armed forces, combine to produce some rather jaundiced views which find expression in Stained Radiance and The Thirteenth Disciple. Indeed Garland and Maudslay's perceptions of the proletariat are most succinctly expressed when they air their opinions, reflecting Mitchell's own prejudices, on their fellow squad¬
dies. The portrait of the working class serviceman emerging from the remarks of the central characters of Stained Radiance and The Thirteenth Disciple is one characterised by uncleanliness, triviality and stupidity. Each time Garland or Maudslay make an observation on their colleagues the speaker is distanced from the object of his remarks, reflecting Mitchell's own distaste for the uncouth serviceman. Stuart Parham's recollection of Mitchell as an air force private should be borne in mind from the outset. According to Parham, Mitchell:

"didn't mix well and was fastidious in many ways, which made him an object of amused wonder".70

Mitchell's own experience of military life can be seen in Garland and Maudslay's failure to integrate with their fellow servicemen. Garland seems to come to terms with his differences from his colleagues fairly quickly, the following remark made by him on awakening reflecting both condescension and resignation:

"That a damned stink. The proletariat smell bad this morning".71

69. In "Memoirs of a Materialist", the synopsis for his proposed auto¬
biography, Mitchell intended the inclusion of an "Essay on the most cowardly, helpless and brainless of beings - the English soldier". In a letter of 19/12/21 to Ray Middleton he observed of the other soldiers sharing his billet:"there are eight of us in this hut, and for all we are akin we might as well come from different planets".

70. S. Parham's recollections, quoted by I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell: Lewis Grassic Gibbon, pp.32-33. This fastidiousness was a facet of Mitchell's character, see Appendix I.

71. Stained Radiance, p.70.
Maudslay has no higher regard for the proletariat than Garland. Indeed, not only are his colleagues as "insanitary" as Garland's, but they are trivial and stupid as well. Thus, in one of his bouts of depression he cynically recalls his erstwhile political commitment to the proletariat, shuddering as he ponders the implications of:

"Common Man as Man Dominant - a world of unending barrack rooms, on unending Friday nights, thronged with the unending insanitary, deafened with shouts and yelps and comic songs, belching with laughter over the comicality of the sexual processes...".72

In Maudslay's rather high-minded estimation the proletariat are little better than mischievous adolescents with grubby mental preoccupations reflecting their physical uncleanliness. In similar fashion James Storrman in Stained Radiance views the meeting of mine workers he is to address with a mixture of compassion and contempt:

"Looking down so, he shivered, for it was draughty. Further, it was though he looked from the ledge of a hunter's pit upon a collection of trapped and unclean animals, and he knew that, but for care, he himself might lose foothold and fall into that festering no-life".73

Earlier in the novel Garland is also depicted as feeling contempt for the vacuity of the proletariat. Thus describing the parting of servicemen from their wives he observes them to be:

"Underfed, nomadic, mostly shopgirls or domestic servants whom airmen had first seduced and then married, these women looked at the warehouse and the "Culmer Castle" with bright, interested, dead eyes".74

It will be recalled that the tower blocks of the Hierarchs' London in Gay Hunter had looked out "as if with dead eyes". In the present context it is the working class women who look with "dead eyes", indicating, as the same phrase had in Gay Hunter, a kind of spiritual death.

72. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.124.
73. Stained Radiance, p.238.
74. Ibid, p.183.
Although the proletarian servicemen mocked in *Stained Radiance* and *The Thirteenth Disciple* are not directly associated with the city, the characteristics accorded them by Mitchell may be seen as paralleling his views of city life. Thus, the lives of the servicemen are as mean, feculent and spiritually barren as the cities which have spawned them. Having termed the city of Glasgow "the vomit of a cataleptic commercialism" there is a sense in which the "insanitary", "belching", "yawping" working class squaddies can be seen through Garland and Maudalay's eyes as an egestion of the city recreating the fetid atmosphere of their homes in the barrack blocks. It is however only rarely in Mitchell's work that the proletariat are linked with the city and compared directly with the peasantry. One such instance does however occur in the *The Thirteenth Disciple* where Sergeant John Metaxa is introduced to the reader in the following manner:

"He hated Regulars ... Quite equally he disliked the enlistments from the towns - the cheerful, ragtime-singing individuals who were unashamed of calling themselves 'Tommies'. Cockney chirpiness could infuriate Metaxa. But the dull, plodding, anxious ploughmen, the nervous worried boys, all those whom the orgy of beastliness had overtaken and mentally murdered, were his protégés".75

The town dweller, sheltering behind his "Cockney chirpiness" is here described as being immune from the horror of war precisely because he has become incapable of feeling. Even so, Mitchell really ought, one feels, to have displayed some stirrings of compassion for them since even before the "orgy of beastliness" which is the war they had been "mentally murdered" just as surely as the "plodding, anxious ploughmen" monopolising his concern. Characteristically, however, it is the countryman who elicits Metaxa's and Mitchell's sympathy perhaps because/

because the psychological shock the peasant is subjected to is all the greater given the relative tranquillity of his rural past.

The city and those dwelling within it were, judging from Mitchell's work, distinctly unpleasant, evoking in him strong and sometimes conflicting emotions. Yet, in relation to his own actions, the gap between the thought and the deed were as wide as could be. It will be recalled that he steadfastly refused his father's demands that he should take a fee and work on the land, preferring life in the cities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, London and Welwyn, not to mention his travels with the army.

The conception of the city portrayed in his work is one of general hostility, yet when he came to contemplate moving back to Scotland in 1932, it was to the city of Edinburgh and not to rural Aberdeenshire or the Mearns. If his depiction of the city is one-sided and rather unfair, his depiction of the land likewise leaves something to be desired. An indication of this imbalance is to be seen in his juxtaposition of the country with the damning picture of life in the slums of Glasgow found in the following passage:

"Why did men ever allow themselves to become enslaved to a thing so obscene and so foul when there was this awaiting them here - hills and the splendours of freedom and silence, the clean splendours of hunger and woe and dread in the winds and rains and famine times of the earth, hunting and love and the call of the moon? Nothing endured by the primitives who once roamed these hills - nothing of woe or terror - approximated in degree or kind to that life that festers in the courts and wynds and alleys of Camlachie, Govan, the Gorbals".

Except in an excess of lyricism it might be thought that Mitchell surely could not believe the famine times of the country to be preferable even/

77. "Glasgow", Scottish Scene, p.137.
even to "the life that festers" in a city slum. Yet, beneath the hyperbole, Mitchell was striving to articulate deeply felt emotions: emotions which led him into wilful distortion.
b) The Country and the Scottish Past

Despite the rhetoric contained in his essay "Glasgow," Mitchell's upbringing taught him the very real arduousness that life on the land entailed. As a result he has Maudslay, in The Thirteenth Disciple, utter a caustic comment on those who, championing the peasant way of life from the comfort of the city, do so from almost complete ignorance of such:

"A beastly life. With memory of it and reading those Catholic writers who, for some obscure reason, champion the peasant and his state as the ideal state, Malcom is moved autobiographically to a sardonic mirth ... he is unprintably sceptical as to Mr. Chesterton or his chelas ever having grubbed a livelihood from hungry acres of red clay, or regarding the land with any other vision than an obese Victorian astigmatism ..." 78

"Those Catholic writers" exciting Maudslay's disgust are, as he mentions, G.K. Chesterton who became a Catholic in 1922 and in all probability Hilaire Belloc (a 'cradle Catholic') who jointly founded the Distributist League in 1926 on a programme of massive land restoration to ordinary people. 79 It is, however, one of the ironies of Mitchell's ambiguity towards the land that he comes close to advocating solutions to the city - country dichotomy which themselves have a mildly Distributist orientation. 80 Despite the rhetoric of his essay "Glasgow" - "the clean splendours of hunger, and woe and dread" - at his most polemical Mitchell was as unremittingly hostile to back to the land ideas as was Maudslay his fictional counterpart. Indeed in his essay "The Land" it is as if/
if he continues where Maudslay's condemnation of "Chesterton and his chelas" leaves off:

"They are promising to make of a young, ricketic man, with the phthisis of Glasgow in his throat, a bewildered labourer in pelting rains and the flares of head-aching suns, they are promising him years of a murderous monotony, poverty and struggle and loss of happy human relationships. They promise that of which they know nothing, except through sipping of the scum of Kailyard romances".31

Chesterton's fondness for good wine is well-known, but whether he was guilty of imbibing and being influenced by such a questionable literary brew is doubtful.

Where Mitchell deals with the land in his fiction it is clear that in man's unequal struggle to wrest a living from it there can be only one winner. In Sunset Song John Guthrie has the vitality and life force drained from him through long years of servitude to his croft, and in the short story entitled "Clay",32 Rob Galt effectively works himself to death in an almost ritual re-enactment of the fate of his predecessors. It is as if Guthrie and Galt become infected with a deadly virus from the land, impelling their sacrifice to it. In this respect, had not death in France intervened, it could be predicted that Swan Tavendale senior would have ended his days in a similar fashion. He, like Guthrie and Galt, is infected by the germ of his own self-destruction, having:

"fair the land in his bones".33

As a balance to this essentially bleak determinism, Mitchell also portrays the land as having strong recuperative powers. Thus, Gershom Jezebel is nursed back to health in military hospital in the north-east by Nurse Simpson, a young woman of peasant stock whose vitality is directly/

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32. Published in Scottish Scene.
33. Sunset Song, p.22.
directly derived from her origins on the land. Similarly, Malcom Maudslay regains his faith in the quest for understanding after the arrival of the letter from his brother and sister in the north-east, and his subsequent visit there, while John and Thea in Stained Radiance are refreshed and re-invigorated after their visit to Thea's parents in the same location. In marked contrast to "Clay" which it accompanies as one of the five short stories by Mitchell in Scottish Scene, in "Greenden" a sickly Glaswegian returns to health after taking the let on a croft, even if as in "Clay", the crofter's wife dies as a result of the harsh life-style. Perhaps the most precise definition of the land's power in this respect is Chris's instinctive reaction following the hurt at the hands of his husband, brutalised by his army training: 

"So, hurt and dazed, she turned to the land, close to it and the smell of it, kind and kind it was, it didn't rise up and torment your heart, you could keep at peace with the land if you gave it your heart and hands, tended it and slaved for it, it was wild and a tyrant, but it was not cruel".

So, while on the one hand Guthrie and Gait are in thrall to the land - which would in Mitchell's estimation destroy the ricketic Glasgow slum-dweller, (mentioned in "The Land"), - on the other, it provides a source of regeneration for Maudslay, John and Thea Garland, the sickly Glaswegian in "Greenden" and particularly Chris Guthrie. It is necessary, however, to distance his portrayal of the land's regenerative/

84. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, p.61 makes this point.
85. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, pp.36, 44 and 61, mentions the recuperative properties of the land in relation to Stained Radiance, The Thirteenth Disciple and Image and Superscription.
86. In "Clay" Galt's wife dies of cancer as he continues his dour struggle with the land. In "Greenden" such is the traumatic effect of the transition from city to country that the wife dies, mentally and physically exhausted.
87. Sunset Song, p.226.
regenerative capacity from that of D.H. Lawrence's notion of nature's regenerative powers. In this regard Philip Henderson maintains that there is no point of meeting between Chris's feelings for the land and Lawrence's thought, contending that Sunset Song has:

"nothing in common with the romantic return-to-nature cult of D.H. Lawrence".88

In this respect the really crucial difference between Mitchell and Lawrence has been summarised by Raymond Williams in the following judgement:

"If we go from reading him (Lawrence) to reading Grassie Gibbon in A Scots Quair, we find many resemblances, but in the end one significant difference; indeed a difference that is crucial ... What Lawrence again and again rejects ... is the idea and practice of social agencies of change. Where Lawrence hesitates, always, is between an idea of regeneration and an idea of revolution ... he sees available revolutionary movements as simply fights about property; he wants a different vision, a new sense of life, before he commits himself; otherwise it will not be regeneration, but a final collapse".89

For Williams, Mitchell and Lawrence share a feeling for the permanence and vitality of the land, an ambiguity towards the growth of industrialism and the city and the intrusion of the latter into the country.90

Ultimately they use these ideas very differently. In Sons and Lovers, in particular, the city, industrialism and the country and the ways of seeing and feeling associated with each are juxtaposed. But they are so within the dominating context of interpersonal relationships. The distinct historical movement of Sons and Lovers is subsumed by the introspective and subjective interaction of individuals acting primarily in accord with their own emotions, however much they are shaped by their/

89. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, p.321.
their environment. The historical background determines the parameters and modes within and through which Paul Morel, his mother, Clara and Mirian act out their drama, but the ultimate resolution of the tensions between them is emotionally and psychologically rather than historically located. The Quair, in contrast, opens with a historical "Prelude" within which the details of Chris Guthrie's personal life are set. The moment the narrative proper begins Chris, her mother, father, brothers and their croft are firmly located within a changing historical context. Thus the massive interconnecting themes of changes in agriculture, including the dissolution of the peasantry and the growth of industrialism and class conflict become of even greater moment as the Quair progresses. Individuals like Chris, Colquhoun, Ewan, Chae, Long Rob and the others conduct their lives and personal relationships within this determining historical matrix. What they do and feel, on the most intimate emotional levels must correspond to this perceived constraining and determining reality - Chris and Ewan's marriage is blighted and then terminated by the War; Long Rob is tormented into submission by it; Colquhoun becomes estranged from Chris by the effects of the class struggle as, eventually, does her son. The story of the Quair is, on this level, that of Chris and Ewan, one of whom wishes to conduct her life without significant reference to historical change, the other who accepts the necessity of understanding and working on and within the constraints of history itself.91 The bond between Chris and Ewan is no less strong than that between Paul and his mother in Sons and Lovers, and the culminating estrangement of each mother and son is equally painful. The crucial difference is that in Grey Granite the separation of Chris and Ewan is depicted with reference to the overall historical parameters of the Quair, where the culmination...
to *Sons and Lovers* is ultimately determined by Paul's personality without any real reference to his historically determined environment.

The themes providing the background to *A Scots Quair* are grounded in historical reality, but the way in which Mitchell depicts that reality is not as historically accurate as it might have been. It is clear from the general development of the *Quair* that Mitchell saw the city as the location of the class struggle between capital and labour, but he was also willing to acknowledge the existence of a similar conflict in the country. Thus, reviewing James Barke's novel, *The Wild Macraes* (1934) he wrote:

"His crofters and fishers and village folk are faithfully living and life-size; The Wild MacRaes (sic) themselves ... centre and epitomise the struggle of the classes that is waged just as bitterly in the remote glen as in the nearby factory".92

In *Sunset Song* and *Cloud Howe* the references to the growth of the Ploughman's Union is evidence of the growing militancy of the landless labourer and the conflict on the land. Similarly, the growth of Mowat's mills in Segget leads to the polarisation of the town into proletariat and farming community, with the local petit bourgeois wedged uneasily between, and dependent upon, each class for its own economic existence.

Yet the actual instances of class-based antagonism Mitchell portrays in relation to the crofter are individualistic rather than that engaged in by the collectively organised proletariat of Segget and Duncairn. Significantly it is Chae Strachan, John Guthrie and Long Rob who, on an individual and ad hoc basis, display the signs of revolt in *Sunset Song*. It is his emphasis on the individual as opposed to collective action undertaken by the crofters in *Sunset Song* which will be seen to be a palpable/

palpable distortion of the recent Scottish past.

In the particular instances of Strachan and Guthrie's display of class-based feelings, their ire is raised by the intrusion of the motor car into their countryside. Chae assaults a motorist - "a fair toff with leggings and a hat cocked over his eyes" 93 - for narrowly missing a playing child and for the "toff's" impudent lack of any expression of regret. John Guthrie is involved in a more serious and heated altercation with a chauffeur-driven lady. The car frightens Guthrie's horse, landing it and his cart half in a ditch, blocking the road. The following exchange takes place:

"... she thrust her bit head out from the window of the car and cried 'You're causing an obstruction, my man'. And John Guthrie, roused like a lion: 'I'm not your man, thank God, for if I was I'd have your face scraped with a clart then a scavenger wash it well'. The woman nearly burst with rage at that ...".94

Guthrie may give better than he gets, but the incident lays bare class relationships as it results in the non-renewal of his lease on his croft. Similarly, Chae ends in court for his handling of "the toff" in the car, being fined the sum of £10s-0d. More disturbing is when Long Rob's spirited resistance to conscription finally ends and he is shipped to France and his death. In each instance the crofter takes on authority, "the toff", "the gentry" and, in Rob's case, even the government in an unequal struggle which can have only one result. Although, in Chae Strachan and John Guthrie's cases the conflicts arise over trivial incidents, they nevertheless serve to indicate not only the existence of/


94. Ibid., pp.35-36. Just a few pages later (p.40) Mitchell again portrays Guthrie's independence as he orders the foreman of a nearby farm from his land with the words "You may be the archangel Gabriel, but you're not to shoot on my land, d'you hear?"
of conflict in the rural environment, but the underlying sources of power and the way in which it is unfairly exercised.

Ian Carter argues that Mitchell gives undue prominence to "the middle range farmer", like John Guthrie, in *Sunset Song*, and not enough to the poorer crofter who was actually more prominent in the Mearns. 95 It is unlikely that someone with Mitchell's eye for detail 96 would have made a mistake of this nature without a reason. The first book of the *Quair* dwells on the middle-range farmer - the crofter with enough land to sustain a family without the head of the household undertaking work as a labourer on other farms - because the central theme of *Sunset Song* concerns the individuality and self-sufficiency of the Mearns crofter. That such characteristics were present in that environment is not open to doubt, but changes in agriculture and the social structure of the area had involved the dissolution of the independent crofter in the generation prior to that in which the first book of the *Quair* is set.

Although the instances of conflict involving Guthrie, Strachan and Long Rob are true to life and therefore justifiable in the context of *Sunset Song*, they serve to perpetuate a picture of independence and vigour which is misleading when actual developments on the land are considered. Just as Sherlock Holmes solves the case in "Silver Blaze" by the fact that the dog didn't bark in the night, so, in the present context at least, what Mitchell didn't write is almost as eloquent as that which/


96. Mitchell's attention to detail is vouched for by the following comment made by Ewan Tavendale senior, *Sunset Song*, p.170, on the more prosperous farmers of the neighbouring parish of Fordoun: "they're not farmers, then, only lazy muckers that sit and make silver out of their cottars". Ewan's croft is set in the area inland from Fordoun, where Bloomfield, the Mitchell's own croft was, and where the soil composition is poorer and more difficult to work. The accuracy of Ewan's comments on the easier farming enjoyed by the larger farmer-landowners is indicated in *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, 1824/
which he did. What has been called the most radical and progressive political issue in Scotland erupted in the 1880's in the Highlands, the reverberations of which continued into the present century. It receives no mention in A Scots Quair or elsewhere in Mitchell's work because to have done so would have been to undermine his own definition of the Scots crofter and his conception of his past.

Changes in agriculture in the 19th century had the effect of intensifying the hard-core misery and poverty of the Highland crofter. Left out of the general improvement in agricultural techniques as well as the enclosures and evictions of the 18th century, when such changes did come to the Highlands they were enacted over a much shorter period and with a consequent intensity of effect. Having suffered eviction in earlier decades of the 19th century to make way for the more profitable sheep farm, from the 1870's and 1880's the land-hungry crofter had in turn the galling experience of seeing the sheep replaced by deer forest. The refusal by landlords to re-let land, even when it was not being used for sheep or deer caused deep resentment amongst hard-pressed crofters. In consequence, from the mid-1880's agrarian disorder erupted in various parts of the Highlands which came to be accompanied by independent political action, a distinct "Crofters' Party", emerging in parliament in 1885. Not surprisingly, the land issue became/
became enmeshed in the socialist revival of the 1880's.

In Scotland land reform candidacies were sponsored by two political bodies, the Highland Land League, formed in 1882, and the more radical Scottish Land Restoration League (S.L.R.L.) an affiliate of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation. From the outset the political organisation of the fight over land tenure and crofters' rights was centred in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Particularly in Glasgow the S.L.R.L. made its appeal to the growing radical sympathies of the region's industrial workers, many of whom were only recently proletarianised from Highland or Irish rural backgrounds. Socialist thought became inextricably linked in the struggle: Michael Davitt, the Irish socialist and Land League activist, lent his support to the formation of the S.L.R.L., while William Small, an official of the Lanarkshire miners, succeeded in setting up a branch of the League as the basis of an independent radical party. Labour politics in Scotland grew from the seedbed of the land issue. Keir Hardie fought the first ever Labour candidacy in the Mid-Lanark by-election of April 1888, having joined with William Small and his organisation the previous year. This was followed by the foundation of the Scottish Labour Party as an independent working class party in August 1888. In a situation of rapid development, groups and individuals as diverse as the Lanarkshire miners, the Highland Land League, the S.L.R.L., the London-based Labour Electoral Association, William Small, Keir Hardie and E.H. Champion found themselves bound together on the issue of the land.

In the north-east the socialist revival of the last quarter of the century paralleled the agitation surrounding the land issue. In Aberdeen itself a branch of the Scottish Land and Labour League was founded in /

100. R. Mitchison, A History of Scotland, p.393, argues that much of the unrest in the Highlands was, in fact, caused by Irish agitators like Davitt.
in 1887, while the Aberdeen Socialist Society launched the first socialist weekly paper in Scotland in 1891. In another respect Aberdeen socialists led the rest of their British colleagues in securing the return of two working men to the Town Council independently of the Liberals in 1884. While largely as a result of the efforts of James Leatham, the indefatigable Aberdeen socialist, between 1883 and 1893, several socialists of national standing including William Morris, H.M. Hyndman, Eleanor Marx Aveling and Peter Kropotkin, visited the area on public speaking engagements.

Pre-dating but overlapping the growth of socialist politics in the north-east was the struggle between landlord and tenant. The conflict which had its roots in the 1860's reached its peak between 1881 and 1886, the period of the Highland crofters' most intense opposition to their landlords. Against a background of general agricultural decline three areas of grievance served to bind together large tenant farmer and medium and small crofter against the landlords and factors of the north-east. Although the interests of these groups were by no means identical they became united in their demands for tenant/

102. Ibid, p.xi.
tenant rights and opposition to Hypothec and game laws.\textsuperscript{105} Apart from demands for redress in these particular areas the large meetings of tenants, and the tactic of the rent strike borrowed from their Irish counterparts, spawned more general demands for the inclusion of the north-east in the Crofters' Holdings Bill designed only to apply to the seven Highland crofting counties.\textsuperscript{106} Although unionisation of ploughmen and farm servants carried on apace with the agitation of the crofters, the demand for access to land and security of tenure was consistently denied by the government.\textsuperscript{107} Hypothec and the game laws were repealed and some progress made on tenant right to compensation for improvements made, but the agitation which was hampered throughout by association with Liberal Party interests petered out as the 1880's drew to a close. Nor were there any demands from the north-eastern crofter for peasant proprietorship or land nationalisation as there was from his Irish and Highland counterparts.\textsuperscript{108} Yet, it may be contended that particularly between 1881 and 1886 the north-eastern peasantry, from large capitalist farmer to poor subsistence crofter, had participated/

\textsuperscript{105} Much bitterness was felt by crofters of whatever size and wealth by the reluctance of landlords to compensate them for improvements made to the land at the termination of their leases. Similarly, the landlords' right to sequester goods of crofters defaulting on rent enshrined in the Hypothec law and the penalties imposed at law for shooting or trapping landlords' game, despite its damage to crops, caused much widespread resentment. Paradoxically, the Hypothec law actually helped the poorer crofter to secure land at a reasonable rent, since the landlord was guaranteed a return of some kind through sequestration.

\textsuperscript{106} Ian Carter, ibid, p.171.

\textsuperscript{107} See G. Evans, "Farm Servants Unions in Aberdeenshire between 1870 and 1900", \textit{Scottish Historical Review}, XXXII, 1952.

\textsuperscript{108} Ian Carter, \textit{Farm Life}, pp.170-175 ascribes the failure of the/
participated in agitation with a view to altering, if not radically changing the relationship between landlord and peasant.

The fact that Mitchell makes no reference whatsoever to the land agitation either in a north-eastern or Scottish context, or to the growth of radical and socialist ideas in later nineteenth century Scotland requires some explanation. Central to the reason for this distortion through omission is Mitchell's ambiguity towards the land, his conception of the crofter as a sturdy and independent individual and his view of the Scottish past. G.J. Davie argued that Mitchell invested his hopes for the future of Scotland in the "cultureless... workers and peasantry" as opposed to the "Anglicised upper-bourgeoisie", but the group in which Mitchell was particularly interested was the peasant, conceived of as the descendant of the ancient Pict. In his essay "The Antique Scene" as in the Prelude to Sunset Song and an article written for The Freeman Mitchell asserts the absolute integrity of the Scottish peasantry.

In The Freeman article Mitchell argued that there had been no assimilation of the indigenous population following the invasions of the Celts:

"There is not the remotest reason to believe that the Celtic invasions of Scotland were in immigrant droves; instead they were merely the raidings of gangs of thugs, who subsequently settled on the country's back as a parasitical social class, and have remained there ever since. Racially, the root stock of Scotland, though leavened in the south by the English and on the coasts by the Norse, remains Old Stone Age stock, Mediterranean and Maglenian. Scotland as a result of the Celtic invasions no more became racially Celtic than I would become/

the north-eastern agitation to develop into an attack on the landlords as a class to the successful siphoning off of discontent into support for the Liberal cause: "The spontaneous eruption of north-east land agitation had been tamed and channelled into political support for Gladstone and his party" (p.170).

become racially Siberian if I were knocked down and robbed by a Kamchatkan burglar".110

While in "The Antique Scene" he sketches the Picts' phlegmatic acceptance of a change of their oppressors:

"The Kelt, the Scot, the Norseman, the Norman were no more than small bands of raiders and robbers. The peasant at his immemorial toil would lift his eyes to see a new master installed at the broch, at the keep, at, later, the castle; and would shrug the matter aside as one of indifference, turning with the rain in his face, to the essentials of existence, his fields, his cattle, his woman in the dark little eirde, earth-house".111

But Mitchell does not remain totally consistent in relation to this definition of the passive timeless peasant unaffected by the changing of his overlords. In the same essay he contends that the one authentic force capable of utilising the strength of the Scots peasantry against oppressive alien masters had been, as he puts it, "Wallace's Army of the Commons of Scotland". However, betrayed by their own noblemen:

"Wallace's great schiltrouns of heroic peasant spearmen were broken and dispersed".112

It is clear from his essay "The Antique Scene" that Mitchell held Wallace in high regard because of his non-aristocratic origins and his generalship: "a great republican",113 as he is styled. Certainly, Robert de Brus, as Mitchell terms his successor in order to emphasise his French aristocratic background, fares rather less well since his victory at Bannockburn in 1314 signalled the victory of the Scots aristocracy as opposed to the Army of the Commons led by Wallace some sixteen years previously. Whether Mitchell actually believed Wallace to have been/


112. Ibid, p. 28.

113. Ibid.
been some kind of egalitarian Scots leader is difficult to judge on the evidence. As it is, after the Battle of Falkirk in 1298 the "heroic peasant spearmen" of Wallace's schiltrouns disappear from Mitchell's work as an agent capable of challenging and changing the social order. Indeed his next reference to the peasantry in "The Antique Scene" depicts them in a socially cohesive, semi-Utopia. Thus:

"In the Highlands the clan system, ostensibly aristocratic, was never so in actuality. It was a communistic patriarchy, the relation of the chief to his meanest clansman, the relation of an elder blood brother, seldom of a noble to a serf".115

Mitchell ends his essay by contending that the period from the '45 Rebellion to his own had been one in which:

"... the ancient Pictish spirit remembered only at dim intervals, as in a nightmare, the cry of the wind in the hair of freemen in that ancient life of the Golden Age, the play of the same wind in the banners of Wallace when he marshalled his schiltrouns at Falkirk".116

Before commenting on this picture of the Scottish past and its view of the Pictish 'crofter permanent' linked in some way to the cause of William Wallace it is important to bear in mind the Prelude to Sunset Song. In this the history of the Kinraddie estate (in which Guthrie's croft is located) is sketched by tracing the fortunes of its first owner, the/

114. Certainly from the brief outline of Wallace in "The Antique Scene" this would seem to be the case, since he is described as "one of the few authentic national heroes: authentic in the sense that he apprehended and moulded the historic forces of his time in a fashion denied all but a few of the world's great political leaders - Cromwell, Lincoln and Lenin".


116. Ibid. There is an extent to which John Foster's essay "Scottish Nationality and the Origins of Nationalism" in T. Dickson (Ed), Scottish Capitalism, Class, State and Nationalism from the Union to the Present, (London, 1980), p.48, vindicates Mitchell's picture of Wallace as a proto-revolutionary leader in "The Antique Scene". Foster argues that a movement of lower feudal orders analogous to that which produced the Peasants' Revolt in England/
the Norman Cospatric, and his successors. The brief narrative ranges over the part played by this family in the Scottish past, namely, in Wallace's struggles, the Reformation and the revolutionary turmoil invoked by ideas emanating from the French Revolution. Cospatric's successors are canny folk who side with the English against Wallace and accept the new Protestant religion. They are less wise in relation to the French Revolution however as the laird of the time joins the Jacobin Club in Aberdeen and is nearly killed in the rioting:

"And they carried him back to Kinraddie a cripple but he would still have it that all men were free and equal and he set to selling the estate and sending the money to France, for he had a real good heart. And the crofters marched on Kinraddie Castle in a body and bashed in the windows of it, they thought equality should begin at home".117

It is necessary to recap briefly at this stage. Mitchell's somewhat idiosyncratic view of the Scottish past then involves the descendants of the primitive Picts labouring under the rule of alien masters, sometimes in resignation, at other times resentfully and turbulently. Following the defeat of Wallace and the "Army of the Commons" and the triumph of the Scottish aristocracy under Bruce, there emerges, it is never actually explained how, a patriarchal communistic clan system. The Reformation, the turmoil of the covenanting times, and '45 come and go as the Scots crofter tills his land and fights, when he has to, in the power struggles of his superiors. From the time of Wallace until the enraged crofters storm Kinraddie Castle at the turn of the 18th century the/
the Scots are a dormant and subdued people in this reckoning. Clearly Mitchell's account is selective and his interpretation of the Scottish past could be questioned at every stage. But, since his very selectivity would seek to further the notion of the 'crofter permanent' as the authentic expression of the Scottish spirit his selectivity becomes pointedly contrary in his 'perversion by omission' of the more recent history of the crofter himself.

Mitchell's depiction of the crofting community in *Sunset Song* is of an individualistic, independent and socially conservative people. It is this independence and the sense of self-worth which permits John Guthrie to stand-up to the chauffeur-driven lady regardless of the consequences - "Guthrie, roused like a lion"¹¹⁸ and which allows Chae Strachan and Long Rob to register their own particular protests against authority. In this respect Edwin Muir's surprise at finding the practice of doffing caps and the addressing of superiors as "sir" in the Glasgow of the 1920's is of note. Although such subservient behaviour is more usually associated with the class relationships of rural areas, Muir's recollections of the Orkney Isles did not include instances of such elaborate emphasis on social divisions, a fact he attributed to the natural independence of the Scots crofter.¹¹⁹ Mitchell's crofters, and particularly John Guthrie, are fiercely independent and individualistic men who, except in exceptional circumstances,¹²⁰ are involved in a single-minded and lonely struggle with the land. This independence is/

¹¹⁸. *Sunset Song*, p.36.


¹²⁰. E.g. *Sunset Song*, pp.128-131 when lightning threatens Chris's horses and Chae and Ewan come to her aid.
is reflected in the crofters' scepticism (not to say cynicism) of the Liberals and Tories; both of whom are regarded as self-seeking and shallow. Yet, for all their sometimes belligerent independence, when Chae Strachan, aided and abetted by John Guthrie and Long Rob, do engage in collective action by disrupting the Tory election meeting, it achieves nothing in real terms save perhaps helping the rival Liberal to victory.¹²¹ Chae is a socialist, albeit a Christian socialist, but despite any class consciousness stemming from his ideological commitment even he cannot break-out of the confines of the crofters' inhibiting individuality which demands an essentially intuitive and uncoordinated reaction to events.

Raymond Williams argues that the independence of the crofters in *Sunset Song* is transitional to the militancy of the urban industrial worker portrayed elsewhere in the *Quair*.¹²² This argument, attractive as it is, cannot be sustained. While John Guthrie can effectively deal with the impudent chauffeur-driven lady and the foreman of the Mains whom he catches shooting on his land,¹²³ he is powerless to act against the termination of his lease resulting from the former incident. What is more revealing is the fact that Guthrie apparently accepts such crude victimisation as inevitable if not legitimate. Guthrie, Strachan and Long Rob can disrupt the Tory election meeting, trading blows with the party faithful, but despite venting their dislike of Tory politics they never even conceive of the possibility that existing class relationships could be challenged and changed. Even Chae Strachan's socialism is heavily overlaid with a Christian messianism and passion for retribution/¹²¹

¹²¹ Ibid, pp.95-96.

¹²² Raymond Williams, *Country and the City*, pp.323-324.

¹²³ *Sunset Song*, pp.40-41.
retribution rather than a commitment to the tenets of the class struggle and revolution. The militancy displayed by Guthrie and his colleagues has to be measured against the real life collective action by crofters against their superiors and the only instance of this permitted by Mitchell in the Quair is the severely limited action of the crofters "bashing in" the windows of Kinraddie Castle. This is undoubtedly a militant action, but it hardly threatens, nor is it intended to threaten existing social relationships. In another context Paul Johnson has typified this type of response as pre-industrial, likening it to a crowd of medieval peasants who, having attacked the local Manor House, revert into an indecisive rabble to await the retribution of superiors. The key to an understanding of this type of militancy is its ad hoc nature: it is reactive and reactionary, having neither programme nor plan to guide and sustain it. It is this type of strictly limited militancy which Guthrie, Strachan and Long Rob inherit and display in Sunset Song. By comparison, the militancy of the Segget spinners and Duncairn proletariat is both conscious of class and collectively pursued. So too was the real-life land agitation of the 1880's in Scotland and the northeast and which Mitchell studiously ignores. The reason for such a purblind attitude may be seen to reside in his eulogy of individuality and the rural environment which gives it substance and meaning. When he does imply a communitarian element to life on the land in the Scottish past, in his definition of the clan system, it is significant that it should contain a strong individualistic element with the/

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124. E.g. Sunset Song, p.96, where Chae calls down the wrath of God on the Tories.

125. Ibid, p.4.

the insertion of an over-riding patriarchal dimension. 127

With the passing of Guthrie, Strachan, Long Rob and Ewan Tavendale senior, there perishes also their individualism of thought and deed. It is no coincidence that as they pass away so does the life-style which has created their consciousness and intuitive, individualistic mode of thought, feeling and action. In Colquhoun's sermon the passing of the crofters killed in the War is associated with the very death of their country itself, 128 killed by the changes in agriculture brought on by the growth of the cities and the Great War:

"The crofter has gone, the man with the house and steading of his own and the land closer to his heart than the flesh of his body". 129

Through this selective device the independence of the crofter remains intact even to its death with the Last of the Old Scots Folk at the conclusion to Sunset Song.

There is no point in being unduly harsh towards Mitchell in this respect: after all, when it comes to distorting history he is in good and varied company. James Connolly in his Labour in Irish History conveniently omitted any mention of the Celts' enthusiastic participation in the early and High Medieval slave trade lest his projected image of the Celt under the Saxon yoke be besmirched. Likewise, selectivity serves Mitchell's depiction of a communistic clan system, even though/

127. See above, p.166. Mitchell's definition of the clan system as a "communistic patriarchy".

Ian Carter, Farm Life, p,94, argues that the father played a dominant, even dictatorial role on the type of croft which Mitchell grew up on. Mitchell may therefore have been grafting the patriarchal aspect of his own early environment onto a conception of the clan system of the past.

128. Sunset Song, p.252, "It was the old Scotland that perished with them ...".

129. Ibid.
though the blood-thirsty and unprincipled anarchy of that system stretches to the very limits of toleration the use of the term communism. Indeed, his hailing of the communistic clan system is fundamentally at odds with his perception of the supreme individuality of the crofter, yet he seeks to maintain both as if they were compatible. Along with other notable figures of the 'twenties and 'thirties he held a distinctly mythical and propagandistic view of that past. Thus, when his friend and collaborator C.M. Grieve wrote that:

"Scots steel tempered wi' Irish fire
Is the weapon I desire," 130

he was attesting to the inspiration of Erskine of Mar's romantic ideas on Celtic communism. Not only Grieve but Neil Gunn and John MacLean, Grieve's great revolutionary hero, were drawn to the notion that inherent in the Celtic past was a disposition towards communism. Grieve, and MacLean before him, took the idea a great deal further in a left-wing political context than the romantically conservative Erskine of Mar, arguing that the resources of the "Gaelic Idea" could be a weapon in the struggle against English imperialism and domination of Scotland. 131 Mitchell was out of sympathy with the "Gaelic Idea" largely because of its association with nationalistic sentiments, but his definition of the clan system as a communistic patriarchy reveals that it may have exerted some influence on him. 132


Mitchell could write of advocates of back to the land ideas that they had suffered through "sipping of the scum of Kailyard romance", but it is equally true that in his distortion of the Scottish past he himself displayed elements of the Kailyard in his own work. The principal criticism of the Kailyard writers resides in their unnaturally rosy and optimistic depiction of Scottish rural life. But, insofar as there was such a dimension, as Ian Campbell argues, in relation to this and other aspects the Kailyard writers reflected at least a partial truth of Scottish life. Thus, if Scottish life bears scant resemblance to the saccharine picture painted in, for instance, Ian McLaren's Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush, then the same judgement may be made in relation to George Douglas Brown's portrait of the diseased community exposed in The House with the Green Shutters. When C.M. Grieve claimed that Mitchell had taken up where Brown had left off he might have, though he did not, mention that he was also prone to an element of the distortion to be seen in both the Kailyard writers and in George Douglas Brown, their principal contemporary antagonist. Mitchell's depiction of the crofter as a hard individualist, the enduring heir to a Pictish tradition of independence and a distant communistic clan system is then a conscious selection of characteristics which portrays a particular but inevitably distorted view of the Scottish past.

c) Towards an Accommodation of the City and the Country

The preceding two sections of the present chapter have attempted to deal with Mitchell's view of the city and his conception of rural Scotland, its people and its past. Mitchell on the city is nowhere as expansive as in the treatment he accords to the country. One indication of this is that, apart from the references to the urban working class mentioned earlier in this chapter, none of Mitchell's heroes or heroines, nor any of his secondary characters is drawn from the proletariat. In *Stained Radiance*, for instance, where the structure of the work would have made it relatively simple to include such characters, Mitchell peoples the novel with lower middle class individuals who are of little consequence in themselves or in relation to the plot. In contrast his treatment of the country hinges upon well-developed portraits of individuals acting within and reacting to their environment. Where, in *Grey Granite*, the city serves as the background, it is round the struggle for understanding of two country-born, and in the case of Chris, distinctly crofter-minded characters that the action revolves. Mitchell on the city and Mitchell on the country is therefore not a comparison of like with like.

There is a timelessness about his conception of the city considered so far: the city is evil or, at best, unpleasant, whether it is ancient Rome or his vision of the future London of the Hierarchs in *Gay Hunter*. These cities stand, or as with Rome, "squat", animal-like and emanating evil. They have no past, only a

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136. This is with the exception of *Cloud Howe* and *Grey Granite* which are discussed in the next chapter. See also Chapter 5 where Mitchell's choice of characters is considered.

137. In *Stained Radiance* Ellen Ledgeworth, a milliner, Mrs. Stresemann Mullins, her employer, Edward Snooks, a clerk and Norah Casement who is a civil servant, are introduced to the reader in the first few pages.

a perpetual and baneful present in contrast to the country where, in *Sunset Song*, the passing of time is indicated by the development of Chris, maturation of Ewan and even in the very section headings.\(^{139}\) By contrast, as David MacAree has noted, the fact that *Grey Granite*, unlike the preceding books of the *Quair*, has no prelude is indicative of the city as having no history, no continuity with the past.\(^{140}\) If timelessness can imply permanence, the absence of a history, of a past, it can also imply transience and impermanence. It may therefore be contended that, in a conscious reversal of the real-life trend from country to city, Mitchell imputes life to a countryside rapidly being depopulated, and decay and death to the expanding cities of the twentieth century.\(^{141}\) He could not sustain a counterfactual argument of such proportions even in an imaginative context, but, basing his hopes on the impermanence of the city in its present form, he could search for an accommodation of the country with some of the city's more positive facets. This would not have been possible had he been as unremittingly hostile to the city as is implied in the opening section of this chapter. Fortunately, for the balance of his work, he displays an ambiguity towards the city reflecting that noted earlier in relation to the Bible itself.

The Biblical tendency to depict the city as a shimmering place of light, as a New Jerusalem, has already been mentioned in connection with Mitchell's tendency to dwell on the other, distinctly unwholesome/
unwholesome Biblical view of the city as "the habitation of all that is vile, oppressive and horrible in human life". But there is also an extent to which the idea of the city as an almost unearthly New Jerusalem gains elucidation in his work, particularly in Gay Hunter. This is located towards the end of the novel as the heroine approaches the ruined city of London intent on destroying Houghton, Easterling and their band of hunters. In order to emphasise through contrast Gay's vision of London as a New Jerusalem, it is preceded by an association of the city with disease, danger and obscenity. After she leaves behind the untrammelled countryside surrounding the Golden Age hunters' cave dwelling, and nears London the vegetation becomes noticeably meaner and more sparse. As a result her sense of desolation and imminent danger increases as she draws near the evil city of the Hierarchs, where even the blackberries on its outskirts become "meagre and sour". Gay then witnesses the fantastic and frightening absurdity of lions being pursued by the giant sewer rats; meanwhile towering above the city in mute and evil testimony, the giant phallic tower menaces and intimidates. The sparse vegetation, the meagre and sour blackberries, the sewer rats and the phallic tower therefore combine to create a mood of disease, danger and depravity. Yet, in the midst of these, her gloomiest forebodings, Gay experiences a radically different vision set in the clouds above London. Surveying them from a ridge in the evening prior to her planned attack, Gay is struck by the imaginary city's majestic bearing and beauty:

"... it seemed a new London ... Not London. Perhaps instead it had been what Blake once saw - what was once a vision and a possibility in the days when he sang it, before man lost/

142. A. Richardson, (3d), A Theological Word Book of the Bible, p.49, quoted previously, p.122 above.

lost his vision completely:

'I shall not cease from mental strife
Nor shall the sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land".\textsuperscript{144}

Gay's vision evaporates almost as soon as she conceives it, but what is striking is the intrusion of this counter-image of the city in a passage in which the dominant mood is one of distinct anti-urban feeling.

It will be recalled that Malcom Maudslay in The Thirteenth Disciple had been the medium through which Mitchell directed some of his most mordant criticisms of Glasgow; criticisms which later find their way into his polemical essay in \emph{Scottish Scene}.\textsuperscript{145} It is somewhat paradoxical, therefore, that the object of Maudslay's great adventure should be another city, albeit the lost city of the Maya. What is of importance here is the vision of the city which Maudslay experiences when he is close to death. Lying injured, slipping in and out of consciousness, Maudslay envisions the city of his quest:

"... it was no ruined city at all that crowned the Domina Range. Purple-blossoming, its terraces climbed the slopes. Golden-towered and minaretted, the City of the Sun itself, it flashed in the evening light, a city immense, banner-hung and splendid, recorded by a straying pencil on an impossible page ...".\textsuperscript{146}

Similarly, although previously depicting London as a "frowsy harlot", Garland, like Gay and Maudslay, experiences a completely contradictory conception of the city. It is a hot day and he and Thea have escaped to the outskirts of London where they lie in the grass overlooking the city:

"Below them London lay shining bluely. 'The City of the Sun', said Garland. But Thea was humming her song and did not hear".\textsuperscript{147}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{144} Gay Hunter, p.256. The quotation is from Blake's "Jerusalem".
\item \textsuperscript{145} "Glasgow".
\item \textsuperscript{146} The Thirteenth Disciple, p.286.
\item \textsuperscript{147} Stained Radiance, p.156.
\end{itemize}
Garland's perception of London as glorious as Campanella's *City of the Sun* 148 (an association replicated in Maudsley's vision) is a momentary phenomenon but, along with Gay's vision of London as a New Jerusalem and Maudsley's vision of the city of "minarsted towers" it does present a conception of the city completely at odds with its more dominant representation in his work as an unpleasant habitation. Significantly, Gay, Maudsley and Garland are all outside the city, looking in on it from a distance, when they reveal this alternative contradictory conception. Likewise, in *Spartacus*, the slaves are struck with the magnitude and grandeur of Rome. It is the manifestation of the patriciate's evil power but, as the slave army realise:

"How might a man live without a city? For the City was life", 149

In this reckoning Rome may not be depicted as a New Jerusalem yet, as a city, it has lost its association with death and disease.

In stark contrast to these images of the city as grand, and even magnificent, Kleon's (the slave army's political theorist's) dream for the future is not one in which the awesome city of Rome figures. Contrary to the slaves' conclusion that "the City was life", his *Lex Servorum* decreed a social organisation based on small towns in a setting of rural peace and tranquillity; it:

"dreamt, this Law, of a land of little farmsteads sleeping secure, of quiet towns, with literati in the porticoes and freemen in the mills and booths", 150

148. Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) was an Italian Dominican whose utopian work *The City of the Sun* was published in 1623. It has been compared to St Thomas More's *Utopia* and described as "an escapist dream". See G. Negley and J. Max Patrick, *The Quest for Utopia*, (Anchor Book edition, New York, 1962), p.308. *The City of the Sun* was translated into English in 1855 by T.W. Halliday.


150. Ibid, p.188.
Thus, the objective of the slave army is not to take Rome for themselves, replacing one ruling class with their own leadership, instead there is a suggestion that they must defeat the masters and progress to a qualitatively different way of life, comprised of "little farmsteads" and "quiet towns". While Gay, Maudslay and Garland each conceive of the city of their dream as a kind of New Jerusalem, Kleon postulates a radically different and more practicable view whereby town and country might meet and co-exist interdependently.

This idea gains fuller expression in "Dieneke's Dream", a tale in Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights. The story involves the struggle of seventeen Greek weavers who migrate to Egypt and, settling in Cairo, manage, against all the odds, to establish and prosper in a small communitarian settlement. They are beset by the police, depicted as hirelings of the Persian Egyptian rentier who is intent on having them evicted from their settlement before a law is passed entitling them to compensation for improvements they have made. Like the crofter of Mitchell's own north-east who, it will be recalled, had conducted a real life struggle over the issue of tenant right, the weavers fight doggedly for their independence, holding to their initial resolve:

"They were determined, with an altogether archaic obstinacy, to erect their own looms, not to work for others". 151

The story of the weavers in "Dieneke's Dream" illustrates the virtues of independence and communal responsibility of the type which would have been necessary to put Kleon's dream in the "Lex Servorum" into effect. It also highlights the benefits of a small scale venture as it is juxtaposed with the bustling unpleasantness of Cairo on whose outskirts it lies. But the weavers' settlement is also a point of meeting between/

between country and city. And, as the militant actions of the young Greek weavers signify, it is an idea worth fighting for.

These images of the city as the New Jerusalem in Gay Hunter, a fabulous city in The Thirteenth Disciple and, fleetingly, Campanella's City of the Sun in Stained Radiance are antithetical to Kleon's vision in the "Lex Sorvorum" and its partial transmission into the settlement described in 'Dienekes Dream'. Yet each image is a projection of faith in what the city might become. Raymond Williams has noted that both D.H. Lawrence and William Morris were prone to a similar confusion of such images, with the city as an agricultural village co-existing with the completely contradictory depiction of it as a New Jerusalem.¹⁵²

While Mitchell's own rural background and early unhappy experience of life in Glasgow can be seen as likely sources of his more overt anti-urbanism, such preoccupations were, of course, a central concern for the writer of the Victorian period onward. Mitchell's apparent attraction to an accommodation of city and country may in part have been determined by the work of influential political figures writing in the period immediately prior to his birth.

The work of such as William Morris, Prince Peter Kropotkin and Robert Blatchford helped establish a tradition of what might be termed anti-urban, pro-rural sentiments within the context of a more general critique of industrial capitalism.¹⁵³ In News from Nowhere (1890) Morris looked forward to a communist society based on small villages and communes and a leisured life-style which might be compared to/


¹⁵³. R. Williams, ibid, p.297, notes the existence of such a tradition which emphasised "the cultural importance of rural ideas".
to Kleon's dreams of 'quiet towns with literati in the porticoes and freemen in the booths'. Kropotkin's advocacy of the small scale commune can be found in much of his work, particularly in Mutual Aid, his best known and most widely circulated pamphlet published in English in 1902. In "Dieneske's Dream" and Kleon's Lex Servorum then Mitchell might be seen to be in accord with this general aspect of Morris and Kropotkin's thought. Yet, for all the popularity of the afore-mentioned writers, one work in particular by Robert Blatchford had an influence which Mitchell is unlikely to have been immune from. Published in 1892, Merrie England sold three quarters of a million copies in its first year, and continued to outsell all other works of socialist propaganda including Henry George's Progress and Poverty, (1879), its nearest rival. Among other things Merrie England argues not only the economic case for maintaining a strong rural economy, but stresses that a dynamic agricultural Britain would save the lives of many millions of men sacrificed to the workings of industry. Blatchford translated his thought into political action perhaps more effectively than Morris or Kropotkin were to do. In 1892 he joined the Independent Labour Party and was responsible, at least in part, for that party's continued insistence on the importance of the land even when events had shifted the land issue from the centre stage of British politics. Thus as late/

154. Spartacus, p.188.

155. According to A.L. Morton and George Tate, The British Labour Movement, p.201, Merrie England "did perhaps more than any other single publication to create a socialist consciousness among the working class". John MacLean thought Merrie England to have been the "primary school of socialism", See David Broom, John MacLean, (Edinburgh, 1973), p.22. Edwin Muir, An Autobiography, (London, 1954), p.111, was converted to socialism after reading Blatchford's Britain for the British, (London, 1902), while C.M. Grieve expressed a debt to Blatchford's work when interviewed by the present writer.
late as 1921 Tom Johnston was sounding the distinctly Blatchfordian warning in Forward that:

"Agriculture is not like any other industry. We might lose our trade in the manufacture of chocolate mice and barbed wire and fiery liquids; Birmingham's manufacture of heathen goods for export or Yarrow's skill in gunboat design might pass from us, and as a nation we could survive; but if the smell of the earth ever goes from us, and we become a poor street-bred people, all is lost".156

The transmission of these Blatchfordian sentiments by the I.L.P. was, according to C.M. Grieve and Cuthbert Graham, to attract Mitchell to:

"The inflamed radicalism of the I.L.P. and its desperate last stand on the importance of the land issue and all that went with it".157

Both Grieve and Graham believed Mitchell found this aspect of I.L.P. policy and activity conducive but that, especially as he matured, he tended to see the party as ineffectual in the struggles of the 1930's.

Morris, Kropotkin and Blatchford appear to have been known to Mitchell as they all gain mention in The Thirteenth Disciple,158 even if one reference to Blatchford is presented to the reader as an oblique allusion. Thus, Malcom Maudslay gives as the headquarters of the Secular Control Group an address in "Nunquam Street". There is no such street in London, but when nunquam is translated it means "a strong negative" or "emphatic denial", and, as such, precisely accords with the Secular Control Group's, and Mitchell's attitude to certain developments of the 1930's. Nunquam was also the pseudonym of Robert Blatchford under which early editions of the influential Merrie England were published, implying the author's own rejection of an increasingly urban, industrial society. This/


C.M. Grieve, PT.

158. The Thirteenth Disciple, pp.60-61, 86, 123. The work of Blatchford, Morris and Kropotkin are all referenced as having been known to Maudslay.
This oblique association of Maudslay and the Secular Control Group with Blatchford's anti-urbanism is strengthened when it is borne in mind that during his early days in Glasgow Maudslay has a bust of William Morris on his mantelpiece and is drawn to his friend Meierkhold's utopian Kropotkinite dreams - what Maudslay describes as:

"beloved Kropotkin, to picturing a future earth of grain and flowers, a paradise of the leisured craftsman and the happy peasant, without sin or blood ...", 159

This is, of course, a refuge for Meierkhold's sorely tried emotions but it is an appealing vision which Maudslay ultimately rejects, as did Mitchell himself. But the question remains as to why Mitchell should feel it necessary to hark-back, in Sunset Song as in the other areas of his work dealt with, to the vanished, even imaginary, life of the independent crofter or to communitarian, semi-rural communities of the kind outlined in "Dieneske's Dream" and mentioned by Kleon in Spartacus. One reason why a number of writers, Morris, Kropotkin and Blatchford included, found this a necessity has been described by Williams as arising from the trend towards industrialisation and urbanism:

"Rural Britain was subsidiary, and knew that it was subsidiary, from the late nineteenth century. But so much of the past of the country, its feelings and its literature was involved with rural experience and so many of its ideas of how to live well ... persisted and were even strengthened, that there is an almost inverse proportion, in the twentieth century, between the relative importance of the working rural economy and the cultural importance of rural ideas". 160

It is of interest to note that Marx and Engels were conscious of this process of agricultural decline and urban expansion and aimed to/
to heal what Friedrich Engels in *Anti-Dühring* termed:

"The first great division of labour in society ... the separation of town and country".\(^{161}\)

Engels went on to argue that what he and Marx regarded as the antithesis between town and country denied the rural population intellectual development and the city dweller proper physical growth. For Engels the ideal social groups were to be between 1,600 and 3,000 - good sized villages - in which every person would be guaranteed all round training in urban and rural skills, thus healing the city-country dichotomy.\(^{162}\) Not many years later Ebenezer Howard, the founder of the concept of the Garden City was to advance the proposition that the city and country had to learn from each other that the increasingly widening gap between them might be healed.\(^{163}\) As a result Letchworth Garden City then Welwyn Garden City were completed in the 1920's and early 1930’s as a tangible manifestation of a general concern that the rural past should be accommodated within an increasingly urban future.

Grieve believed Mitchell to have been:

"constantly lusting after the little towns and small farms of the Mearns".\(^{164}\)

and, to be sure in *Sunset Song* and in Kleon's *Lex Servorum* and "Dieneke's Dream" there is perhaps an indicative element of such a nostalgic longing.

But Mitchell was a product of the twentieth century and if he could not deny the emotions determined by his formative years in a rural setting he/
he knew that regression to a Kropotkine or Morrisian dream community was all but impossible. This recognition may have had something to do with the excess of feeling involved in his anti-urban polemic, although in this respect Edwin Muir's Poor Tom (1932) and James Barke's The Green Hills Far Away (1940) may be seen as parallels to his rural-orientated critique of urban capitalism.

The expression of Mitchell's feelings in relation to city, country and some half-way stage incorporating elements of each is marked by his characteristic tendency to advance an idea and almost as quickly retreat from it, drawing back from the edge as it were, before its implications become manifest and amenable to close analysis. This is perhaps one reason why these ideas, feeding on his primary emotions, are nowhere systematically elucidated but are to be found ranged, almost haphazardly, throughout his work. Ultimately the one emotion underlying his view of city and country is his ambiguity and uncertainty. This ambiguity is neatly reflected in the words of Ann Shearsby about the reasons why she believes Mitchell to have chosen Welwyn Garden City for his home:

"His choice of a home was, I think, made with companionship in mind, plus some access to the country. His deepest feelings for the country were still up north. I must stress that he did like company. I don't think that city life, as such, appealed to J.L.M. He liked its conveniences - libraries, book-shops, museums etc. and the company of like minds, but recognised that children loved a rural environment."

Ultimately, despite the anti-urbanism to be found in his work, Mitchell was inexorably drawn towards the city. He may have felt guilty/

and so on, that that was forcing country-bred people more and more into the industrial belt, into the big cities - Dundee and Glasgow - and the black belt of Lanarkshire generally".

guilty about this which perhaps helps explain some of the more excessive of his anti-city rhetoric, but, in another sense he was simply conforming to what Holbrook Jackson described in the following manner:

"Love of town is a human passion which may not be suppressed by advocates of the Simple Life and the Return to Nature, even though they bedeck their propaganda with words of flame. Such enthusiasts can never be more than apostles of a marginal gospel, attracting the few and, perhaps, the ill-starred".166

There are three strands to Mitchell's thought in relation to the city and the country, two of which are characterised by ambivalence and ambiguity. His conception of the city is couched with a vehemence associated with the anti-urban tradition in our literature, in which the city emerges characterised as a repugnant, diseased, almost evil entity. In only partial mitigation of this the city emerges fleetingly in his work in an entirely contradictory guise; as splendid, magnificent and remote. His treatment of the country is subject to a similar ambiguity only the reasons underlying it are somewhat more complex. The land is portrayed as a hard task-master demanding unremitting toil on the part of those who work it, but equally Mitchell also depicts it in terms of the quiet, peaceful, pastoral idyll. The former conception may be seen as deriving from his actual knowledge of the country; the latter as having its origins in Mitchell as the city-dwelling novelist and distanced observer. With the rapid growth of industrialisation and urbanisation neither of these views are however particularly realistic. Life on the land might remain as arduous as it had ever been but the structure of the agricultural economy had by the 1930's undergone profound change, leading to decline. Despite his attempt to sustain the notion of the crofter as the one permanent element in the Scottish past he was forced/

forced to concede at the conclusion to *Sunset Song*, that this permanence had come to an end as early as the period of his own childhood and adolescence. No amount of distortion by omission of the kind which causes him to ignore the land agitation of the latter nineteenth century - as if the independent crofter of the Mearns was immune from it - could blind him to the inevitability of the demise of the crofter and the way of life associated with him. The third strand of his thought may be seen to emerge as a result of his recognition of this reality along with a personal preference for city life, *"Dieneske's Dream"* and Kleon’s *Lex Servorum* can be viewed as the first tentative steps on Mitchell’s part to become part of a tradition which, recognising the inevitability of technological advance and concomitant urbanisation sought to marry the best aspects of the former with a desire to keep the positive aspects of country life. It was while in Welwyn, that half-way house betwixt city and country, that Mitchell developed his ideas and commitment towards an increasingly uncompromising view of left-wing politics.
a) The Background: The 1930's

It was argued previously that Mitchell was drawn to socialism from an emotional intolerance of suffering and at least in part as a source of vindication for his own youthful rebelliousness. It must be acknowledged, however, that apart from such personal characteristics and their bearing on the development of Mitchell's socialist sentiments he was also in accord with the general shift to the left made by other intellectuals in the 1930's. This and the following two chapters seek to show Mitchell in the context of the British left of the earlier 1930's in terms of his attitude to literature, Fascism, revolutionary action and the means-ends dilemma.

The 1930's wanted employment and peace: the employment that had been crippled by the depression; the peace threatened by the Nazis. With the economic crisis deepening, the spectacle of Ramsay MacDonald leading a majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party into a National Government in 1931 filled Mitchell with the venomous disgust he displays in *Scottish Scene*.\(^1\) However, until the success of the Nazis in Germany with the accession of Hitler to the Chancellorship in January 1933 the menace of Fascism did not seem of central importance to Mitchell. The development of his awareness of the threat posed by the growth of Fascism will be dealt with shortly; for the present it is necessary to look at the background against which Mitchell produced the bulk of his work. The corollary to Mitchell's opposition to Fascism was for him, as for others of his generation, a growing acceptance of communism.

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1. "Representative Scots (1), The Wrecker. James Ramsay MacDonald", *Scottish Scene*. 
Mitchell had begun his career as a professional writer at the end of the 1920's, a decade typified by Neil Wood as involving artists in:

"a withdrawal in revulsion from all social and political responsibility - creating and writing for the inhabitants of a closed circle".\(^2\)

In contrast to Wood's contention John Harrison argues that at least five of the leading literary figures of the period advanced distinctly conservative views under cover of a veneer of artistic neutrality. Harrison argues that the reactionary, anti-democratic sentiments found in the work of W.B. Yeats, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence are intrinsically political in their association with right wing ideologies. Thus:

"The desire for 'classical' order, discipline, strict rules and hardness in literature led Yeats, Pound, Lewis and Eliot to demand the same in society".\(^3\)

One reason for the popularity of such views amongst the literary elite in the twenties and early thirties was a fear of Bolshevism and communism which, from their viewpoint, made the idea of order, hierarchy and discipline a conducive alternative.\(^4\) In contrast to what might be termed this right-wing apolitical politicality, the number of intellectuals attracted to communism in the twenties comprised a very small group indeed.\(^5\) There is an extent therefore to which the politicality of The Thirteenth Disciple and Stained Radiance - which culminate respectively, it will be recalled,/

recalled, with Malcom Maudslay singing the praises of Karl Marx and John Garland assuming the leadership of the Anarchocommunist Party—can be seen as a reaction to the covert right wing artistic politics of the twenties.

In contrast when Mitchell came to write Gay Hunter in 1934 as a warning against Fascism it was in a period in which a generation of writers and poets had been attracted to left-wing, even revolutionary, ideals. Amongst those who might be mentioned in this respect are W.H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, John Strachey, Sydney and Beatrice Webb and Harold Laski. The main reason for this rapid transition from a background of the political neutrality or covert artistic conservatism of the previous decade was the rise of Fascism on top of the economic crisis of western and American capitalism. The greatest discernible reason for this swing to the left was undoubtedly the Nazi triumph in Germany. "Then", as James Klugman recalled:

"with January 1933, there came a real, agonising reappraisal throughout the revolutionary movement. It was a fairly devastating event. It should be remembered what German fascism did, the internal destruction, step by step, of everything progressive, starting with Communists, proceeding to Socialists, trade unions, Centre Party, liberals, radicals, the Church (or at least anything in any sense Christian), killing en route, imprisoning, torturing millions of Jewish people, burning books, ranking as 'cultural bolshevism' most of German culture from the Middle Ages onwards. One needs to be reminded of this. And externally, also, the external outlook and war threat and the internal policy of fascism went together. And so this agonising reappraisal meant that millions of people, in Britain as in other countries, became drawn into the struggle against fascism, or this, or that aspect of fascism, in one form or another form".7


Several British intellectuals witnessed the rise of Fascism in Germany and Austria amidst the economic dislocation of the twenties and thirties, bringing back accounts of its barbarism and savagery. Mitchell received accounts of Fascism through the left-wing press of the period, in particular reports contained in *The Daily Worker* and its predecessor *The Workers' Weekly*. Added to these sources there remain amongst his books copies of John Strachey's *The Coming Struggle for Power* (1932) and *The Menace of Fascism* (1933), the former of which influenced the account of Fascism contained in *Gay Hunter*. Visitors to the Mitchells' home in Welwyn also made their contribution to Mitchell's growing awareness of the menace of Fascism, but undoubtedly the emergence of Fascist supporters in this country brought the problem into sharper focus for Mitchell, as for many others. In this respect it would be too simple to contend from a safe post-1945 perspective that the fears of Mitchell's generation that Fascism would take root in Britain were exaggerated. Because, although he died before Nazism revealed its awful potential there was enough evidence that the ideology of Fascism represented a deadly dangerous threat. Fascism in Britain only became anything approaching a mass movement with the formation of Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (B.U.F.) in 1932. Initially at least the B.U.F. programme was/

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9. Considered in Section c).

was built around Mosley's own plans for the regeneration of the British economy, but this was soon to be influenced by German National Socialism. Strachey's analysis of Fascism (and in particular of Mosley's programme) in The Menace of Fascism was known to Mitchell so it is instructive to consider the key points of Strachey's argument. This is especially so when it is considered that the analysis advanced in The Menace of Fascism is an elaboration of the chapter in Strachey's earlier work The Coming Struggle for Power which it will later be seen forms the basis for Mitchell's imaginative depiction of the ideology in Gay Hunter.

Strachey viewed Fascism as the natural consequence of a capitalist order in crisis. Analysing Mosley's programme for Britain - The Greater Britain (1932) - Strachey interpreted the demand for a corporate state as the means by which a crisis-ridden capitalism would be transformed into a capitalistically organised but rigidly class-divided and hierarchical society. In order to achieve this end Strachey predicted that working class organisations and political parties would be eradicated and pointed to the Italian Fascists' earlier shackling of organised labour. In this respect at least Mitchell could add to Strachey's analysis his knowledge of what the ideology had meant to the Italian peasantry from Ignazio Silone's semi-factual novel Fontamara. In Fontamara the corporate state of the Fascists is portrayed as a continuation of the exploitation and oppression of the peasantry and craftsman by the landlords in much the same way as Chris Colquhoun views Mowat's Fascist/

13. Ibid, Chapter V, "The Corporate State".
Fascist vision of a future Scotland in Cloud Howe. One of Strachey's main contentions however was that German Nazism was intrinsically belligerent, intolerant and war-like, a fact borne out by the behaviour of its British practitioners. Thus on 7 June 1934 the B.U.F. held a massive rally in Olympia in London attended by 15,000 ecstatic blackshirts. The violence attending this event helped discredit British Fascism, especially as the violence became associated with the German Nazis' bloodletting of just three weeks earlier, known to us as "the night of the long knives". It also had a less pleasing aspect however since it elevated the Fascist cause encouraging the belief that it was, at the very least, a pseudo-political movement capable of producing change in a depressed economic climate. As a consequence Fascist violence brought an equal and opposite response with the result that although:

"Clashes with left-wing groups in the streets were relatively few compared with the latent civil war in Italy in 1920-22 or Germany between 1930 and 1933, ... they were just sufficient to give the false impression that Britain also was caught in the European struggle between communism and fascism".

The growth of Fascism in Britain, in particular the reports of the violence attending the Olympia rally, worried Mitchell, but according to his wife what "upset him" was the apparent "sympathy" of sections of the British establishment with Fascism. Nor would Mitchell's concern seem/

15. Considered in Chapter 5.
Ann Shearsby, WT, 7/12/79, takes a more philosophical view, claiming that Mitchell "really should have known that the sympathies of the ruling class resided with the fascists and their pals" (sic).
seem to have been mis-placed. Thus, John Harrison argues that there was:

"widespread support for it among intellectuals and influential people in countries other than Italy and Germany, what has been called 'the intellectual foreign legion of fascism'". 20

With support for Fascism coming from diverse quarters, including John Buchan, the "Cliveden Set", the Daily Mail and occasionally The Times, 21 and the increasing strength of the ideology on the Continent and in Britain it is not surprising to learn that Mitchell confided to Dorothy Tweed that he believed Fascism would triumph in Europe before finally being swept away itself. 22 Miss Tweed does not elaborate on what force, according to Mitchell, would eventually purge Europe of this objectionable ideology. Given his left-wing sympathies it may be suggested that he envisaged the possibility of a revolutionary uprising against Fascist domination as depicted by Jack London in The Iron Heel and in his own novel, Gay Hunter. 23

From its infancy Fascism declared itself the implacable enemy of Marxism and manifested this hostility by attacking in particular organisations of working people and their political parties. 24 Thus with the socialistically motivated organisations of the working class, as well as many other non-political groups under direct Fascist attack, the impulse towards communism provided by the depression was given an enormous boost.

As Stephen Spender, then a young English poet and briefly Communist Party member, stated in relation to the period:

"As well as unemployment there was the rise of the Nazis, and a few years after Hitler's seizure of power, the ever-growing realisation that war was inevitable". 25

20. John Harrison, The Reactionaries, pp.33-34. Harrison does not reference the source of his quotation "the intellectual foreign legion of fascism".


22. Dorothy Tweed, "Recollections of Dorothy Tweed".

23. See Section c).


As has been seen Mitchell enjoyed, or perhaps suffered from, a surfeit of sympathy for suffering humanity, whether at the hands of European Fascism or the slave-masters of antiquity, but unlike the previously apolitical Spender, Fascism helped Mitchell sharpen a pre-existing political consciousness. There were then two aspects to the leftward swing of some intellectuals, including Mitchell, in the thirties; a revulsion of Fascism which entailed for some an acceptance of communism. As Arthur Koestler puts it, when describing his period as a young man in Germany in the early thirties, there seemed to be no third alternative between communism and Fascism. The equation was simple, even simplistic: the non-communist was, at best, a crypto-Fascist. Of these general formative conditions of anti-Fascism leading to pro-communism, Koestler asserts that although:

"... each of us, comrades of the Pink Decade, had individual roots with different twists in them, we are products of - by and large - the same generation and cultural climate".27

Mitchell's anti-Fascism and the particular nature of his attraction to a major element in Marxist thought are dealt with later.26 A brief comparison of Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Howard Fast and Mitchell bears out the accuracy of Koestler's belief that despite a wide divergence in terms of background, what he terms the "cultural climate" of "the Pink Decade" did help produce a particular brand of political consciousness. This is especially so when it is recalled that Koestler and Fast were to follow Mitchell's example by writing historical novels on the Spartacist revolt of ancient Rome which contain a high degree of contemporary political relevance.29

28. See Chapter 5 c) and Chapter 8.
29. See Chapter 6.
Koestler was born the son of middle-aged bourgeois parents and enjoyed an upbringing commensurate with such a start in life, even if, by the time of their son's adolescence, the Koestlers were suffering the effects of a gentle downward social mobility. Such a process of declassing led some to support the Fascist cause, but for Koestler, if not his parents, communism represented the solution. In complete contrast to Koestler, but with more than a little similarity to Mitchell's own background Ignazio Silone was born to poor parents in an impoverished region of southern Italy. Silone practically grew up with Fascism which, although making it no less distasteful for him, meant that he was spared the conditions which helped give rise to the conscience-stricken display which the triumph of Nazism in Germany effected in some British intellectuals. Separated by background and the Atlantic Ocean from Mitchell, Koestler and Silone, Howard Fast too turned to communism in the 1930's as a result of the economic slump and the threat of Fascism. A "fellow traveller" of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., Fast was born into the industrial proletariat of New York. He eventually joined the C.P.U.S.A. because of its identification with the Soviet Union and that country's struggle against Fascism.

It says much of the twin factors of a revulsion against Fascism and the attraction of Marxism that the sons, respectively of a Mearns crofter, an Austrian bourgeois, an Italian peasant and American industrial worker, are to be found in congruence as anti-Fascists who, as a result, were impelled to:

30. The Koestlers moved from their native Czechoslovakia to Austria when their son was nine years of age.


32. I. Silone's essay, ibid, passim.

to advocate revolutionary solutions. But, in truth, given the confluence of Depression and rise of Fascism there seems to be an element of inevitability surrounding the leftward development among some western intellectuals during the thirties. Yet, one of the pre-conditions for this phenomenon had been laid down many years previously when Marx had penned his famous Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach which claimed that:

"The philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways: the point, however, is to change it".34

Thus, since for some it seemed axiomatic that the world of the 1930's stood in need of radical alteration, where better might a solution be found than in a philosophy combining analysis and change?

Richard Crossman remarked that it was the "loneliness" experienced by the "premature anti-Fascists" (those who apprehended the nature and threat of the ideology before it was fashionable to do so) which opened their minds to the appeal of communism.35 Against such a background, for Strachey, as for Mitchell, communism offered to defend and advance:

"the eternal cause of human culture, and science and civilisation itself";

while Fascism promised only a "mental and moral suicide".36 Ultimately, however, it was the total clarification of the inter-connection of ostensibly disparate and discrete factors proffered by Marxism which was so alluring to the disorientated thirties intellectual. In his autobiography, Arrow in the Blue, Arthur Koestler recalled what it had been like to come upon the certainties of Marxism-Leninism in a situation of/


of apparent social disintegration:

"By the time I had finished with Engels' Feuerbach and Lenin's State and Revolution, something had clicked in my brain and I was shaken by a mental explosion. To say one had 'seen the light' is a poor description of the intellectual rapture which only the convert knows ... The new light seems to pour from all directions across the skull; the whole universe falls into pattern like the stray pieces in a jigsaw puzzle assembled by magic at one stroke. There is now an answer to every question; doubts and conflicts are a matter of the tortured past - ".

Marxism then not only interpreted what was, but offered the prospect of change, violent if necessary, to ensure the defeat of the forces standing in the way of human progress. Fascism, as an extension of capitalism, as Mitchell following Strachey saw it, threatened a solution to crisis through order, discipline, hierarchy and subservience to the state. Comparing the rival claims of these ideologies Mircea Eliade argues that the Nazi vision of racial purity based on the Norse mythology of Ragnarok came a poor second to the soteriological promise of Marxism seen as the inheritor of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

It is certainly the case that Mitchell was a socialist in his adolescence but it is also undeniable that the economic dislocation and rise of Fascism in the thirties provided a set of conditions which could not help but determine his eventual acceptance of revolutionary politics. Mitchell has therefore to be viewed as a product of his time, a time which saw intellectuals from a variety of backgrounds, accept the necessity of revolutionary solutions. As Neil Wood points out:


38. That is, where the forces of good and evil meet, annihilating one and other.

"As time passed the politics of the intellectual moved leftward to socialism and communism. What began as a political awakening became a great radicalisation.

Radical politics flourish in a seed-bed of catastrophe." 40

The twin elements responsible for the leftward shift of some intellectuals in the nineteen thirties, comprising a hatred of Fascism and concomitant attraction to revolutionary ideas can be seen in Mitchell’s work: the former aspect particularly in Gay Hunter, the latter in Spartacus and Grey Granite.

b) **Nationalism and Fascism**

Before looking at Mitchell's imaginatively expressed warning against Fascism in *Gay Hunter*, it is necessary to consider his attitude to nationalism in general and Scottish nationalism in particular. When this is undertaken it becomes clear that his rejection of Scottish nationalism was, to an extent, both a cause and a consequence of his growing awareness of the threat of Fascism.

Even before the startling rise of Fascism in Europe following the Nazi triumph of 1933, Mitchell was hostile to that aspect of nationalism which emphasised the differences between men at the expense of their shared humanity. Thus, in "East is West" a short story first published in the *Cornhill* in February 1930, Mitchell dwells on these harmful aspects contending in relation to the mixed-race central character that:

"For East is West and West is East; they merge and flow and are the compass points of a dream. And the little jingo men who walk the world, lifting here the banner Nordic, and there the flag Mongolian - "

Here the narrative introduction breaks-off and the story of the "half-breed", Simon Mogara, and the tribulations he undergoes because of his racial origins unfolds. Mogara is a phlegmatic character consumed by his interest in building an "ornithopter" (a flying machine built like a bird) which is intended to symbolise his desire to escape the base prejudices of the world. The tale ends happily with his marriage to an/

41. Reproduced in *The Calends of Cairo*.

42. "East is West", *The Calends of Cairo*, p.195.
an English girl, her racialist brother having undergone the disconcerting experience of finding that his grandmother had been a "white mulatto" from Jamaica. The final sentence reasserts the central theme of the story that racial consciousness is an evil illusion - an illusion which Mitchell directly associates with Nazism:

"For East is West and West is East and the little fascistic German blesses as the Aryan symbol exclusive the swastika they worship in the Mountains of the Moon".43

In Nine Against the Unknown Mitchell returned to what he saw as the false consciousness bred by nationalism. Writing of Medieval Venice he contends:

"Venetians were of the common stock of men no doubt, kindly and cruel and wayward and homely, no two alike, patriots and traitors, revolutionists and reactionaries. Only the shoddy symbolism of nationalism would foist a definite personalization upon those life-warring, life wandering multitudes".44

For Mitchell nationalism divided men by emphasising the peripheral aspect of place of birth and ancestry, but it led to far worse than the evil of racial prejudice which is an extension of this emphasis and which is dealt with in "East and West". In another short story, first published in the Cornhill in October 1929,45 Mitchell made it explicit that nationalism had caused the First World War. Entitled "A Volcano in the Moon", the story involves two scientists, one French, the other German, who, driven apart by nationalistic feelings following the outbreak of the War, are reduced to a petty and sterile squabble as to the existence/


44. Nine Against the Unknown, p.55.

existence of a particular volcano on the surface of the moon. The controversy turns out to be meaningless and futile and as such represents the war which has driven the two friends into bitter enmity. Pointing-up the absurdity of such a conflict, both personal and national, the daughter and son fall in love and the theme of race mixture, and its parallel in "A Volcano in the Moon", nationality transcended by love, which is also a feature of "East is West"; gains further expression. There the story might rest and pass as entertaining, if unoriginal, but for its closing section. In this the German scientist's son is described by Saloney, the narrator, in the following terms:

"He forgot his laughter-cloak, this pleasant young man, and I saw the Spartacist of Bavaria. 'Curse their mean and dirty little nationalisms, their petty spites and their petty patriotism! Curse the infernal moon and all its volcanoes! What have we to do with their lunatic astronomical past, dead Gellon and dead Freiligrath'? 'Some day, being dead, the future may demand that of your past', I said. But he paid no heed. Instead, stood staring at the sky in a kind of desperation.

Overhead, like a portent, hung the sickle moon." 46

The son of Freiligrath the German scientist, (who himself bears the name of a German poet of the 1848 revolution), 47 thus turns out to be a Spartacist, and as such, a follower of Rosa Luxemburg the murdered German communist. 48 Furthermore, the young Spartacist gazes at a portentous sickle moon in a "kind of desperation". All that is required on the part of the reader is to fill in the missing blanks and the "message" of the/


48. Luxemburg was one of Mitchell's revolutionary heroes; see Chapter 8.
the story stands out clearly: the anti-war, anti-fascist must look to the desperate revolutionary tradition of Luxemburg and the Spartacists for salvation. As in so much of Mitchell's work, no sooner is the assertion advanced than the narrative ends or the scene and tone change abruptly. So it is that only by looking at his work as a whole and teasing out such themes that his thought emerges in any clarity. In Gay Hunter it will be seen that Mitchell again alludes to Luxemburg and also uses the symbolism of the sickle to suggest its absent counterpart the hammer and the accompanying association with revolutionary action.

D.F. Young has noted the anti-nationalistic element in Mitchell's work, while Christopher Harvie has typified Mitchell as "the cosmopolitan opportunist par excellence" in the context of his depiction of industrial Scotland in Grey Granite. Rightly or wrongly Mitchell believed that nationalism was a dangerous political path to follow as it seemed to lead away from the growth of an identity of interest with the suffering of all lands and all times. This is precisely why, as Harvie has noted, Duncairn in Grey Granite might be any industrial city and it can be added why Ewan is representative of any Communist Party cadre. Mitchell did however implicitly concede the strength of Scottish nationalism and his own awareness of it by the way in which he consistently links it with the perceived threat of Fascism. Fascism might be a thousand miles, so to speak, from Peesie's Knapp, but he acknowledged that its threat resided in its applicability in distinctly local situations. For Mitchell nationalism was no way to combat Fascism, with/

49. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, p.21.

50. C. Harvie, Scotland and Nationalism, p.216.

51. Thus Fascism intrudes into the ostensibly unlikely social structure of Segget in Cloud Howe. This is considered shortly.
with the result that he was almost completely out of sympathy with C.M. Grieve's hopes of a Scottish nationalist revival taking place in the early thirties. Hence, for example, his reply to H.B. Cruickshank's criticism of his own bloodthirsty descriptions in *Spartacus* concludes with an indictment of cultural nationalism:

"... ancient Scotland is never Mary Queen: its those serfs they kept chained in the mines of Fife a hundred years ago ... Of course I shout too loudly. But the filthy conspiracy of silence there was in the past; and is coming again in Scotland in a new guise, called Renaissance, and Objectivity and National Art and what no. Blithering about Henryson and the Makars, (whoever they were) and forgetting the Glasgow slums".52

For Mitchell Nationalism was, at best, a diversion from the struggle for the eradication of the real evils - "Blithering about Henryson ... and forgetting the Glasgow slums" - but at worst nationalism could involve:

"such typical Scottish ideals as those which kept men chained as slaves in the Fifeshire mines ...".

As Sydney GoodSir Smith puts it:

"Like MacDiarmid Mitchell was a communist and like MacDiarmid he was a communist of the heart rather than the head and he tended to think, rather blindly, of nationalism as synonymous with German or Italian Nationalism - i.e. Nazism and Fascism. This was common in the 1930's; nationalism was a dirty word and the grime rubbed off onto Scottish Nationalism".53

But what of the view of C.M. Grieve that Mitchell came to regard Scottish nationalism as a valid and worthwhile force and that, as a result, towards the end of his life he:

52. Mitchell to H.B. Cruickshank, 18/11/33.

53. Sydney GoodSir Smith, "He Burned His Hair", review of I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, in The Scotsman, 28 May 1966. We are forced to concur with GoodSir Smith in view of the fact that Mitchell himself stated, in his essay "Religion" that "what happened in Italy and Germany may happen in Scotland. The various Scots nationalist parties have large elements of Fascism within them".
"became more and more a Scottish Communist-Nationalist and abandoned his earlier facetious attitude to the Scottish Renaissance Movement".54

Mitchell provides a valuable perspective on this claim when only ten months before his death he described himself as:

" - living furth of Scotland, non-nationalist, yet interested in this new revival of cultural and political nationalism".55

Taking these two views together it would seem that Mitchell's accommodation with nationalism was, at best, contingent. For one thing it was dependent on his friendship and collaboration with C.M. Grieve, surely the most vehement 'communist-nationalist' (with the exception of John MacLean) Scotland has yet produced.56 Yet, even this contact failed to win Mitchell towards anything greater than an "interest" in contemporary developments. However, largely as a result of Grieve's influence, shortly before his death, Mitchell had agreed to contribute a short story to David MacEwan's nationalist publication, the Scottish Standard.57

In any wider context, however, it is difficult to identify Mitchell as a nationalist without destroying the meaning of the term. In his Theories of Nationalism Smith claims to be able to distinguish:

"a body of assumptions common to most examples generally included under the rubric of 'nationalism',

a kind of sine qua non for all nationalists".58

These assumptions are reduced to seven categories comprising the "core/
"core doctrine" of nationalism, of which the following are some of the more important in relation to Mitchell. Thus, according to the "core doctrine" humanity is naturally divided into nations; each nation has its peculiar character; loyalty to the nation-state over-rides other loyalties; the primary condition of global freedom and harmony is the strengthening of the nation-state.59

It is difficult to see any of these categories applying to Mitchell save the claim that nationalism implies the belief in a nation's peculiar character. If this is taken to apply to the nature of the people of the country, as distinct from the city, there is a limited sense in which it can be seen as having relevance, even if Mitchell's use of it is per se a denial of nationalism. Thus, it has already been argued that Mitchell saw the north-eastern crofter as possessing the distinctive characteristic of independence, but what is equally noteworthy is the fact that he did not extend these characteristics to the majority of his fellow Scots. Thus, the proletarians of Glasgow and the imaginary Duncairn are a largely undifferentiated, almost passive mass - surely something of an ambiguity on Mitchell's part given that politically he supported the emancipation of that class.60 So in Mitchell's view the nation of Scotland had produced at least two groups of people with completely different characteristics; hardly the sentiments cast in the traditional nationalist/

59. S.G. Smith, Theories of Nationalism, p.21.
The other points of the core doctrine are that the source of all political power is the nation; men must identify with the nation in order to gain freedom and self-realisation; nations can only be fulfilled in their own states.

60. This ambiguity has been alluded to in Chapter 3, and is returned to again in the present chapter, Section d). Mitchell is not entirely alone in this respect. Thus, Dickens whose emotional sympathies parallel Mitchell's, depicts the proletariat as a similarly undifferentiated mass. When he does portray them as individuals they are hardly representative: e.g. Bill Sykes is a brutal thief and Sam Weller a cowed servant.
nationalist tendency to diminish such differences. Furthermore, Mitchell was quite explicit as to the ethnic divisions separating Scot from Scot. Replying to a contention by a previous contributor to The Freeman that the nation was a community bound together by a common historical tradition, language and kinship, Mitchell posed the following rhetorical question:

"But what ties of language and kinship bind together a Glasgow domiciled Irish labourer from County Cork, an inadequately Celticised fisherman in the Western Islands, a Harrow-educated brewer in Inverness, a Mearns ploughman, and a Polish miner in Fifeshire. Yet all are, I understand, Scotsmen, or, if not, whom shall we exclude or include?" 61

Underlying this attack on one of the fundamental concepts giving rise to nationalist consciousness is paradoxically a recognition of the importance of ethnic origins. The implication arising from the foregoing extract from his Freeman article is that the Scots are people born and bred in Scotland, as opposed to Ireland, Poland or someone educated in the alien environment of Harrow. It is perhaps significant that of those mentioned in the passage only the Mearns ploughman can be identified as an indigenous Scot - the rest are either "inadequately Celticised", of foreign extraction or immersed in an alien culture. It may therefore be contended that taking into account Mitchell's statement that he was a non-nationalist along with his rather dismissive view of the proletariat and elevation of the Mearns crofter (both in the passage quoted and in the context of the preceding chapter) invites the conclusion that he was caught between a recognition of the power of nationalism as an ideology and his repugnance of the use to which it was being put. Mitchell recognised that the crofter of the north-east, the descendant of the indigenous Picts - "The Last of the Old Scots Folk" - were soon to be/

be consigned to a place in history. This entailed the consequent recog-
nition that if these people - the Mearns ploughman of The Freeman
article - represented the essence of "Scottishness" and this essence
was in a state of terminal decline, then anything authentically Scottish
was in the process of being replaced by new ethnic forces which were at
the same time indicative of new class divisions. Thus in the passage
from The Freeman (with the exception of the "inadequately Celticised
fisherman") the other three categories represent the traditional indus-
try of mining, the new urban proletariat and the industrial capitalist
in the heart of the Highlands. The recognition at the conclusion to
Sunset Song that an old way of life was passing away therefore finds its
parallel in The Freeman article with its picture of an ethnically div-
erse and class-divided Scotland where Glaswegian labourer, Fifeshire
miner and Highland brewer are juxtaposed.

It may be that Mitchell was attracted to that element in nation-
alism, symbolised by figures like Erskine of Mar, John MacLean and
C.M. Grieve, which attempted to construct a view of the Scottish past
which was an implicit indictment of twentieth century capitalism.62
His definition of the Highland clan system as a "communist patriarchy"63
is a reflection of this influence. Events, however, seem to have con-
spired to ensure that Mitchell's contact with political nationalism
was fleeting and contingent at best. Not only was the left, in/

62. Nan Milton, John MacLean, p.195 describes Erskine of Mar as "a
revolutionary Nationalist. Unlike the Home Rulers he wanted a
complete Scottish separation, a Scottish Republic, and like James
Connolly in Ireland, he wanted to see a Celtic Renaissance". In
September 1920 he contributed a series of articles on Celtic
Communism to Maclean's Vanguard.
See also J. Brand, The National Movement in Scotland, p.188,
on Erskine of Mar.
I can find no copies of The Vanguard for this date.

63. "The Antique Scene", Scottish Scene, p.29. Full quotation
provided above, p.166.
in general, moving away from nationalism because of its association with Fascism, but the nationalist movement in Scotland was itself moving to the right in the early thirties. The National Party of Scotland was captured by right wing nationalists in 1932 and Grieve was expelled on account of his left-wing views. When Mitchell met Grieve in 1933 the latter was to join the Communist Party: and if the arch-proponent of nationalism could take such a step it can hardly be surprising that he failed to convince Mitchell of the legitimacy and strength of a nationalist outlook. As Christopher Harvie says:

"Although he joined MacDiarmid in shooting-up bourgeois Scotland in The [sic] Scottish Scene published just before his tragically early death in 1934 he had little sympathy with the compromises involved in his friend's nationalist projects".65

This judgement is substantiated by the following extract from Mitchell's article in The Freeman where he pointedly distances himself from the nationalist camp and clearly associates that ideology with Fascism:

"The fascist recognition of the artist's importance in the state may be true. But how does this benefit the great creative artists - the greatest of them always lone wolves, anti-State, anti-social? Surely it merely eliminates them (into suicide or concentration camps), and raises up in their place such regimented gangs of dull and base and cowardly souls as have denigrated Italian culture for thirteen weary years. ... If this is the New Nationalism, it is little likely to win converts to its wastes from the ranks of those who, like myself, have seen in its stead the vision of Cosmopolis, the City of God; who would find a return to the harbourage of such hazy conceptions as repulsive as a racial return to cannibalism".66

Ultimately, Mitchell's emotional involvement with, and compassion for the suffering of all places and all times compelled the rejection of/
of an ideology which seemed to deny the extension of such emotions beyond national boundaries. For Mitchell the sufferings of the Scot were of no greater importance than the torment of the Athenian slave or any other member of any under-class, whatever their nationality. Thus, in his depiction of Medieval Venice in *Nine Against the Unknown*, politics and morality over-ride nationality as it will be recalled that the city's inhabitants are defined as being kindly or cruel, reactionary or revolutionary as opposed to their "definite personification" by "the shoddy symbolism of nationalism". Similarly, in his letter to Cruickshank already referred to, the key emotion is compassion for the oppressed class whether it is the slaves in the law courts of Athens or the collier-serfs of 19th century Fife which gain mention in the same rush of emotional rhetoric as if differences of no significance - nearly two millenia for one thing - separate them. As is seen from Smith's somewhat dogmatic conception of the "core doctrine", the nation state must, of necessity, stand as the cornerstone of a nationalist consciousness, while differences between the peoples of the nation are played-down and diminished. Mitchell may have produced *A Scots Quair*, his most enduring work, from a deep understanding of the north-eastern character but the movement of the trilogy is outward from local to national to international issues and revolutionary solutions. Furthermore, by emphasising in the *Quair* and *The Freeman* article the differences between rural and urban Scot, the social disintegration implicit in the decline of the land and growth of the cities, in short, the triumph of heterogeneity over the homogeneity exemplified in the north-east crofting community, Mitchell was effectively destroying the very basis upon which nationalism could grow and flourish. Nationalism is, of course, something more complex than a set of politically-definable/

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67. *Nine Against the Unknown*, p.55; see above p.201
definable attitudes or beliefs and as such the mainsprings of his emotional attachment to the land of his birth, (in both senses of the term) clearly form a source for the poetry of *Sunset Song*. Yet, because he was a product of the thirties, Mitchell tended, as Goodsr Smith believed, to view nationalism as synonymous with Fascism. Perhaps another time would have evoked a different response in Mitchell: as it was, not only is there a distinct and discernible build-up of references to Fascism in his work, but in the *Quair* the ideology is directly associated with Scottish Nationalism.

As was seen in "East is West" German Fascism is mentioned directly in a context which helps relay Mitchell's disgust at the absurdities of its racial claims. Up until 1933 this rather allusive and dismissive tone can be seen in his work where his references to Fascism are of note primarily for their brevity. Thus, the only reference to Fascism in *Stained Radiance* arises when Storman asserts that:

"The bourgeoisie produce a certain romantic scum. Under proper conditions and temperature this scum froths and ferments. It is then called Fascism".69

This pronouncement on the conditions under which Fascism flourishes is, characteristically for Storman, couched in an unemotional and sterile tone, reflecting the essential barrenness of his commitment to revolutionary politics. But the detached, almost sociological, definition mirrors Mitchell's own almost relaxed attitude to Fascism. In the late twenties when *Stained Radiance* was written a reference to Fascism would be more likely to apply to the Italian source than the German variant of/
of the ideology, so Storman is more likely to be referring to the romantic element in the former. The novel is much more concerned with John Garland's transition from an insular apoliticality to revolutionary commitment and as such Fascism emerges as just one, almost inconsequential evil, among many. In The Thirteenth Disciple the inherent violence of Fascism gains mention but, as in Stained Radiance, there is a certain detachment conveyed by the depiction of Maudslay's:

"bored disgust at a dreary old man's rejoicings over the blood spattered bludgeons of Fascism". 70

In this, the only mention of Fascism in The Thirteenth Disciple, the analytical tone of Storman's comments is replaced by a resigned recognition of that ideology's unpleasantness, but in the context of the political milieu which forms the background to both novels it is accorded only the passing attention indicated above.

It could be argued that prior to 1933 Mitchell did recognise the threat posed by Fascism but that the internal structure of Stained Radiance and The Thirteenth Disciple, with their emphasis on the semi-autobiographical development of their respective central characters was not conducive to the elaboration of such a major theme. If this were the case then it might have been expected that his next work would rectify this omission, but the opposite is, in fact, the case.

Three Go Back was published in 1932 and despite a format eminently suitable for the introduction of Fascism as a theme, the main villain of the piece is represented by Sir John Mullaghan, a Conservative M.P. and armaments manufacturer. Mullaghan is not a Fascist but in his emphasis on tradition, order and discipline he can be seen as a prototype of the overtly Fascist Major Ledyard Houghton in Gay Hunter, published two years later. Transported back in time to the twilight of the/

70. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.85.
the Golden Age; Mullaghan is accompanied by Dr. Keith Sinclair, secretary of the League of Militant Pacifists and Clair Stranlay, herself a prototype of Gay Hunter. Mullaghan's political philosophy is outlined in his militarist sentiments thus:

"The strong man keeps his house and the wise country an army on the qui vive. The soldier is civilisations's safeguard, and still, thank God, defends it against anarchic sentimentalities ... Do you people know nothing of the beast that is in human nature unless there is force and discipline to keep it down?" 71

It is the M.P.'s war-like posture which arouses Sinclair's fury, not the definition of a need for force and discipline, since Sinclair is, himself, an advocate of the use of violence in the cause of peace, concurring with Mullaghan in his pessimistic view of human nature. The running verbal battle which ensues between Mullaghan and Sinclair has as its theme not the threat of Fascism but the horror of the First World War which Sinclair believes to have been caused by militaristic, war-mongering armaments manufacturers like Mullaghan. If the emphasis on Mullaghan's war-like belligerence and Sinclair's opposition to it found in Three Go Back is to be relied upon then it may be contended that by late 1931 (the novel was published in January 1932) Mitchell was more concerned about the dangers of militarism than Fascism. Indeed throughout 1932, and up to March 1933 when Image and Superscription was published, there is no mention of Fascism in Mitchell's work. In contrast the First World War provides the backdrop to Sunset Song (August 1932) and deeply affects Malcom Maudslay in The Thirteenth Disciple and Gershom Jezreel in Image and Superscription indicating the relative importance he attached to the problems of militarism and Fascism in this period, to say nothing of the effect the First World War had made on his consciousness.

71. Three Go Back, p.91.
As James Klugmann noted in relation to some intellectuals after 1933, so Mitchell's attitude to the perceived menace of Fascism undergoes a gradual but perceptible change from this time. Beginning in *Cloud Howe* where Fascism is equated with nationalism, its centrality culminates in *Gay Hunter*, published less than nine months before his death. Yet even in *Cloud Howe* there is no mention of Nazism even though the book was published some four months after the Nazi triumph of January 1933. Fascism does however emerge in the second book of the *Quair* and is given the kind of treatment which indicates its growing importance in Mitchell's mind, even if it is still associated with Mussolini's Italy rather than Hitler's Germany. In contrast to *Stained Radiance* and *The Thirteenth Disciple*, where the references to Fascism are brief and allusive, in *Cloud Howe* actual Fascist characters make their first appearance. The first, and less important of these is Alec Hogg, the son of "Hairy" Hogg, the Provost of Segget.

Hogg is the archetypal "big fish in a little pond" so that when his son returns to Segget on a visit from Edinburgh where he works as a clerk the scene is set for some form of parental-filial friction. The matter is complicated however by Alec's efforts at sophistication, which are in part an attempt to impress his Edinburgh-born fiancee who has accompanies him, and partly to swank before the local population. Alec's demeanour irritates his parents - he has taken to wearing fashionable plus-fours - and his Fascist politics appear as an outgrowth of his tiresome attempts at urbanity. Provost Hogg is not dealt with at all sympathetically by Mitchell in the rest of *Cloud Howe* but in relation to his son's newfound politics he achieves an honesty born of his forthright and intuitive dismissal of a foreign-born ideology. The/

72. Full quotation provided above, p.190.
The Fascists, Alec explains:

"... were fine, Conservatives, like, but a lot more than that; they meant to make Britain the same as was Italy. And old Hogg was fair vexed, he cried 'But goodsakes! You're not going to leave your fine job, now, are you, and take to the selling ice-cream sliders?" 73

When Alec attempts to reprove his father for his flippancy the Provost rounds on his son informing him that his odd behaviour and stranger political opinions suit him for little better than ice-cream salesmanship.

Hogg's own politics are not defined in _Cloud Howe_, but he is not prepared to endure such pretentious nonsense from his son, especially the suggestion that his own beliefs have anything to do with something as disreputably cosmopolitan as an ideology. But it is Alec's mother who reveals the nature of what is an essentially rural-based dislike of her son's arrogant sophistication and political blathering. Seeking to impress his fiancee by his own grasp of etiquette, Alec asks for the slop pail in which to dispose of the remains of his cup of tea only to be unceremoniously advised to "slop it" in his "guts", while, as an afterthought, he is threateningly warned to exhibit:

"less of your Edinburgh touches here". 74

Provost Hogg's ridicule of his son's political beliefs is an outgrowth of his exasperation at Alec's city-bred pretensions and he is dismissive of the ideology principally because of this fact. But Alec's pathetic Fascist beliefs act as a prelude to the far more serious factor represented by the intrusion of a real Fascist into the Segget social fabric in the form of Stephen Mowat the local mill owner, newly returned from a tour of Europe which had included Mussolini's Italy.

73. _Cloud Howe_, pp.63-64.
74. Ibid, p.64.
The luckless Alec's Fascism, contracted in Edinburgh, is easily dealt with through the medium of his parents' sarcasm, but Mowat's beliefs are treated in more detail and with a seriousness lacking in the earlier detachment exhibited by Storman in *Stained Radiance*, Maudslay's "bored disgust" in *The Thirteenth Disciple* and the Hoggs' sarcasm in *Cloud Howe* itself. This is perhaps the case because Mitchell realised that Fascism did possess a distinct appeal in a situation of economic dislocation. Initially, Robert Colquhoun sees in Mowat's return the means through which his plans to regenerate Segget might be given a much-needed boost. It is Colquhoun's hope that by urging the well-to-do of Segget to a charitable initiative he can halt the growing social polarisation in the town by founding a "Segget League". But Colquhoun is to be as disappointed with Mowat as he had been with the response of the local dominie and his staff whom he had earlier invited to lunch in order to enlist their support.

Mowat is not to be swayed by Robert's attempts at conciliation: according to the mill owner absentee landlordism was the cause of Scotland's economic ills. A harmless enough proposition, but gradually as Mowat outlines his social philosophy it becomes clear he believes Scotland in general, and Segget in particular to have been suffering from an absence of the application of his own distinctly Fascist ideals:

"The thing that was needed everywhere was Discipline, hwav? and order, and what not. The hand of the master - all the Jahly old things. He had been down in Italy the last few months and had seen things there, Rahly amazing, the country awakening, regaining its soul, its old leaders back - with a new one or so. Discipline, order, hierarchy - all that. And why only Italy; why not Scotland? He'd met other men, down from 'varsity of late, who were doing as he did, going back to their estates. Scotland a nation - that was the goal, with its old-time civilisation and culture".75

75. Ibid, p.112.
It is Chris who sabotages any inclination Colquhoun might have had to enlist an individual with such views into his Segget League. The vehemence of Chris's reply to Mowat surprises her as much as it does Mowat and her husband. Beginning with a dismissal of Mowat's vision of a homogeneous society of old by asserting the reality that the gentry had kept order by violence and intimidation, she moves to an avowal that Mowat's pleas for a return to hierarchy, order and discipline will bring only an intensification of misery and suffering. Such is the impact of these Fascist ideas of order and discipline - similar to Mullaghan's in *Three Go Back* and a portent of Houghton's in *Gay Hunter* - that Chris is forced to declare her allegiance to the radicalism of the spinners in preference to Mowat's threatening vision:

"If it came to a push between you and the spinners I would give the spinners my vote".\(^{76}\)

It is significant that it is the threat posed by Mowat's Fascism which impels Chris and Robert to side with the forces of socialism represented by the spinners rather than the attraction of the latter ideology itself. As it is, unlike Robert, Chris does not develop from this intuitive identification of right from wrong despite the fact that it is she who notices the irony that Mowat's brand of Fascist Nationalism was to be imposed on Scotland by "this snippet of a fop with an English voice".\(^{77}\)

What is of importance to note from the foregoing is that Fascism as it is portrayed in *Cloud Howe* reveals Mitchell's growing awareness that it required more detailed treatment than he had previously accorded it. In *Cloud Howe* it is tinged with the romanticism which coloured the Italian model, as evidenced by Alec Hogg and Stephen Mowat's clear association of Fascism with Italy, but not only does Mowat introduce the decidedly non-romantic factors of "Discipline" and the proposed source of

\(^{76}\) Ibid, p.112.

\(^{77}\) Ibid, p.113.
of its application by "the hand of the master", but it has a discernibly nationalistic element to it for the latter, while for Alec Hogg "a Fascist" was just another description for a Conservative. Through Hogg, and particularly Mowat, Mitchell strives for the first time in his work to expose Fascism as a real threat: Alec Hogg may be a farcical figure easily ridiculed by his parents' sarcasm, but a political movement like Fascism is not particular about the calibre of its footsoldiers. At the opposite end of the spectrum Mowat calculatingly embraces Fascism intending, as Mitchell is careful to make explicit through Chris's reaction to him, to use it as a means of sustaining the rule of his own class. In a reflection of the narrowing choices which seemed for some time to present themselves in the crisis-ridden thirties, Mowat's Fascism is juxtaposed with the radicalism of the spinners, and Chris and Robert are thrust in the direction of radicalism by the negative impulse of Fascism. However, Cloud Howe is much more about the development and interaction of Chris with her husband than it is about Fascism. So it is that Mitchell's fullest warning against Fascism was produced in the year following, with the publication of Gay Hunter, by which time the Nazi triumph in Germany was of sufficient duration to cause Mitchell considerable concern.

In the preface to Gay Hunter Mitchell wrote that the story:

"is neither prophecy nor propaganda. It is written for the glory of sun and wind and rain, dreams by smoking camp-fires, and the glimpsed immortality of men".

There is reason to doubt Mitchell's sincerity in this matter. True, the picture of mankind triumphing over and surviving bitter class and atomic war bespeaks immortality of a kind, but it is immortality for a mere handful achieved at the expense of millions of humans killed/
killed horribly after living miserably as helots and slaves. Surely a strange elegy to the "glory of sun and wind and rain". Discussing Three Go Back and Gay Hunter Ian Campbell argues that:

"Neither is considerable science fiction in the normal sense espoused by some. The scientific content is demonstrably thin; yet like so many of his predecessors, Mitchell used it to create a framework for his statement regarding his own times".78

In relation to the latter it is necessary to go further than this: Gay Hunter is, in fact, an example of a kind of work which, according to I.F. Clarke displays the author's:

"... ambition to expose the dangerous tendencies in society (which) finds expression in nightmare projections".79

This purpose is somewhat occluded by the way in which the story uses a fictional science-fiction format with elements of romance and adventure designed to make the central message more attractive to the reader. In all central aspects Gay Hunter accords with Negley and Patrick's definition of utopian literature in that it is a fictional description of the political structure of a particular state or community.80 Actually, there are both utopian and dystopian elements in the book, the former being provided by the descriptions of the primitive communism of the hunters or "Folk" of the distant future, the latter, and by far the more interesting, being provided by the descriptions of the thinly-disguised Fascist states Mitchell calls the Hierarchies. Along with the opinions and actions of the two Fascists in the book it is this dystopian element which is of importance in establishing that Gay Hunter is a more serious work than Mitchell would have us believe. The best refutation of his/

his previously referenced disavowal is an investigation of the dystopian theme in Gay Hunter seen against the previously considered background of his own growing awareness and concern at the growth of Fascism in Europe and Britain. It is nevertheless well to recall the opinion of Ann Shearsby in relation to the purpose she believed Mitchell to have in mind when writing Gay Hunter:

"... he was anxious that Gay Hunter should not appear as "vulgar" propaganda. It should turn people "subtly" against the idea of fascism and alert them to the very real threat it posed in the thirties."

Where Aldous Huxley's Brave New World and George Orwell's 1984 take the reader into the assured totalitarian dominance of the not-too-distant future Gay Hunter removes the imagination of the reader some 20,000 years forward to a time when only the remnants of the last great totalitarian civilisation along with a handful of "primitive" hunters and three time-travellers remain. Both in terms of time scale, construction and theme, Mitchell's work bears a closer resemblance to Jack London's The Iron Heel, one of his favourite books, according to Dorothy Tweed. London's warning against right-wing totalitarianism sets the subject of the work in the twentieth century with the narrator looking back to it from seven hundred years in the future. Gay Hunter begins in the early 1930's, jumps forward 20,000 years to where the narration and action take place with glimpses back to the eponymous heroine's own time and that of the rise of the neo-Fascist war states succeeding it. London's work deals in far more detail with the economic and political factors underlying the transition of capitalist democracy into the right-wing totalitarianism of the Oligarchs, but Mitchell's Hierarchies correspond in the essential/


82. Dorothy Tweed, "Recollections".
essential detail that a chronically malfunctioning contemporary capitalism is seen as the progenitor of an enslaving totalitarianism wracked by the endemic revolts of an oppressed under-class. Although not as detailed as the American socialist's analysis of the result of a capitalist system in crisis, Mitchell provides an outline of the Hierarchies' society through a transmitting device upon which has been recorded an account of the last days of that civilisation. The nature of the Hierarchies' rule is given elaboration by the presence of Houghton and Easterling, two Fascists determined to resurrect civilisation upon values previously espoused by John Mullaghan in *Three Go Back* and Stephen Howat in *Cloud Howe*. As such Houghton and Easterling represent Mitchell's warning that the Fascism of the 1930's formed the basis upon which a future society of brutal class rule, represented by the Hierarchies, could become a possibility.

*Gay Hunter* is in fact the story of the eponymous twenty-three year old American archaeologist holidaying in England in the early 1930's. From the outset the implicit violence and danger of Fascism is prominent. Hence the book opens with the ostensibly apolitical and carefree Gay offering a lift to a hiker who turns out to be the leader of the local Wiltshire Fascists. Major Ledyard Houghton is gruff, rude and ungrateful, but, like all Mitchell's heroines, Gay is well able to look after herself. What precipitates her ejection of Major Houghton from her car is not his manners, or lack of them, but an underlying politicality which surfaces upon her learning of his political beliefs. Gay is reminded of a Nazi atrocity related to her at a recent archaeological congress by a German regarding his sister who the archaeologist had said was:

"... a communist who had had her —— She (Gay) felt sick even now to remember it. And this freak with the headache and the hiker's shirt was of the party that had been pleased to do that". 83

Precisely what the fate of the German communist is at the hands of the Nazis is apparently left to the reader's imagination, which in view of Mitchell's ability and inclination to describe the unutterably horrible, might be thought just as well. Only six pages further on Gay advances a possible explanation when she gives voice to her fears that the Fascists would:

"... cut the throat of all decent traits in civilisation".84

Gay ponders the unlikelihood of a trait having a throat to cut, and well she might, but it will be recalled that the murdered German communist "had had her" and one might now add "throat cut". The link is tenuous perhaps but the sentiment underlying the juxtaposition of these passages from Gay Hunter reflects Mitchell's growing conviction that communism represented, as Strachey put it "the eternal cause of human culture, science and civilisation" 85 or as expressed by Gay - the decent traits in civilisation, threatened by the barbarity of Fascism. Indeed, preceding the articulation of her fear of what the Fascists would do to all the decent aspects of civilisation Gay's carefree mood becomes clouded as she recalls the newspaper stories of previous days:

"Idiotic - but the stuff of them had begun to spoil her lightest moments, with their dreary listings of tariffs and bickerings, strikes and hunger-marches, mounted police charges on London's unemployed, the drowsy mumblings of the English parliament, the Grammy awards and solemnly-borne of a civilisation in the agonies of every civilisations's internal contradictions. War and the rumours of War again, blowing up smokily from the four corners of the world. Hunger and murder and famine coming on seven-league boots, the beasts and savages of civilisation gathering under the swastika flag".86

84. Ibid, p.15.


Thus, contemporary events - strikes, unemployment, police repression and the threat of war - impinge on the naturally carefree and happy Gay. But it is not until the climax to the passage that it becomes clear that Mitchell is indicting Fascism as the major and most pernicious of these evils. Like some terrible apocalyptic colossus - "coming on seven-league boots" - Fascism bestrides a civilisation on the very brink of disintegration. Gay considers it "idiotic" that news of such events should disturb her happiness but Mitchell's point is well made by the fact that Gay, as a reasonably stable, normal and caring individual should be disturbed by such things and, what is more, should, ultimately, come to feel it as her duty to oppose them.

The choice of words and phrase in the above passage quoted from Gay Hunter is also indicative of a fairly well-developed Marxian perspective. Thus, the use of the term "every civilisation's internal contradictions" denotes the Marxist notion that advanced capitalism will be increasingly prone to disequilibrium as a result of the conflict between productive forces and productive relations. Or, put more succinctly, in the increasing antagonism between capital and labour and the consequences arising from it some of which are referred to directly by Mitchell in the passage as "strikes, hunger marches, mounted police charges". The passage from which the above quotation is drawn begins at a low pitch, Gay's "lightest moments" being spoiled by "dreary listings", but in the space of just three sentences Gay's almost petulant annoyance is brought into sharp focus by the apocalyptic vision of where such events are leading: "Hunger, and murder and famine" perpetrated by inhumane, beast-like Fascists. So, by the fifteenth page of the book, a fairly clear picture of British capitalism in decline is presented to the reader. This is important because Mitchell needs to show that the culmination of the trends he sketches in and which perturb Gay, contain the seeds of Fascist rule translated by him later in the story into the/
the rule of the Hierarchies. Gay's frightening vision of the future is in fact, a covert prophecy as to the type of society she finds evidence of once she has travelled through time. It will be recalled that Gay faints as she hears of the sexual excesses of the Hierarchs from the recording machine in the Tower of Voices, but this description is only a prelude to the following account of the terrible dominance and brutality of ruling overasubservient class which although echoing far exceeds in ferocity the perverse mutual exploitation of Eloi and Morlocks in Wells' *The Time Machine*.

Thus, "The Voice" outlines a frightening but, from the turmoil of the 1930's, not altogether unimaginable dystopia beginning with a description of the Hierarchies' rise to dominance:

"They had arisen, it seemed, several hundred years before that time in which the Voice spoke, at a time when humanity had been at the cross-roads ... So the great order of the War States arose, and the sub-men were allotted to those classes from which the Hierarchs drew their helots and servants. The great problem of the surpluses was solved, and everywhere the Hierarchies entered into control of those States that have made our civilisation ... men had grown as no beasts that had ever lived - splendid, immense, terrible, and cruel; while underneath festered the Sub-Men, the Ancient Lowly ... Then it told of the suppressing of a former revolt of the Sub-Men - an international revolt - how thousands of the Sub-Men had been crucified up and down stretches of the Atlantic coasts. Now war had broken out, to an extent never suffered before, between the Hierarchies, and everywhere the Sub-Men had risen in a last tremendous revolt".87

In the previous section it was argued that a number of intellectuals in the 1930's came to see the emergence of a stark choice between Fascism and Communism, contending that mankind was fast approaching a cross-roads. Thus, it is not too surprising to find Mitchell using the metaphor of the cross-roads to describe the situation immediately/

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immediately preceding the rise to dominance of his own Fascist-like Hierarchies. Indeed, Mitchell may have gained such a perspective from an earlier source in Rosa Luxemburg's *The Junius Pamphlet*, produced in 1915 and available in Britain from 1919.88 Quite how the Hierarchies solve the "great problem of the surpluses" is not explained, but reference to Marx's conception of one of capitalisms's central problems of over-production and under-consumption shows Mitchell's general awareness of Marxist economics. In this regard London's *The Iron Heel* would certainly have given him the outline of this theory. Of equal importance is the fact that the Voice's description of the Hierarchs' rule is a virtual reflection of the Masters' rule in *Spartacus*. The Hierarchs are "splendid, immense, terrible and cruel" which mirrors the depiction in *Spartacus* of the slaves' grudging, awed admiration of the terrible ruthless strength and implacable enmity of the Roman Patriciate.89 The divide between Hierarchs and Sub-Men is as great as that existing between Masters and slaves: the former are "splendid" and "immense", with the latter "festering" below in a manner evocative of John Strachey's judgement on Fascism:

"Fascism proclaims a society rigidly and eternally divided into social classes, the one governing, educated, economically secure, with all the resources of civilisation at its command; the other governed, poor and dedicated to a life of unthinking and unhoping toil".90

In what is perhaps a conscious attempt to cement the parallel between the objectionable societies depicted in *Gay Hunter* and *Spartacus*, and


89. *Spartacus* is considered in Chapter 6.

and to emphasise the unity of suffering binding together the oppressed of all places and all times, Mitchell designates the Sub-Men in Gay Hunter as "The Ancient Lowly" which is the title of the book he used for much of the background to Spartacus. 91

Gay Hunter is comparable to George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949), Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932), Yevgeny Zamyatin's We (1925) and Wells' The Sleeper Awakes (1904), 92 yet differs from each in important aspects. The aforementioned works by Orwell, Huxley and Zamyatin describe societies in which the aim is, at least notionally, to further human happiness through the application of science and the principles of rational organisation. By contrast in Gay Hunter there is no Big Brother, Mustapha Mond or Benefactor to rationalise the sacrifice of individuality to the greater good of the whole. The hegemony of dominant assumptions and those administering them in the aforementioned is actually more assured because of the subtlety of its extent than is the class rule of the Hierarchs, sustained through the medium of naked physical oppression. As was suggested earlier, the dystopian element in Gay Hunter owes more to the 'crude' Marxism of Jack London in The Iron Heel with its emphasis on class conflict and the physical mechanisms of repression and is also closer to Wells' stern plutocrats in The Sleeper Awakes than to the rather more subtle and oblique structures of social dominance seen in the work of Orwell, Huxley and Zamyatin.

Structurally and conceptually Gay Hunter differs from these dystopias in another important aspect. When in 1984 Winston takes on the/


92. First published in 1899 as When the Sleeper Wakes, revised and published in 1904 as The Sleeper Awakes.
the might of Big Brother, in *Brave New World* the Savage confronts Mustapha Mond and D503 rebels against the Benefactor and The One State in *We*, these are, quite distinctly, cases of the individual in revolt against authority. Contrasting the above works with *The Sleeper Awakes* and *Gay Hunter* it can be seen that while in the former the struggle is between the individual and authority - Winston, the Savage and D503 - in Wells' and Mitchell's novels the action is class based. Thus, in *The Sleeper Awakes* Graham leads the revolt against the Council and in *Gay Hunter* class conflict is central to the fate of both Hierarchies and Sub-Men. In Mitchell's description of the final clash it is class against class in a fight to the finish. But Mitchell was astute enough to realise that the reader's interest would soon be lost by a prolonged description couched in such generalities. So it is that what *Gay Hunter* lacks in terms of a systematic elaboration of the dynamics, assumptions and values underlying the functioning of the society under discussion through not having the main characters act out their roles within it, is compensated for by the juxtaposition of Houghton, Easterling and Gay and their respective articulation of pro- and anti-Fascist views. Before Gay comes into open conflict with the Fascists accompanying her forward in time she has to learn of the final days of the Hierarchies' civilisation.

According to the Voice "The problem of the surpluses" may have been solved but the civilisation of the Hierarchies' was still, apparently, subject to what Gay had earlier described (in strikingly Marxist terminology) as "every civilisation's internal contradictions". These contradictions lead to international conflict and internal revolution. Like their counterparts in *The Iron Heel* an international rising of Sub-Men is crushed with a ruthless ferocity echoing the fate of the slaves in *Spartacus* as:
Spartacus as Mitchell describes in Gay Hunter how:

"thousands of the Sub-Men had been crucified up and down the stretches of the Atlantic coasts".93

The revolt of the Sub-Men does nothing to lessen the prospect of war between rival Hierarchies and the Voice describes the last days of a civilisation wracked by international conflict, internal revolution and all but devastated by atomic weapons:

"Already most of the European Great Centres have been obliterated by atomic bombs, and only the fact that the Fascist Federation has sent its fleet to delay the Transatlantics still saves London. ... The Army of the Communes is on the march from the north, and everywhere the sub-men have risen, destroying the ways and killing and devouring the overseers. ... Our chemists are still attempting, and so far unsuccessfully, to cope with the poisoning dust that comes from the atomic bombing".94

Quite how the Sub-Men are supposed to have had the organisation to plan an international rising is not explained. In fact, the actions of the Sub-Men, killing and devouring their overseers seems to owe more to the example of spontaneous vengeance provided by the actions of the slaves in Spartacus than to an internationally organised revolt. The crucifixions following the penultimate revolt of the Sub-Men take place on the Atlantic coasts, suggesting that at least Britain and America are involved, a suggestion borne out by the startling revelation that the war, when it does come, is between Britain, aided by a European Fascist Federation and the American "Transatlantics". It is interesting to note in this respect that Mitchell seems to have believed along with C.M. Grieve and John MacLean before him that a future war would be fought between Britain and America as the, then, most advanced capitalist powers. As/

93. Gay Hunter, p.137.
As it is Mitchell was perhaps more prescient than either Grieve or MacLean by his identification of Europe as a power-block - "The Fascist Federation" - pitted against an American counterpart. Unfortunately, Mitchell's account fails to mention the role of the Soviet Union in the new world of Fascist Hierarchies: his thoughts on the matter would have been interesting. Since Mitchell makes it clear that the existence of Fascism in Gay's - that is his own time - has formed the precondition for the rise of the Hierarchies' awful world, the story really only attains a dynamic impulse with the heroine's realisation that she must stop Houghton and Easterling in their attempts to impose or, perhaps more accurately, re-impose Fascism in the world of the distant future.

From the outset it has been apparent that Houghton and Easterling's attitudes will cause trouble with the "primitive" but naively happy hunters of the future Golden Age. The dystopia represented by the description of the civilisation of the Hierarchies is much more gripping and powerful than the depiction of the utopian community of the hunters who know nothing of such ignoble notions and emotions as private property and possession, jealousy or aggression. While Gay is almost immediately at ease with the hunters, quickly shedding her clothes and sexual inhibitions, Houghton and Easterling's conception of the hunters as dirty savages amounts to a parody of the upper-class racist imperialist. When the Fascists leave the settlement they take with them a band of dragooned hunters to the ruins of London, intent on imposing "civilised" values on them. Gay cannot allow this to happen, especially as she has by then heard from The Voice of how the emergence of Fascism in the thirties had ended with the rule of the Hierarchies. Gay resolves to stop Houghton and, incidentally, convert the otherwise pacific hunters into killers to do so, arming them with hunting spears for the purpose. She does so on realising that to allow Houghton and/
and Easterling to succeed in their plans to begin a new civilisation on Fascist principles would involve a re-cycling of old evils:

"... civilisation would be launched again, with war, religion, blood sacrifice, all the dreary and terrible mummeries of temple and palace and college. Kingdoms would rise again on earth, poets sing battle again, the war horses stamp on the face of the child, the women know rape and the men mutilation ...".  

The outline of life under the Hierarchies provided by the Voice, although extending over several pages in *Gay Hunter*, can only be of the most general kind. So that the juxtaposition of Gay with Houghton and Easterling is important by the contrast provided in terms of attitudes, behaviour and demeanour. Mitchell is thus enabled to indicate the unpleasant nature of a society run along Fascist lines by his depiction of the blighted personal relationship and behaviour of individuals holding to such beliefs. Neither Houghton nor Lady Jane Easterling have any reason to dislike Gay Hunter, save the rather justifiable complaint that she is the cause of their predicament, stranded 20,000 years in the future. But, because, in Mitchell's estimation, Fascism was an evil ideology Houghton and Easterling are portrayed from the outset as unpleasant, even mentally unstable individuals. In contrast Gay is a virtual paradigm who on doing something in the least unpleasant almost immediately regrets then rectifies the action, as when she re-admits Houghton to her car after his ejection on account of his Fascist beliefs. Similarly, although Lady Jane Easterling takes an almost instantaneous dislike to Gay, the latter perseveres with a friendly demeanour towards the titled lady - although this may be as much due to sexual attraction as an inherent pleasantness of character.

95. Ibid, p.178.
Major Ledyard Houghton is a gruff and short-tempered military type, tormented by headaches as a result of nerve-gassing in the First World War, and the leader of the local Fascist Defence Corps. Houghton reluctantly agrees to join Gay in an experiment with dreams, which she claims may remove his headaches, but which ends in their travelling forward in time, along with Easterling who has likewise agreed to participate. Before the three journey into the future, Mitchell has Houghton articulate the principles he desires in society which in fact have gained reification in the future world of the Hierarchies. Mitchell's portrayal of Houghton as an archetypal upper middle class Fascist is sometimes overdrawn as in this instance where the Major exhibits distinct signs of dementia, such as face-contorting uncontrollably, he relates his hopes for the future:

"'All this modernist botching of society and art and civilisation finished, and discipline and breed and good taste come into their own again ... Service, loyalty, Hardness, Hierarchy. The scum in their places again'. His face twitched. 'England a nation again'"

Views such as these have already been encountered in Mitchell's work, being articulated by Sir John Mullaghan in *Three Go Back* and Stephen Mowat in *Cloud Howe*. It is interesting to note that of the characters advocating such views, with the exception of Alec Hogg in *Cloud Howe* who is, in any case, little more than a naïve dupe of the Fascists, all are individuals with a recognisable place within the hierarchy they most ardently seek to perpetuate and advance: Mowat is the local laird,

96. Gay Hunter, pp.17-18, 24-25. Gay’s experiment is based on the theory of J.W. Dunne, expounded in his book *An Experiment with Time*, (London, 1927) that individuals could will themselves into the future when they are just on the point of sleep. J.B. Priestley’s plays *Time and the Conways* (1937), *I Have Been Here Before* (1938) and *Johnson over Jordan* (1939) were strongly influenced by Dunne’s theories. During his foreign posting Mitchell “experimented” with thought transmission. See Appendix I.

laird, Mullaghan and Easterling are members of the peerage while Houghton has the Army rank of Major. In this regard it will be recalled that Mitchell felt especially concerned at the extent to which the principles of Fascism were accepted by the apparently apolitical but powerful sections of society. But, just as the testimony of the Voice in the Tower of Voices is lacking in depth, so outbursts like Houghton's fail to convey a real-life immediacy as to how Fascist values would affect everyday life. So it is that Mitchell introduces brief cameos indicating what might be called "Fascist behaviour", as when he portrays Houghton as being deliberately and callously insulting to an old waiter who brings him the wrong dish. The unpleasantness of the action is emphasised by Gay's anger and implicit condemnation of the effects of a social order which has made such an occurrence possible:

"She had often to restrain herself over bodily assault in matters like that! The damned horror of any animal addressing another like that!" 98

If Houghton is a gruff, ill-tempered, even slightly unbalanced individual, he at least has the excuse of his terrible headaches. Lady Jane Easterling is, at base, much more unpleasant and has no excuses at all for her ideas or behaviour. Her patronage of the local Fascist Defence Corps is the result of a mixture of an innate, aristocratic haughtiness to which the Fascist 'virtues' outlined by Houghton are naturally complementary and an anaemic sexual attraction to the Major himself. In an indication of the danger of Fascism it is Easterling rather than Houghton who emerges as by far the more dangerous and, especially in relation to Gay, venomous of the two Fascists. Gay at first tries to reason with Houghton and Easterling that their plans to resurrect civilisation from the ruins of the Hierarch's London will only involve more/

98. Ibid, p.17. Mitchell felt strongly about the demeaning effects which hierarchy and rank entailed. See Appendix I.
more pain and suffering, not least for the deluded hunters under the Fascist's command, but it soon becomes clear to her that this is a forlorn hope. Although Houghton is the "ideologue" of the venture with his continued talk of hierarchy, order, discipline and obedience - the hunters' obedience, that is, towards Easterling and himself - it soon becomes clear that the real application of such precepts emanates from Jane Easterling for whom the subservience and control of others has been a constant factor of her aristocratic life in the twentieth century. Thus, it is as natural for Lady Jane to assume control in a hierarchic order as it is for Stephen Mowat in Cloud Howe to indicate clearly the respective positionings with himself on top in his own projection of the new order. As Chris apprehends in relation to Mowat's grand plans that the reality will be an extension of misery and suffering, so despite Houghton's rhetoric, Fascism means only pain and suffering for the hunters under their control. Lady Jane Easterling reveals as much when she advocates treating Gay to a little of their methods for ensuring the type of social organisation prized by Fascists when she suggests that:

"A little of the same treatment as we've given those savages would quieten her, I think",

"I won't have more floggings".99

The latter's outburst forbidding this course of action is indicative of the mental strain which he and Easterling are undergoing though his partner is, by the end of the book, practically pathological in her hatred of Gay and the freedom she stands for.

It is of importance to notice that although nemesis overtakes the Fascists the dangers of their beliefs are never played down by Mitchell, but are kept constantly in the forefront of the reader's mind throughout/

throughout the story. This is achieved by Houghton's bellicose avowals as to the merits of Fascism, the Voice's testimony as to what life under the Hierarchies had entailed for the Sub-Men, and in Houghton and Easterling's callous treatment of the naive and almost simple-minded hunters. This is supplemented and given texture by the contrasting attitudes of Gay and the Fascists and the way in which while the former achieves almost immediate integration within the social fabric of the community, from the outset Houghton and Easterling are evil outsiders seeking only to enslave those they meet. The parallel with slavery is not chosen accidentally, but is suggested by Mitchell himself who, as has been indicated earlier, associates both the subjection and rising of the Hierarchies' Sub-Men with the actions of the Spartacist slaves. Mitchell contrives to relieve Gay of the necessity of employing force for the sake of peace (a paradox which does not escape her) but her resolve to kill the Fascists and their followers although untested, is associated with the ideology of communism in a manner first suggested in his story "A Volcano in the Moon".

Gay's decision to stop Houghton and Easterling is one she does not take lightly. Pondering the task which lies before her and the band of armed hunters she has organised Gay looks out over London as night falls:

"... it seemed a new London ... Not London
... Suddenly, far in the west, under the sun's edge, she saw the strange star lit ...
Presently a thin, sickle moon came up and rode the sky shedding a faint radiance, a light like diffused buttermilk, ... In that pale illumination the near stars burned and went out --- all but the forward star low in the sky. It was the same she had seen that morning from London".101

100. On realising that Houghton, Easterling and their hunters would have to be killed for the sake of the future the heroine of Gay Hunter, p.251, exclaims: "My God, what a programme for a pacifist!"

The star is in fact Jupiter, ruler of gods and men, whose weapon is the thunderbolt. The symbolism contained in the foregoing passage becomes clearer when two pages further on Gay wonders if the appearance of Jupiter in the night sky was portentous of "some celestial catastrophe". It is, in fact, a portent of the self-destruction of Houghton, Lady Jane and their plans. Moreover, the inclusion of the reference to the "sickle moon" acts as a secondary allusion suggesting the political creed of communism as it had been made to do in "A Volcano in the Moon".

The hunters exist in a state of primitive communism, the way in which they are described as being "... grouped in a shallow half moon in front of their fires ..." 102 on the night before the attack mirroring this fact. The suggestion at the conclusion of Gay Hunter is then that had it not been for the self-destruction of Houghton and Easterling, the primitive communism of the folk, aided by Gay's ability to transform a naturally pacific people into a war-like band, would triumph over the Fascists by force of arms, just as it seemed to a growing proportion on the left in the 1930's that communism represented the most formidable bulwark against that same ideology.

Yet even at her most hostile towards the Fascists, Mitchell is careful to have Gay make the point that, put crudely, Fascists are made, rather than born, being the products of distinct socio-economic conditions:

"They were no more than victims of their one-time environment and education and social caste, and the aberrant culture that companioned that caste in the days of its economic straits".103

Gay's realisation that Houghton and Easterling's Fascism was a result of their class position under a capitalist system in crisis is indicative of Mitchell's understanding of this key point relayed through the work/
work of people like Jack London, Rosa Luxemburg and John Strachey. So that if there is a case for comparison of Gay Hunter with the dystopias described in Brave New World, Nineteen Eighty-Four, We and The Sleeper Awakes, it owes something to the assumption shared by the diverse group of writers and activists mentioned above that the seeds of totalitarianism were buried deep in the structure of contemporary capitalism. Arguably Mitchell possessed neither the analytical ability nor the desire to undertake a systematic exposition of the mechanisms by which capitalism can degenerate into Fascism, and bearing in mind some of the more protracted passages of didacticism in London's work, this might be thought just as well. Although, as I.F. Clarke contends, Gay Hunter displays an overall and carefully constructed distrust of the capabilities of modern science found in other writers dealing with the pattern of future events. However, although it is maintained that Gay Hunter is a warning against the dangers of Fascism, it is written in such a way as to discredit that ideology in a more profound, because emotional, manner than an analytical tract might have achieved. In this respect it will be argued in the next section that this was the result of Mitchell's conception of the uses to which literature should be put. Before doing so it is well to remember that Gay Hunter ends on a more optimistic note than many dystopias, and is certainly more reassuring than the conclusion to Wells' The Time Machine. While the latter ends with a picture of the extinction of humanity, mitigated by evidence of the beginnings of the slow evolutionary process, Gay Hunter concludes with the primitive communism of the hunters intact, with the elimination of the Fascists and with Gay's return to her own troubled times/

times having:

"dreamed a dream to give her a guerdon
for life".105

Like Clair Stranlay and Keith Sinclair in *Three Go Back* it must be assumed that Gay returns to the 1930's resolved to fight the evils of her own time. In Gay's case the evil is clearly defined as Fascism.

c) Politics and Literature in the Thirties:  
"a free lance fighting for the revolution"

With the leftward development of some intellectuals in the 1930's and the continuing economic and political decline, the question of the writer's responsibility to society, not to mention the perennial debate over whether art owes responsibility to or for anything at all, became one of particular importance. With the benefit of hindsight, Arthur Koestler may recall the apparent, and for him, naive simplicity of the choice facing intellectuals in that decade, but the adoption of revolutionary political beliefs brought with it certain ramifications for the writer. Rather than being the answer to the question of the extent of a writer's responsibility such a development simply restated the question in a different form. It came to be axiomatic to the left-wing writer of the thirties that he owed a responsibility to raise the consciousness of his audience as to the genesis and nature of society's problems and to an elaboration of the necessity for radical solutions. However, as a consequence, the question simply developed from being "should literature" to "how should literature" fulfill such a purpose. It can be seen from Mitchell's main works of fiction that he reached the conclusion, along with others on the left in the 1930's, that literature should be used to convey a broadly, left-wing political perspective. However, he was not prepared to sacrifice his own judgement for a dogmatic interpretation of "committed" art. Mitchell began writing at a time when the Modernist movement in literature and the arts could/

106. See p.195 above.
could claim such diverse figures among its number as Joyce, Kafka, Picasso and Schoenberg. 107 Modernism is of course a complex movement which cannot be adequately dealt with here. Embracing literature, the movement articulated a mood of cynicism and despair which was at least partly a reaction to the First World War. In the sense in which it will be used 1 term Modernism is intended to convey not the form or formlessness of his work, but the general attitude to society manifested therein. Thus, Irving Howe describes "The modernist sensibility" as positing:

"a blockage, if not an end, of history: an apocalyptic cul-de-sac in which both teleological ends and secular progress are called into question, perhaps become obsolete. Man is mired - take your choice - in the mass, in the machine, in the city, in his loss of faith, in the hopelessness of life without anterior intention or terminal value". 108

It has been argued that Mitchell shared with John Garland a restlessness and what Ray Mitchell described in relation to her husband as an early bitterness and cynicism about life in general. 109 Looking back over the opening passages of Stained Radiance it is not too difficult to see in Garland's almost overpowering cynicism an element of the despair implied in Howe's definition of the Modernist sensibility. Even the ironical mode Mitchell uses in the first part of the novel to mask Garland's deep pessimism was itself identified by one publisher as rendering Stained Radiance unlikely to "appeal to the general reader".110 Whether or not Mitchell intended to imply a modernist aspect to the work is not certain, but he did state to Dorothy Tweed that/

108. Ibid, p.5-6.
that it was:

"rather in the modern style; with a disposition
to call a spade a sanguinary shovel".\textsuperscript{111}

In similar vein the \textit{Aberdeen Bon Accord} reviewer noted more sombrely, and perhaps more accurately, that the novel:

"wept and raged with pain so that one felt that here was a man who had indeed been down into a pit".\textsuperscript{112}

Mitchell had indeed been down a pit in personal and emotional terms but the tone of \textit{Stained Radiance}, and in particular Garland's early cynicism and despair, owe something to the modernist sensibility, as Howe terms it, as well as being a reflection of his own experiences and emotions. So it is that at the outset of the novel Garland represents the embodiment of hopelessness, particularly in his ambiguous envy and repugnance of Storeman's certainty of purpose. Garland may see no purpose or plan to life which leads him into a denigration of someone who does, but it cannot conceal his envy. But just as there lurked a right wing politicality beneath the veneer of artistic neutrality in that element of the modernist strain represented by artists like Evelyn Waugh and T.S. Eliot, so at the other end of the political spectrum Garland, even in his blackest moods, is never totally representative of the modernist despair "of life without anterior intention or terminal value".\textsuperscript{113} What gives Garland away is his ceaseless, hopeless curiosity concerning life itself which bespeaks a desperation for the kind of solution represented by Storeman's politics which, perversely, Garland rejects during the first half of the novel. It is almost as if Mitchell were intentionally trying to trick the reader by appearing to place Garland within/  

\textsuperscript{111} Letter, Mitchell to Dorothy Tweed, undated. 
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Aberdeen Bon Accord}, 5/2/32. Also quoted, as are the letter from \textit{Allen and Unwin and Mitchell to Dorothy Tweed}, by I.S. Munro, \textit{Leslie Mitchell}, pp.57-58. 
\textsuperscript{113} Irving Howe, \textit{Decline of the New}, p.6, quoted earlier.
within the mainstream of the modernist tradition provided by Howe, only to reverse the equation at the close of the novel, when Garland is granted both explanation and faith in his and man's ability to change things. Since Howe mentions Joyce and Kafka as being representative Modernist writers, it is perhaps appropriate to pursue a brief comparison of their work with *Stained Radiance* because of the contrasts which emerge.

There is indeed a sense in which the earlier part of *Stained Radiance*, where the reader is permitted an insight into Garland's thought patterns, emotions and resulting cynicism is comparable to Joyce's autobiographical rendering of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Indeed, the title could be an appropriate description of the literary ambitions of the young John Garland and his work on a novel—the fictional equivalent of *Stained Radiance*—the completion and publication of which he believes will provide some solutions to his disturbed mental state. But, where Stephen Dedalus effectively denies any responsibility towards literature or life itself, Garland undergoes a development, ending in the recognition that if life is evil, then that evil must be fought. For Dedalus art and the artist remain predominant throughout his life where John Garland's conception of the importance of his career as a novelist diminishes as he perceives the nature of life's evils and his role in the struggle against them. In fact, any sustained parallel between Joyce and Mitchell would seem to reside more in their idiosyncrasies of style and expression—ironic in *Stained Radiance*, the use of the vernacular in *Sunset Song*—than in any essentially contingent manifestation of a shared world view. Garland's pessimism finds a parallel in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* with its despair of a bleak mechanistic universe and the almost pre-ordained sacrifice of the individual to its internal functioning. But, if the essentially egocentric/
egocentric Dedalus could never be a prototype for John Garland, although sharing some of the latter's pessimism, neither could Joseph K, as he stoically accepts his fate - which is the real horror of the thing - since Garland is impelled by his curiosity and subsequent rage into a frontal attack on the existing order through a combination of Manicheism and Marxism.

My depiction of Garland as a kind of enraged Joseph K with some elements of Dedalus's cynicism and egocentricity provides a background against which the later emergence of the hero of Stained Radiance from an aimless bitterness towards belief and purpose can be better appreciated. Mitchell makes the point through him that, even at his most jaundiced and embittered Garland is correct to reject the political solutions proffered by Storeman precisely because they represent the mirror, but oppositional image to his own aimlessness in their sterility and implicit, cynical manipulation of people and events.

Mitchell may use the ironic mode of Stained Radiance to good effect in achieving this, but it is worth bearing in mind that although Garland is critical of the Anarchocommunist Party under Storeman's leadership it is the same political party which the former assumes control of at the conclusion to the book. The point thus being made is not that political action is wrong but that Storeman's lack of an appreciation of the role of politics in the search for a meaning to life and as a means of combating life's evils is petty, cynical and manipulative because lacking in an overall appreciation of the enormity of these evils and the need to combat them. The meaning to life for Stephen Dedalus as for Joseph K is, at its most basic, that there is no meaning, which according to Howe is the essence of modernism and its aim to;

"strip man of his systems of belief and his ideal claims, and then proposes the one uniquely modern style of salvation: a/
Stained Radiance begins then by exhibiting both of these characteristics of modernism through Garland’s generalised misanthropy, scepticism and wretched, if intermittent, introspection, but ends on a note of hope and expectation totally belying the novel’s sombre beginning. This message of hope is strengthened by its juxtaposition and contrast with the discredited opportunism of Andreas von Koupa and the actions of James Storeman who, in telling fashion, eschew the search for meaning by opting for the very domesticity Garland finds it necessary to reject. Likewise, Maudslay’s periods of bleak depression in The Thirteenth Disciple may be seen to reflect an aspect of the Modernist sensibility but, he like Garland, ultimately triumphs in his search for understanding.

The Modernist sensibility with its characteristic of doubt bordering on despair and the consequent urge to strip man of his beliefs and illusions applies only tangentially to Mitchell. Although characters like Garland, Maudslay and even Gay Hunter plumb the depths of despair they, in common with the other central characters of his fiction all develop to perceive a need for solutions to the problems facing them and those affecting the world. Although Stained Radiance in particular displays an element of the broad definition of Modernism here employed Mitchell may be seen to have more in common with the "committed writer" of the 1930’s.

Given his interest and immersion in the left wing politics of his time it is inevitable that Mitchell should become involved in the debate concerning the role and function of the committed artist. Because the/

114. Ibid, p.5.

115. This is with the exception of Gershom Jezreel in Image and Superscription and Chris Guthrie in A Scots Quair.
the role of art in capitalist society had been virtually ignored by the British left in the 1920's, the debate which got underway in the thirties tended to replicate the controversy begun in the Soviet Union in the previous decade.\(^\text{116}\) It is in the context of this debate that Mitchell needs to be considered particularly as he contributed to the controversy himself.

In the period following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 all forms of art not openly hostile to the revolution were encouraged but this gradually came to be challenged by a rival view of the purposes to which art in general and literature in particular should be put.\(^\text{117}\) Growing out of the pre-revolutionary propagandistic purposes of the Bolshevik party the Proletcult (Proletarian culture) movement arose advocating the creation of what it saw as a purely revolutionary culture cleansed of bourgeois influence. In contrast to this Leon Trotsky argued for a continuation of the less rigid definition of revolutionary culture which, in particular, would take account of the great art which had preceded the revolution.\(^\text{118}\) Not surprisingly, with Stalin's success in the struggle with Trotsky over the leadership of the Bolshevik Party and therefore of the Soviet Republic, the latter's more liberal view of art came to be increasingly discredited. After 1928 the experimentalisation in the arts which had been a feature of the previous decade came to an/

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118. Trotsky's objections to Proletcult are contained in *Literature and Revolution* (1925). H. Gustav Klaus, "Socialist Fiction", provides a useful analysis of Trotsky's views in this respect. Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p.42, argues that Lenin's views on art resemble Trotsky's much more closely than those of Stalin, or Zhadanov, his Minister of Culture.
an end and the somewhat restricting definitions of Proletcult triumphed. Henceforth, socialist art was to deal with the objective reality of the class struggle under capitalism and the building of socialism in the Soviet Union. All previous art not overtly revolutionary in content or intent was designated as virtually meaningless; a proposition encapsulated in the post-1928 Proletcult slogan "Burn Raphael". The extent and nature of Proletcult's triumph is perhaps best indicated by Mayakovsky, the Soviet Union's leading post-revolutionary poet when he wrote:

"I want the pen to equal the gun to be listed with iron in industry. And the Politbureau's agenda to be Stalin's Report on 'The Output of Poetry ...'"

Mitchell found himself in the midst of an almost identical debate to that which had taken place in post-revolutionary Russia when the Left Review initiated a discussion as to what the aims of the newly-formed Writers' International should be. Thus, one early contributor to the fray urged all writers to ensure a proper adherence to the strictures of Proletcult to be achieved by the creation of a special committee of the Writers' International:

"We need a permanent propaganda committee, to work towards a. the proletarianisation of our outlook (of those of us who have bourgeois origins in our work) - and during the initial period of our magazine, most important, to carry on vigorous/

119. Ibid, p.37. "Burn Raphael" had, in fact, been one of the slogans of pre-revolutionary days used by the Futurists.

120. Quoted by D. Craig, Marxists on Literature, (Harmondsworth, 1975) p.17.

121. Left Review, Vol. I, No. 1, October 1934. According to Pelling, The British Communist Party, p.60, the Left Review was founded under the auspices of the Writers' International, a C.P.G.B. "front organisation".
vigorous contemptuous criticism of all high browism, intellectualism, abstract rationalism, and similar dilettanteism ...".122

These remarks were effectively countered however when another contributor to the debate rather pointedly observed that if "all existing literature" had to be:

"chuck(ed) overboard in order to create a real proletarian culture ... One might have told the builders of the Dniepréstroy dam to pay no attention to pre-Soviet science since it is tainted with bourgeois prejudice".123

It is clear from Mitchell's contribution to this controversy that his sympathies were rather closer to the views expressed by the latter contributor as in a pointed reference to the proponents of Proletcult he stated that:

"Not only do hordes of those 'revolutionary' writers never read their contemporaries, (they wallow instead, and exclusively, in clumsy translations from the Russian and German) but they hate and denigrate those contemporaries with a quite Biblical uncharitableness and malice. With a little bad Marxian patter and the single adjective 'bourgeois' in their vocabularies they proceed (in the literary pages of the Daily Worker and like organs) to such displays of spiteful exhibitionism as warrant the attentions of a psycho-analyst. From their own second-rateness they hate and despise good work just as they look upon any measure of success accruing to a book (not written by one of their own intimate circle) with a moronic envy".124

Mitchell quite clearly did not include himself in the "intimate circle" of which he complains, yet despite the testimony of Dorothy Tweed to the contrary, those reviews of his work appearing in the Daily Worker/

Worker were quite sympathetic. Despite these strictures against the Daily Worker Mitchell goes on in his piece to claim that:

"Not all revolutionary writers (I am a revolutionary writer) are cretins",

and to make some constructive remarks on what the aims of the Writers' International should include, but he ventured no criticism of the International's injunction for its members to:

"use their pens and their influence against imperialist war and in defence of the Soviet Union, the state where the foundations of socialism have already been laid ...".

Evidently the International's unqualified support of the Soviet Union did not deter Mitchell from applying for membership - a completed application form remains among his papers. What did concern him, however, was the prospect of an organisation including:

125. D. Tweed, "Recollections", thought Mitchell's work to have been unfairly treated by the Daily Worker. In fact, the paper reviewed two of his books: Three Go Back was reviewed by "W.F." and despite being entitled "Running Away from Reality", ended by stating: "This is a novel out of the ordinary and worth reading. Never mind its plausibility or lack of it". Daily Worker 5/2/32. Spartacus was likewise sympathetically reviewed by The Daily Worker on 27/5/33 by "A.L.M." (A.L. Morton?) The reviewer claimed the book had two "small faults ... it sentimentalises the extremely unsentimental relations between Spartacus and Crixius. The sudden transformation of Spartacus, also, from a half-crazed, ignorant barbarian chief to a wise and enlightened ruler and inspired strategist is a little too miraculous to be convincing. Nor does the gratuitous introduction of the crucifixion of Jesus add anything to the far greater horror of the Appian Way .... Here is a novel dealing with a great subject in a not unworthy spirit. It gives a magnificent picture of an age which most of us have but the haziest of ideas. It gives life to a virtually unknown hero of millions of the oppressed".


127. The application form for the Writers' International has certain categories of work which the member was to indicate he was prepared to contribute to the Left Review. Mitchell ticked the boxes marked "Short Stories" and "Book Reviews", and put crosses against "Articles" and "Poems". One of the conditions of membership was that the contributor had to sign the following declaration: "I shall be willing to contribute to the periodical (without payment until the magazine is on a satisfactory financial basis) ...".
including:

"that horde of paragraphists, minor reviewers, ghastly poetasters and all the like amateurs who clog up the machinery of the left-wing political movement".128

In a thankfully rare example of arrogance Mitchell suggests the restriction of membership to:

"only those who have done work of definite and recognised literary value (from the revolutionary view-point). It would consist of professional journalists, novelists, historians, and the like who before admittance would have to prove their right to admittance".129

Precisely who would decide the literary value "from the revolutionary view-point" of an applicant's work Mitchell does not say, but it is clear that he believed his own work to qualify in respect of such criteria. One reason for his exclusivity in this respect is suggested by Ann Shearsby's recollection of his disgust at the Welwyn Communist Party branch's practice of vetting a writer's work before proceeding to publication. Shearsby recalls his "unprintable comments" on the ability of the average party member to decide the revolutionary and literary merits of a piece of work.130 Perhaps inclusion in the Writers' International of such self-appointed censors - "ghastly poetasters" who had gained admission because of their origins in the working class - was too much for Mitchell to bear. In any event, the whole tenor and content of his contribution to the debate in the Left Review firmly places him in the anti-Proletcult camp. It is clear however that, in his own words, Mitchell considered himself to be a revolutionary writer, but precisely what such a title means is difficult to define.

129. Ibid.
130. Ann Shearsby, WT, 19/12/77.
David Margolies argues that although lacking a clear line in terms of left-wing literary theory the participants in the debate in the *Left Review* to which Mitchell contributed share three basic assumptions. According to Margolies these were that art and literature in particular could never be neutral or disinterested in terms of the conflict between economic interests. Following from this it was thought therefore not only legitimate but absolutely necessary that literature should seek to promote the cause of revolution and finally that its value was to be judged against its usefulness in terms of helping people to political consciousness and action. If Margolies' definition regarding the assumptions shared by the contributors to the *Left Review* debate is accepted as a valid set of criteria against which to measure committed literature - and it is general enough to include the majority of the genre so defined - then the question arises of how far Mitchell fulfils his role as a self-confessed "revolutionary artist". If Margolies' definition it may be seen that it is certainly never neutral. Thus, *Stained Radiance* and *The Thirteenth Disciple* portray the individual's struggle to come to terms with and combat the evils of the world in a political context, even if there remains an element of ambiguity in the conclusion to *The Thirteenth Disciple*. *A Scots Quair, Spartacus*,

131. D. Margolies, "Left Review and Left Literary Theory", in J. Clarke, M. Heinemann, et al. (Eds), *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 1930's*.

132. Margolies' summarisation has the advantage that it is drawn from the debate which Mitchell was himself involved in, and may therefore possess more pertinence than the more complex arguments on Marxist literary theory contained in the following useful works: T. Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, H. Arvon, *Marxist Aesthetics*, (New York, 1970), R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford, 1977) and, in particular, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory", *New Left Review*, No. 82, November - December, 1973 by the same author.
Spartacus, Three Go Back and Gay Hunter share the characteristics of providing some form of definition of the evils of class-divided society, and although in this respect no-one would be absolutely convinced of the necessity for revolutionary action on finishing these books - of which works could this be said in any case? - the reader has been given an insight into the nature of class relationships and values. In contrast although Image and Superscription and The Lost Trumpet contain passages exposing such perceived realities, their overall 'message' is antithetical to Margolies' claim (arising from his summation of the Left Review debate) that committed literature should seek to promote the cause of revolution. They are so because in each a distinctly individualistic solution to the perceived evils of the world is posited - in The Lost Trumpet each character is motivated to seek fulfilment through the pursuance of their own interests, ranging from archaeology to communism, while in Image and Superscription Gershom turns his back on the world, riding off into the sunset astride a motor cycle shared by the naked Ester Caldon in what must surely be Mitchell's poorest, if titillating, conclusion to a major work.

The Lost Trumpet and Image and Superscription reveal Mitchell's literary flair, but by comparison with other of his works, they are lacking in evidence of his commitment to radical social change. In the former the Diffusionist argument is linked to the advice that people should "be their essential selves", but its effectiveness is weakened by the too powerful dose of romance and "eastern mystique" with which it is accompanied. In Image and Superscription the hero's

133. As when Marrot the American communist is used to expose the unfairness of wage labour in relation to the Egyptian labourers in The Lost Trumpet, p.65, and Gershom Jezreel's sick horror at the thought of the injustice of Caesar's treatment of the legionaries in Image and Superscription, pp.119-120.

134. The Lost Trumpet, p.139. See D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, p.55.
hero's disillusionment with his father's religious fanaticism and the portrayal of Gershom's experiences in the trenches in the First World War belie the steady deterioration of the novel into the romantic adventure it later becomes. These two works are, when judged against the exacting tenets of committed art provided by Margolies, almost pure escapism and as such they stand out from the rest of Mitchell's full-length fiction.135

Spartacus and Grey Granite are considered in more detail in the subsequent two chapters. For the moment it may be contended that both works fit most appropriately into the category of committed writing. More than any other examples of his fiction Spartacus and Grey Granite lay bare the perceived dynamics of class conflict and the, if necessary, ruthless actions the revolutionary should engage in. With the exception of Grey Granite Mitchell's work does not fit into the category of 'socialist realism' if by that term it is meant that the content of a work of literature should be about working people and their struggle for survival under capitalism. Using an alternative definition provided by Raymond Williams is more productive however:

"realism (is) typical characters in typical situations ... typical must not be confused with that which is frequently encountered; the truly typical is based on a comprehension of the laws and perspectives of future social development. ...'realism' becomes, instead, a principal and organised selection".136

Mitchell's use of "a principled and organised selection" may be seen in his choice of the related themes whereby the individual must first come to an understanding of the world and, having attained understanding, to fight against the evils of his or her time. It is in terms of this/

135. Perhaps the most appropriate comment on The Lost Trumpet, pp.256-257 is when one of the characters, on finding the trumpet, remarks: "It was impossible - a boy's treasure tale come true".

this 'selection' that the actions of the central characters in Stained Radiance, The Thirteenth Disciple, Three Go Back, Gay Hunter, Spartacus and Ewan in Grey Granite are to be understood. To the extent that Ewan Tavendale is an industrial worker and Spartacus a slave, these characters may be judged typical in relation to Williams' definition and as much can be said of the other major figures in Mitchell's fiction. But apart from Ewan they are very definitely not proletarians as might be expected from someone of Mitchell's political persuasion. John Garland, Malcom Maudslay, Clair Stranlay, Keith Sinclair and Gay Hunter are middle class as defined by occupation and with the exception of Maudslay, by birth. By occupation they are, respectively, an aspiring writer, a journalist, a novelist, a doctor of medicine and an archaeologist. The "villains" of Three Go Back and Gay Hunter are almost stereotyped examples of their kind: Mullaghan is an ultra-conservative armaments manufacturer; Major Houghton a brusque and offensive military type and Lady Jane Easterling a haughty and insensitive aristocrat. They are less convincing as characters because of this, which may be attributable to the fact that Mitchell did not know any armaments manufacturers or titled ladies at first hand, although this cannot be said of military types in view of his service record. In contrast the other middle class figures in his fiction mentioned above are more convincing as characters perhaps because he had a better knowledge and understanding of such people.\[137\] It is certainly the case that, apart from the period of his life spent in the armed forces, where the company most often must have comprised the least fortunate elements of the proletariat, Mitchell/

137. Perhaps, had Mitchell been asked why his work involved middle class as opposed to working class people, he would have answered, as did Louis Aragon to a similar question "I know them better". Quoted by D. Craig, Marxists on Literature, p.15.
Mitchell tended to associate with literate and informed company, both as a reporter and later as a writer in Welwyn. Perhaps this is one reason why Clair Stranlay and Gay Hunter are more convincing characters of their (middle class) type than are the proletarians like Jock Cronin or Alec Watson who emerge somewhat uneasily in Cloud Howe and Grey Granite.

While Spartacus and A Scots Quair could qualify as successful pieces of committed writing judged against the criteria Margolies sees as comprising the Left Review's definition, Gay Hunter is not an obvious "call to action". Perhaps a more appropriate test of Gay Hunter is to measure it against a more subtle set of criteria. Writing of Christopher Caudwell's Illusion and Reality, David Margolies argues that:

"Literature in the modern world also fulfils its function through a reorganisation of values onto reality, a picture of reality distorted in its objectivity in order that it may be more true subjectively - what Caudwell means by 'illusion'. The values of the 'illusion' remain with us in reality and thus motivate us to change reality to accommodate the illusion".138

If Gay Hunter is not a call to action like Lewis Jones' Cwmardy (1937) and We Live (1939) it is equally significantly not a cry of impotent concern like Walter Greenwood's Love on the Dole (1933). It actually succeeds precisely because of the wilful distortion of reality involved in the science fiction mode in which it is written and by the equally distorting consequent amalgam of Golden Age hunters, bloody-minded Fascists, and the angrily righteous Gay set against the dual background of twentieth century Fascism and its transformation into the society of the Hierarchies. The values bequeathed by the illusion are those referred to by Gay when she concludes that through her adventure she had "dreamed a dream to give her a guerdon for life".139 Three/

138. D. Margolies, "Left Review and Left Literary Theory" in J. Clarke, Culture and Crisis in Britain.

Three Go Back displays the same distortion of reality but, because it was written before Mitchell became aware of the threat of Fascism, some of its dynamic and contemporary relevance is lost when the evil represented by Mullaghan is replaced on his death by the ape-like and brutal Neanderthalers. Nevertheless, like Gay, Clair Stranlay and Keith Sinclair return to their own time with a different perspective.

Mitchell's fiction, even at its weakest as in The Lost Trumpet, signals a message of revolt against the existing order. This gains expression in different ways: in the development of Maudslay and Garland from cynicism to commitment which, when taken in the sequence suggested earlier, mirrors Mitchell's own development; in the depiction of the fantastic world of the Hierarchies acting as a signifier of the awful potential of Fascism and the consequent reorganisation of values forced on Gay and the reader; and in the call to action implicit in Spartacus and Grey Granite. Proletcult with its emphasis on revolutionary art for and about the working class could not have commended itself to Mitchell. It did however grow from the same source which provided him with his overall political perspective. It is not difficult to see how in terms of one interpretation Marxism could be held responsible for the narrowness of vision and rejection of all non-revolutionary art of the kind associated with Proletcult. A simplistic interpretation of Marxism would see art in a capitalist society as a reflection of dominant class interests in that society. If capitalism is held to produce/
produce art which serves the interests of the dominant class than the
injunction by A. Brown in the Left Review to reject the pressures of
bourgeois origins in favour of a proletarianisation of outlook is
understandable. So, too, is the rejection by supporters of Proletcult
of all art forms not consciously revolutionary as intent and class
conscious in content. As Marx himself displayed a catholicity of literary
taste which would have shocked his otherwise devoted adherents drawn to
the purity of Proletcult it is unfair to condemn Marxism as distinct
from those who later acted in its name. Somewhat more culpable in
this respect was the Bolshevik Party and the way in which the pre-
revolutionary necessity to emphasise the merits of proletarian culture
eventually hardened into a post-revolutionary orthodoxy which was eagerly
sanctioned and espoused by some British Communists. Given Mitchell’s
awareness of the issues involved in the Left Review debate, it is hardly
surprising that after dismissing the notion that modern literature was
"narrowing in content" he should conclude that part of his argument by
designating such nonsense as "bolshevik blah". In fact, Mitchell
_was far closer to Marx than were the supporters of Proletcult. Thus,
S.S. Prawer contends that:

"Marx believed, then, that though many authors
are spokesmen for a dominant class, great
literature is able to rise above a prevalent
ideology".

while Mitchell in his same Left Review article commented that:

"There was never in the history of English letters
such a variety of books on such a variety of sub-
jects, never such a continuous display of fit and
excellent technique ...".

141. See S.S. Prawer, Karl Marx and World Literature, passim.
143. S.S. Prawer, Karl Marx and World Literature, p.404.
Indeed, C.M. Grieve was to make a similar point in relation to non-proletarian literature in *Lucky Poet* when he referred approvingly to Lenin's belief that the communist ought to absorb:

"the treasures of human knowledge ... the final outcome of which is communism".145

Mitchell quite clearly stands outside the Proletcult camp, but within that tradition of what has been termed committed writing. But committed to what? That question has been answered, at least in part, in the context of the discussion on his major works of fiction. Re-stated simply, most of the central characters of Mitchell's fiction engage in the struggle to find meaning to the evils of the world and, having gained an understanding, determine to fight against them. This may be said of Maudslay (although in his case death intervenes to prevent him actually doing anything), Garland, Clair Stranlay, Keith Sinclair, Gay Hunter, Spartacus and Ewan Tavendale. That evil may be the ubiquitous mal-evolence apprehended by Garland, the militarism and Fascism exposed in *Three Go Back* and *Gay Hunter* or the evils of class-divided society which Spartacus and Ewan are pitted against. Mitchell's major fiction is about struggle on a number of levels - from the struggle for survival waged by ordinary people, the struggle of the individual to understand the world and the class struggle. But, only in a very few occasions do individuals struggle for wholly personal understanding and personal salvation. Mitchell's heroes are, to use Alan Swingewood's term, "problematic" as their existence and actions are predicated on their conflict with society.146 Mitchell may be seen to speak through them, for as C.M. Grieve observed/

146. A. Swingewood, *The Novel and Revolution*, pp.26-27. Swingewood distinguishes between the hero who accepts the existing order and the hero who questions it, characterising "the novel of the problematic hero is the novel of bourgeois society".
observed he:

"had no use for literature as a mere amenity, a game, an intellectual game, but as a matter of life and death, capable of practical influence on the whole range of human affairs". 147

Mitchell made his contribution to the politics of the 1930's largely through his literature.

The evidence of his willingness to join the C.P.G.B. orientated Writers' International, with its injunction that members should use their pens in aid of the Soviet Union, suggests that towards the end of his life he was not averse to being associated with that particular political party. Of key importance, although it was not mentioned to any great extent in the Left Review debate, the growing menace of Fascism and the leading role which communists were playing in the struggle against it - particularly on the Continent - may also be seen as having played its part in the leftward shift of Mitchell's opinions. Grey Granite and Spartacus stand as testimony to this development which is dealt with in the next two chapters. For the moment it is important to note that his comments on the revolutionary role of literature date from 1933 when the threat of Nazism became apparent. Thus, "All good art is propaganda", 148 proclaimed Mitchell; "my art is implicit anarchy", 149 but although "a revolutionary artist", 150 he was also his own man:

"I hate capitalism; all my books are explicit or implicit propaganda. But because I'm a revolutionist I see no reason for gainsaying my own critical judgement". 151


148. "Grieve - Scotsman", The Freeman, 9 September 1933.

149. "News of Battle: Queries for Mr Whyte", ibid, 17 March 1933.


151. Ibid.
So, although the class struggle in one form or another provides the backdrop to his work, even when as in *The Thirteenth Disciple* and *Stained Radiance*, Maudsley and Garland develop through various stages to a recognition of the need to choose their side, Mitchell was also an artist who would not "gainsay" his own critical judgement. In his address to the first Soviet Writers' Congress in August 1934, Karl Radek described the attitude of the writer who, although committed to revolutionary ideals, wished to maintain ultimate control over the form and content of his work. For Radek such writers could be held to express their "individualism" in the following way:

"I, a writer, a worker of the mind, cannot submit to any discipline. All parties mean blinkers. All parties tie-down the artist. I want to be a free-lance fighting for the revolution. I cannot be a soldier in the army of ... revolution". 152

Such a description could apply to Mitchell.

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CHAPTER 5:

Chris and Ewan: Two Ways of Seeing, Feeling and Acting

a) From Stained Radiance to Grey Granite

Only four years separate the publication of Mitchell's first novel from that of his last in 1934.1 But even in this short period the differences between Stained Radiance and Grey Granite, although great in terms of style and content, cannot conceal the evidence of an overall and key development within Mitchell's work. It has already been argued that the portrayal of Malcom Maudslay in The Thirteenth Disciple has to be seen as the first stage in a developmental process which is completed by John Garland in Stained Radiance and which is of importance in relation to Mitchell's own life. It is necessary to bear this in mind in relation to what is to follow. In those works the individual as hero reaches its highest expression in Mitchell's fiction. Even though Garland and Maudslay cannot act out with the confines of a restraining reality the responsibility for their respective triumphs over a shared and potentially destructive pessimism is the result of their own actions and decisions. Neither makes any real contribution to the struggle against the ubiquitous evils of economic dislocation, unemployment and poverty which provide the background to their adult lives simply because these books deal with the development of a broader understanding in relation to their central characters and the outside world. Maudslay and Garland are, at least initially, at war with themselves and the outside world.2 Once these inner tensions have been resolved, in the course of The Thirteenth/

1. That is, Stained Radiance, September 1930 and Grey Granite, November 1934.

2. Somewhat after the manner described by Miyoshi, The Divided Self, pp.207-208, in relation to Tennyson's young man in his poem "Maud", "who undergoes violent alterations of mood ... 'At war with myself and a wretched race!'".
Thirteenth Disciple to Stained Radiance development described earlier, Garland stands on the verge of committing his life to the struggle against evil in general and chooses a political mode to do so. Although political action, in the shape of the Anarchocommunist Party, is the chosen mechanism it is left to other characters in Mitchell's later fiction to define both the nature of the evil and the precise political manner in which it is to be fought.

This is certainly so in the case of Three Go Back (1932) and particularly Gay Hunter (1934) where the emphasis shifts away from the investigation of the conflicting emotions of the individual to looking at their reactions to events in the outside world. In the former, Clair Stranlay and Keith Sinclair help the otherwise pacific Cro-Magnards of pre-history to resist the onslaught of the evil, warlike attentions of the Neanderthalers. The parallel between the Neanderthalers and their twentieth century counterparts is made explicit just in case the reader is in any doubt as to the nature of the evil, its relevance to the nineteen thirties and the need for its eradication. Similarly Gay later becomes the focus for the struggle against Fascism in the far-future with all the immediacy and appropriateness such a topic had in 1934. Unlike Garland and Maudslay, Clair and Gay actively participate in a real struggle against identifiable evils yet they are essentially outsiders to that struggle. Like the hero of The Sleeper Awakes, they obviously sympathise with the people they help and lead but are/

3. Three Go Back, p.213. Thus, Keith Sinclair to Clair on the ancestry of different elements in class-divided society: "'Men - The Cro-Magnards and the stock that produced ourselves - are decent, kindly animals of anthropoid blood, like the chimpanzee and gibbon. But there is another strain - the gorilla and perhaps these Neanderthalers - the sullen, individualist beast whose ferocity is perhaps maladjustment of body and a general odd, black resentment against life'. 'Like the militarists and the hanging judges and the gloomy dead of the twentieth century?' 'Exactly'."
are insulated and detached because they are of another place and another time. Despite the heroines' attempts at fostering understanding with the hunters, largely it must be said through the liberality of their sexual mores - Clair mating with a hunter called Aerte, Gay with one called Rem - each returns to her own time to wage the struggle against evil there. The logical conclusion to this development in Mitchell's work is for the individual firstly to recognise that evil exists and that he must fight it, as do Maudslay and especially Garland; then for that evil to be defined and fought against as is the case in relation to Clair and Gay; and finally, for the central character to be of the time and background within which that struggle is located. Before looking at A Scots Quair and Spartacus as the culmination of this trend, it is necessary to say something regarding the remaining two pieces of Mitchell's fiction not so far dealt with at any great length.

The Lost Trumpet (1932) and Image and Superscription (1933) belong in terms of publication and to an extent in subject matter and style to a second, intermediate phase of Mitchell's work, falling between Stained Radiance, and The Thirteenth Disciple on one hand and Spartacus and Grey Granite on the other. Like Three Go Back and Gay Hunter, each has a large helping of romance and, in the case of The Lost Trumpet, an equally indigestible portion of fantasy to help convey the meaning. Image and Superscription parallels Stained Radiance and The Thirteenth Disciple in the struggle of the central character to come to terms with the evils of the world but departs from the formula when Gershom opts out of the challenge through the flight of fantasy with which the novel ends. In Image and Superscription the evil which Gershom turns his back on is the religious fanaticism epitomised by his father's heartless creed - named the Christian-Israelite Church/
Church, where in The Lost Trumpet it is the inhibiting themes, conventions and pre-occupations of civilisation which form the burdens on mankind. In each novel the mode of response to the perceived evil is individualistic: Gershom turns his back on it, the diverse collection of adventurers in The Lost Trumpet simply determining to "be their essential selves". The most ostensibly Diffusionist work of Mitchell's fiction, The Lost Trumpet is also his poorest piece perhaps because it is his (only) attempt to argue that the world's salvation resides in the individual looking to the emergence of an innate goodness inherited from the Golden Age but now constricted by the demands of civilisation. As an attempt to translate Diffusionism into a philosophy of action The Lost Trumpet simply succeeds in restating the question as to how the concerned individual is to fight these evils defined as the inhibiting constraints of civilisation. The Maudslay-Garland development from confusion and self-doubt to commitment implies the triumph of one aspect of their persona over its rival: the victory of compassion over selfishness. In The Lost Trumpet and Image and Superscription however the opposite is the case: the individualistic responses to the evils of the world effectively signal the triumph of selfishness over compassion. This equation is somewhat fudged in relation to The Lost Trumpet but it is equally pertinent to contend that although evil may be combated as a/

4. Image and Superscription, p.18. Intended as a reconciliation between Gentile and Jew Gershom's father attracts many converts to "The rigour of his rule, the wearing of uniform, the non-cutting of hair, even, in a darkened chamber and two minutes of fumbling agony, the rite of circumcision".

5. The Lost Trumpet, p.139.

6. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, p.56, contends in relation to the meaning of The Lost Trumpet that: "This essential self is latent in us all and the world will not become a better place until each individual makes this personal discovery".
a result of Saloney, Pelagueya and Marrot's knowledge of the self derived from their adventure - the former two who marry and journey back to their native Russia, the latter embracing his communist creed with renewed vigour - that such responses are more a by-product of their development as opposed to its main purpose. Thus, other characters, Aslaug Simonsen and Quaritch, who also marry, and Huebsch emerge from their experience enlightened about themselves, but equipped with neither the commitment nor the mechanism to join battle with evil. Ultimately, The Lost Trumpet and Image and Superscription have to be seen as the extension of those features in Maudslay's and Garland's psyche whose defeat is signalled by the development culminating in Garland's commitment. Thematically, The Lost Trumpet and Image and Superscription form an antithetical parallel to Three Go Back, Stained Radiance and Gay Hunter, whose heroes and heroines are forced into an acceptance of the need to fight against the evil they encounter. In Spartacus and Grey Granite the central argument contained in The Lost Trumpet, as to the individual's duty to "be his essential self", is emphatically repudiated by the sacrifice of Spartacus and Ewan to the cause of helping mankind.

Spartacus and A Scots Quair (particularly Grey Granite) therefore comprise the third phase of Mitchell's fiction. Not only is the nature of evil defined and the central characters committed to fighting it, but they are of the time and of the class which, through their actions, they hope to lead to victory. In terms of publication A Scots Quair spans the period from August 1932 to November 1934. The internal structure of the trilogy and, particularly, the development of the conflict between Chris and Ewan, replicates the development in Mitchell's thinking, seen by the movement from the, in one sense, static/
static 7 individualism of Maudslay and Garland through the concerned actions of Clair and Gay and ending in Ewan's commitment to the one perceived reality of the class struggle and his role within it. 

*Spartacus* was written and published (August 1933) between *Cloud Howe* (May 1933) and *Grey Granite* (November 1934). It is therefore not surprising that the theme of the individual and revolutionary activity should find expression in the very different settings of *A Scots Quair* and *Spartacus*. Both works are firmly located within the main intellectual preoccupations associated with the left-ward shift of opinion of the period, particularly in the counter-point provided by the two ways of seeing represented by Chris and her son, Ewan. Where *Stained Radiance* approached the issue of political commitment from a personal viewpoint, in respect of Garland's linear three-stage development (preceded by Maudslay's oscillations in *The Thirteenth Disciple*), the central question concerning the identification by the activist with the proletariat is left unanswered. Garland's reasons for commitment to revolutionary politics are almost purely personal - evil must be fought, but precisely how and even why is left rather vague. Those questions posed implicitly by the commitment to revolutionary politics seen at the conclusion to *Stained Radiance* are only taken up systematically some four years later in *A Scots Quair*. Thus, these semi-autobiographical first novels involve their central characters in the resolution of a tension between domesticity, adventure and revolutionary politics while at the culmination to this progression Garland stands on the verge of a life committed to revolutionary action. With *Three Go Back and Gay Hunter* providing a more open definition of evil and the/

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7. Static in the sense that *The Thirteenth Disciple* to *Stained Radiance* progression ends with Garland's decision to commit himself to the cause of revolutionary politics without any indication as to how this is to work in practice.
the need for the concerned individual to combat it, *A Scots Quair* takes up, elaborates, redefines and develops the perceptions of reality which may earlier be seen as giving rise to the tensions affecting Garland and Maudslay. It is therefore important to see in the characterisation of Chris and Ewan, in the former's passivity to social injustice and eventual return to the quietude of the croft and the latter's decision to take on the evils of the world through political commitment, the reflection and redefinition of the tensions affecting the central characters of *The Thirteenth Disciple* and *Stained Radiance*. Moreover, while Swan stands as the culmination to the trend suggested in the actions of Garland, Clair Stranlay, Keith Sinclair and Gay Hunter and including Spartacus; Chris may be seen as an extension of the escapism implicit in *The Lost Trumpet* and *Image and Superscription*.

Chris and Ewan are located within a context of historical and personal change which neither chooses but in terms of which each must decide how they will react on a personal and social level. Few would deny the politicality of *A Scots Quair* but the relationship of Chris and Ewan has not been subjected to the kind of analysis demanded through a recognition of the movement away from the self and towards commitment indicated previously in relation to Mitchell's work. Mother and son become the focal point of the trilogy from its physical mid-point halfway through *Cloud Howe* when Ewan makes his first appearance as a character in his own right. Mitchell's depiction of the subsequent actions of mother and son are however at such variance as to require further comment.

The majority of critics who have dealt with *A Scots Quair* agree that, in comparison to the first two books, *Gray Granite* suffers from a deterioration in quality. Most criticism of *Gray Granite* has, in fact, centred around what is seen as the unnatural and dogmatic intrusion of/
of Ewan's revolutionary beliefs, this being held responsible for flaws of structure and characterisation. Typical of this school are D.F. Young, Kurt Wittig, Ian S. Munro and Ivor Brown, the latter contending in an otherwise sympathetic foreword to the Quair that in Grey Granite:

"The great pattern appears to crumble in the author's hands, and the talent, which had been so finely maturing suddenly seems younger and cruder".8

D.F. Young is rather more overt in his estimation that the intrusion of Mitchell's own political beliefs conveyed in the characterisation of Ewan Tavenale are to blame for the disintegration of the third book of the Quair noted by Brown:

"It is the imposition of a crude political theorising upon the fundamental and universal themes latent in the Diffusionist myth which causes the falling off in imaginative power".9

In similar fashion Kurt Wittig notes that Grey Granite:

"is sometimes doctrinaire, and artistically inferior to the other two",10

with Ian S. Munro adding the view that because:

"Mitchell's view of life was largely intuitive and frequently emotional; ... he was a better artist than politician ... Grey Granite has its faults, crudities and excesses".11

Grey Granite does certainly show evidence of a hurried completion but it is arguable that any lessening in quality has little to do with:

9. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, pp.139-140.
F.R. Hart, The Scottish Novel, (London, 1973), p.239, attributes "the let-down of the third part of the trilogy" to "technical faults" and in a reference to Ewan's political career "the lessening of intensity and the narrowing of concern" judging that the latter is an/
with the intrusion of a revolutionary political activist into the structure of the novel. One reason for a central deficiency in Grey Granite may be that as Jecz Koomanova argues, Mitchell was on less sure ground in his depiction of life in an industrial city by comparison with the knowledge he had of life on the land, the latter having been filtered down to him by an older generation and compounded by his own early experiences on the croft. It is perhaps because of this factor that the texture of the folk voices in Sunset Song is more poetic and evocative than their more sparsely utilised counterparts in Grey Granite. On the other hand Mitchell may have chosen deliberately to diminish this aspect of his technique in order to reflect and convey the heterogeneous and disparate aspects of city life through the sometimes faltering rhythm of the third book. In this respect it is worthwhile commenting on F.R. Hart's judgement that Grey Granite is weaker than Cloud Howe as a result of Duncairn's "fragmentariness" in contrast with the "one self" of Segget despite "its pathetically fallen state". Another view is suggested however when the relationships of the central characters to their environment are considered. In Cloud Howe both Chris and Robert are outsiders to the lives of the spinners and the people of Segget. Robert dies perplexed and raging at his congregation, who have as much understanding of his final sermon as he had of them in his pastoral role, while Chris eventually leaves the town without the slightest regret. In stark contrast in Sunset Song Chris experiences crofting life from an inevitable part of the trilogy's meaning and form. It is of interest to note that Mitchell considered the third book to be superior to the others comprising the Quair. Thus, in an undated letter to R.B. Cruickshank he claimed "It's much the best of the three ... Where has your critical faculty gone - been reading Aggie whore Mackenzie or summat?"

12. J. Koomanova, "A Scots Quair and its Relevance to the Scottish Proletarian Struggle of the 1930's", in (Eds) P.G. Tortosa and R.L. Ortega, English Literature and the Working Class, (Seville, 1980). See also "Lewis Grassic Gibbon: A Pioneer of Socialist Realism", Journal of Brno University, 1955, by the same author. Mitchell's statement on the matter tends to substantiate Koomanova's view. Thus in the synopsis for the proposed autobiography "Memoirs of a Materialist" he intended writing an "Essay on the class war from the viewpoint of one who in origins (peasant) was outside the war".

13. F.R. Hart, The Scottish Novel, p.239.
from the 'inside'; similarly, in Grey Granite Ewan comes to experience proletarian life from the 'inside', first as an apprentice and then as a political activist. Each are a part of the changes which take place in their environment in contrast to the picture of Chris and Robert, isolated in the Manse, misunderstood and sometimes even despised by the Segget worthies and spinners alike.

Standing at the opposite extreme from those critics mentioned earlier for whom Ewan's political creed diminishes the power of Grey Granite, Kocmanova, and two other Marxist critics argue that despite some deterioration in Grey Granite, Ewan's ideologically grounded grasp of history is a crucial contribution to the dynamism of the trilogy. Moreover, for Roy Johnson, Ewan is a more valid character than Chris because his apprehension of change is:

"a materialist, militantly Marxist view of history as the outcome of perpetual class struggle".  

Similarly Ian Milner views one of the strengths of Grey Granite as being its portrayal of:

"the working class struggle against economic oppression and cross-currents in the workers' movement towards Socialism".

While both critics are correct in regard to the nature of Ewan's political creed, his validity as a character cannot be estimated from/
from the assumption that he has chosen the 'right' side in the class struggle. Rather it is the juxtaposition of the antithetical world views held by Chris and Ewan which resides at the heart of an understanding of *A Scots Quair*. This said, these world views may be seen to be deeply political, comprising the extension of a central preoccupation of Mitchell's fiction - the struggle between selfishness and selflessness.

It has however become something approaching the norm to view Mitchell's characterisation of Chris as being more real and valid in terms of the necessary artistic commitment to the demands of reality and verisimilitude than his depiction of Ewan. Typifying such a view Ian Campbell writes that:

"Chris is a real person, she embodies feelings he (Mitchell) had known all his life and knew to be shared by his readers, his family, the originals behind his fictional characters. Ewan is an invention, a man embodying ideas which were developed, did not grow naturally like love for the smell of the land, or the sound of the curlew's cry. Ewan is, in short, intellectualised, while Chris is a more emotional creation".17

While it is not denied that Chris's characterisation in *Sunset Song* accords with Campbell's argument it is rather more difficult to justify its extension in relation to her in the remainder of the trilogy. It will be argued that far from being a "more emotional" creation than Ewan, Mitchell drew on emotions at least the equal of his love of the land as the source for his characterisation of Ewan Tavendale. Campbell does however provide a key to an understanding of the obvious dichotomy existing between mother and son. Drawing on what is the central theme/

theme of Masao Miyoshi’s The Divided Self Campbell argues that:

"To some extent Mitchell is using the novel as a battleground for his own conflicting emotions, a ground on which their genesis and development may be traced, on which understanding may lead to control, perhaps to a new development".18

It has been argued that Mitchell was deeply affected by the existence of suffering and that this was a central factor leading to his acceptance of the necessity for revolutionary political solutions. If this is so then it might be expected that Chris, as a "more emotional creation" than Ewan, as Campbell puts it, would display some evidence of compassion for suffering humanity. It will be argued that she does not and that when it seems likely that she will do so it is of minimal significance when compared to that evidenced by her son in Grey Granite. Chris’s lack of compassionate involvement with and on behalf of other people in fact supplies one pole of a dynamic tension with the angry compassion of her son supplying the other. The great issue at the heart of A Scots Quair is not simply about love of the land and nostalgia for the vanished ways of the past versus the perceived necessity for revolutionary commitment. The Quair is about two kinds of morality: the one deeply personal, introspective, being true to the self; the other just as deeply located, but outward going and a denial of self. Chris’s emotional attachment to the land and Ewan’s to the proletariat are the result of this tension.

Jessie Kocmanova argues that the third book of the Quair is flawed by the weaker characterisation of Chris in comparison with her obvious strength of character and resilience to change evidenced in Sunset Song and Cloud Howe.19 But it may be argued that it is not so/

18. Ibid.

so much that Mitchell's characterisation of Chris diminishes, but that she is diminished as an individual by the growth of Ewan as a character, especially in the development of a world view so radically different from her own. Thus, her attraction to the peace and quietude of the land, stern master though it is, is a powerful emotion which grows stronger and not weaker - as Kocmanova's argument demands - as her son's emotional commitment to humanity intensifies. Chris retains her vitality as a character to the end in _Cloud Howe_ and _Grey Granite_, Mitchell pointedly taking her to the very threshold of commitment capable of developing in the manner of his own real-life emotional stand-point, but each time he allows her to recede into individualism and passivity. Her son's commitment to revolutionary politics certainly involves major ethical problems but if, as Kant believed, actions are justified by their underlying motivation, then Ewan is, despite Campbell's claim, perhaps an even more accurate and truthful representation of Mitchell himself. This is especially so in view of Chris's sometimes quite irksome passivity towards the existence of injustice and suffering.

Ewan stands as the culminating of a development in Mitchell's fiction beginning with _Stained Radiance_ and containing his characterisation of Maudsley, Garland, Clair Stranlay, Keith Sinclair, Gay Hunter and Spartacus. In contra-distinction Chris stands along with Gershom Jenreel in _Image and Superscription_ as the major exception to this movement towards compassion leading to commitment. Even the motley band of adventurers and tourists in _The Lost Trumpet_ are more active in pursuing answers to the problems facing mankind. The levity of Gershom and Sester's flight from responsibility with which _Image and Superscription_ closes may be seen as a parody of Chris's passivity and rejection of struggle. Yet Chris is a powerful character simply because she reflects a dominant socio-political ethos which commands internationalisation of compassion and rejects the validity of/
of revolutionary struggle on behalf of others. It is perhaps because Chris reflects accepted values while Ewan espouses alternative, revolutionary solutions that the reader may find Chris more 'believable'. This does not make her more important nor should it be claimed that she necessarily stands as the only legitimate vector of the author's emotions.
b) Chris and Ewan: Two Ways of Seeing and Feeling

Chris's perception of social change and class divisions is uniquely grounded in her peasant origins. Even so, there are various junctures in *A Scots Quair* where, having perceived the unpleasant realities of class-divided society, Chris retreats back into individualism as of choice. Significantly, these reactions to class differences are characterised by an overall confusion, despite some notable instances of class-conscious insights and clarity on her part. Where Chris does develop in a political and emotional sense it is because others and, most notably Robert Colquhoun, her second husband, provide her with the opportunity. Of all Mitchell's characters, Chris Guthrie is the best known but, paradoxically for a writer who cast all his major creations as men or women of action, she is also the most passive in her reaction to social change and its consequences. Her confusion and almost wilful inability to develop past an intuitive grasp of class relationships, in contra-distinction to her son, is too striking not to say something about the author's intention in the second half of the *Quair*.

Ian Campbell has sought to draw a parallel between Chris Guthrie and Thea Mayven, John Garland's girlfriend and later wife, in *Stained Radiance*. Sharing an ambiguity to the land of their birth and towards the urban working class, Thea displays a detached almost contemptuous attitude, reflected by Chris, in relation to life outside the croft. Thus/

Thus, Thea has:

"a vague, indifferent republicanism, a vague, indifferent contempt of royalty, and all the peasants' dislike and distrust of the working class".21

The crucial difference between Thea and Chris is one of attitude, stemming from their environment. Thea has her moments of longing for the croft,22 but they are more the result of her residence in far-off London than the kind of feelings which affect Chris. As an individual Thea is far more worldly-wise than Chris, even if only because she has to cope with Garland's wild oscillations between optimism and despair, the exigencies of being poor and alone in London, not to mention the daunting prospect her husband's eventual commitment to revolutionary politics entails. By contrast, Chris is never far enough from the land to gain a healthy perspective and as a result is bound up and almost totally absorbed in the practically closed environment of the crofting community, despite her youthful sojourn into and contact with education. Once she is denied the opportunity of developing the "English" and educated part of her personality, Chris, the daughter of John Guthrie the crofter, attains enduring predominance. She is alternatively attracted and repelled by the language, attitudes and lifestyles of the surrounding crofters but, even when the death of her father removes the necessity of her staying on the croft, Chris's decision to do so bespeaks an inherent conservatism of character and perception. This perhaps even more than the difference of environment separates Chris from Thea who is able to react successfully to the challenge of change which is life. This conservatism is pointed up in the aftermath of her father's funeral when Chris comes to the/


the realisation that her future is intrinsically related to the land:

"She walked weeping then, stricken and frightened because of that knowledge that had come on her, she could never leave it, this life of toiling days and the needs of beasts and the smoke of wood fires and the air that stung your throat so acrid, Autumn and Spring, she was bound and held as though they had imprisoned her here. And her fine bit plannings! - ".23

Seen in isolation the above passage casts Chris as the unwilling victim of almost mystic forces which, while triggering her deepest emotions, trap her into subservience to the land. The passage preceding it in Sunset Song cast a somewhat different perspective however. It is not so much the land but Chris's cynical disdain for the efforts of her fellow men to come to terms with life which determine her subservience. In this passage life is relegated to a mere appendage of the natural order. It is thus Chris herself who is responsible for her fate, disdaining:

" ... the folk who wrote and fought and were learned, teaching and saying and praying, they lasted but as a breath, a mist of fog in the hills, but the land was forever ... ".24

Lyrical and evocative as is this depiction of Chris's emotions, they yet amount to the portrayal of what are at base anti-human values. While Chris can accept the land because of its permanence, the thought of men struggling with basic questions of existence - "folk who wrote ... were learned, teaching and saying and praying" - strike no chord of sympathy in her. The cruel twist of fate is that she is to bear a child who will ask just these questions. Perhaps, given the perpetuation of her life on the croft at Blawearie, such attitudes would have remained in tune with her environment, as indeed John Guthrie and/

24. Ibid. p.117.
and Rob Galt had remained in concert with theirs despite being trapped in an equally oppressive subservience to the land. It is when Chris undergoes the transition first to Segget then to Duncairn that her deepest emotions and the highly individualistic mode of perception stemming therefrom are found to be out of phase within a different set of social parameters. So this elevation of the inanimate and enduring over the human and ephemeral would be bound to cause feelings of insecurity and hopeless yearning for Chris even had she stayed on the croft, just as Guthrie and Galt become more and more mentally unstable as time passes.

The move to Segget on her marriage to Colquhoun which opens Book Two of the Quair brings Chris into contact with a heterogeneous class structure for the first time. The conflict between the ways of the croft and those of books, learning and proper speech which had occupied her mind as an adolescent disappears like the chimera it is to be replaced by the disturbing actuality of her new and precisely defined position as the Minister's wife. Although outwardly unworried by the speculation among Segget worthies regarding her humble origins and new status, Chris is forced for the very first time to a consideration of class-based attitudes and values which her previous ambiguous attitude to the peasantry and their ways had never involved.

At first it seems that she can reconcile her 'desertion' of the peasantry for the gentry despite her realisation that her father's attitude, had he been alive, would have translated into the pungent injunction for her to:

"'Come out of that, quean, with your dirt of gentry!'" 26

25. Rob Galt is the central character in the short story "Clay" in Scottish Scene.

26. Cloud Howe, p.109
Thrusting such uncomfortable thoughts to one side, Chris busies herself in her new role at the Manse, but under the pressures the class structures of Segget bring in their wake the practical equilibrium of her youth vanishes forever. Thus, in *Sunset Song*, even the trauma of her last meeting with her first husband prior to his departure and death at the front fails to disturb the native self-assurance which allows her to pick up the shreds of her shattered life on the croft. In complete contrast she is never completely at ease as the Minister's wife, despite her love of her husband, the comfort of a growing son and economic security. Chris's unease at her almost artificial insertion into a class structure she knows little of and cares even less for is indicated by the way Mitchell exposes her inconsistency of behaviour in relation to others.

Chris does have an awareness of class differences but the manifestation of this perception is almost haphazard as well as being instinctive. So it is that the farm labourer who is invited to share a meal with them at the Manse arouses Chris's deepest emotions for her ex-class:

"... they all ate up, Muir, Melvin and Meiklesbogs, and the fee'd man that blushed and was shy, not just looked it. Chris liked him best, with that sudden compassion that always came on her as she looked at one of his kind - that conviction that he and his like were the REAL, they were the salt and savour of earth".27

But this instinctive, emotional certainty that her class, the peasantry, were "the salt and savour of earth" and therefore more valid in a most profound sense than other social classes is the result of Chris's abstraction from that class.28 Her idealisation of the peasantry/

27. Cloud Howe, p.35.

28. Mitchell's notion of the crofter permanent seen in Chapter 3 may be seen as the source of his depiction of Chris's idealisation of the peasantry as a class.
peasantry - "the salt and savour of earth" - is the predictable result of the distorting influence her new class position entails. There is even a faint odour of condescension in her observation, occasioned as it is by the labourer's diffidence and uncertainty at table: he and his kind may be lacking in social graces but are a dab-hand when it comes to "bringing home the kye". After all, despite her unease as the wife of the Minister, Chris's force of personality enables her to hold her own in her new surroundings while the reality of the "fee'd man's" future is the gruelling unending struggle with the land outlined in Sunset Song. Still, Chris's "sudden compassion" is a real and noble sentiment. Yet, even this virtue is undermined by her earlier inconsiderate treatment of the maid who comes to work at the Manse.

Shortly following her arrival Else, somewhat precociously, gives Chris an airy "hello", to which her mistress responds in a manner indicative of her unease:

"Chris felt the blood in the tips of her ears, she saw plain the thing in the great lump's mind. 'You call me Mrs. Colquhoun, you know, Else. And you get up smart in the morning as well, else we'll need another maid at the Manse'.

Else went dirt-white and closed up her mouth".29

With the above in mind one wonders whether Chris would have felt quite so compassionate towards the farm labourer had he been like Else, a little more precocious, and a little less deferential and unsure. Chris's observations on the farm labourer and "his kind" are those articulated by a member of another social class for whom the labourer is no threat in his present subdued condition. Contrast the intrinsic condescension of this compassion with the cutting edge of her remarks to Else - a/

29. Cloud Howe, p.11.
a girl who in origins and temperament is almost identical to her self—delivered with the full force conferred by the power relations existing between employer and employee—and something of Chris's unease becomes more apparent.

As she settles into her new life with Robert so Chris is increasingly forced to define her new class position, doing so by an instinctive and increasing retrospection to her origins on the croft. Thus, Chris dutifully acts as hostess when her husband arranges to have Mr. Geddes, the local dominie, his wife and staff to tea in a vain attempt at recruiting them to his "Segget League", designed to bring about the regeneration of the town through a healing of the class divisions between the proletarian spinners and the good burghers of Segget. Chris's faith in Robert's venture, never of any significant extent, is tested to breaking point when Mrs. Geddes suggests rather forcefully that she should join the Women's Rural Institute. Chris's retort is sharp and to the point:

"I was brought up on a croft and married on one, and I mind what a nuisance we thought some folk, visiting and prying and blithering about socials, doing everything to help us, or so they would think—except to get out and work with the work'."

This response is, of course, an implicit condemnation of Robert's hopes for a League composed of just such people pledged to help the less fortunate and better their lot. Yet the harking back to the hard life on the croft is not particularly perceptive on Chris's part, nor is it very honest. The Women's Rural Institute, while staffed by what might not unkindly be termed 'do-gooders', was, by any account, a harmless attempt to enrich the lives of country women and was never intended to

to reform class relationships or to help the crofter-wife with her work.\textsuperscript{31} Chris's identification of the W.R.I.'s inability to help with the struggle to wrest a living from the land - the real issue according to Chris - completely misses the point in terms of the economics of rural life, the W.R.I. being symptomatic of the realities of class differences and not their cause. Thus, Chris's point, although invoking the difference between the middle class W.R.I. "prying" and "blithering" individual typified by Mrs. Geddes and the crofter, although pungent, is lacking in any real appreciation as to why such class differences exist or what should be done.

Although Chris's background in a closed crofting environment denies her the breadth of experience necessary for her to advance anything other than the very personalised and limited attack on Mrs. Geddes, she is almost inevitably drawn into a closer definition of class relationships through her life in Segget. But it is not until her meeting with Mowat the Fascist mill owner that the idealisation of the peasantry - the "salt and savour of earth" heroically working the recalcitrant red clay - is replaced for the first time by evidence of a real class consciousness and feeling for others. This takes the form of her realisation that her people had always had to struggle to live, not just because crofting was a hard life, but because of the existence of an oppressing class. Rounding on Mowat's idea of a society constructed on 'good' Fascist principles of "Discipline, order, hierarchy—all that",\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31} The Women's Rural Institute was founded in 1915 to develop and improve conditions of rural life for women. It aimed to do this particularly in an educational, intellectual and social context.

\textsuperscript{32} Cloud Howe, p.112.
Chris glimpses the reality underlying history:

"And what's going to happen when you and your kind rule us, again as of old, Mr. Mowat? Was there ever the kind of Scotland you preach? - Happy, at ease, the folk on the land well-fed, the folk in the pulpits well-feared, the gentry doing great deeds? It's just a gab and a tale, no more, I haven't read history since I was at school, but I mind well enough what that Scotland was. I've been to Dunnottar Castle and seen there the ways that the gentry once liked to keep order. If it came to the push between you and the spinners I think I would give the spinners my vote' ... suddenly she'd said so much she didn't say, all the pageant of history since history began up here in the windy Mearns Howe: the ancient rites of blood and atonement where the Standing Stones stood up as dead kings; the clownings and cruelties of leaders and chiefs; and the folk - her folk - who kept such alive - dying frozen at night in their eirdes, earth-houses, chaying from the blink of day for a meal, serfs and land-workers whom the Mowats rode down, whom the armies harried and the kings spat on ...."33

It is not just that this awakening forces Chris to side with the spinners against Mowat - which is a significant enough development in itself - but that she has progressed from dismissive disdain for the middle class meddlers of the W.R.I. to an identification of herself with the peasantry - "her folk" in distinction to the peasantry as "they" as it had been in her eulogy of the fee'd man - as a class exploited and degraded by virtue of class relationships. It is this conception of history as oppression which Ewan will later build on from a basis of compassion, adding the catalyst of revolutionary intent. For his mother, however, it signifies the high water-mark of her consciousness and feeling for oppressed humanity. Although taking the side of the proletariat during the General Strike of 1926, Robert and Chris never become involved in the Labour Party or the actual day to day struggles of the workers in Segget, except for the former's intercession on behalf of the spinners forcing Mowat to/

33. Cloud Howe, pp.112-113.
to clean up his works. Yet, even in this, Robert's actions smack of
the concerned bourgeois bringing both his dog-collar and class position
to bear on an unreasonable employer's treatment of an inferior class.
Robert and Chris are outsiders to the social structure of Segget, with
Chris more a passive observer than anything else, even if they choose
what might be termed the 'right side', in terms of the book's underlying
morality.

However, Chris and Robert are a perfect compliment to each other.
Robert supplies the necessary impetus deriving from his belief that
something must be done against the evil of the spinners' poverty-
striken lifestyle. - Chris participating (without enthusiasm) in his
ventures, her intuitive class-based antagonism to the ruling class - "the
dirt of gentry" - supplying a vital cutting edge. Without it there is
every possibility that Colquohoun would have persevered with his Segget
League and tactic of petitioning Mowat to improve the workers' conditions
of employment. As it is, it is Chris who effects the demise of the
League through her caustic rebuff to Mrs. Geddes and it is she, not her
husband, who rejects Mowat's neo-Fascist plans for the town. As was
seen, her first rebuttal of Mowat involved Chris in a class-based
appraisal of the Scottish past. The second is as vehement, but is more
positive as Chris is drawn into a definition of her class alignment with
a terseness and economy which sees Colquohoun forced into agreement, but
almost apologising to Mowat on account of his wife's abruptness. Asked
by Mowat for their help in forming "the O.M.S., a volunteer army",35

The Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (O.M.S.) was an
ostensibly non-Governmental body set up "in the early autumn of 1925
to recruit, train and organise, in the Government's words 'those
citizens who would be prepared to volunteer to maintain supplies and
services in the event of a General Strike'. The O.M.S. was defined
as 'an association of loyal citizens organised in the public interest ...
who, when called upon by the constitutional authority, will/
aimed at countering the effects of the General Strike:

"Robert said 'Well, Christine, what do you say?' and Chris didn't much care for she didn't much hope. Then she looked at Mowat, elegant, neat, in his London clothes, with his tended hair and his charming look; and the saggy pouches under his eyes. And it seemed she was looking at more than Mowat, the class that had made of the folk of Segget the dirt-hungry folk that they had been and were - made them so in sheer greed and sheer brag. You had little hope what the miners could do, them or the Labour leaders or Robert, but they couldn't though they tried make a worse mess than Mowat and his kind had done, you knew. So you just said 'No'. Robert smiled at Mowat. 'That's Chris's answer, a trifle abrupt. And I can't help the O.M.S. myself - ".

Thus, Chris's first encounter with Mowat sees her expound a view of history as class-based oppression while the second up-dates this appreciation ranging the miners, the spinners and their class against Mowat and his. Robert and she clearly side with the strikers in 1926 and, apart from the spinners, are alone in Segget in doing so, but neither she nor her husband became totally identified with that class. Tellingly the only service Robert and she actually contribute to the struggle of the spinners in relation to the strike helps emphasise the isolation of the Manse from the bitter reality of that conflict.

Some of the younger and more radical of the spinners determine to blow up a bridge near Segget in order to de-rail a train-load of 'blacklegs' travelling south from Dundon and Robert is approached by John Cronin, the local Labour Party secretary, to help thwart the de-railing. Cronin's main concern is the legal retribution he fears will/
will follow, but Robert is presumably motivated by humanitarian considerations as well. Whatever the motivation the successful forestalling of the spinners in their aims causes Chris such exertion that Robert's child is born prematurely and so dies. This event is significant in its symbolic connotations. Not only does it reflect the still-born action of the General Strike, called-off after only nine days, but the collapse of the action and death of his child shakes Robert's belief to the core before plunging him into a state of religious mysticism where the only reality is the Christ he envisions on the outskirts of Segget one day. Without Robert's compassion for suffering humanity Chris reverts, one might almost say regresses, into a passivity towards the wider issues of the community. Although prophesying revolution on hearing of the evictions in Segget following Mowat's bankruptcy and of the Means Test, her lack of reply to Ake's pessimism signals her agreement that it was right and proper that she and Ake should do nothing at all against such instances of glaring wrong:

"Chris said 'They won't stand for it, there'll be revolution', and Ake sneered 'Revolution? They'll starve and say nothing. Or 'Come and walk on my face and I'll give you a vote!'" 38

Without the animating spirit of her husband's concern, Chris cannot break out of an enervating individualism which permits her to recognise the revolutionary potential of events but denies her the will to contribute to such a development. Chris is as emotionally affected as her husband by the news that a homeless couple's child has been gnawed by a rat in the night, but it is Robert who is moved to action and not Chris. Rudely jerked from his quietistic fervour back into the real world of homelessness and want, Robert delivers his last sermon in which the/

37. Mitchell wrote a poem entitled "An Old Theme" on the General Strike which he footnoted with the words: "On the surrender of G.C.T.U.C. on 12 June 1926". This poem remains among his unpublished papers.
38. Cloud Howe, p.209.
the surgical metaphor present in Mitchell's essay "Glasgow" is used to startling effect. Cloud Howe thus closes with Robert Colquhoun apparently abjuring religion and urging revolutionary social change, advocating a:

"stark sure creed that will cut like a surgeon's knife through doubt and disease".39

Where does Colquhoun's death leave Chris? Far from absorbing her husband's revolutionary fervour, and being moved to action or understanding by the dramatic potential of his death - oozing blood from between clenched teeth onto the text of his revolutionary sermon - Chris retreats once more into herself. It is as if action and events bypass her, as if she is effectively immune from the changing tides of history both on a personal and a social level.

Recapping on Chris's life as it is portrayed up to the conclusion to Cloud Howe, it is apparent that all of the major decisions and emotional developments of her life are effected by other people or outside factors. Her dithering between a life on the croft and an education is resolved by her mother's suicide; her father's death sees her take over the croft, while Colquhoun courts, marries and carries her uncomplaining to the foreign environment of the town. At each juncture Chris could, but does not break away from her environment - at each juncture she opts for the course of action which is easiest for her to follow. This pattern is also discernible in Cloud Howe, being broken only in the two instances already indicated when her class-based antagonism to the gentry compels Colquhoun to a rejection of the solutions proposed by/

39. Ibid, p.221. R. Johnson "Lewis Grassic Gibbon and A Scots Quair: Politics in the Novel", Renaissance and Modern Studies, XX, 1976, argues that Robert abjures religion in this final sermon, but a counter argument is advanced later in the present chapter and also Chapter 8.
by Mowat. But, while supporting her husband in his humanitarian crusade and aiding his development of a more class-conscious application of his angry compassion, she only operates in the overall context of his actions. Robert feeds from Chris's atavistic hatred of the gentry and her glimpses of the exploitation and misery they and their class have caused, but his strength of commitment is nowhere vigorous enough to encourage her to take action against Mowat and his ilk. Chris does not so much stand outside history but is affected by a conception of change which sees history as a vast impersonal process which just must be 'tholed'. So it is that far from determining to carry on the struggle in her husband's absence, Chris announces to the stunned congregation that with Robert's death part of her life, a minute epoch in her life, is at an end:

"It is Finished".40

Like those philosophers described by Arthur O. Lovejoy in *The Great Chain of Being* Chris eulogises peace, stillness and immutability above all else precisely because her life on the land has bequeathed the unpalatable truth that the life and the strivings of human beings are bounded by the irrefragible parameters of "birth, copulation and death". This being the case Chris reacts by a relegation of the human element in history leading to the hopeless emotional yearning for immutability with which *Cloud Howe* closes. Thus, anticipating what the future holds in store following Robert's death, Chris stands looking out over the Howe for the last time:

"Now, with the broadening of the day, she could see the peaks of the Mounth wheel one by one into the line of the flow of the light, dun/

40. *Cloud Howe*, p.222.
... dun and sun-riding they rode down the Howe. Trusta towered first and north and north the peaks came fast, sun on the Howe and day on the Howe, her last day in Segget ere she went elsewhere, to new days and ways, to changes she could not foresee or foreknow".41

With that acute facility to define relationships Mitchell pictures Chris standing immobile as the hills of the Howe seem to wheel around with the rotation of the earth changing in relation to the sun. The reality of human society is tranposed onto the Howe where the once-immutable hills are seen to change before Chris's very eyes. Thus, Chris appears to attain, for an instant, the dream of immutability as standing immobile and deep in thought the very hills seem to change with the close of the day. Reality is only reimposed in her recognition that, after all, it is she who will be required to change and not the hills. Naturally self-contained, Chris is resigned rather than unhappy about this state of affairs.

One of the striking aspects of the Quair is the circuitous nature of Chris's existence, that part of her life which had begun at the very conclusion to Sunset Song among the standing stones culminates at the end of Cloud Howe with Chris looking wistfully at that which will endure forever:

"... the bare still rocks upturned to the sky".42

The rocks, whether in the position the last glacial shift left them or left standing by the efforts of an ancient civilisation now long vanished and forgotten, rest or stand as mute testimony to their immutability and to man's transience; sentiments shared and expressed/

41. Ibid, p.222.
42. Ibid, p.223.
expressed by Hugh MacDiarmid in his poem "On a Raised Beach" in the following way:

"These stones with their resolve that Creation shall not be injured by iconoclasts and quacks ..."

Events "happen" to Chris as they might happen to the inanimate rocks. She becomes involved when other people and events fashion that involvement just as the megaliths had once been roughly hewn and upraised in order to participate, for an instant, in the codes and observances of a civilisation now long vanished. But, the effects of Chris's progression from the land, through the intermediate semi-rural, semi-urban setting to the industrial city of Duncairn cannot be stayed by wistful and ineffective longing. Chris is immediately uneasy in an urban industrial environment with its engineering works, factory sirens, cold, wet and miserable foggy closes. Yet for a time she displays a native resistance to such things and even seems on the verge of accepting and adapting to her new environment. Initially the class relationships of the city present themselves to Chris on a level she can understand and accommodate. As has been seen Grey Granite opens with Chris making her way up the Gallowgate in the early morning fog through which she perceives the hustle and bustle of the city below:

"... (the) grind of the trams, the purr of the buses in the Royal Mile, the clang and swing of the trains in Grand Central, the swish and roll and oily call of the trawlers taking the Forthie's flood - ".43

Although apprehending the sounds of a city in the morning rush-hour Chris is cocooned in the enveloping fog while the dominant image of the city beyond the "yellow fog that hung tiny veils on her eyelashes" 44 is of a detached vibrant organism. But what is missing from Chris's/


44. Ibid.
Chris's view of the city is its real life-blood, the citizens; the city representing, for her, a 'clanging', 'purring', 'swishing' machine. Chris can even cope with this definition of the city as a pounding machine because she consciously distances herself from it, her location in the Gallowgate with the city set some way apart indicating this. But her distancing from the people of the city is both temporary and illusory. When Chris does become aware of the existence of the Duncairn proletariat, the slums they live in and the bosses they must needs fight, she exhibits an increasing disorientation and restlessness. Before this happens, however, she virtually isolates herself in an artificial universe of her own making and definition just as she had done in the thick fog in the Gallowgate. This time she does so in the microcosm of the closely defined relationships obtaining between the individuals occupying Ma Cleghorn's boarding house.

For Chris, initially, the class relationships of the city are represented by the inhabitants of the boarding house, and as such they form a source of occasional irritation but, more generally, of amusement. But they do not represent a threat to her: neither demanding her support as the spinners and strikers in Segget had or invoking the disgust which Mowat had aroused in her. As portrayed they are simulacra, poor imitations of the "real" people Chris had left on the crofts. Easily parodied Mitchell seizes the opportunity to elevate Chris by comparison with:

"Ena Lyon, the typist, powdered and lip-sticked, and awful up-to-date, baggy a bittle below the eyes and a voice like a harried peahen... Mr Clearmont, nice loon who went to the University ... if ever he'd a thought in his head it'd be easy to tell it, you'd hear the damn thing rattling about like a stone in a tin ... John Cushnie, all red, the clerk in Raggie Robertson's Drapery Depot, half-sulky, half-shy and would spend half an hour roping up his neck in a speckled tie ... Miss Murgatroyd sitting neat as a pin, Such Fino, and eating her/
her grapefruit up like a sparrow pecking at a bit of dung ... Poor Mr Piddle with his long thin neck and his long thin head, as bald as a neep and something the shape, would snap up his meat in a haste to be gone in search of news for the Daily Runner, a fine big paper, the pride of Duncairn, and awful useful for lining your shelves ..." 45

Each is bent on keeping up appearances, almost preening themselves instinctively as the animals some are compared to might be imagined as doing. It is almost as if the boarding house were a zoo with Chris becoming a joint keeper once she purchases a half-share from Ma Cleghorn. Ena Lyon is like "a harried peahen", Miss Murgatroyd eats her grapefruit "like a sparrow pecking at a bit of dung", and John Cushnie regales himself in a "speckled tie", by way of plumage. Miss Murgatroyd pecks at her food as an inquisitive bird investigates excrement, while the frenetic activities of the reporter leave almost as little to the imagination in relation to bodily functions as his name suggests. The over-riding impression of that section of humanity gathered together in the boarding house is of a collection of nervous and jittery animals preoccupied by the functions of feeding and defaecation. And as if to drive this point home the best educated of them, Clearmont, the undergraduate, has not a single thought in his head. Only two guests escape the withering censure of this passage, Ewan Tavendale and Sim Leslie the police sargent, late of Segget; these two individuals who will take up opposite sides in the class struggle which is to take place in Duncairn. But even in this Chris has no prescience of the role these future protagonists will assume, being driven by her instincts, disliking the policeman and harbouring the natural love of a mother for her son.

In contrast to the air of detachment with which Chris treats the boarders/

boarders (excepting Ewan, of course) she is immediately attracted to Ma Cleghorn. The reason for this is not difficult to find. Ma Cleghorn is the urban equivalent of the rural crofter working the boarding house from dawn to dusk with as much independence from outside forces as her situation permits. Her lodgers are the equivalent of the beasts kept by the crofter, and Ma Cleghorn is not averse to treating them as such. Chris is drawn to Ma Cleghorn because in a city environment where mutual interdependence and affectation is the norm - as judged by the lower middle class occupants of the house - she is independent and free from affectation, sitting:

"at the top of the table, her big red face set square on its neck, sonsy and sturdy, you'd liked her from the first, she you, you supposed you'd neither of you frills, you'd seen over much of this queer thing Life to try hide from its face by covering your own with a ready made complexion out of a jar, or ready made morals from the Unionist Club, or ready made fear and excitement and thrill out of the pages of the Daily Runner ...".46

Ma Cleghorn is a friend but what Chris yearns for is something deeper and more substantial in a relationship. Nevertheless Chris is no more honest with herself than are those she ridicules for hiding themselves behind masks of make-up, sharing the closed morals and politics of the Unionist Club and whose source of titillation is the popular press.

When Ake Ogilvie fortuitously takes a room in the boarding house Chris is attracted to him for what he represents to her and not for what he is. The absurdity of her hopeless attempts at gaining stability through marriage to Ake is indicated by the fact that she actually knows she is marrying a representation, rather than a real person:

"He looked over-real sometimes to Chris to be real as she'd meet him coming in at the door,/}

door, slow and yet quick, throwing down his feet with a fine measured stride, the earth's his, yielding the wall to none in Duncairn. And he'd clump up the stairs and into his room without a sideways look or a thought, he'd paid his fee and the room was his, would he creep up quiet for any damned body?" 47

Chris marries Ake as the embattled paradigm of peasant individuality and independence - "yielding the wall to none in Duncairn" - but this is hardly sufficient to sustain a marriage. She had seen something of herself in Ake's coming to the city, but the reflection is distorted as the simile implies at the end of the following passage describing Ake Ogilvie:

"Long mousered, green eyed, with his ploughman's swagger, it had seemed to Chris six months before that Ake Ogilvie's coming had brought to Duncairn something clean and crude as the smell of rain - crude and clean as she herself had been once before a playing at gentry enslaved her, like turning round in a lane at night and meeting one's own lost self and face, lost a long fifteen years before, smiling with cool and sardonic lips". 48

Meeting one's old self in a dark lane is to meet a ghost; something which once may have existed but which has no longer relevance. It is thus not to memories of her life in Segget that she retreats on meeting Ake, but to a mythical past of life on the land. Her evocation of Ake as embodying "something clean and crude as the smell of rain" is at odds with reality: issuing from a croft Chris knows full well the actual effects of the rain on the land for those who work it. Certainly Ake, "with his ploughman's swagger" would know the reality of what Mitchell elsewhere described as:

"The fall of sleet and ... the wind ablow on ungarmented floors, ploughmen in sodden bothies, ... old, bent and wrinkled people/"

47. Ibid, p.71.
people who have mislaid so much of fun and hope and high endeavour in grey servitude ...

Distanced by her location in the city and need to find permanence in a relationship, Chris, the cool-headed and independent daughter of John Guthrie, erects a view of the country which is fundamentally at odds with the reality of life on the land, and in so doing marries Ake. Chris's nostalgia for her vanished past is a natural and human emotion but it frustrates, almost at every turn, any chance there might be of her apprehending and relating to the different structures of Segget and, more particularly, Duncairn. It is almost as if she wishes to place herself behind the idealisation of Ake's sturdy peasant demeanour, but the wall she imagines he defends exists only in her perception of him. It is her gradual realisation of this factor that drives her away from her third husband: Ake is a ploughman turned artisan who, unlike Chris, can make his way in differing environments. No-one doubts but that Ake will survive in Canada, (to which he emigrates) but such a transition for the increasingly confused and introverted Chris is quite out of the question. When she apprehends the real Ake Ogilvie - an ordinary working man - as distinct from the romanticised version she had cherished, she has no use for him and they part.

The ambivalence Chris had displayed in Segget through her gushing compassion for the farm labourer and her less than considerate treatment of Else is replicated in Duncairn. Telling her of his fight with Alec Watson, one of the apprentices at Gowan and Gloag's, Ewan uses the disparaging term "keelies" to describe his workmates. Her response is instantaneous and somewhat surprising even to Chris herself:


50. The Scottish National Dictionary, (Edinburgh, 1960) defines keelie as "A male city dweller of the rougher sort ... an uncouth rowdy fellow, a tough".
herself:

"She'd heard him use that word before, but the queerest thing happened to her now. She said sharply: 'What's a keelie Ewan? Your father was a ploughman afore we were wed, and I was a quean in a crofter's kitchen!'"\[51\]

Chris doesn't go onto develop the glimpsed, almost intuitive understanding that the urban proletariat and the hired ploughman were of a common stock of working people who deserved better than the ridicule of demeaning appellations. Her defence of the keelies emanates from the same instinctive source as the compassion for the diffident labourer at the Manse, but in practice it is not long before it evaporates and Chris reverts into a blinkered and confined way of reacting to class differences. She does so during her first sojourn into down-town Duncairn, and the result is as salutary and indicative as is her treatment of Else in *Cloud Howe*. Chris is repaid sixpence she had lent to Alec Watson's unemployed father and becomes involved in a telling altercation:

"'There you are, mistress. Enjoy your money while you have it. There's a time coming when your class won't have it long'.

Chris's temper quite went with her a minute, silly fool, the heat she supposed, she didn't care.

"'My class? It was diggin' its living in sweat while yours lay down with a whine in the dirt. Goodbye'".,\[52\]

This exchange, which may be seen as elucidating what Mitchell had termed "all the peasant's dislike and distrust of the working class" in relation to *Thea Mayven*,\[53\] contains the kernel of Chris's unease and confusion in Duncairn. The depth of emotion is attributable to the/

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52. Ibid, p.32
53. Stained Radiance, p.18, quoted previously p.274.
the worker's assumption of her class position. Quite clearly Watson has taken her for a member of the prosperous middle classes ("a stuck up toff" as he classifies her at the instant of their meeting) who are to be relieved of their wealth in the event of sudden social change. Chris's response serves the function of reasserting to herself as much as to her protagonist the nature of her class origins in the peasantry. So in the space of just two days the theoretical unity between keelies and crofters dissolves in her mind when she is actually faced with a precocious keelie.

Chris can see the reality and evil of a class-divided society and the way in which the riches of the few are an afront and injustice to the poverty of the many. She can side with the spinners against Mowat, with the strikers in 1926 against practically everybody else in Segget and she can remind Ewan, in pointed fashion, that his own father was once a ploughman and that by implication denigration of the keelies was an insult to all working people. Chris possesses an intuitive class consciousness but because of her past she is imbued with an individuality of thought and behaviour which entails the eschewal of any attempt by herself or others to help mankind in general. Her compassion for others - the ploughman, the spinners, the 'keelies' - although emerging with power and sensitivity is ultimately blocked by the selfishness implicit in that individuality. Chris feels, one might almost say knows, she is an outsider to class differences, aloof and above them. When in a lyrical and romantic mood the crofters as a class are, like the young ploughman and Ake Ogilvie, the very "salt and savour of earth"; in a bleaker mood, as in Sunset Song she:

"hated the land and the coarse speak of the folk".

54. Grey Granite, p.31.
55. Cloud Howe, p.35.
56. Sunset Song, p.32.
while in Cloud Howe the "salt and savour" become "pitiful gossiping clowns".57 Trapped within the matrix of her origins and by a psychological tendency to relegate the importance of human endeavour, Chris's life may be seen as the constant re-affirmation of individuality. It is so because in terms of Chris's world view only the individual can come to terms with the defining constraints of life, and coming to terms means, for her, acceptance. Perhaps, it ought to be said, much as the land with which she powerfully identifies "accepts" the changes wrought on it by men while remaining profoundly unchanged.

Her yearning for the peace and quietude of the land increase as her stay in Duncairn lengthens, but even this emotional salve cannot prevent the intrusion of the unpalatable facets of life under modern industrialism. It is not that she cannot see the evils of class-divided society but that her conception of life forces on her a decidedly individualistic mode of response in implicit denial of her son's revolutionary beliefs. Thus, journeying through the slums of the Paldy district of Duncairn she passes a church and ponders that:

"if there was a God as Robert had believed couldn't He put it into the heads of these folk they'd be better served filling the wames of their weans than the stomach of some parson clown in a Manse. But then she'd never understood religion, thought it only a fairy-tale, not a good one, dark and evil rather, hurting life, hurting death, no concern of hers if others didn't force it on her, she herself had nothing to force in its stead".58

Veiled by the common sense observation that the slum dweller would be better feeding their children than the parson, Chris's observations are negative in the extreme. If there is no God as she believes, might/
might not Chris be expected to take on the task of conveying such an elementary truth to the "unwashed" and "weary" victims of the slums? Chris provides the self-deluding answer - she has nothing to offer in place of the dirt and squalor she sees precisely because she sets herself apart, distancing herself from the affairs of men believing them to be less important than "the land (that) was forever". 

Recalling Colquhoun's belief in the ultimate triumph of a wrathful deity who will sweep the wicked from the earth:

"dimly she thought that maybe that was what the Covenanters had believed when they faced the gentry in the old-time wars. Only God never came and they died for him and the old soss went on as it always would do, aye idiot folk to take dirty lives and squat in the dirt, not caring a lot were they letten a-be to rot as they liked. No concern of hers - she belonged to herself as Ewan had told her he belonged to himself, she'd have hated the Covenant giving her orders as much as she'd have hated it's enemies, the gentry".

And no doubt Chris would have hated to sink her individuality into any cause, even one which promised the hope of bringing to an end the dirt, squalor and disease of slums like Paldy. Chris believes herself the master of her own destiny - "she belonged to herself" - even though the events of her life ought to lead her to the opposite conclusion.

Extending this conception of human nature leads her into the pessimistic conviction that there would "aye be idiot folk to take dirty lives and squat in the dirt". Perhaps Chris is correct in this estimation; after all the evidence fuelling such pessimism is all around her. But, although Chris may believe that she "belonged to herself", even as she walked through Paldy, her son stands on the verge of a development which/

59. Sunset Song, p.117. It will be recalled that this passage, quoted earlier, sees Chris comparing unfavourably "the folk who wrote and fought and were learned" who "lasted but as a breath" with "the land" that "was forever", so that not only does Chris have nothing to offer by way of relief for the poor, but she denigrates anyone who has ever thought on the problems of life.

which explicitly contradicts his mother's way of perceiving, feeling and acting.

Initially, Ewan possesses a strength of individuality surpassing that of his mother's and paradoxically it is his cynicism and the aloofness resulting from this characteristic which brings Chris into conflict with him. When in Cloud Howe the adolescent Ewan observes that his stepfather's and Jock Cronin's debates on socialism are an exercise in self-deception, he raises his mother's ire:

"'Oh Ewan, you're so hard and cool as - grey granite! When you too grow up you'll find facts over much - you'll need something to follow that's far from the facts'. And she said something else, about a pillar of cloud, and was suddenly angry. 'Don't stare at me so!' And you said 'I'm sorry', and she shook you again. 'So am I, Ewan - but oh, you're so cool!'" 61

Bereft of any animating belief herself Chris's criticism of Ewan's attitude to Colquhoun's campaign for the regeneration of Segget - alluded to by Chris through her reference to the Biblical text "A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night" 62 is an implicit self-criticism. The only difference between mother and son is that Ewan is honest enough to articulate his scepticism of political solutions. When he does develop into a political activist Chris does not contribute to his growing awareness, characteristically maintaining a distance from him and the beliefs she has accurately prophesied he would need in/


62. This text from Exodus, 13: XXI, XXII is used by Chris, ibid, p.114, in relation to Robert's Segget League and may therefore be taken as an indication that he intends to lead his people out of their 'desert' as God had led Moses and the children of Israel from theirs: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night".
in later life.

It takes an argument with Ellen Johns, an English school teacher who comes to Duncairn, subsequently becoming his girlfriend, that belief in that "something", as it had been defined by Chris years before in Segget, was a necessity. The first reference to Ellen in *Grey Granite* is made when she takes the room next to Ewan in the boarding house. Awakened by the commotion involved he asks his mother what the new arrival is like, only to fall asleep again as she begins her reply, a fact which Chris interprets in the following way:

"Then she saw with a smile that Ewan was asleep, human beings were never of much interest to him".63

To be sure, up until then, human beings had been of little interest to Ewan, but it is a moot point if such a remark could not be applied with equal accuracy to Chris herself. The intrusion of Ellen Johns begins the process which leads to the estrangement between mother and son as the English school teacher provides him with the conceptual model by means of which an instinctive compassion for humanity might be tapped and utilised. In contrast, Chris could provide nothing more tangible for her son than the rather vague conception that a belief of some kind would prove necessary even though her own participation in 'political' schemes like Colquhoun's is decidedly unenthusiastic, and following his death, non-existent.

Ellen is instrumental in introducing Ewan to a set of abstract principles which his scientific disposition, satisfied up until then by his passion for collecting stone-age flints, can organise into an explanatory model applicable to all human history. The important/

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important aspect of Ewan's conversion to socialism is however the way in which it alters his perceptions about people. Earlier, in reply to his mother's criticism of his denigrating use of the term keelies, he had stated:

"though my father was a ploughman and you came from a kitchen - that's nothing to do with me, has it? I'm neither you nor my father: I'm myself".64

Chris had been content to leave Ewan with this highly individualistic self-perception. But when he makes a similar statement to Ellen Johns, she is equipped to offer him a concept capable of organizing the apparently disparate events of history and relating these to his own experience. Captured by the internal logic of her argument Ewan concedes:

"Yes, that seems sense and I'll look it up. I've always thought Socialism just a measly whine, MacDonaldish stuff and politicians' patter. Different when you think of it as history making, the working classes to be captured and led: all right, I'll give the keelies a chance".66

But the moral impetus of the socialism preached by Ellen Johns:

"Capitalism falling to bits everywhere, ... raising up classes of slaves again, Fascism coming, the rule of the beast - ",67

is not, as Ewan initially thinks, to be 'looked-up' in books. Fired by Ellen's conception of socialism as moulding history Ewan founds the/
the Duncairn young workers' league which he aims to steer carefully between "the cowardice and sloth of Labour" and "the nonsensical lying of the Communists". But it is not the sectarian politicking of the Left nor the fact that as he had conceded to Ellen - socialism seemed a sensible idea which marks the real change in Ewan. This change is nothing less than the moral regeneration effected by his passionate identification with suffering humanity which is every bit as moving as - and arguably more uplifting than - Mitchell's lyrical evocation of Chris's wistful longing for the land.

While Chris effectively distances herself from people Ewan's development gets underway when he becomes involved with the struggles of others. The case in point centres around his participation in a demonstration over the rates paid out to the unemployed by the Public Assistance Committee. Mitchell ensures that it is not the potentially sterile economic issue of the cut in Public Assistance which captivates Ewan's mind but the more important factor of human life and human dignity. Although clearly justified the demonstration is resisted by the police and it is the screams of a demonstrator smashed down beneath the hail of blows from Sim Leslie's truncheon which is impressed on Ewan's mind, haunting and tormenting him. Although he tries to distance himself from the keelies Ewan is inexorably drawn back by the realisation that he has a duty of some kind to them. Wandering round the Duncairn Museum Gallery he undergoes the first of two key phases of identification with the proletariat; the first underpinned by anger, the second by the more enduring emotion of love.

Possibly with the strictures of the advocates of socialist realism in mind Mitchell portrays Ewan as comparing the subject matter of the/

the paintings and sculptures in the Gallery with the reality of what history had actually entailed for the oppressed majority. Thus, after looking at a bust of Caesar he wonders why there is no head of Spartacus or a plaque commemorating the crucified slaves; why a scene from the Athenian Justice Courts instead of a slave being ritually tortured or, instead of a crowd cheering a gathering of soldiers, cardinals and angels:

"Why not a more typical Italian scene: - a man being broken on the wheel with a club, mashed and smashed till his chest caved in, till his bones were a blood-clotted powdery mess? - " 69

This is an important point in Ewan's development as it strengthens and confirms that part of his character which has come to sympathise with the keelies. Ewan's innate and very powerful individualism becomes threatened for the first time in Duncairn Museum Gallery when he undergoes the symbolic catechism which concludes the following passage:

"... 'twas yourself that history had tortured, trodden on, spat on, clubbed down in you, as though you were every scream and each wound, flesh of your flesh, blood of your blood ..." 70

This is however only the first phase in Ewan's development of revolutionary sympathies leading to outright commitment. After all, Chris, his mother, had almost reached a similar state of awareness regarding the historical process when rejecting Mowat's Fascist ideas in Cloud Howe. Both Ewan and Chris reach a climax of anger concerning what history or more precisely what they see as various ruling classes as having done to their forebears. But Chris never identifies with history's victims in quite the same harrowing manner as Ewan does, and what is more she never does so from a feeling of affection. Ewan does, and the consequences are remarkable in terms of the metamorphosis this occasions.

69. Ibid, p.79.

70. Ibid, p.30.
In the course of a short speech to the young workers gathered at the Young League's dance, Ewan emphasises that his commitment to politics is designed, at base, to claim for everyone "a decent life and time for dancing and enjoying oneself". During the applause greeting these comments, a remarkable transformation takes place within him:

"And as they cheered him and cried his name, the dirty, kind words of mates in the Shops, a great chap that Ewan, just one of themselves ... it seemed to Ewan in a sudden minute that he would never be himself again; he'd never be ought but a bit of them, the flush on a thin white mill-girl's face, the arm and hand and the down bent face of a keelie from the reek of the Gallowgate, the blood and bones and flesh of them all, their thoughts and their doubts and their loves were his, all that they thought and lived in were his. And that Ewan Tavendale that once had been, the cool boy with the haughty soul and cool hands, apart and alone, self-reliant, self-centred, slipped away out of the room as he stared, slipped away and was lost from his life forever." It will be recalled that Ake Ogilvie's coming to Duncairn caused Chris to imagine she met her long-lost self in a dark lane at night. While she is trapped within the circularity of an emotional conditioning constantly impelling her to retrospection, Ewan is free to slough-off the former cold and impersonal persona which had kept him apart from others. He emerges from this epiphantic experience changed so fundamentally that even Ellen can identify that something out of the ordinary had taken place:

"And then Ellen Johns was pulling at his arm: 'Ewan, you look funny, is there anything wrong?' and he moved and came out of that dreaming trance, and smiled at her, and Ellen's heart moved, not the cold smile at all, it might have been that of any kind boy. 'Hello, Ellen. You look lovely tonight. Can I have the next dance?' and she said, wide eyed, 'You can have them all if you want them, Ewan'."  

71. Ibid, p.115.
73. Ibid.
But Ellen is to be bitterly disappointed by the consequences of Ewan's identification with the proletariat; instead of taking her for his bride, as she confidently expects, he becomes wedded to the mission to free his class. In so doing he retraces and extends the path his stepfather had trodden years earlier in Segget, thus bringing his and the views of his mother into stark contrast.

Ewan's initial distrust of the local Communist Party gives way to a much more co-operative attitude as Jim Trease and Steven Selden appear in the forefront of the strike at Cowan and Gloag's "stiffening it up", and raising funds for the strikers abandoned by their union.

But it is not until Ewan is beaten up in the notorious Cell 3 of the Duncairm police station that he joins with Trease and the Communist Party. He does so after undergoing another identification with suffering humanity in which he is vouchsafed the knowledge of the very nature and pattern of historical development, a development couched in classic Marxian terminology with himself in the vanguard of the proletariat's ultimate triumph:

"... the raggedest van of the hordes of the Last of the Classes, the Ancient Lowly, trampling the ways behind it unstayable: up and up, a dark sea of faces, banners red in the blood from the prisons, torn entrails of tortured workers their banners ...".

Despite the excesses of expression (which may be seen as another instance of the author's morbid fascination with pain and hurt) it is this conception of history as one long bloody bout of class warfare which impels Ewan to accept an absolutely deterministic definition of change - a definition he had previously advanced to Ellen Johns in the following:

74. Ibid, p.130.
75. Ibid, p.145.
following manner:

"'You don't quarrel with History and its pace of change any more than you quarrel with the law of gravitation. History's instruments, the workers, 'll turn to us sometime -'".76

In similar fashion Robert Colquhoun had advocated a decidedly deterministic view of history. Thus, arguing with Chris over the necessity for the founding of his Segget League Robert expresses the hope that Ewan, his stepson, among others will pursue the struggle for change:

"'It's just that men must change, or perish here in Segget, as all over the earth. Necessity's the drive, the policeman that's coming to end the squabbling stupidities of old -'".77

It is significant that Ewan should found a League in Duncairn in the hope of effecting change through people of good faith. For Robert, they were the respectable and educated elements of Segget society, to Ewan they are the young workers of Duncairn. But each abandons his League because the problems facing mankind are just too great to be tackled by acts of good faith and resolution. Robert Colquhoun dies advocating the stark, sure creed that will cut like a knife through the dirt and disease, little realising that his step-son is destined to become that very instrument of historical retribution.

It is from the time of his beating at the hands of the Duncairn police that Ewan really grows away from his mother. Previously concerned about his lack of interest in people, his assertion that he was "himself" and therefore an entity without reference to or need of any other human being, Chris could at least see that facet of her character emerging in her son. When concern and compassion for suffering/

76. Ibid, p.91.
77. Cloud Howe, p.48.
suffering humanity replaces Iran's former cool aloofness Chris finds it impossible to relate to what is for her a particularly abstract concept. Nor can Ellen Johns who finds herself replaced in Ewan's affections by his political activities and beliefs.

Neither Chris nor Ellen can grasp Ewan's sense of what is, in his terms, the imperative to act in concert with the very movement of history. Thus Ellen cannot grasp the internal coherence of Ewan's reply to her question of why it is necessary to sacrifice oneself to the cause of communism. Like a patient adult lecturing a dull young child in an elementary fact Ewan confides that dissolving the League and joining the Communist Party would do:

"'No good at all. Child's play, Ellen, or so it'll seem for years. And we've just got to go on with it, right to the end, History our master not the servant we supposed ...'.\textsuperscript{73}

Having once identified himself with the suffering of all places and all times and having become as one with the very process of history and its end state, Ewan can do nothing other than reject Ellen and her pleas for a quiet life of domesticity and political activism contained within the comparative respectability of the Labour Party. D.F. Young argues that this rejection is unconvincing because it is done for political reasons.\textsuperscript{79} This is a matter of opinion,\textsuperscript{80} but it becomes decidedly more credible when it is recalled that Ewan's views are the direct result of Ellen's own conception of historical change which starts him on the process towards identification with the downtrodden and oppressed. Having arrived at a way of perceiving reality in terms of class relationships Ewan, as/

\textsuperscript{73} Grey Granite, p.132.

\textsuperscript{79} D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, p.130.

\textsuperscript{80} See Section c) following.
as the committed revolutionary, considers himself to be a dispensable element in a fundamental struggle for justice. His rejection of Ellen's pleas for a safe and comfortable married life with his political energies being channelled through the Labour Party, is met with a steadfastness of purpose which led Jack Lindsay to describe Ewan as:

"a fighter tempered to steel in the harsh struggle".  

The reader may consider Ewan's response both cruel and inhumane. Perhaps, in a sense, they are. However, it should be borne in mind that his motives are fundamentally benevolent, and that his actions are in fact less callous than the universally admired Chris whose treatment of her husband in the moments of his last departure from Blawearie exhibits an obduracy and callousness few would think her capable of. Chris's actions are motivated by a personal hurt and because of her nature are calculated to cause her husband the maximum of pain and anguish. Even the obviously repentant Ewan (senior) whose bad behaviour is surely mitigated by a brutal army training, fails to arouse Chris's emotions. When she finally unbends, it is too late. Ewan is on his way to a death in France and Mitchell had penned one of the most painful passages the reader will find in his entire fictional output. Chris is compelled to reject Ewan senior through an inherent obstinate individuality - "cold and sure" 82 she is as he takes his leave of her - but the mutation of this inheritance in her son impels him to sacrifice himself for the benefit of others, which is surely a more noble action.

One key facet of Ewan's sacrifice to a creed he believes will redeem mankind is his conscious eschewal of the comforts of home and family. Both Ewan and his stepfather before him develop into what/

82. Sunset Song, p.224.
what might be described as a celibate revolutionary priesthood which is ultimately related to the development of their revolutionary beliefs. Such a description is deliberately chosen. The belief binding Ewan and Robert together is a more subtle enunciation of John Garland's conception of the dethroned God and the place of political activity in the fight against evil. Garland does not reject Thea Mayven outright but it will be recalled that the fantastic vision of the rider on the spindrift serves to ensure his renunciation of his threatened abstraction from the struggle for meaning to life's evils. In a different context Robert Colquhoun rejects sexuality, dedicating himself to the fight against evil. Recovery from his anodyne religious mysticism, and recovering his sanity forbye, helps re-establish his somewhat strained relationship with Chris. But the closeness of their marriage vanishes forever as Robert becomes wedded to the belief that evil must be purged from the world by violent revolutionary means. Confined to bed as a result of illness following his exertions on behalf of the couple whose baby dies from the effects of rat-bites, Robert says to Chris:

"If I was a man again, I'd hold you, you wretch of a woman to bully me like this!"

Robert is of course debilitated by his illness but his intentions are no more than rhetoric. He is too bound-up in his mission to save mankind to spend his energies in personal relationships and pointedly reminds Chris a short while later that:

"It's you or the kirk, Chris, and I'm the kirk's man".

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83. See Chapter 2.
84. Cloud Howe, p.214.
85. Ibid, p.216.
Nor is this an affirmation of Robert's allegiance to a traditional definition of the duties of his calling. Significantly he uses the pulpit rather like the political activist's 'soap-box' to deliver his final political harangue, conveyed through the meanings of Christianity. Thus, when Robert says he is the kirk's man, it is another way of saying that revolutionary commitment has claimed his life. There is simply no room for Chris in Robert's life as in his final sermon the cause of Christ becomes that of the workers in the struggle of May 1926. Mitchell himself believed that the General Strike of May 1926 failed because of the timidity of the trade union and Labour leadership, and he has Colquhoun relay this belief at the beginning to his revolutionary sermon:

"Against ignoble oppressions and a bitter tyranny the common people banded themselves at last - in a Christ-like rage of pity to defend their brothers who sweated their blood in the mines ... And the leaders of the great Nine Days, days filled with the anger and pity of the Christ who drove the money-changers from the Temple courts, looked in their hearts and found there fear, heard the crunch of the nails that were driven in through the shrinking hands of Christ. And they sold Him again, his promise in Man, each for their thirty pieces of silver".

Thus, for Colquhoun, the "common people's Christ-like rage" has the same potential for freeing mankind as that contained within Christ's passion and the promise of man's redemption. The pacific aspect of Christianity is however totally eschewed in this passage. The congregation are urged/

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86. "James Ramsay MacDonald", Scottish Scene: "For Nine Days that strike paralysed and exhilarated Great Britain. There was a blowing up of a sudden and astoundingly Marxian class-consciousness. The Government, appalled, determined to arrest the strike leaders. The strike leaders, appalled, determined to save their skins. They abandoned the strike and abandoned thousands of those they had called out to victimisation and intimidation".

87. Cloud Howe, p.220.
urged to abjure the orthodox interpretation of religion:

"... forget the dream of the Christ, forget the creeds that they forged in His shadow when their primal faith in the God was loosed - and turn and seek with unclouded eyes, not that sad vision that leaves hunger unfed, the wail of children in unending dark, the cry of human flesh eaten by beasts ..." 88

There is an important distinction to be made here. Colquohoun's sermon is not a rejection of Christ as such but a repudiation of the church's doctrine which promises life after death for suffering in this life -

"that Kingdom of the Soul which the Churches proclaim". 89

Far more important than the "Kingdom of the Soul" in Robert's mind is that men be given the means of realising this dream on earth, explicitly stated as:

"a stark, sure creed that will cut like a surgeon's knife through the doubt and disease - men with unclouded eyes may yet find it, and far off yet in the times to be, on an earth at peace, living and joyous, the Christ come back -". 90

Robert Colquohoun grasps what is for him the reality and truth of man's situation and what must be done in relation to it. Ewan undergoes a more gradual development from being a cool and self-possessed individual. Firstly through the process of conceptual and empathic identification with suffering humanity in the Duneairn Museum Gallery, thence in the actual identification sanctified and reinforced by the shedding of his own blood in the police cells, and finally to the identification with the keelies through affection and love as the more enduring of emotions. The veils covering Ewan's eyes are drawn away one by one as he makes his way to the realisation that the knowledge gained by his insights demands/

88. Ibid, p.221.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
demands total commitment to a revolutionary creed every bit as uncompromising as that advocated by his stepfather in his last, dying breath. In parallel to Colquhoun Ewan finds it necessary to reject thoughts of sex and domesticity as he becomes hardened to the task lying ahead of him. Readying himself to join the picket at Gowan and Gloags Ewan takes his leave of Ellen:

"in the clearing weather she looked up in his face, he down at hers - queer what a thrill that faint line of down sent through one, funny biological freak, thought the old-time Ewan that wasn't quite dead - ".

His beating by the police follows and kills the "old-time Ewan" forever and as his sexual desires are diminished they are replaced by the physical and emotional surrogate derived during the beating in the cells. Just as Chris cannot compete with Robert's ecstasy of knowledge and commitment, Ellen cannot compete with the all-enveloping, almost orgiastic sensation Ewan derives from his empathy, lying bloody and broken with humanity tortured by the masters:

"He moved a little the arm he'd thought broken, it wasn't, only clotted with bruises, the dryness had left his throat, he lay still with a strange mist boiling, blinding his eyes, not Ewan Tavendale at all any more but lost and be-blooded in a hundred broken and tortured bodies all over the world, in Scotland, in England, in the torture dens of the Nazis in Germany, in the torment pits of the Polish Ukraine, a livid, twisted thing in the prisons where they tortured the Nanking Communists, a Negro boy in an Alabama cell while they thrust the razors into his flesh, castrating with a lingering cruelty and care. He was one with them all, a long wall of sobbing mouths and wrung flesh, tortured and tormented by the world's Masters. 

And a kind of stinging bliss came upon him, knowledge that he was that army itself - that army of pain and blood and torment ...."

92. Ibid, p. 148-149.
Swan becomes wedded to a manner of perception which demands his total compliance and identification with humanity which his mother cannot share. By having him develop his stepfather's views Mitchell ensures that Chris is forced into an increasingly uneasy proximity to views which are antithetical to her own mode of experiencing and reacting to reality - views in fact which help widen the gulf between Robert and Chris in the latter part of *Cloud Howe*, and which have a similar effect in relation to mother and son in *Grey Granite*. Unable to comprehend the nature of Ewan's commitment to revolutionary politics Chris likens his faith to a dark cloud or a great rock he is trying to push up a hill.

Ewan's response is to claim that, on the contrary:

"it was the rock was pushing him". 93

The point Ewan is making is that once he has identified with suffering humanity and accepted the notion that the motor of historical development is the class struggle he is committed to doing what he sees history as requiring of him. It may indeed be as arduous as pushing a Sisyphean rock up a steep hill, but the price of belief is great and Ewan, who has been vouchsafed the identification with all the suffering of all time cannot renounce the struggle. It is as if he becomes both the suffering of all ages and their champion entwined in a mystic kinship of blood.

As Ewan puts it, it is indeed:

"A hell of a thing to be History! - not a student, a historian, a tinkling reformer, but LIVING HISTORY HERSELF, being it, making it, eyes for the eyeless, hands for the maimed! - " 94

Given identification on such a profound level renunciation of his creed would amount to an act of self-negation and moral cowardice. So it is/


So it is that, summing up the divergence between his mother's views and his own, Ewan makes a statement which provides a key to an understanding of the Quair:

"There will always be you and I, I think, Mother. It's the old fight that maybe will never have a finish, whatever the names we give to it - the fight in the end between FREEDOM and GOD". 95

There can be only one meaning to the above passage: it is Chris who is to be associated with "freedom" and Ewan who is to be associated with "God". This is so as in no sense of the term can Ewan be free when locked within the demands of a belief in the struggle of good against evil. Conversely, Chris is the embodiment of the desire for absolute personal freedom to do what she will with her life without reference to the feelings or needs of fellow human beings. But Chris's abrogation of her son's beliefs are themselves no solution to the very real problems of the world. The problems are too great, too enduring for Chris to contemplate combating, so that her perception is of the kind - admittedly put at its most unfair - typified by Robert as:

"(the) sad vision that leaves hunger unfed, the wail of children in unending dark, the cry of human flesh eaten by beasts - ". 96

It is Ewan who heeds Robert's dying injunction to take up the "stark, sure creed" as a prelude to "the Christ come back". It is Ewan who takes on the burden of Colquhoun's politico-religious creed, who takes on the onerous burden of belief as a result of the series of empathic identifications with suffering humanity that he undergoes in the course of Grey Granite. Like Robert Colquhoun and John Garland before him, Ewan finds himself on the side of the dethroned God (identified as will be seen, with Christ in Spartacus) in the struggle against evil.

95. Ibid, p.218.

96. Cloud Howe, p.221.
In contrast Chris comes to terms with the evils of the world through the simple expedient of ignoring their existence, this being the ultimate application of her freedom. Towards the beginning of Grey Granite Chris had contended that people were never of much interest to Ewan and this had indeed been true of her son until the genesis of his identification with the hurts and needs of others. But in reality this criticism is most effectively leveled against Chris herself. Ewan's political means may not endear him to all, but that his motivation is towards good ends cannot be doubted. Contrast this with the close of A Scots Quair and Chris sitting on the Barmekin having almost realised her ideal state of oneness with the immutable, inanimate earth:

"... the rain came beating the stones about her and falling all that night while she still sat there, presently feeling no longer the touch of the rain or hearing the sound of the lapwings going by".97

Ewan's creed is an asseveration as to the sanctity of life; Chris's disposition is a selfish negation of life itself, unfeeling of either its cruelties or, as she grows older, its delights. Ewan's actions are underpinned by morality and sacrifice, Chris's by what is, in terms of the morality underlying Grey Granite, amorality in her passivity towards social injustice.

One final point requires to be made in relation to Ewan's development as a revolutionary and his consequent changing view of the historical process. Initially history is, for Ewan, something which can be moulded and directed by men with a clear purpose. It is this conception which makes him warm to Ellen Johns' definition of socialism, Ewan enthusing over the notion of a commitment to

"'history making, the working classes to be captured and led'".98


98. Ibid, p.49.
After his identification with suffering humanity and glimpse of history as perpetual class struggle arising from brutally exploitative social systems historical development attains the status of an immutable law:

"You don't quarrel with history and its pace of change any more than you quarrel with the law of gravitation." 99

This radically different conception of history is compounded when Ewan justifies his decision to join the Communist Party with the argument that:

"History (is) our master, not the servant we supposed".100

By the latter stages of Grey Granite therefore Ewan has lost any remnant of belief that any individual may affect the course of history. What this means in effect is that Ewan and his comrades must act as if the culminating act of the class war was imminent even if, in reality, that event was a long way off. This involves an almost total subjugation of the self in the struggle to liberate mankind from oppression and exploitation, a sacrifice the essentially moral disposition Ewan develops leads him to accept implicitly.101

Ian Carter argues that Mitchell's characterisation of Chris and Ewan is the result of an unsuccessful attempt to synthesise communism and the Scottish national identity.102 David Smith contends that Ewan's creed and Chris's view that all beliefs are ultimately meaningless amounts to Mitchell's articulation of the sentiment that while communism/


100. Ibid, p.182.

101. R. Crossman's judgement in The God That Failed, p.11, that "The attraction of the ordinary political party is what it offers to its members: the attraction of Communism was that it offered nothing and demanded everything" may have an applicability to Ewan as he is portrayed developing in Grey Granite.

communism may be desirable, like all ideologies, it will evaporate with the passing of time. 103 I believe the Quair to operate on the more profound personal and fundamental level suggested in the previous section and indicated earlier in relation to Mitchell's other works of fiction. The trilogy is not about synthesis, as Carter suggests - and certainly not about a merging of nationalism and socialism - and while there may be truth in Smith's conclusion that ideology will be outdistanced by time, it is more pertinent to consider Mitchell's purpose in portraying Chris and Ewan as he does. For so long as man remains there will always exist the two profoundly divergent ways of seeing, feeling and reacting to the more unpalatable aspects of the human condition exemplified through the central characters of A Scots Quair. Chris belonged to a past Mitchell certainly had a wistful longing for, but Ewan exemplifies the stern resolve shared by the author that the shortcomings of the world could not simply be ignored.

c) Chris, Ewan and Leslie Mitchell

One question which has prompted some commentary on A Scots Quair is how far Mitchell's own emotions are reflected by and transmitted through his characterisation of Chris and Ewan. Works of fiction can be judged against many criteria including those of internal consistency, coherence, use of language, realism, the transmission of ideas and the production of empathy within the reader. To date the only sustained attempt at evaluation of the trilogy in relation to other works in the genre of 'committed' writing is the chapter on the Quair in David Smith's Socialist Propaganda in the Twentieth Century British Novel.

As has been seen, there is a general tendency to equate Mitchell's masterly characterisation of Chris, particularly in Sunset Song, as stemming from the creative depths of the author's innermost feelings and emotions. In stark contrast even where critics have conceded the similarity of Ewan's beliefs to those of Mitchell's, they have tended to downgrade the obvious relationship between author and character largely as a result of what is seen as Ewan's doctrinaire and objectionable political opinions. It has to be accepted that certain flaws exist in Mitchell's characterisation of Ewan, the principal of these being the rapidity of his transformation into a passionate and hardened revolutionary, a factor commented on by Jack Lindsay. Yet the bulk of critical opinion in relation to Ewan is invalid since, in essence, the argument may be said to flow as follows: Ewan's beliefs are doctrinaire and repugnant, therefore he cannot be a credible character and/

104. J. Lindsay, After the Thirties, pp.51-52.
and because of this he cannot be seen as embodying or transmitting the author's own ideas and emotions. Thus, for instance, Kurt Wittig treats Ewan's politics as a mere aberration in relation to the trilogy as a whole.\(^{105}\) This, despite the fact that both in real life and elsewhere in his work Mitchell espoused these very political ideas and was affected by the type of empathy giving rise to Ewan's revolutionary commitment. There is an obvious danger of being reductive in this respect. Mitchell embraced revolutionary ideas and displayed an empathic response to suffering: Ewan does likewise, therefore Ewan reflects the author's feelings and sentiments. The pitfalls of such an approach are somewhat assuaged by virtue of the fact that, because of the parallels between Mitchell's life and the subject matter of his fiction, he may be seen as someone who wrote to give imaginative form to his ideas.

The hostility of some critics to Mitchell's characterisation of Ewan can be seen as having two possible sources. The first of these can be almost immediately dismissed. Some critics may not have appreciated the intense nature of the political debate on the left in the 1930's, Mitchell's immersion in these issues and the resultant growth of his revolutionary beliefs. They may thus have seen in Ewan Tavendale the attempt by an author to introduce an ideology which, in itself, was to be given little credence in terms of Mitchell's greater purpose of providing it as a counterpoint to Chris's actions and emotions. The second is a more fundamental point. It is, of course, possible to achieve literary analysis where the critic's own assumptions and values are minimised by the erection of objective criteria of the type suggested, for example, by Northrop Frye.\(^{106}\) But it is also true that the critic/

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\(^{106}\) Principally in *Anatomy of Criticism*. 
critic does inevitably bring to any literary work his own feelings and prejudices - especially to one which involves the readers' emotions as effectively as the Quair. So it is not too surprising that Ewan's creed should evince the kind of hostility of the type indicated in the opening section of this chapter. To some extent therefore it would seem to depend on the political perspective which the reader brings to an appraisal of the Quair. Thus, in contrast to later critics like Young, Campbell, Wittig and Brown, Ann Shearsby and C.M. Grieve found Ewan a completely credible character in the context of a novel set in the early 1930's, although the latter thought him "a little unbending for his own good". While Jessie Kocmanova writes:

"I can recall no feeling on the first reading of Grey Granite - almost contemporaneously with the events it depicts - that there was anything unreal or improbable in his character or actions: he is very much a real figure of a real time, perfectly representative of the young people of his day who believed they had indeed found a new creed ....".

Juxtaposing the political prejudices of literary critics might highlight the distortions of interpretation which can arise but, in this instance, it could be that the pro-Ewan lobby, so to speak, are just as guilty of a subjectivity of approach as their opponents, even if they are perhaps more honest in declaring the left-wing bias underlying their judgements. In order to discern the nature of Mitchell's involvement with the ideas transmitted through the Quair it is more profitable to take a further/

107. See present chapter Section a) pp.265-266, 269.
108. A. Shearsby, "LT, 12/12/77.
109. C.M. Grieve, LT.
further look at his chronological relationship to Chris and Ewan.

By the late summer of 1931 Chris is 36, and Ewan 17 years old, making their respective dates of birth 1895 and 1914. As Kocmanova remarks the trilogy cannot be autobiographical in the conventional sense as it involves two major characters located in different generations, with Mitchell himself (born 1901) located in an intermediate generation. Because *A Scots Quair* is an admixture of the author's experience, emotions and intellectual capacity Mitchell as artist must therefore be seen as occupying a pivotal position in relation to his main characters. Thus, he looks back to Chris's generation and forward to Ewan's. With this in mind, despite the depths of his nostalgia for the ways of the crofter and the land evoked through Chris the movement of the *Quair* is towards the over-riding reality of urban life, industrialism, economic crisis and the class struggle. If Chris's individuality and her part intuitive, part inherited hatred of the gentry has been bequeathed by the Last of the Peasants, the generation of John Guthrie, Chae Strachan and Long Rob, then their death signifies the removal of her source of succour and definition in a rapidly changing world. Chris therefore acts like a displaced, rootless person in Segget and Duncairn, for that is what she is.

The logic of Mitchell's portrayal of Chris at the conclusion to the trilogy sitting through the dark and inclement night becoming as unfeeling as the stones which surround her suggests that she cannot put new roots down on the land. It in fact suggests the death of the standard bearer in another age of the Last of the Peasants, the last of the Old Scots Folk. Ewan's individuality and strength of purpose is inherited from his maternal grandfather and his mother. But the independent crofter has vanished and, unless he is to end up like Chris, he must/

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111. Ibid.
must find a source of replenishment and justification for the application of these virtues. Leading a contingent of hunger marchers on the weary road to London as the interlude preceding his new life as a political organiser with the Communist Party, is a comment on the source from which Ewan is to draw just this sustenance. It also evokes resonances of C. Day Lewis's poem entitled "The Road These Times Must Take". Thus, Ewan occupies a distinct place within the future Mitchell looks towards, even if he is somewhat contradictorily depicted "history making" as he had exulted earlier in Grey Granite — and acting in accordance with the pre-determined clash of the classes leading to the millenium:

"History our master, not the servant we supposed".

At the conclusion to the trilogy it is Chris's world view which is found wanting not just because of the ethical considerations relating to her passivity towards social injustice but because it cannot even sustain her as an individual. While Ewan fights to save the fallen world, Chris realises the awful truth that:

"SHE HAD NOTHING AT ALL, she had never had anything, nothing in the world she'd believed in but change ... ".

Chris's stoical acceptance of change, the belief that resignation and accommodation to a perceived inevitability is sufficient consolation for the individual breaks down at the last. This view had been the opposite and equal of Ewan's conception that if change is the constant aspect of existence, its course should therefore be apprehended and worked to fruition. The realisation that "SHE HAD NOTHING AT ALL" and never had/

112. Grey Granite, p.49.
113. Ibid, p.182.
114. Ibid, p.113.
had anything coming upon Chris as it does immediately prior to Ewan's identification with the workers at the Young League dance - his only identification with the oppressed marked by affection rather than angry compassion - signals the eclipse of Chris's confidence. She takes over the boarding house following Ma Cleghorn's death and then marries Ake; but the die has been cast and, having finally lost her son to his cause and thereby her only tangible link with her past, neither her proprietorship of the boarding house nor marriage to Ake provides her with any comfort.

There is of course an extent to which Mitchell's characterisation of Chris must be seen as an elucidation of the author's own longing for her way of perceiving and reacting to change: cool, sure and untroubled, at one with the land and disdaining the apparently endless controversies of men wishing to change everything, but altering nothing. Yet, at the conclusion to the Quair it is Ewan's world view - his angry compassion, his rage against injustice - which is the dominant idea. Perhaps something of Mitchell's purpose in casting Ewan in the way he does was apprehended by Neil Gunn in the following letter written shortly following the publication of Grey Granite:

"Your work has moved me deeply. You are yourself so moved by the suffering poor that relation of what will be dubbed this coarsest thought of feeling achieves and in truth even a certain moral fervour (sic). There is an integrity in this trilogy of yours that brings belief to the written word. And I understand so well the relentlessness of your attitude - as in Ewan - that foresewears charity and becomes the granite wedge, daening forward though the heavens come down in small bits ... This is History, History like life is born in pain and not in sweet imaginings!" 115

In May 1929 Mitchell's story "One Man with a Dream" was published in *The Cornhill*. Entitled "Revolt" on its republication in *Persian Dawn* *Egyptian Nights* the tale explores the moral implications of using violent means for good ends in a political context. While acknowledging the very pertinent dilemma facing the revolutionary activist "Revolt" ends in a manner both strikingly similar to the conclusion to *Spartacus*, but fundamentally at odds with the central message of that work. When "Revolt" is considered in relation to *Spartacus* and along with the depiction of Ewan in *Grey Granite* it will be seen that between 1929 and 1934 Mitchell moved from a position of some doubt in relation to the moral problems involved in revolutionary action to an explicit avowal of the legitimacy of revolutionary activity.

"Revolt" centres on Thomas O'Donnell, a half-caste, who flees from England to Egypt after being falsely accused of sexually assaulting an English girl. When the story opens O'Donnell has changed his name to Rejeb ibn Saud, adopted the Islamic religion, and full of racial hatred against the English is the leader of a planned uprising against the British in Egypt.¹ At this point Saud is a dedicated and ruthless revolutionary as the callous treatment of his sister-in-law suggests. On the eve of the planned rising Hassan, Saud's ailing son, is being cared for by the sister-in-law. When confronted by the distracted woman's pertinent question as to what is to happen to his son and herself should he/

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¹ Britain had effective control of Egypt from 1882. Arab hopes of independence were dashed after the First World War and there followed a series of disturbances in the Middle-East in general characterised by a merging of nationalist and socialist anti-imperialist sentiments. British military presence therefore increased after 1918.
he die in the rising, Saud rounds on her and delivers the classic exposition of the revolutionary whose compassion for the masses blinds him to concern for the individual:

"'And what of the folk - our brothers - who die out there in their hovels and hunger? Thousands every year'. He blazed with the sudden, white-hot anger of the fanatic. 'What matters your miserable life - Hassan's - mine - if we can show the sun to those who rot their lives away in the kennels of the Warrens?'" 2

Saud's hatred of the English ruling class is partly motivated by his unjust treatment earlier in England where his mixed-racial origins had made the alleged sexual attack appear far-worse in the eyes of the authorities he had been forced to flee. Yet his remorseless, fanatical hatred is also mitigated by his compassion for the natives with whom he now so passionately identifies. The offspring of an Irish father and Sudanese mother, Saud is now prepared, if necessary, to sacrifice his only child through an admixture of racial hatred of the English, a desire for vengeance and laudable compassion for his countrymen. His sister-in-law's pleas do, however, awaken a spark of remorse within Saud and he agrees to strike a deal: should his son recover from his illness, he will call off the rising, should he die, the revolt goes ahead.

Unfortunately for Saud's clear-cut revolutionary perspective, his sister-in-law's entreaty has an almost immediate effect on him. On his way to address the meeting which is to herald the uprising he instinctively rescues Clair Lily, a young English girl, from being stoned by a crowd of native urchins. It transpires that the girl is the daughter of the woman he is alleged to have attacked while in England. The liaison between Saud and Clair Lily's mother had in fact been with the full compliance of the latter and there is more than a hint that the girl is/

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is his natural child. This is perhaps emphasised by the fact that she runs to him from among the many adults watching idly the, for them, justified stoning of a member of the privileged English elite. The incident takes Saul by surprise and, against his initial impulse to let the urchins dispense their rough justice, he extends his protection to the girl, saving her life. Reflecting on his sister-in-law's entreaty and the incident with Clair Lily he sees in a moment of awful clarity that his actions might mean a continuation of the suffering of little children and that, although he had been badly treated because of his ethnic origins, the needs of the individual extended beyond such considerations. Pondering the issue he envisions that the revolt would entail:

"Clair weeping in terror, the terror-filled mites of the Warrens, Hassan ...". 3

When he reaches the meeting Saul is given the news that Hassan has died so that in terms of the agreement he has made with his sister-in-law, he is justified in going ahead with the rising. Instead, in an act of self-sacrifice costing his life, he addresses the meeting, calling off the rising. As the daggers plunge into his back for what his comrades interpret as an act of treachery:

"Crowned in his purpose, infinitely humble; he outreached both arms to the mob ...". 4

Saul thus dies that Clair Lily and the slum children might be spared the awful consequences of the revolt, but Mitchell ensures that the dilemma facing Saul is brought fully to the reader's attention. It is the dilemma facing every revolutionary who would bring about change by force of arms: sacrificing himself to save the children would also mean condemning the many to a continuation of the oppression and conditions.

conditions which had been at least partly responsible for motivating him to action in the first place. As shortly before the rally Saud turns the issue over in his mind, he realises that his act of self-sacrifice must, of necessity, involve a price:

"Clair - Hassan - the saving of the near and dear to one - how pitiful".5

Saud therefore sacrifices the majority - "those who rot their lives away in the kennels of the Warrens" - in favour of the immediate interests of the "near and dear" to him. The conclusion to "Revolt" invites the conclusion that in 1929 Mitchell appears to have decided that, on balance, repugnant means were not justified by the ends - however noble - they were designed to serve. Saud's death may be seen as the symbolic evocation of the pacific message of Christianity. Mitchell did not return again to the theme of means and ends until 1932 when Three Go Back was published and it is of some importance to note that while still acknowledging the almost intractable nature of the problem, his views had developed away from the perspective advanced in his story of 1929.

It will be recalled that the principal protagonists in Three Go Back are Sir John Mullaghan, the Conservative M.P. and armaments manufacturer, Dr. Keith Sinclair, the leader of the League of Militant Pacifists and Clair Stranlay the young novelist who initially finds the views of the latter somewhat extreme but ultimately more palatable than those advanced by Mullaghan. The kernel of the argument which develops between Sinclair and Mullaghan is in fact a re-working of the theme which had pre-occupied Rejeb ibn Saud in "Revolt". Mullaghan's belief in the need for law, order and discipline in society may be seen as the result of his view of man as an animal whose savage passions it is/

5. Ibid, p.196.
is necessary to restrain at all costs. But the Conservative M.P. also has a more personal reason for holding such views as he has suffered the trauma of having a daughter raped then murdered by a tramp. Sinclair shares Mullaghan's pessimistic view of man's nature but argues that it is the aggressive element in contemporary capitalism which keeps the beast in man alive, substantiating his argument by referencing the thousands of mutilated men he had come into contact with as a doctor in the trenches during the First World War. Whereas Clair can sympathise with both Mullaghan and Sinclair neither man has the least understanding of the other's feelings and arguments. This is because Sinclair's revolutionary creed - "send a bullet into the brain of every clown who preaches war" - leads to the debility of seeing things in mass terms, to the possible exclusion of individual suffering, while Mullaghan's stern conservatism leads to the itemisation of suffering and an inability to comprehend the larger dimension.

This had been the essence of Saud's dilemma: at the beginning of "Revolt" he had implicitly accepted the 'Sinclair view' of revolutionary ethics: the anonymous mass, although composed of individuals, was of more importance than any one of its number. By the story's end, however, Saud's perspective is much closer to Mullaghan's reaction to pain and suffering, even if the meaning implicit in his self-sacrifice is fundamentally at odds with the rigid, authoritarian conservatism of the M.P. Yet in a manner indicative of Mitchell's own changing perspective on the matter of means and ends, it is Sinclair who survives the adventure in the past, and, although equipped with a changed perception of man, his/

6. Three Go Back, pp.91-92. Sinclair is also given to using the exclamation "Great Spartacus" (p.40) perhaps indicating the tradition within which he stands.
his revolutionary views are undiminished at the conclusion to *Three Go Back*. And what is of equal importance, Clair Stranlay joins him in the crusade to rid the earth of the present-day Neanderthalers - "the militarists and the hanging judges and the gloomy dreams of the twentieth century"7- the implicit suggestion being that force might be necessary to dislodge them, just as they had found it necessary to combat their predecessors in the distant past.

In 1929 and the publication of "Revolt" Mitchell indicated that ends did not justify the use of brutal revolutionary means while in 1932 he re-stated the basis of the revolutionary's dilemma in the clash of Mullahan and Sinclair, the latter's view gaining implicit vindication at the conclusion to *Three Go Back*. Mitchell had more to say on the subject and he conveyed his steadily growing belief that means were justified by the ends they were designed to achieve through his portrayal of Spartacus and Ewan Tavendale.

It has already been suggested that Mitchell can be located within the general left-ward shift of opinion noticeable in relation to some intellectuals in the 1930's. *Spartacus* and *Grey Granite* may therefore be seen as the products of a period described by one left-wing intellectual of the day in the following terms:

"Soon the intellectual life of the 1930's turned into a debate about Ends and Means. From day to day, of course, the individuals involved in this agonising debate did not see it in such terms".

Spender continues to develop this argument, finally asserting that the response of the left-wing activist was to adopt the simple expedient/

expedient described below:

"The point is to fix one's eyes on the goal, and then one is freed from the horror and anxiety - quite useless in any case, which inhibit the energies of the Liberal mind".  

Ewan's steady progression in *Grey Granite*, through which his eyes do become fixed on the goal of revolutionary change, cannot be understood without an appreciation of the issues Mitchell wove into the fabric of *Spartacus*. The means-ends dilemma and the vindication of the idea of revolutionary activity comprise the central theme of the book with the nature of slavery and its relationship to national identity and revolutionary action operating on a subsidiary and related level.

Since Mitchell abhorred suffering it is natural that he should hate slavery as a form of social organisation involving a systematisation of human anguish. *Spartacus* is Mitchell's "angriest" work, an anger motivated by his repugnance of suffering and compounded by his determination that the slaves' cry for vengeance should not go unheard. As he wrote to H.B. Cruickshank, in his reply to her criticism that *Spartacus* was too brutal and bloody:

"Yes, horrors do haunt me. That's because I'm in love with humanity".

Mitchell derived the background for *Spartacus* from the work of C. Osborn Ward, an American Marxist historian, from whose work *The Ancient Lowly* he took details of the campaigns and battles between Roman and slave armies. Ward sought to place the Spartacist uprising in the context of the movement of history interpreted as a continual struggle between contending/
contending classes. Mitchell was certainly in sympathy with such a notion but he was probably aware of the Marxian interpretation of history before coming into contact with Ward's book, although the latter was possibly responsible for suggesting the semi-mystical parallel between the crucifixion of the slaves and that of Christ, less than a century later, with which *Spartacus* concludes. Ward's is a moving account of the slave revolt and would have been in accord with Mitchell's own emotional sensibilities. It may be recalled that Mitchell in fact has Ewan use the title of Ward's book during his ordeal at the hands of the police as he envisions history as the bloody march to triumph of:

"The Last of the Classes, the Ancient Lowly, trampling the ways ...". For an accurate and possibly more objective definition of slavery, however, it is best to look to that provided by David Brion Davis. According to Davis:

> "In general it has been said that the slave has three defining characteristics: his person is the property of another man, his will is subject to his owner's authority, and his labour or services are gained through coercion".

The above certainly applies to Spartacus and his fellow gladiators who spark off the great revolt on their escape from the slave stables in/

12. C. Osborn Ward, *The Ancient Lowly*, Vol. 1, pp.234-294. The original source material for the Spartacist revolt consists of a few passages from Livy, Plutarch, Appian, Florus and a few fragments from Sallust's *Historia*. Ray Mitchell, PT, recalled using Ward's book while helping check the draft of *Smartacus*. A copy of *The Ancient Lowly* remains in Mitchell's bookcase. Ward, *ibid*, p.245, attributed the "success" of the slave revolt to the "restrictions" placed on contemporary "labour organisations...we cannot but see that the widespread disaffection called the Servile War of Spartacus must have been largely caused by the law prohibiting and threatening to prohibit free right of combination".

13. In the introduction to *The Ancient Lowly* Ward asserts that Christianity and the struggle of the labour movement are essentially in congruence.


in 74 BC. \textsuperscript{16} However, gladiators were no ordinary slaves. It is clear that Mitchell apprehended this fact and, although he was pleased that his book was favourably compared to Gustav Flaubert's \textit{Salammbô}, \textsuperscript{17} any such comparison must remain superficial. The army of mercenaries in \textit{Salammbô}, only some of whom are slaves, are engaged by Hamilcar to fight Carthage's wars and only take on the might of the masters when the latter default on their payments. The slaves and their colleagues are a somewhat pitiable collection of individuals driven on by a mixture of expediency, avarice and inevitability. In contrast to the revolt depicted by Flaubert the gladiators in \textit{Spartacus} are men of fierce individual bearing and courage. Slaves sold into commercial gladiator schools, as opposed to those unfortunate slaves purchased by individuals merely interested in the sight of blood and anguish, were men of good physique and health. \textsuperscript{18} Nurtured to kill and maim for the macabre amusement of others they occupied an ambiguous position in slave owning society. In a social order eulogising physical and martial prowess, this ambiguity involves the definition of the gladiator as a slave who yet excels in such prized characteristics. The fact that the gladiators were well-versed in their deadly trade and yet were compelled to remain slaves, may account for Mitchell's depiction of the ferocity of their fight for freedom.


\textsuperscript{17} Dorothy Tweed's "Recollections" mentions this comparison. I can find no critical comparison of \textit{Spartacus} and \textit{Salammbô} (1862, tr. M. French Sheldon, London, 1886).

While Mitchell had been gratified at comparison of *Spartacus* with *Salammbo*, he was rather less taken with E.B. Cruickshank's opinion that his historical novel was not as good as Naomi Mitchison's *The Corn King and Spring Queen* as the following extract of his reply to her reveals:

"Sorry you don't find *Spartacus* up to Naomi's standards. But rather like comparing the Bible to the Rig Veda".19

Precisely what Mitchell meant by contrasting the Bible with the Rig Veda can only be guessed at.20 Published in 1931, *The Corn King and Spring Queen* is set in the third and second centuries BC in the Crimea, Greece and Egypt and ranges over the differences between the societies and their peoples. It is a much more extensive work than *Spartacus*, and over twice its length, encompassing a diversity of themes only one of which is the problem surrounding solutions sought through political activity. Mitchison's book raises more questions than it answers where *Spartacus* underlines the basic message that the class divisions of slavery were evil and had therefore to be combated by all possible means.

A more profitable line of comparison does however exist. Both Howard Fast and Arthur Koestler have been mentioned in relation to the perceived menace of Fascism which impelled some of their generation towards communism in the 1930's. Like Mitchell, Fast and Koestler wrote historical novels about the Spartacist slave revolt and it is/


20. The Rig Veda is the chief of the four Vedas of Ancient India. It consists of hymns and prayers of the Ancient Aryans used in the worship of various Vedic gods and has ten books of composite authorship produced over a long period of time, the tenth probably being completed before 800 BC. Held in Hinduism to be *sûtra*, the word of God.
is instructive to compare the treatment each accords the subject. Koestler's novel The Gladiators was published in 1939, Fast's Spartacus, a Novel in 1951. When Koestler wrote his book he was on the point of leaving the German Communist Party and renouncing the faith in communism he had held from 1931. At the time of the publication of Spartacus, a Novel Fast was a card-holding member of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. Despite the differences of background and upbringing mentioned previously between Mitchell, Koestler and Fast, and Koestler's renunciation of his revolutionary ideals, their novels on Spartacus share certain themes and assumptions while diverging in some important, if predictable, respects.

Mitchell's version is related in the present through Spartacus and the slave host where Fast's utilises the Roman aristocracy, viewing the rising in retrospect. While Mitchell's Spartacus gains in intensity it is deficient in the breadth and perspective Fast achieves through his technique of juxtaposing the assumptions and values of the aristocracy with the slaves' struggle for freedom. Both authors are however completely committed to portraying the slaves' cause as morally right to the extent of sanctioning the excesses of vengeance sometimes visited upon the slaves' protagonists. In contrast, Koestler's work recounts the miserable dilemma of means and ends accompanying revolutionary struggle but it is predictably lacking in the depth of belief underlying Mitchell's work. There is an extent to which Koestler's novel is more complex than Spartacus in its portrayal of a 'middle class' squeezed between contending forces in the war of the classes. Pressed between his hatred and envy of the patriciate and his fear and loathing of the slave population, the class represented by Quintus Apronius, First/


22. Howard Fast, The Naked God, It is interesting to note that Fast, like Mitchell, used C. Osborn Ward's work during his writing of Spartacus, a Novel. Thus Fast, WT 8/6/79: "If you are curious about some of the information I had in Spartacus you might look at a very long Marxist historical work called The Ancient Lowly".
First Scribe to the Market Court, is the real subject of Koestler's concern, and the source of the writer's sympathy. Apronius is the helpless onlooker as the class struggle rages and the participants in the revolt emerge as the helpless victims of pre-determined catastrophe. Like The Gladiators, Fast's account permits a sometimes quite detailed insight into the Roman ruling class and its political machinations. In Spartacus, a Novel slavery is seen as the underpinning of a social system which is supported because it is lived and experienced as natural by the slave owners. Koestler's account contains something of this recognition that slavery is socially and economically determined without the accompanying recognition that since economic systems are created by men, they can be changed by them.

There is little of the detachment necessary in Mitchell's Spartacus to permit a similarly analytical approach: for him slavery was a moral wrong requiring extirpation by any means necessary. Koestler wrote The Gladiators as Fascism loomed ominously during the period of his disillusionment with political movements while Fast wrote Spartacus, a Novel during the Cold War years of the 1950's. Mitchell wrote Spartacus during the political turmoil of 1953; a year dominated by the triumph of the Nazis in Germany and the depth of economic recession in Britain. A detached account of the revolt of "The Ancient Lowly" would have been difficult for Mitchell to achieve at any time. In a period in which various storm clouds must have appeared to be gathering, it may be suggested that Mitchell used the slaves' revolt of the first century BC as something approaching a political tract for his own time. This may/

23. In Spartacus, a Novel, pp.180, 311, 341, 375, Fast's immersion in American politics is revealed by the way in which Gracchus, the Roman politician, is depicted in a manner suggestive of the American Tammany Ward boss.
may account for its lack of breadth when compared with Koestler and Past's works on the slave rising.

There are certain noticeable similarities as well as differences between these three imaginative accounts. In both Mitchell and Past's novels the gladiators are marked off as a special category of slaves. As previously indicated, although slaves, gladiators seem to have been better cared for in comparison to the house or field slave because of their greater economic value. Both Mitchell and Past acknowledge this difference, the latter when he has Batiates the Lanista, (gladiator owner) define his property in the following terms:

"They are special. If you fight dogs, you do not buy house pets that are reared by little girls. If you fight men, you want men who will fight. Men who chew their gall. Men who hate. Men with spleen". 24

The slave master's description of the gladiator stands in marked contrast to the dehumanising definition of the house and field slave as the instrumente vocale employed by the slave owners throughout Past's work. The gladiator as a special kind of slave emerges more subtly in Mitchell's novel. It is indicated at the meeting of the escaped gladiators, Crixus and Oenomaus, with Spartacus. Although the other gladiators discard "their shameful armour", 25 because of its association with their former servitude, the meeting of Crixius, Oenomaus and Spartacus is curt but laden with meaning:

"'We were mirmillones, Crixus and Oenomaus'.
'You are welcome. I was a Threce, Spartacus'." 26

Thus, for Crixus, Oenomaus and Spartacus, a Gaul, Greek and Thracian, nationality is subsumed by the defining characteristics that their deadly skills have bestowed - even their names assuming secondary importance to the fact that Crixus and Oenomaus were mirmillones and Spartacus handled the Threce.27 This difference gains further emphasis as the gladiators assume the leading role in a slave army which swells to include all definitions of former slaves. In marked contrast Koestler describes the gladiators as obnoxious and quarrelsome, and nowhere is the judgement contradicted that:

"Everyone knew these men were little better than animals, trained beasts".28

Reflecting this judgement the gladiators in Koestler's account engage in a largely aimless flight for freedom, even slaughtering other slaves who attempt to join the revolt. Koestler's point is, perhaps, that, as trained killers, little else could be expected of them. While the gladiators in Spartacus and Spartacus, a Novel evolve a strength of purpose and fundamental unity emanating from their shared experience of servitude, this factor, although acknowledged, is played down by Koestler. In his account the gladiators stick together out of sheer expediency, arguing and fighting amongst themselves all the while. Even so, for each writer, Spartacus and the leading gladiators are compelled to organise their forces into units capable of combating the inevitable despatch of the soldiers sent in their pursuit. Despite the professional pride in their shared skills/

27. H. Fast, Spartacus, a Novel, p.105, describes "mirmillones" (sic) as "a loose category of fighters who carried either a sword alone or sword and shield". Mitchell's definition of Spartacus as "a Threce" probably refers to the short, slightly curved stabbing sword used by the Thracians, described by Fast as "a grouping or profession more than a race" in the context of gladiator typology.

skills as gladiators which has been seen binding Crixus, Oenomaus and Spartacus together, this is not achieved without some difficulty in the context of moulding a cohesive force from the diversity of the slave horde.

In Mitchell's account national consciousness emerges as a dangerously divisive element. From the outset tension exists between Gannicus and Crixus, the leaders respectively of Germans and Gauls. Where Crixus is easy-going by nature, Gannicus is quick-tempered and jealous of Spartacus's leadership, while Gershom ben Sanballat, a Jew, and leader of the Bithynians is more than once locked in bitter argument with Kleon, the castrated Thracian literatus. Bickering and feuding between national groupings forms a background to the opening scenes of Spartacus, but this tendency dissipated once Spartacus is elected leader. It is in fact Elpinice, Spartacus's wife, who reminds the differing national groups intent on journeying to their own lands that they must forget their differences and stay and fight the masters. But, significantly, national differences are only really overcome in battle. Thus, in the first major encounter with the enemy, the death of the legate, Furius, is described in the following way:

"Howling like wolves they raced, and in a moment, wielding clubs and axes, fell on the legionaries. Two of them sprang on the legate, one a great Thracian, one a starved Bithynian".29

This is of note as the animosity between Thracian and Bithynian contingents - highlighted by the clash of Kleon and Gershom on the previous night - evaporates in the heat of battle. Between battles such bickering re-emerges and Spartacus has to fight to keep the slave army from disintegration. But Mitchell's point is clear: the slaves, whatever/

29. Spartacus, p.59.
whatever their nationality, have more in common than that which divides them. In the second battle, this time against the Legions of Varinus, tension is high because Spartacus deputes the leadership to Crixus, the Gaul, leaving Gannicus and the German contingent feeling slighted and aggrieved. But even jealousy of Spartacus and hatred and envy of the honour accorded the leader of the Gauls is insufficient to diminish Gannicus's realisation that:

"he hated the Masters more than he hated either Crixus or Spartacus, and the blood of his unquestioned bravery began to beat across his forehead".30

With an implacable and terrible enemy ranged against them, the slaves have little choice but to subsume, in the interests of survival, those factors which divide them:

"In the evening haze, over the palisades stormed the attacking bands of slaves, men miners or shepherds or porters a month before, now ragged, well-fed, and a storming fury".31

As the revolt grows in duration and intensity and Spartacus apprehends his and the slave army's historic function, so their shared experience of oppression and their dreams of freedom bind them together in a mighty retributive force. No matter their past - in terms of ethnic origin, class or occupation - the slaves become "a storming fury", bound together in their hatred of the masters.

Paralleling Mitchell's depiction, Fast describes the slave army as:

"a singular company of blood and nations but united first in their blood and now in their freedom".32

Surprisingly for a writer originating from a country of great ethnic diversity, Fast has little to say concerning the issues of nationality in/

32. H. Fast, Spartacus, a Novel, p.177
in relation to the slave revolt. In the gladiator stables there is "bad blood" and ill-feeling among the fighting men when a Thracian armed with a short stabbing sword is unequally matched with a Negro with fishnet and trident. Indeed, it is the unfairness of such a contest which precipitates the revolt when Spartacus points out to his fellow slaves that it is the Lanista and not the Negro who is to blame for the unequal match. National differences are more quickly overcome by the slaves' communality of interest in Past's account than in Mitchell's. This is perhaps a result of the fact that in the period in which Past's book was published the menace of nationalism in its Fascist variant, which to an extent informs Mitchell's work, had come to be replaced by the ideological hostilities of the Cold War.

In Koestler's novel the slave army never achieves the unity of instinct and purpose portrayed by Mitchell and Fast. It would have been surprising had Koestler omitted the question of nationality and the rivalries it engenders as he had grown up in central, then western Europe in the period following the redefinition of national boundaries in 1918. But while in Spartacus potentially destructive national differences are gradually subsumed by the necessity for unity, in The Gladiators, such differences play a damaging role. Koestler ensures this by depicting Spartacus as sharing the leadership with Crixus the Gaul. This is a crucially debilitating weakness as the slave army is constantly divided into two or more groups, defined according to nationality. Crixus is eventually crucified on the orders of Spartacus, but Koestler's purpose is not simply to depict a power struggle emanating from the basis of nationality, even although such factors do contribute to the dissolution of the slave army. Thus, although there are brawls between national groupings in the "Sun State" founded by the/

33. Ibid, p.106.
the slaves this is a non-essential contributory factor to the failure of the revolt. At the heart of Koestler's account of the slaves' defeat is his anguish at the paradox of means and ends.

Koestler's disillusionment with Communist politics in particular, and political solutions in general, is clearly seen in *The Gladiators*. The novel forms the first part of a trilogy completed by *Darkness at Noon* (1940) and *Arrival and Departure* (1943), the latter charting his ultimate political disenchantment. Unlike either Mitchell or Past's depiction of Spartacus, Koestler's hero never undergoes the semi-mystical identification with the rest of the slaves. Instead, in a scene bespeaking Koestler's disillusionment and cynicism, Spartacus is depicted as marveling at his own power to move and manipulate his fellows. Fuelled by the dreams of the Essene, his politico-religious adviser, Spartacus is captivated by the power he wields:

"he listened to the words that spurted out of him from an unknown source; they became a stream which swirled around those in the crater, swallowing them in its whirlpool." 35

In terms of Koestler's sentiments the metaphorical use of the whirlpool is entirely appropriate as the revolt is destined to control Spartacus, rather than the obverse being the case. Events sweep Spartacus along with a bleak and painful inevitability. Intending to speak only of the slaves' need for siege machines (that they might capture a city and live there in safety) Spartacus, despite himself, mentions the Essene's dreams of the 'Sun State'. Once this is articulated the revolt is doomed:/

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34. A. Koestler, *The Gladiators*, p.316, "The Gladiators is the first novel of a trilogy (the other two are *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure*) whose leitmotif is the central question of revolutionary ethics and of political ethics in general: the question whether, or to what extent, the end justifies the means".

35. Ibid, p.96.
doomed: even the defeat of their external enemies would not save them from the whirlpool of the means - ends dilemma. Explaining his view of this dark inevitability Koestler writes in the postscript to The Gladiators:

"Spartacus was the victim of the 'law of detours' which compels the leader on the road to Utopia to be 'ruthless for the sake of pity'." 36

Spartacus fails in his objectives, according to Koestler, because he baulked at ruthlessly eliminating those who questioned his leadership. Yet, even by following this "detour" the slave leader would have succeeded only in perpetrating a self-defeating orgy of violence. For Koestler, Spartacus would have failed just as surely as Stalin was failing in the 1930's in the Soviet Union of the Kirov murder, the show trials and the Purges. The Gladiators is a testimony of despair regarding man's ability to change society or himself for the better through political and particularly through revolutionary means. This belief is summed up in a key passage at the conclusion to the novel in an exchange between Fulvius, a cynical ex-slave and lawyer with an agile intellect, and the Essene, Spartacus's visionary adviser and author of the concept of the Sun State. According to Fulvius:

"The petty misery of their existence has made men and women unreceptive for the serene, merry-making enthusiasm, and spurs them on towards the drunkenness of the black saps. That is what induces mankind to act contrary to the interests of others when isolated, and to act contrary to their own interests when associated in groups or crowds". 37

There is no solution to this miserable dilemma although, significantly, the conclusion to The Gladiators parallels the ending to A Scots Quair in the juxtaposition of the two antagonistic ways of perceiving the/

37. Ibid, p.299.
the world of human affairs. Thus, awaiting their turn for crucifixion, the Essene and Fulvius continue their debate as to the meaning invested in the slave revolt. The Essene's argument echoes Ewan Tavenable's view of history and commitment to revolutionary social change:

"Blessed are those who take the sword in their hand to end the power of the Beasts; those who build towers of stone to gain the clouds, who climb the ladder to fight with the angel; for they are the true Sons of Man. ... He who receives the Word has a bad time of it ... He must carry it on and serve it in many ways, be they good or evil, until he may pass it on." 39

He is answered by Fulvius whose pessimistic resignation bears a marked similarity to the impulse underlying Chris's decision to return to the land. In this estimation man is of little or no importance in the passing of time into eternity, and it is the insignificance of man's efforts and desires which Fulvius dwells upon:

"It is written: the wind comes and the wind goes and does not leave a trace. Man comes and man is gone, and knows nothing of the fate of his fathers and has no knowledge of the future of his seed. The rain falls into the river, and the river drowns in the sea, but the sea becomes no greater. All is vanity." 40

The two world views seen in A Scots Quair represented by Chris and Ewan are thus replicated by Koestler in a very different setting. But, while the Quair closes with Chris reabsorbed into the land, it also culminates with Ewan's departure at the head of the contingent of Hunger Marchers. All such ventures may be vanity as Koestler suggests through Fulvius, but men will continue to act as the Essene predicts.

38. A. Koestler, WT, 27/6/78 is not "acquainted" with any of Mitchell's work.


40. Ibid, p.310.
The Gladiators closes with Quintus Appronius unnerved by a passing gang of shackled slaves, and although by this time Spartacus is dead the scribe to the Market Court cannot suppress a shudder as he sees the likeness of the revolutionary leader on the face of a sneering slave. It is the implications of such an imagined recognition which causes Appronius such trepidation. The scribe is the vehicle for Koestler's transmission of the pessimistic view that perhaps for as long as man endures, the cycle of subjection and revolt would continue. Like Chris Colquhoun at the conclusion to Grey Granite, Koestler has nothing to offer as an alternative to this perceived facet of the human condition. Worse still, Quintus Appronius and the class he represents occupy the "no man's land" between the contending classes, an escape to the land being out of the question for all excepting the likes of Chris. Koestler's novel closes, as it had begun, with the scribe pondering the dynamics of a class struggle he can barely understand, never mind control, but which threatens his very existence.

In contrast to Koestler's testimony of despair, Past's account vindicates the actions of Spartacus and the slave army in their struggle with the masters. As Mitchell depicts Ewan undergoing identification with suffering humanity as the key element in his development, so Fast has his Spartacus come painfully to the realisation that destiny has placed upon him the onerous task not only of combating a wicked and remorseless ruling class, but of setting in motion an entire revolutionary tradition. The dawning of this realisation is gradual. The breakout of the gladiator school is neither planned nor particularly well executed, the slaves being fortunate to survive the initial skirmishes of their headlong flight for freedom. Spartacus assumes command over the gladiators and fleeing slaves through necessity - the slaves need a leader and Spartacus, from his earliest days in the mines of Nubia, has been a natural leader to whom men have turned for guidance. He is a/
a naturally compassionate individual in brutal surroundings who apprehends
dimly from the outset that the slave revolt is a portent of greater issues
than the immediate question of the slaves' freedom. But it is not until
he experiences an identification with the oppressed slaves of all time
that he perceives his own role as the creator of a revolutionary trad¬
ition. Like the "sleeping monarch" of medieval legend, Spartacus believes
that:

"All his life had been for this, and all his
patience had been a preparation for this.
He had waited centuries; he had waited since the
first slave was shackled and whipped to hew
wood and draw water, and he would not be
turned from it now".41

The sublimation of the self into the collective will and desires of the
slave host bestows on Spartacus the freedom which comes with the recog¬
nition of the necessity to fight to the bitter end for his cause.

Likewise, Mitchell's depiction of the slave leader involves Spartacus
in a two-fold development which sees him identify absolutely with the
slave host and accept the necessity of being ruthlessly determined in the
prosecution of the struggle. The first of these empathic identifications
would later be reflected in Grey Granite, in Ewan's identification whereby
his flesh and blood become as one with the oppressed - "flesh of your
flesh, blood of your blood".42 So it is that Spartacus feels:

"As though he were all of the hungered and
dispossessed of all time: as though at moments
he ceased to live, merging his spirit in that
of the hordes, his body in that of a thousand
bodies, bone of their bone, flesh of their
flesh. ... he knew himself, in a mystic
kinship of blood".43

41. H. Fast, Spartacus, a Novel, p.166.
42. Grey Granite, p.80.
Again in an empathic response to suffering whereby the pain of others is experienced by the observer, in a manner perhaps reflecting Mitchell's own feelings, Spartacus:

"knew, looking at the winding drift of the slaves, that angry possession upon him - all the slaves himself, feeling the stinging pain in the torn feet of a Gaul who limped past ...".44

The force possessing Spartacus is the summation of his angry compassionate identification with the slave which is to harden into revolutionary conviction and resolve. In contrast to Past's depiction of the slave general Mitchell does not cast Spartacus as a natural leader but, rather like the self-contained crofters of Sunset Song, as a self-confident individual. Even as a slave Spartacus is as much his own man as his condition permits, and it is this quality of character which sees him assume command of the revolt. As in Past's account, so in Mitchell's, it is not until Spartacus undergoes the identification with suffering humanity that he can move to the next stage of revolutionary hardness by the perception that his mission would be to mould history to his will. Walking among the mounds of dead following a mighty battle with the enemy:

"the Strategos wept. He walked with unshielded face, weeping suddenly, weeping his dead, the lost and forlorn, the rejected, those born to stripes, his people who had died here so bravely, so aimlessly, for they hardly knew what, for a hope and a belief so dim, yet in which they had followed him blindly. So Spartacus wept for his dead, the first and last time with an anger and passion that frightened the slave who accompanied him. And then it was the resolve that altered the face of history - a resolve born from sight of those heapings of torn men who lay so quiet under the coming of the stars".45

44. Ibid, p.181.

45. Ibid, p.185.
It is not until Spartacus weeps for his dead, consecrating their death in a surfeit of compassion, that he can set his face resolutely and uncompromisingly against slavery and the evil it represents. Spartacus weeps "with an anger and passion" that frightens the slave accompanying him, and well it might, for the truth the Strategos glimpses in the stars is of the enormity of the task lying before him. From this point on the slave army ceases its piecemeal tactics of confronting the enemy when the necessity arises and turns on Rome, the lair of the beast itself. From then on Spartacus evolves into the leader of a massive retributive force as the slave army attains a cohesion despite the disparity of its composite elements.

This factor is reflected within the leadership of the slave army itself and is most clearly seen in respect of Gershom ben Sanballat, the leader of the Bithynians. Initially Gershom feels himself distanced from his fellows through nationality, class and religion. An aristocrat in his homeland, Gershom had helped suppress slave revolts and feels only the most contingent loyalty to the slave army he now helps lead. Moving through the country he helps free slaves, but with nothing more than a cold contempt, especially for those who had been born into slavery. But even Gershom, much to his own surprise, finds himself identifying with his fellow slaves:

"Yet also (and this startled his haughty heart when he thought of it), there were long stretches of days and hours, when he sank himself in the mood of the slaves, moved with their anger against the Masters, with their compassion for the fellow-enslaved".47

Even Gershom, the former slave-owning aristocrat, shares the slave army's disgust of Gannicus's practice of using captured legionaries as slaves:

46. *Spartacus*, p.51, gives the meaning of strategos as "a word for a captain".

47. Ibid, p.106.
slaves; the slave army perversely identifying with the plight of the enslaved soldiers. Gradually a qualitative moral distinction emerges between the slave army and the actions of their opponents. Having themselves suffered as slaves they know almost instinctively that to permit the extension of slavery into their ranks is to weaken their cause. Coincidentally, it is David, a Jew like Gershom, whom Fast has articulated the sentiment that "what is right for them is never right for us". 

when Fast depicts Spartacus ordering two captured Roman generals to fight to the death in gladiatorial combat. In Mitchell's version it is Spartacus himself who outlaws the enforced combat of captive soldiers just as he forbids the use of the barbaric spiked pit in ambush.

The morality of the slaves' actions is important, for underlying Gannicus's practice of enslaving his captives resides a deadly weakness. Gannicus quickly forgets that he is an escaped slave and not a freeman, and it is this factor which weakens then destroys him and, as a consequence, the entire revolt. Again it is through the unlikely Gershom that Mitchell exposes the crucial strength which could be derived from an acknowledgement by the slaves of their former servitude. Speaking of Gannicus, to Crixus, Gershom charges that:

"He has the heart of a slave. As have too many of the Legion. See to it, Gaul: no man may ever be a slave but he bears the stigma until he is dead. And the stigma is on his soul. We are no free men. We are rebel slaves'.

For a moment it seemed to Crixus that he was aware of a bitter truth. Then the sharpness of it faded from his mind. He laughed again.

'I am no slave: I have no slave stigma on my soul. I hate the Romans as I hate an enemy, not as a slave his Master'.

'Then you are a fool', said Gershom and turned away." 49

Gershom thus indicates that the slaves' strength resides in a recognition of their definition as rebel slaves as opposed to free men whose foe might regard them as equals. An enemy can be sued for peace: slaves who revolt against their masters must eradicate the system which has given rise to their slavery, die in the attempt or become perpetual fugitives. Since the last option is effectively closed to Spartacus following his total identification with the slave host, he has little choice but to utilise the slave army's hatred of the masters in a fight to the death against an entire social system.

For Mitchell and Fast the identification of Spartacus with the slaves transforms a revolt into a political revolution. Taking decisions which, as Mitchell puts it, alter "the face of history" by confronting a brutal ruling class is all very morally uplifting and grand. This resolve, however, includes the darker and more practical aspect of the means - ends problem: if Spartacus cannot turn his back on the task of destroying something so manifestly evil as slavery, he must, of necessity, destroy those who support the system. The slaves must, in short, be as ruthless in pursuit of their cause as the masters are in theirs. Thus, shortly after coming to the realisation that he and the slaves were making history through their assault on the masters' power, Spartacus also comes to the more sombre realisation that in so doing:

"he might not dare refuse that attempt with all the strength and all the force and all the cruelty the task might demand."

Spartacus is compelled to discharge his historic task by virtue of the very definition of the enemy:

"a God drove him on, a God crowned with the knowledge that unless the Beast that squatted/

50. Ibid, p.185.

There could hardly be a more conclusive association of Spartacus fighting on the side of good - the "God" driving him on - against the evil represented by the Masters and the almost cloven-hoofed "Beast" representing their rule. Against such an enemy Spartacus can hardly do otherwise than muster "all the strength and all the cruelty" his mission demands. Mitchell has Spartacus claim to be fighting for the very future of mankind: unless he triumphs there would be no possible life ever again while the world endured. Fast, too, has Spartacus articulate precisely this conception of the struggle when he claims that:

"We are not fighting for ourselves. We are fighting for the whole world".53

The Spartacist revolt did fail and by implication the cause of humanity was defeated in the process. Mitchell, Fast and Koestler depict Spartacus dying in battle and each ends his novel with the crucifixion of the slaves, through which the masters extracted their terrible salutary revenge. But in each work the Spartacist revolt is seen as bequeathing a tradition of resistance by arms to oppression, even if Koestler is less than enthusiastic concerning such a legacy. Mitchell was certainly more at ease in this respect, the ultimate vindication being Kleon's death on the cross with the precognition of Christ's passion and the vision of Spartacus, sword in hand, merging into Christ's image:

"And he saw before him, gigantic, filling the sky, a great Cross with a figure that was crowned with thorns; and behind it, sky towering as well, gladius in hand, his hand/

52. Ibid. The "theological" aspect of Mitchell's depiction of Spartacus is considered in Chapter 8.

hand on the edge of the morning behind that Cross, the figure of a Gladiator. And he saw that these Two were One, and the world yet theirs...".54

There is a close similarity between Spartacus and Ewan in a number of aspects. Both come to identify fully and emphatically with the class they are to lead to freedom. Each is prepared to do whatever the fulfilment of the task demands, Ewan's development into a hardened Communist cadre being presaged by Mitchell's depiction of Spartacus. Ewan and Spartacus do, however, differ in their ultimate conception of history and it is quite appropriate that they should do so. Spartacus is gripped by "the resolve that altered the face of history" while in an essentially similar manner Ewan is attracted to socialist politics because he sees it as a means of "history making". In terms of Mitchell's depiction of the historical process, Spartacus's decision does, quite literally, "alter the face of history", because Ewan is impelled ultimately to the realisation that he was acting in accordance with history, not making it: "History our master", as he puts it.55 Once Spartacus had "made" history the history of class struggle Ewan has to act in accordance with a revolutionary tradition determined two millenia previously. In Mitchell's reckoning Spartacus and Ewan are unimportant; they must do the will of history to the bitter end, even to the extent of forsaking personal relationships. Like Ewan, Spartacus is depicted as eschewing sexuality as he hardens to the task before him. As he moves to an ever closer identification with the slaves his love for Elpinice is almost bereft of the physical element:

"his heart emptied of all desire, as it seemed, and filled with a burning question of Gods and men, Spartacus would yet look at her with an/

54. Spartacus, p.287.

55. Grey Granite, p.182.
an ancient kindling of fire in his blood.
But that had been seldom enough as the
north grew near ...". 56

Indeed, as the struggle intensifies and the corpses multiply after each
bloody battle, Spartacus loses any vestige of this former self:
"desire for women had long gone from him". 57

The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from an appraisal of Spartacus,
particularly when the works of Fast and Koestler are considered, is that
by 1933 Mitchell was in full accord with the sentiment that it was indeed
necessary to be, as Koestler disapprovingly put it, "ruthless for the
sake of pity". This consideration achieves its most formidable expression
in the character of Ewan Tavendale who may be seen as the expression of
Mitchell's growing revolutionary sentiments in a contemporary setting.
As we have seen, Ewan's political evolution involved a parallel emotional
and moral transition which sees him develop from a cool and self-contained
young man into a compassionate individual advocating a steadfast and
stern retributive creed of revolution. This process is, however, not with¬
out its ethical problems. During the initial stages of his political
development Ewan had been contemptuous of the "nonsensical lying of the
Communists", 58 but following the failure of his young workers' league
and experiences at the hands of the local police, he is quite willing to
manipulate the native antagonism between Duncairn's student population
and working class for the purposes of:

"Deepening the dislike between the classes". 59

56. Spartacus, p.175.
58. Grey Granite, p.89.
It is of interest to note that Jim Trease, the Communist Party
organiser, typifies Ewan's belief that "the fight for the future
was the workers against the world" as "a bit of heresy". This/
More significant is Ewan's realisation and implicit acceptance of the fact that, as individuals, he and Jim Trease, the local C.P.G.B. organiser, were of no importance:

"... he thought of Trease saying that he and the rest of the Reds were nothing, they just worked the will of history and passed ...".60

Even more chilling, because it is the direct result of Ewan's compassionate identification of himself with the oppressed, is the calm resignation that, for the sake of the struggle:

"... if it suited the Party purpose Trease would betray him ... as propaganda and publicity, without caring a fig for liking or aught else. So he'd deal with Mrs Trease, if it came to that ... And Ewan nodded to that, to Trease, to himself, commonsense, no other way to hack out the road ahead".61

Moreover, the class Ewan and Trease are to lead to triumph would be just as liable to slay their liberators as their erstwhile oppressors, a comfortless factor Ewan accepts as part of the price of his empathic identification:

"Most likely such leaders of the workers as themselves would be flung aside or trampled under, it didn't matter to them, THEY THEMSELVES WERE THE WORKERS and they'd no more protest than a man's fingers complain of a foolish muscle".62

Looked into a startlingly deterministic concept of change, the physical metaphor employed previously by Ewan in relation to his empathic

This may be a reference to Marx's view, expressed in the Communist Manifesto, that disenchanted elements of the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia would join the proletariat's cause in the class struggle. Trease is a practical activist however and despite his young comrade's lapse, approves of his action.

60. Grey Granite, p.167.
61. Ibid, p.197.
empathic identification with the oppressed - "flesh of your flesh, blood of your blood" is extended in this passage to the point where the activists and the proletariat become part of a corporate organ of vengeance. And if the fingers, representing the cadres, be the more vulnerable part and are impelled to destruction by the twitch of proletarian musculature in the war of the classes, then for Ewan, so be it: they themselves were the workers, and the workers an integral part of their being.

The moral issue involving the sacrifice of the individual for the greater good of humanity first investigated by Mitchell in "Revolt", may be seen as residing at the heart of the revolutionary's dilemma. Mitchell's portrayal of Ewan may not endear him to all since the reader can be forgiven for asking that if revolutionaries are prepared to betray their closest comrades, what price the rest of mankind? However, another perspective may be gained by consideration of the morality underlying Ewan's depiction in Grey Granite considered in relation to Spartacus. Thus, if the revolutionary is prepared to sacrifice his comrade for the greater good of humankind might not his selflessness reflect something of God's sacrifice of Jesus enacted in the hope of redeeming man? Spartacus, Ewan and Trease engage in revolutionary politics because they believe class conflict to be the motor of historical development, leading to the triumph of the proletariat and ultimate emancipation of mankind. Even though they fight for this emancipation - perhaps indeed because they do so - they must act as if the lives of individuals are of no concern to them.

This view, implicitly projected through the actions of both Spartacus and Ewan may be seen as emanating from the class war doctrine/}

63. Ibid, p.80.
doctrine of Marxism. Thus, Edmund Wilson contends that although Marx desired the unity and happiness of mankind he was prepared to accept the necessity for conflict in the form of:

"a righteous war and with it the idea of righteous hatred" 64

to achieve it. Having accepted that the Masters of their respective epochs stand in the way of human happiness Spartacus and Ewan foster a righteous hatred against their adversaries because, as the latter puts it, there was:

"no other way to hack out the road ahead". 65

The conclusion to "Revolt" and to Spartacus are too strikingly divergent in meaning while unified in their frame of reference to be co- incidental. Saud dies in imitation of the pacific aspect of Christianity; Kleon dies with the precognition of Christ and Spartacus become one in an explicit vindication of the revolutionary tradition. There can be no other meaning to the culmination of Spartacus because Ewan so obviously continues in the tradition bequeathed by the slave leader. Moreover he embarks on the prosecution of the morally righteous war identified by Edmund Wilson in relation to the Marxist conception of change. It is no accident that Mitchell should conceive of revolutionary politics being, in some way, related to the perspectives of religion. As has been indicated previously, the two central characters of his semi-autobiographical first novels, Maudslay and Garland, apprehend what is for them the Manichean reality underlying life. While Maudslay glimpses it imperfectly, for Garland it is the conception of the general, the universal, struggle between good and evil which impels him into revolutionary politics.

64. E. Wilson, To the Finland Station, (First British edition, 1941), p.159.

It may be concluded that Mitchell was in harmony with both the leftward shift of opinion associated with his time and the accompanying hardening of revolutionary perspectives. Beyond this it can also be shown that because he was aware of the ethical problems involved in such a development - seen in the progression from "Revolt", through the exchange between Mullaghan and Sinclair in Three Go Back and particularly in the perspectives articulated through Spartacus and Ewan - he sought a more enduring source of validation for his espousal of revolutionary views. Yet, as will be argued in the next chapter, it was not only this factor which led him to a utilisation of the morality inherent in the Manichean schema, but, in a wider sense, he may be seen as reacting to problems originating in the nineteenth century.
a) The Search for Meaning

Much of the foregoing has attempted to locate Mitchell within the context of the political preoccupations of his own day. It is necessary to emphasise however, that underlying the development of his left-wing views there existed a psychological rationale, the origins of which can be traced to the intellectual crisis of the later 19th century.

The problems caused by science's attack on religious knowledge in the Victorian period are of central importance to an understanding of the political solutions that are advanced through Mitchell's work. Mitchell may be seen to stand in an intellectual tradition which resulted from the reaction invoked by the amoral necessity implied by the consequences of Darwin's discoveries. Although the claims of science as a means of explaining existence and the world of men had come into conflict with religious explanations from the time of the Renaissance, even the Enlightenment had failed to disturb the general certainty vested in the claims of religious knowledge. Indeed, according to Langdon Gilkey, scientific and religious knowledge had been in almost complete accord, since:

"the religious knowledge of creation was in continuity with the scientific knowledge of species because the former provided the intelligible explanation for the origin of the same species they were in their researches concretely investigating". 1

The publication of Charles Darwin's The Origin of _Species_ in 1859 can be seen to have ruptured this unity. Thus, science's claim to provide/

provide the normative mode of understanding the space-time world was an effective denial of the validity of religious explanation in areas of fact.² The crucial implication stemming from the theory of natural selection was that amoral necessity became the effective principal underlying life. The reactions to this consideration were many and varied: some lost their religious faith entirely, others embraced the Christian verities regarding the creation myth with renewed vigour.³ Still others reacted to the putative meaninglessness implicit in Darwin's account of man's origins and in the struggle for survival by seeking a spiritual counterweight of various shades. It is this consideration which provides a key to an understanding of Mitchell's recourse to Manicheism.

In the context of the nineteenth century something of the impulse to apprehend meaning and a moral basis to life may even be seen among Victorians who in other respects championed the cause of science. Thus, following his reading of The Origin of Species T.H. Huxley argued in favour of maintaining a moral outlook threatened by the implications arising from Darwin's work, contending that:

"The ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it".⁴

In similar fashion, despite mounting a strenuous attack on the theistic/

². Although Darwin's work had a most profound effect, advances in related disciplines which utilised a rigorously scientific methodology must be seen as contributing to the crisis induced by the latter's thesis on natural selection and the origins of man. Among those works which might be mentioned in this context are Grote's History of Greece, J.S. Mill's Logic, F.H. Bradley's Ethical Studies and James Frazer's The Golden Bough.


theistic and pantheistic claims of religion Herbert Spencer drew back from outright atheism, arguing that although we can have no knowledge of deity, religion itself served to foster humane values and transmit them from one age to another.\(^5\) In a different intellectual context George Bernard Shaw's comments on the effects of "neo-Darwinism" in the preface to Back to Methuselah bespeak an unease at the prospect of life governed by Necessity.\(^6\) As indeed might Oscar Wilde's urgings that the moral basis of Christianity and its congruence with the tenets of socialism be kept upper-most in mind.\(^7\)

In relation to Mitchell it is important to note the existence of a more idiosyncratic response to the Victorian crisis, particularly of the kind manifested by William Winwood Reade in The Martyrdom of Man (1872). Reade charts man's history of travail, struggling to overcome his environment in a manner which would later gain elaboration and re-emphasis in Wells' Outline of History.\(^8\) But unlike Wells, Reade was anxious that man's struggle against the evils he encountered should be located with reference to an extraneous source of morality. Thus, at the conclusion to The Martyrdom of Man, he asserts the over-riding importance of the Manichean schema, linking its definition of cosmic/


6. There is every indication in Shaw's Man and Superman, Back to Methuselah and St Joan that he was uneasy concerning outright atheism, even if in "The Black Girl and her Search for God" he might have been a little more self-effacing than to have the unfortunate girl come face to face with the red-bearded Irishman at the end of her long travail.

7. Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism".

8. I am indebted to Professor Shepperson for his comments on Reade's influence on Wells' vision of man portrayed in the Outline of History (1920).
cosmic dualism to the efforts of man himself:

"The Prince of Darkness is still triumphant in many regions of the world ... But the God of Light, the Spirit of Knowledge, the Divine intellect is gradually spreading over the planet and upward to the skies. The beautiful legend will yet come true; Ormuzd will vanquish Ahuriman; Satan will be overcome; ... Earth which is now a purgatory, will be a paradise, not by idle prayers and supplications but by the efforts of man himself".9

It may be that Wells was influenced by Reade's profoundly Manichean conception of life because, although it plays no part in the Outline of History, published in 1920, when the latter had been confronted with the awful catastrophe of the First World War it was to that theology he retreated for comfort and solace.10 In a sense it is somewhat paradoxical that Wells should do so since he perhaps epitomises the Victorian intellectual for whom the claims of modern science appeared as infinitely superior to the explanations offered by religious knowledge.11 Wells' vision of man as risen from the beasts but on his way to conquer the stars indicates the effect of Darwinism even if there is something breathtaking and inspiring concerning this human desideratum. Addressing Wells through the columns of the New York Herald Tribune the literary critic of that paper seems to have apprehended something of the majesty of Well's conception of the great adventure when he wrote:

"You have been a brave myth-maker and a heartening poet to the Intellectuals of/"


10. Thus Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, (London, 1934), Vol. 2, p.666, held the 1914-18 period directly responsible for what he termed "The Great War and My Resort to 'God!'" explaining that "No intelligent brain that passed through the experience of the Great War emerged without being profoundly changed".

11. Explaining his attitude towards religious belief, Wells, ibid, Vol. 1, p.165, observed that religion was "thrusting an incredible and ugly lie on the world".
of your time. You have turned an entire

generation of novelists from contemplating

the fatal forces of heredity and environ-

ment and instinct to considering the god-

like power of an intelligent will to

control instinct, environment and heredity". 12

Penned in 1925 the writer had failed however to appreciate the psycho-

logical shock which the Great War had effected on Wells and his elev-

ated but still essentially Darwinian conception of the quest of human-

kind. Robbed of the validity of this striking interpretation of man's

quest by the carnage of the Great War, Wells sought refuge from the

palpable assertion of bleak and meaningless evil in the moral framework

of Manicheism. One critic describes this period in Wells' career

(encompassing the years 1915 to 1919) as his "theological phase".13

Wells himself defined it more accurately in the following manner when,

seeking to excuse his lapse into "religiosity", he pleaded that:

"If my gestures were pious my hands were

clean. I never sold myself to organised

orthodoxy. At its most artificial my

religiosity was a flaming heresy and not a

time serving compromise. I never came

nearer to Christianity than Manicheism - "14

Pending further discussion of Wells and Manicheism the following

may be contended: the Darwinian conception of life as a struggle for

survival was an inspiring concept when woven by Wells into his picture

of man's quest. When man became embroiled in the less elevated aspect

of that struggle in the mud and blood of France in 1914 Wells sought

an interpretation which defined the manifestation of evil as having

greater significance than the merely contingent. Mitchell seems to/

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12. "H.G. Wells as a Dreamer for the World", New York Herald Tribune,

Book Supplement, 22 March, 1925. Quoted by I. Raknem, H.G. Wells


13. Lovat Dickson, H.G. Wells, His Turbulent Life and Times,


to have utilised Manicheism for a similar purpose although his use of it, particularly in relation to his political views, is far more extensive and sophisticated than that found in the work of H.G. Wells.

Although something has already been said in relation to Mitchell and Wells it is necessary in the present context to attempt a brief comparison on where Mitchell stands in relation to his boyhood hero. Wells may be held responsible for the picture of man projected in Hanno (considered shortly) and perhaps also for Mitchell's depiction of the explorer's great 'dream quest' dealt with previously. Conversely, he was completely out of sympathy with the political perspectives advanced by Wells in the 1920's. It is however possible that he was introduced to Manicheism by Wells. Thus it should be borne in mind that the latter's "Resort to God" coincides with Mitchell's life in the impressionable period from his fifteenth to eighteenth years. It is therefore difficult to see how someone so immersed in the work of that author could have failed to be impressed by the ideas contained in the distinctly Manichean works produced by Wells between 1916 and 1919. Indeed, Mitchell might have discerned an element of theological dualism in The Island of Dr. Moreau, Wells' long story published in 1896.\textsuperscript{15} Although it is not possible to be precise in such matters it may nevertheless be contended that Mitchell would have been affected by Wells' work in the general sense described by George Orwell:

"I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1920, at least in the English language, influenced the young so much. The minds of all of us, and therefore the/\textsuperscript{15} The Island of Dr. Moreau along with Wells' Joan and Peter and The Undying Fire, both from his "theological period", remain in Mitchell's bookcase.
the physical world would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed.\textsuperscript{16}

Mitchell's friends testify to his immersion in the work of Wells\textsuperscript{17} and when he began writing himself he was certainly not averse to canvassing the author's opinion in relation to his own literary output.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, in the letter accompanying the copy of \textit{Stained Radiance} sent to Wells he elicits his opinion and ends a little shamefacedly by explaining that his intention was not:

"in order to cadge an advertisement. Rather in some slight gratitude for all the splendid times your books have given me".\textsuperscript{19}

Despite attesting to the pleasure which the works of Wells had given him, by the time he embarked on his career as a writer, Mitchell was fundamentally at odds with both Wells' conception of man and with the political theories being advanced by the latter in the post-war period. As was indicated earlier, Mitchell actually met Wells in 1931,\textsuperscript{20} the following account of which he proposed expanding upon in his proposed autobiography:

"talking with, or rather listening to him (Wells) talk until three o'clock in the morning on God, Communism, etc".\textsuperscript{21}


18. As well as sending \textit{Stained Radiance} to Wells for his opinion, he also sent "For Ten's Sake", \textit{Hanno} and \textit{The Thirteenth Disciple}. Wells permitted the reproduction of his letters to Mitchell at the beginning to \textit{The Calends of Cairo}, published in 1931.


21. Synopsis of "Memoirs of a Materialist".
John Randall Evans (of the Promethean Society) recalls however that the encounter was not as one-sided as is implied by Mitchell. According to Evans at some point during the evening Mitchell announced that he intended writing a rebuttal of Wells' *Outline of History* which was to assert man's early passivity in contrast to Wells' conception of the aggressive caveman. Wells' response was to inform Mitchell that he would "have a job". The political gulf between Mitchell and Wells is most forcibly reflected in *The Thirteenth Disciple*.

Looking back on his one-time fascination with the work of Wells, Maudslay expresses a particularly cynical and jaundiced view from a perspective informed by the economic dislocation and depression of the post-war world. He is scathing in his comments on those he styles:

"commercialism's leaders, those microcephalous morons whose visionless incompetence has made chaos of the economic world, hymned and hailed by the Wellsians as the promised Messiahs ...".23

The facetious pessimism underlying Maudslay's observations would seem to be an accurate, if slightly over-drawn reflection of the mood of cynicism and rejection of political panaceas characterising the post-war period. Furthermore, they would seem to form a fairly direct attack on the perspectives advanced by Wells in books like *The World of William Clissold* (1926) and *The Open Conspiracy* (1928). In these works, the former of which is a fictional rendering of the arguments of the latter, Wells advances the thesis that the industrial societies of the west could be saved by the actions of an enlightened perspicacious business elite. Such a view may seem naive today and even in the late 1920's it was not only the cynical Maudslay who looked with a jaundiced eye on such Wellsian remedies. Lovat Dickson describes how soon after the/


the publication of *The World of William Clissold*:

"'Clissoldism' became a term to evoke sniggers, conjuring up a busybody with a blueprint fussing about the necessity for improvement".24

"Clissoldism" evokes not sniggers but, as has been seen, contempt from Maudsley. In this regard it is noteworthy that C.M. Grieve recalled that, in common with many on the left, he and Mitchell were moved to sarcastic amusement at the ability of the Wellsian notion of an "open conspiracy" of "idealistic big-business" to put the world to rights.25 Given Mitchell's growing socialist beliefs it is predictable that he should exhibit a less than enthusiastic response to any plans involving big-business and especially one seeming to facilitate its extension of control from the economic to the political sphere, even if such ideas had been and would continue to be advanced by others apart from Wells.26


25. C.M. Grieve, PT.

26. In this respect one might mention Andrew Carnegie's purchase of no fewer than eighteen British newspapers and his use of them, and in particular *Reynold's Newspaper*, to advance his vision of American society with capital firmly entrenched in government. See H. Felling, *America and The British Left*, (London, 1956), p.49. See also Andrew Carnegie, *Triumphant Democracy*, (New York, 1886). In an American setting Huey P. Long's *My First Days in the White House*, (Harrisburg, 1935), advances the importance of business in government. George Bernard Shaw's portrait of the 'idealistic' businessman-politician, Andrew Undershaft, in *Major Barbara*, (1905), may be seen as a fictional forerunner of Wells' ideas. It is also of interest to note that the doctrine of Social Darwinism which evolved in later 19th century America, and which was used as a rationalisation for the growth and activities of the industrial and commercial "Robber Barons" of that period can be traced to Herbert Spencer's attempt to discern a moral purpose in the evolutionary process. See L.B. Wright, C.L. Ver Steeg et al., *The Democratic Experience*, (Glenview, Illinois, 1968), pp.249-250 and passim.
And yet Wells did exercise an influence on Mitchell, particularly at the start of the latter's career as a writer. The following letter accompanying the copy of Hanno sent to the former indicates the nature of this influence:

"I imagine many a young author (braving the dangers of infanticide) sends you a copy of his first book and hopes that a literary foundling of merit will be proclaimed. In sending you Hanno I have no such expectations, but as both my wife and my publisher insist that the book is extremely Wellsian (I hope you will not regard their statements as libellous) you may have some interest in a production which would certainly never have graced the bookstalls but for your encouragement".27

Wells' opinion of Hanno is not recorded but it is easy to see how Mitchell's wife and publisher could identify a strong Wellsian element in it. Ingvald Raknem typifies Wells' view of history as:

"the conception of man as the being that has risen from the stage of a beast of prey to the level of a human being inspired with the idea of a world brotherhood ...".28

It is precisely such a view of human development which permeates Hanno, an outline of man's exploratory endeavours. In it the author envisions a time when man, having extended the frontiers of knowledge through exploration will achieve that dream assigned by Raknem to Wells as "a world brotherhood of men". Thus, Mitchell gives voice to these essentially Wellsian sentiments in the following prediction from Hanno:

"Science and order will rule that world, the snarling buffooneries of competition having given place to the sanities of universal cooperation".29

29. Hanno, p.23. See also Chapter 2 where Hanno is mentioned in the context of Mitchell's egalitarian sentiments. Mitchell's admiration for Wells' work appears to have been reciprocated. Thus, according to Lord Ritchie-Calder, "It 11/3/79, Wells thought"Leslie Mitchell was the best novelist writing at the time ... his appreciation of Mitchell was much more than indulgence ... it was critical admiration. He would read passages to me and chide me; coming from the same countryside, why couldn't I write prose poetry like that?"
Kanno is, however, the only discernibly 'Wellsian' book Mitchell wrote. Although other of his novels, particularly *The Thirteenth Disciple*, contain elements of the quasi-Wellsian notion of man's great adventure, the movement of Mitchell's work is towards the individual's participation in the venture to save mankind by combating the evils of his own time. Just as the War had shattered, for a time, Wells' faith in the inevitable progress of man and his journey to conquer the stars, so the problems of Mitchell's own time - the Depression, the rise of Fascism and the threat of war - may be seen as impelling him to the adoption of a source of moral reference against which he could interpret the events of the 1930's. The invective launched against Wells' political views through Malcom Maudslay were undoubtedly the result of Mitchell's growing left-wing views. But it is also the case that in his utilisation of the same Manichean framework as Wells had used he may be seen as seeking an explanation for the evils of his own time which was more emotionally and psychologically satisfying than mere political ideology.

It is in this respect that we are introduced to the most important element in Manicheism as it relates to the crisis of the Victorian period and subsequent years. The validity of Manicheism may be seen to reside in its definition of good and evil in the context of human history; a definition which explicitly denies the amorality and contingent manifestations of evil implied in the theory of natural selection. Where Wells' use of Manicheism may be seen as something of a posture - given the speed with which he adopted it, the exagetical nature of the works produced under its influence and his abandonment of it after just three years - the concept provided Mitchell with a psychological key to gaining understanding and a way of integrating his revolutionary sentiments into a moral framework. It is only in the context of Manicheism that the development of Mitchell's fiction towards the vindication of revolutionary
revolutionary political solutions can be fully appreciated. This is particularly so in the context of the continual reference to the external criteria of history, and the investment of that process with a distinctly moral purpose, which has already been seen in relation to Spartacus and Ewan. Before this can be considered properly it is necessary to look at the way in which Wells, then Mitchell, used the central tenets of Manicheism in their work.
b) Manicheism, Wells and the Resort to God

The word "Manicheism" has passed into the vocabulary of literary criticism being generally used to denote symbolism and imagery in which light is pitted against dark and involving a set of distinct ethical values. Used in this way, by Denis Saurat in his study of William Blake for instance, it connotes a gnostically derived dualism of good and evil which is more secular than theological. In its modern usage therefore Manicheism no longer refers solely or specifically to the doctrines promulgated by Mani and deriving from earlier Gnostic writings or the speculation of later Medieval theologians. In the foreword to *The Medieval Manichee* Steven Runciman calls attention to a general problem of definition in relation to Manicheism which it is necessary to bear in mind from the outset:

"Theologically speaking, the title which I have given to this book is unjustifiable; for Christian Dualism and Manichaeism were two distinct and separate religions. But to the ordinary Medieval churchman, in the East as in the West, all Dualists were Manichaean; and I have used the name they would have found intelligible and natural. And indeed this misnomer was reasonable, for the Christian Dualists, though they would never have acknowledged Mani's system, were fundamentally nearer to it than they were to Medieval or Modern Christianity".31

Using Hans Jonas's authoritative work, *The Gnostic Religion*, the main tenets of Manicheism as the principal derivative of Gnosticism can be advanced as providing an interpretative base from which Wells, then Mitchell's, thought can be explored. Following the spirit of

of Runciman's remarks, the following outline is intended to identify what might be called the core element of Gnosticism as it was interpreted by the prophet Mani and which can be seen as having a general applicability to all manifestations of the belief, whether historically or literary based. 32

The central feature of the Gnosticism advanced in Manicheism is a radical dualism concerning the nature of and relations between God, the world and man. The Gnostic deity is transmundane, whose lordship of the universe is denied by more lowly powers (Archons) who although mediately descended from Him obstruct human knowledge of the Godhead. God is thus hidden from man and is unknowable through natural concepts. In Gnostic texts, particularly the Manichean, the deity is referred to by titles indicating both his transcendence and differentiation from the evil world of matter ruled over by antagonistic forces: He is "the Other", "the Nameless", "the Hidden", the "unknown Father", and, of particular relevance to Mitchell's work, the "alien God", "the Alien" and "the Unknown". Similarly, the messengers of God and also the "redeemed redeemer" - individuals in possession of gnosis - are styled "the alien man" and "the stranger". While following the ancient gnostic tenet that matter was evil Mani personified evil in the form of the Devil, thus providing a context within which man could conceive of the struggle in life between good and evil as forming a reflection of a greater cosmic duel. The place of man in this schema is however ambiguous. Although composed of matter and therefore evil, his soul ("pneuma" or "spark") is held to be an emanation of the divine and his one link with God. In a world of distractions manufactured by the Archons man exists in a constant state of bemused ignorance. This factor is crucial/

crucial in the Manichean theory of redemption since the necessary precondition for attaining true knowledge of God is the acknowledgement that life itself is evil. The central feature of Manicheism resides therefore in its soteriological promise which is gained through knowledge. It is not clear, however, from Manichean texts upon precisely what basis gnosis is granted or withheld. Nevertheless, knowledge of the lordship of evil, and with it the nature of the entire cosmic struggle between Satan and God is brought down by messengers from the world of light, leaving man in a state of gnosis, or clear-sighted knowledge. In the following quotation from a fragment of text attributed to Mani, the prophet identifies himself as the latest in a succession of messengers which we shall later see Mitchell adding to:

"Wisdom and deeds have always been, from time to time, brought to mankind from the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger called Buddha to India, in another by Zoroaster to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon the revelation has come down, this prophecy in the last age, through me, Mani, the messenger of the God of truth to Babylonia".

The knowledge conveyed by Mani is two-fold comprising, firstly, the nature of and relationship between God, man and the universe and, secondly, the way in which man might escape the evil bonds of the world through sacramental religious observance. The actual translation of this latter aspect of the knowledge has led to certain colourful excesses of ascetic and libertine behaviour located in the High Medieval period.

33. See Chapter 8.


Although theologically complex in the extreme, it is not too difficult to discern the seductive potential of the Manichean cosmogony for perceptive and sensitive individuals seeking an explanation of the world's evils. In its view of the lordship of evil, with humankind its bemused dupe, Manicheism offers explanation for the barbarities committed by man on his kind while simultaneously asserting his intrinsic moral integrity. The promise of gnosis and redemption is therefore ever-present. Once gained, man may react by displaying the more strictly Manichean response of shunning mundane ties (even to the extent of suicide) or, pending his call to the next world, may strive to enlighten his fellows as to the evils of life. Convinced of the necessity for political solutions as Mitchell was, Manicheism provided a psychological source of vindication for his revolutionary views conceived of as the means of combating evil in the terrestrial sphere. Wells, too, found in Manicheism an explanation for the catastrophic evil of his time - the 1914-18 War - but his rendering of that explanation is marked by a certain laboured pomposity, and in respect of the political use to which he put it, absurdity, which distinguishes him from Mitchell.

The key works in Wells' theological phase are *Mr Britling Sees it Through* (1916), *God the Invisible King* (1917) and *The Undying Fire* (1919). In these as in *The Soul of a Bishop* (1917) and *Joan and Peter* (1918), the underlying thematic unity is provided by the struggle of God and the Devil, the nature of man's knowledge of God, and the duty arising from possession of that knowledge.37 In *Mr Britling*, the eponymous hero, in conscious reflection of the writer's own feelings, arrives at a/

37. The other works produced by Wells in 'the theological phase' were *What is Coming*, and *The Elements of Reconstruction* (both 1916), *War and the Future* (1917), and *In the Fourth Year* (1918). The latter of these non-fictional works contains some evidence of the dualism which it is held informs the works referenced in the above text.
a conception of the reality of the lordship of evil by virtue of the escalating carnage of the First World War. In *God the Invisible King*, published in the following year, Wells uses a non-fiction mode to elucidate his newly acquired dualistic beliefs in order to advance the somewhat quaint and decidedly idiosyncratic view that the socialisation of productive capacity was in accordance with the will of God. In the same year *The Soul of a Bishop* was published and in it Wells emphasises the importance of the individuals recognition that the ills of the world are attributable to the lordship of evil. *Joan and Peter* was published in 1918 and is used to convey the message that individuals, in their everyday lives, could serve the will of God in the struggle against evil. Like *The Soul of a Bishop*, *Joan and Peter* lacks the strength of purpose of *Mr Britling* and the precision of *God the Invisible King*. It was followed in 1919 by *The Undying Fire* which recaptures much of the strength of *Mr Britling* through a construction of plot and characterisation more appropriate for the transmission of such complex ideas. Despite grave misfortunes the hero of *The Undying Fire* refuses to abjure his belief in God, preferring to see the Devil's hand in the ills which befall him. Unlike his fictional hero, Wells was to be a little more fickle in his allegiance as *The Undying Fire* is the last of his overtly Manichean works.

Wells' three major Manichean works - *Mr Britling*, *God the Invisible King* and *The Undying Fire* - are considered briefly, particularly for the extent to which they use certain central elements which can be traced to Manicheism. Foremost amongst these are the conception of the existence of a cosmic struggle between God and the Devil which is intimately/

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37. One reason for this being that Wells tries unsuccessfully to work these, by any standards, weighty theological ideas into the fabric of novels dealing with areas of inter-personal family relationships.
intimately related to the importance of man's recognition that God exists in his innermost being. In Mr Britling, the central character, finds it necessary to place mundane terrestrial events in a greater space-time setting in order for them to make sense for him. Thus, when his son is reported killed in France, Britling is forced into consideration of an idea which had meant little to him previously, but which now seemed to bear a kernel of the truth:

"His mind drifted back once more to those ancient heresies of the Gnostics and Manicheans which saw the God of the world as altogether evil".

This is an ostensibly pessimistic and bleak realisation, but it is a device used by Wells to show the revelation of truth being accomplished in stages. Before reaching the next revelatory experience, however, Letty, Britling's sister-in-law, articulates precisely these sentiments in another form. Believing that her serviceman husband too is dead, Letty is struck by the distinctly Manichean thought that:

"this world is just a place of devils; just a dirty cruel hell".

Britling and his sister-in-law's pessimism subsides as the former comes to accept the reality of his son's death. But it is not until he comes to see his son's life and death in a wider context, that is in relation to the death of other young soldiers, that he attains an understanding of the accuracy of Letty's definition of life as "hell". Pondering the news of the death in the German Army of Heinrich, his son's one-time tutor and friend, Britling struggles to reconcile their existence in an utterly evil world. Thus, following his realisation that life itself is evil, Britling develops an understanding of the existence of an/

an external and determining malignity:

"He went straight to the root of the fact that they (Hugh and Heinrich) had been gallant and kindly beings, and that the something had killed them ....".40

These two instances of clarification which Britling undergoes are marked by rational cogitation: in the first "his mind drifted back", in the second he actively searches for "the root of the fact". But the truth of the nature of "the something" which had killed Hugh and Heinrich and made an evil of the world is not to be gained through idle speculation or clinical deduction. The true nature and extent of the struggle between good and evil, of which the death of his son is only a tiny consequence, is vouchsafed to Britling through the granting of gnosis.

Sitting in his study Britling feels God's presence and the truth is revealed to him; the death of his son and thousands of others fighting German militarism had been the necessary sacrifice to God's very own cause. So, unfortunately for the integrity of the Manichean explanation - which should have convinced Wells that war was evil per se - patriotism leads him to the assertion that the Allied cause was synonymous with that of God's. Like some cosmic cricket team captain Wells couches his conception of deity at the conclusion to his first Manichean novel:

"Amidst the darknesses and confusions ... God, the Captain of the World Republic, fought his way back to Empire".41

This notion of God, struggling on behalf of the Allies - fighting for the British, as much as for his own Empire Wells practically contends - is a testament to the patriotism engendered by the First World War. Perhaps Mr Britling's stirring conviction contributed to Mitchell's youthful attempts to enlist for the struggle in France as/

41. Ibid, p.429.
as it was during this period of his life that Wells' novel was published. In any event, Wells persisted with this theme of the dethroned God fighting his way back to lordship against the forces of evil. Just in case the message had escaped the duller portion of his readership, God the Invisible King followed in 1917 with a non-fictional and more expansive definition. Unfortunately, having interpreted the Great War to his own satisfaction in terms of Manicheism, Wells moved on to tackle contemporary social and economic problems, arguing towards some bizarre conclusions.

In God the Invisible King, Wells shifted his ground from that he had occupied when writing Mr Britling. In the latter novel the hero apprehends God as an almost purely transcendent being. His conception is therefore of a decidedly extra-mundane entity locked in the cosmic struggle with the Devil. In the introduction to God the Invisible King, Wells urged that man should reject idle speculation on the matter of the transcendent God's existence and should look to the God he knew to exist in his heart. Precisely how Wells intended to separate these conceptions of God is unclear. Indeed, he comes close to asserting a completely immanent, purely personal conception of deity which, in any other context but the Manichean, leaves our conception of God as arbitrarily inspired and practically bereft of theological substance. With the Manichean schema in mind, however, his conception of an immanent God may be seen as the translation of the Manichean 'pneuma' or 'spark' which Wells associates with the virtues of love, kindness and compassion. Having urged the rejection of idle speculation on the matter Wells nevertheless proceeds in God the Invisible King to re-introduce the idea of the transcendent God. This notion is however reduced to the level of absurdity as he interprets God as awaiting His opportunity of taking over a world economy organised on sound Fabian principles. Moreover, in an anticipation of his secular politicising of/
of the 1920's, private capital - "idealistic big-business" as Maudsley styles it - was expected to apprehend the inevitability of this process and co-operate in its fulfilment:

"The drift of things is in the direction of state ownership and control, but in a great number of cases the state is not ripe for such undertakings, it commands neither sufficient integrity nor sufficient ability, and the proprietor of factory, store, credit or land must continue in possession, holding as a trustee for God and, so far as lies in his power, preparing for his supersession by some more public administration".42

It is therefore difficult not to see in God the Invisible King an idea dominating an author to the exclusion of good sense, Wells urging the business community to recognition of their duty to bring about:

"a Utopian conception of this world changed in the direction of God's purpose".43

In The Undying Fire the last, thankfully, of his "theological phase", Wells seeks to maintain both conceptions of God as transcendent and as existing in the hearts of men. The novel opens with a scene which might have been lifted almost intact, with one important exception, from Shaw's Man and Superman. Amicably passing the time of day in the celestial sphere God is provoked by Satan into allowing the latter to test the faith of the unfortunate Job Huss, the hero of the tale.44 This he sets about with gusto, seeking to test what Satan has contended is man's somewhat brittle faith in God by piling onerous misfortunes on the shoulders of the hero. God and, with the evidence of Mr Britling and the rest of Wells' work of this period in mind, the reader, know better as Job/

42. H.G. Wells, God the Invisible King, (London, 1917), p.136. This idea, minus the element of divine proprietorship, would emerge in The World of William Clissold and The Open Conspiracy of 1926 and 1928 respectively, receiving no more acclaim then than in 1917.

43. H.G. Wells, God the Invisible King, p.129.

44. It is of interest to note in passing that Wells' association of/
Job Huss possesses the eternal patience implied by his Christian name. Placing yet more weight on the name, Job is given a surname encouraging comparison with Jan of Hus, the 15th century Christian heretic. Job Huss's beliefs are, like the transgressions of his historical counterpart, distinctly heretical. Tested almost beyond endurance by the work of Satan - dismissed from his job, believing his son dead, awaiting an operation for cancer - Huss defiantly champions his allegiance to a definition of deity as an extra-terrestrial master he will not forswear:

"I am the servant of a rebellious and adventurous God who may yet bring order into this cruel and frightful chaos ... a God who, in spite of all appearances, may yet rule over it and mould it to his will".

In this instance it is simple, dogged faith which motivates Huss. But just as Wells felt it inconclusive to leave Britling with a vague awareness of the struggle between good and evil, so Huss is to be armed with knowledge through revelation in a similar fashion to that experienced by Britling. Because of his misfortunes Huss has had cause enough to define the world as evil but like Britling it is not until the granting of gnosis through the 'presence' of God that he apprehends the existence of a counterweight to the dark evil. Recovering from an operation for his suspected cancer, he senses that God speaks to him, saying that:/

of Satan with absolute, unremitting evil - "That enemy against whom God fights forever" as he puts it in God the Invisible King, p.175 - is emulated by Mitchell. Thus, Mitchell never associates Satan with any mitigating features whatsoever. This is in contradistinction to Goethe's Faustus, Shaw's Man and Superman and Wilde's use of the theme in The Picture of Dorian Gray, where evil is tinged with vice and enjoyment. The reason for this difference may be located in the Manichean notion that the world is evil through no fault of man while orthodox Christianity declares the existence of evil to be the result of man's weakness in relation to temptations of various kinds.

45. Jan of Hus, 1372-1415, a follower of Wycliffe and critic of certain practices of the clergy was burned at the stake after being declared a heretic.

46. In this context it might also be recalled that Wells was to term his Manicheism "a flaming heresy" in his autobiography.

47. H.G. Wells, The Undying Fire, (London, 1919), p.162. It is of interest to note in this context that Mitchell in an undated letter (1934?) to H.B. Cruickshank conceded "All right! So hatred of the Devil is just love of God faintly disguised, and I'm content".
"The darkness and the ungraciousness, the evil and the cruelty are no more than a challenge to you. In you lies the power to rule all things ...".48

Precisely to what use Huss puts this clarification is left to the reader's imagination. Unfortunately, for the novel as a whole, it is robbed of any credibility by the revelation that Huss had not been suffering from cancer, that his son is alive and that the loss of his job was of no real importance.

One final point requires to be made in relation to The Undying Fire. It is in this novel that Wells explicitly indicts the problems posed by Darwinism in relation to ethical discernment. The following exchange between Dr. Barrack, who is treating Huss's suspected cancer, and Huss provides the basis for our understanding of Wells' resort to God between 1914 and 1919. Although taking a progressive stand on social issues Barrack is a convinced Darwinian, intent on applying evolutionary theories to society. Cast in the mould of a hard-headed realist, he advances the essentially Hegelian argument that whatever is, is justified by its existence:

"Now my gospel is this: - face facts. Take the world as it is and take yourself as you are. And the fundamental fact we have to face is this, that this process takes no account of our desires or fears or moral ideas or anything of the sort. It puts us up, it tries us over, and if we don't stand the tests, it knocks us down and ends us".49

Huss's objection to Barrack's definition of "the process" echoes Huxley's observation quoted earlier. Huss does not dispute that life may indeed comprise a harsh struggle for survival, but that some means of ethical discernment must be brought to bear. Science can provide a definition/
definition of what is, but the moral imperative of religion is needed
to guide the actions of man in relation to "the process". Huss's
objection centres around Barrack's implicit denial of God's transcendence:

"The spirit of God rises out of your process
as if it were a part of your process ...
Except for him the good and evil are
inextricably mixed; good things flower into
evil things and evil things wholly or partly
redeem themselves by good consequences.
'Good' and 'evil' have meaning only for us".50

For Huss there must be some outside force providing an "objective" set
of criteria against which the process and man's actions can be measured.
Yet, this transcendent divine arbiter is seen as being intimately linked
to the individual's own ethical discernment. The key to this relation¬
ship resides in a personal knowledge of the existence of such a force
linked to a steadfast faith in the moral imperatives associated with it,
whatever its nature. Thus for the hero of The Undying Fire, while it is
important to believe that such a transcendent force acts as the font of
ethical discernment, the fact of existence or non-existence is ultimately
irrelevant so long as the individual believes in it "in his heart" and
acts as if it exists:

"If the God in my heart is no son of any
heavenly father then is he Prometheus
the rebel; it does not shake my faith
that he is the master for whom I will
live and die".51

In this respect Huss's impassioned avowal is akin to the central theme
of C.S. Lewis' The Silver Chair (1953) which might be summarised as con¬
tending that even if God doesn't exist, 'I'm on his side, anyway'. As
indeed Wells can be seen to have 'sided' with God in the distressing
shadow of the War years. As it was, by 1920 he had abandoned Manicheism/

51. Ibid, p.115.
Manicheism in favour of the scientific and atheistic outlook with which he is more generally associated, a fact which drew the ire of Hilaire Belloc in response to the Rationalist and materialist viewpoint from which the first work after his 'theological phase', *The Outline of History*, was written.
c) The Manichean Underpinning of the Early Poems and Stories

Wells embraced Manicheism in response to the enormity of the apparently inexplicable evil represented by the Great War because Manicheism declared that evil was to be understood in relation to a counter-balancing source of goodness. Those characters in his novels which have been touched on - Mr. Britling and Job Huss - find in that theology a psychologically satisfying explanation to the shortcomings of the world. Wells, however, seems to have been led to the manifestly absurd conviction, seen in the non-fictional God the Invisible King, that the business elite were empowered to hold the earth's productive resources in trust for a God who would be made manifest through Fabian collectivism. Thus, Wells treated Manicheism as a source of refuge from the horror of the Great War, turning it to another, distinctly mundane political purpose when he felt able. The result, for the reader, is an unsatisfactory glimpse of the potential contained in the Manicheist conception of the struggle between good and evil which is itself a central feature of Christianity.

Mitchell drew more deeply on Manicheism perhaps because the real horror of the lordship of evil was that it obscured the actual existence of evil, men, instead, interpreting life's shortcomings as manifestations of a painful necessity. If man could not see beyond evil as necessity then neither could he conceive of goodness beyond the contingent. He was therefore bereft of humanity and relegated to the level of the beasts acting in accordance with those instincts determined by the struggle for survival. Good might emerge in such circumstances, but it would be as arbitrarily contingent as the more manifest evil ruling creation.
It may be suggested that the sometimes quite harrowing depiction of suffering to be found in Mitchell's work is attributable to his anxiety that people could not recognise that the enormity of life's evils cried out for explanation and eradication. Manicheism provided an explanation as to why mankind could apparently live with evil as if it were inevitable. As was seen in the outline of Manicheism provided earlier, men are held to exist in a state of dull, bemused ignorance from which they must be awakened in order for them to conceive of the reality of evil. This done, man is vouchsafed the accompanying perception of goodness, the source from which it springs and the possibility of his redemption. The following discussion on some of his poems and stories seeks to elaborate on certain key elements in Manicheism which were of central importance to Mitchell. The following are not mutually exclusive categories for collectively they comprise the core doctrine of Manicheism. Thus, Mitchell deals with the way in which the perception of the world as evil is denied men; how the individual may be awakened from that state of dull incomprehension; the existence of transcendent sources from which evil and good emanate and are perpetuated and how the force of goodness made manifest in Christ is cast as the 'alien' redeemer who passes, for the most part, unrecognised by men.

It is necessary to emphasise that the poems in particular are undistinguished examples of that art form and certainly in relation to "Christ", the first one to be considered, the manner in which the central argument is couched is on the well-tried theme of Christ's/

52. I.S. Munro, Leslie Mitchell, p.46, quotes from an undated letter from the editor of the London Mercury who, writing to a Mr. Savage, claimed of Mitchell's poetry "I can see this fellow has stuff in him and will write prose. The poems just fall short". Mitchell's unpublished poems are considered in this and the final chapter. "Dust", one of the poems discussed, appears in A Scots Hairst.
Christ's message obscured by commercialism. In "Christ" the commercialisation of the Stations of the Cross in Jerusalem, which Mitchell had probably experienced at first hand during his service in the Middle East, is contrasted with Christ's message of forgiveness. In the first of the two verses Christ is almost as pitiable as the demeaning trivialisation of his passion:

"They show the tourist now the crumbling hall
    Whence Christ was led:
    They point each resting-place
Whereupon he sat and wept and gabbled prayers
    Unto his childish God. Throughout a street
    Are little tablets set against each wall:
    'Here Christ broke bread',
    'Here halted he a space',
    'Here stood His judges and betrayers',
    'Here Jesus bathed His head ... His hands ... His feet'".

The last verse is however much more sympathetic towards Christ, principally because of His identification with the object of Mitchell's own sympathies; "the People". The poem concludes thus:

"Dim legends blown down dim and blinded years!
    O starved and pallid Soul
They've set to walk the road to Calvary
    And fear its own grey shadows and its end ...
    Darkness and doubt and pain and the stinging death! ...
Now thus our comrade passed. The slow, salt tears
    Shed as the Vespers toll
    At Christmastide, are tribute unto He
Who loved the People, was the harlot's friend,
    And blessed the robber with His dying breath".

The real message of the Christ is then not the priest-inspired "gabbled prayers" to "his childish God", but the reality of the evils of the world: the "Darkness and doubt and pain and the stinging death". Those who "walk the road to Calvary and fear" only dimly apprehend this truth, indicated by their recognition of the "grey shadows", as opposed to the more real "Darkness and doubt and pain" of life which the poem identifies as being the message of Christ. The commercialisation of this message may thus be seen as obscuring the very Manichean conception of life as a dark evil. By such methods man is kept in a state of ignorance/
ignorance as to this elementary and crucial factor even if in the midst of the commercialisation - the walk to Calvary in Christ's footsteps - something of the truth is apprehended through the recognition of the "grey shadows of its end". All that is missing from "Christ" is mention of the Archons as those inspiring the obscuring, through commercialism, of the reality of evil. Significantly it is the harlot, the condemned robber and "the People" in general to whom Christ is a friend since it is they who suffer most and perhaps, therefore, can be seen as having more cause to identify life as evil.

In "Lost" another equally Manichean theme is invoked as God appears on earth at a street meeting run by some charitable church. God appears as the "alien" as he goes unrecognised not only by the poor who are obliged to attend in order to secure a bed for the night, but by the Minister as well:

"In wonderment God stood amidst the throng
Gathered on London's cold fringe this cold, wet night,
And listened, rapt, to its strange, woeful song,
And passionate speech of one whose face shone bright.

With rain and some soft inner light. The crowd
Compelled to earn night's rest in this sad way,
Saw not God's aged form, as, with head bow'd
He heard sweet talk of love, souls astray ...

Soft-voiced, God asked, 'Whose message bring you, Sir?'
When waifs all fled, these two stood alone.
'Whose message friend? Why', cried the minister,
'The Christ's! And God said, 'Who is Christ?'
And blown

About the streets that night the voice of One
Cried terribly, 'My son! ... My only Son!''

Thus the message of the 'alien God' might be said to be obscured not by the Archons or any other such mythical manifestations of evil, but by the minister of religion. The service itself, described as occurring on a suitably obfuscating cold, wet night, might be seen as obscuring Christ's message as surely as if the Archons had been physically present. On a superficial level these poems might be seen as a simplistic condemnation/
condemnation of organised religion. With the Manichean element retained in mind they become, more pointedly, an attempt by Mitchell to illustrate man's confused and numbed condition.

In "Dust" the Christ again stands as the outcast alien redeemer in a more synoptic poem than either "Lost" or "Christ" set as they are in the definite temporal and geographical locations of twentieth century Jerusalem and London. "Dust" moves from an evocation of a pre-civilised pastoral idyll to "grotesque temples" which "grope to God", and from there to contemporary England and even to the faiths of the far distant future. Throughout these aeons the narrator alone recognises Christ standing as a forlorn outcast, his nature and very existence unrecognised by men:

"I have drunk deeply of the ancient wine,
Wandered a summer in the Sumer land,
Heard in the dusk the bells of Cretan kine
And maidens song across the Cnossan strand,
Seen, where the grotesque temples grope to God,
The sculptor-scribe who carved the Runic plan
Of suns and names and serpents intertwined,
On terraces of Toltec Yucatan.

I hear new voices down the English morn
And alien laughter by the Lakeland meres,
And altars reared to faiths undreamt, unborn,
Far in the seed-time of the sleeping years,-

I see the Christ, an outcast, stand, forlorn,
A dream, a tale, a wonderment of tears.

Although perhaps indicating a certain amount of self-righteousness and immaturity on Mitchell's part the ideas projected in these three poems present a bleak cosmogony of God denied by man, not actively, but because of the latter's inability to apprehend the true nature of the world and the promise of redemption proclaimed by Christ. Man is bound-up entirely with his own temporal existence which, at its best, is depicted as facile as in the penultimate stanza of "Dust" - "... voices down the English morn/And alien laughter by Lakeland meres" - and at its worst distorted by the commercialism indicted in "Christ", and the ignorance of the/
the clergy in "Lost". In these poems man is dull, bemused and ignorant, unable to recognise the potential for redemption in God and Christ. Conversely, it is the awful reality that life is evil, and man's failure to recognise this reality that is seen in the following stories. In them those individuals who do perceive life as evil are granted the accompanying conception of the existence of goodness identifiable, in terms of the Manichean schema, as existing both within man as the divine spark and independently of him in a transcendent definition.

"For Ten's Sake" was the first story Mitchell had had accepted for publication, and along with the Manichean themes already mentioned, it can be detected a vindication of belief against the claims of scientifically derived knowledge. The story revolves around Dr. Richard Southcote and his quest for vengeance against the murderers of his son. Set in Mevr in Egypt, "the hell-gate of the East", Southcote is as unpleasant as the town, being introduced to the reader in the following fashion:

"Though a scientist, the old Southcote was a Calvinist with a God waiting round the corner ready to be unpleasant". 54

The juxtaposition of his profession as a scientist with his Calvinism perhaps carries with it the implication that, as a scientist, he really ought to know better than to conceive of deity in such precise anthropomorphic terms. Southcote's scientific training enables him to interpret seismographic readings as forewarnings of a large earthquake, but do not permit him to question his belief in a vengeful and capricious God. Indeed, such is his lust for vengeance that he interprets the earthquake as divine punishment for the city whose inhabitants have murdered his son. Certain of the righteousness of his quest for/


for vengeance, he determines to remain silent regarding the impending disaster.

Mevr, and, more importantly, Southcote are saved by the redemption of the latter when a gnostically derived and radically different conception of deity is revealed to him. Curious as to the nature of those he believes to have murdered his son, Southcote ventures into "the Street of Ten". Accidentally injured on his arrival there, he is saved by the very lowest elements in Mevr. Pondering their actions he is reminded of the Biblical story where God would spare Sodom if ten righteous men could be found. It transpires that his son's killer is among the collection of thieves and prostitutes gathered in the house he is taken to in order to recover, and it also transpires that his son had perhaps, in fact, deserved his fate. Considering this turn of events, Southcote is forced towards a reappraisal of his vengeful impulses:

"Who, in the shadow-show of life, might lift him a light whereby to judge and condemn his fellows? Yet he, vengeful and hating, had done so, the while the harlot and the thief, the drunkard and the murderer, reached to unguessed heights of pity and forgiveness; heroism and shamed kindliness ...".

The development of Southcote's awareness as to the dark evil of life is indicated by the conception of life as a "shadow show". Previous to this realisation, life, his son's murder, his quest for vengeance and the role of the vengeful deity had, for Southcote, been as clear as black and white. Now with his changing perceptions life becomes the noticeably darker "shadow show", just as the pilgrims' indistinct perception of Christ's message in the poem of that name is indicated through the images of the "grey shadows" evoked by their journey to Calvary. But, while in the poem there is no indication of redemption for those mechanically following in Christ's footsteps, Southcote becomes one of the privileged band/

55. Old Testament, Genesis, XVIII; 32.
56. "For Ten's Sake", The Calends of Cairo, pp.31-32.
band of the redeemed. For the answer to his question "who might lift him a light" is provided by his changing perception of reality antici-
pating, as it does, the appearance of Christ:

"Righteousness? As a silver thread he saw it now, winding through the lusts and cruelties, the filth and crime of every life in Mevr. And of Hope and Faith and Charity was it woven".  

Finally, in a scene which anticipates Kleon's vision at the conclusion to *Spartacus*, Christ appears to Southcote, making up the number in the room to the ten required for Mevr to be saved from the wrath of his erstwhile conception of vengeful deity:

".... between Ali the murderer and Selim the thief, he saw stand for a moment One whom he had never known, One with bleeding hands and feet and hidden face".  

This is a distinctly gnostic revelation bestowing on Southcote a perception of reality which is the complete reverse of his former views. Those formerly evil elements - the murderer, thief, harlot - become the repository of righteousness in an evil world, sanctified by the Christ's presence. When Southcote had wondered who would "lift him a light whereby to judge and condemn his fellows", he could little realise that the light in a dark world would be supplied by Christ himself. The "silver thread winding through the lusts and cruelties, the filth and crime" is represen-tative of the spark of divinity in man in the context of the revelation. For, following his transformation into a 'redeemed redeemer', Southcote grasps the silver thread comprising the virtues of "Faith, Hope and Charity" and saves the town from the earthquake by a timely warning. The central message to be derived from "For Ten's Sake" is that Southcote has had to come to terms with life as evil for his redemption to be effected. Perceiving life thus, he is free for th/  

57. Ibid, p.32.  
58. Ibid, p.33.
the first time to apprehend the countervailing existence of goodness in the actions of Ievr's lowest elements. It is not that "the thief and the murderer" are the natural repositories of goodness but that their actions in saving Southcote, enacted against the dark evil of their lives, grant the scientist a recognition of the existence of good and evil and therefore declares the promise of redemption in the vision of Christ.

"The Life and Death of Elia Constantinides" was first published in The Cornhill in November 1929 and in it Mitchell produced a sequel to the account of Southcote's regeneration. Elia is a Greek peasant boy prone to experiencing fantastic visions, usually of a golden, naked youth standing in the sunlight. Elia has a hard life at the hands of his father who blames Elia for his mother's death in childbirth. The boy seeks escape in the hills from his father's rough treatment and his visions are at least partly attributable to his concern to come to terms with the harshness of his life. Elia consistently doubts that life is as bleak as his own situation indicates and the first of his envisionings gives him a glimpse of a truth he does not, as yet, fully comprehend:

"And then came the first of these happenings that were to interweave throughout his life like the threads of gold in a cloak of frieze".59

In contrast to Southcote who, prior to his regeneration in the "Street of Ten", had not perceived life as evil, Elia's own experience has led him to conclude that this must, indeed, be the case. His perplexity may be seen to reside in his desire to find an explanation for evil beyond necessity. Elia's glimpse of the explanation he seeks is, however, couched in similar language to that used in relation to the truth as/

59. "The Life and Death of Elia Constantinides", The Calends of Cairo, p.133.
as it has been revealed to Southcote. Thus, while Southcote's revelation bestows the conception of hope in the form of "the silver thread winding its way" through an evil world, so Elia's envisionings are"like the threads of gold in a cloak of frieze". The weaving together of these threads lightens the darkness of life typified as frieze, a rough, heavy woollen cloth. Elia's visions persist and each time his yearning for an explanation to the shortcomings of life increases. Then, as a young man, he is granted an elaboration of his earlier vision as he identifies the figure of the naked youth as being himself. Moreover, in this vision the boy is accompanied by a naked girl whom Elia feels compelled to go and find in real life. Seeking out the girl, they marry and are blissfully happy until, that is, Elia rescues ibn Muslih, "a half-crazed Negro", from the tormenting and taunting of a crowd of urchins. Repaid by the Negro's absolute devotion, things go badly wrong, however, when ibn Muslih kills Elia's wife in a fit of jealousy and is stoned in the street by a mob when they hear of the murder. Arriving on the scene Elia does the inexplicable by protecting the Negro. Enraged by his apparently perverse disregard for vengeance, the crowd stones Elia and the Negro to death. In the moment of his instinctive protection of ibn Muslih, Elia is granted the revelation which makes sense of the world. Like Rejeb ibn Saud's self-sacrifice in "Revolt"; Elia is associated with Christ's sacrifice for an unredeemed world:

"He flung out a sudden arm and words incomprehensible as that last cry on the Hill of Crucifixion rang in the ears of their stayed anger. 'Why it is we - we who are the People of the Sun! Those others - look, look, they are but shadows'."61

60. See Chapter 6.

Those who stone Elia and the negro thus dwell in the veils of ignorance determined by a world enslaved by the forces of evil, craving a vengeance of the kind earlier associated with the unredeemed Southcote. From the outset, the notion of life as comprising a dim and unreal phenomenon had been at the heart of Elia's perplexity. Strengthening this association he had expressed these doubts in a manner essentially similar to that employed by Southcote. Thus, while the latter had deemed existence "the shadow show of life", Elia had agonised that:

"Life was not so, could not be so. It was some trick, some play of shadows, some foolish dream from which he and the world would presently awake".62

In a manner echoing the Gnostic tenet that man exists in a dark world through a dream-like ignorance Elia invests his hopes in man's eventual awakening to the evils of life. Elia, like Southcote, is granted the knowledge that although life is indeed dark and evil, the recognition of this fact enables man to attain the awareness of the power of good.

Elia seems to have glimpsed something of this from the outset, the vision of himself as a golden naked youth indicating the knowledge that is available to those who grasp the underlying reality of life. It is however only at the very point of death that Elia is granted gnosis derived through pain and suffering. Significantly, Elia dies, as Saud does in "Revolt", in imitation of Christ, and the hope invested in His passion.

In "Daybreak", first published in The Cornhill in April 1930, the redemptive experience granted Southcote and Elia Constantinides arising from their recognition of the world, firstly as shadowy and obscuring, then as a dark evil, is given an added dimension. Southcote had identified Christ as the source of goodness in an evil world, the compassionate/

compassionate and merciful gestures of men comprising the imitation of Christ and His redemptive promise. While the manner of Elia's death is directly suggestive of the potential contained in the passion, neither he nor Elia is granted an insight into the cosmic dimension of the struggle between evil and good. "Daybreak" provides this facet of the Manichean cosmogony in an otherwise unsatisfactory tale. The story centres around the miraculous recovery of a young woman named Dawn from near to death. Her recovery is effected by the opening of the sick room windows and the inrush of an unexpected smell of heather. The cure is miraculous, not least as the story is set in Egypt, a country not noted for its association with that particular shrub. The recovery aside, the importance of "Daybreak" is located in the character of Dawn herself and the association her name has in relation to the struggle of light against dark. As a character, Dawn is almost too good to be true, but although this weakens the actual story it serves Mitchell's purpose in relation to the overall theme. Dawn's illness is conveyed to the reader as a symptom of life's dark forces. Anxiously awaiting an improvement in her condition, her husband, Roger, avers that although life seems arbitrarily and inexplicably evil:

"there's something behind it greater than a dark malignancy. Though that malignancy is real enough".63

At this point Saloney, the narrator, asks Roger just who, or what, the enemy of life's dark malignancy is and receives the somewhat unsatisfactory reply:

".... something equally nameless and untheological. It has led us up through the dark Defile of history, has turned in many guises to help again and again the stragglers and the lost in their hour of utmost despair. It will lead us to sunrise yet".64

63. "Daybreak", The Calends of Cairo, p.83.
64. Ibid.
Roger does not expand on the nature of this force but it is clear that the "dark malignancy" is interposed between man and this source, obscuring his apprehension of it. Saloney suggests that perhaps Dawn will be a prophet of this force to which Roger, in light-hearted agreement, replies:

"She was made in secret when the Dark Gods slept!" 65

Roger has already declared, in true Manichean fashion, that the force in opposition to the "dark malignancy" has manifested itself "in many guises" so that his avowal of Dawn's origins, "made in secret when the Dark Gods slept", identifies her as a virtual emanation of the divine. In the context of the present discussion, however, Roger's mystical force is nothing other than the revealed truth of the universal dualism. As in "For Ten's Sake" and "The Life and Death of Elia Constantinides", Roger's speculation on the nature of life is only the prelude to the glimpsed gnosis, the clear-sighted knowledge, with which "Daybreak" concludes. Thus, although somewhat pat and contrived, the story ends by attesting to the existence of a source of goodness, conceived of as a counterbalance to a bleak world governed by necessity:

"Yet until prevail the years that make all things dim will it seem to Roger and me that once in an hour of desperate need we were granted a glimpse of the kindlier, nameless thing that verily shines and abides behind all the blind ways and destinies of Nature". 66

The "nameless thing" giving succour and solace to man - in the context of "Daybreak" it is credited with sending the mysterious, reviving smell of heather - is essentially similar to Job Huss's argument against Dr. Barrack in Wells' The Undying Fire. Thus, Huss had appealed for the necessity of a set of moral judgement unrelated to the process of nature, and residing in God. Mitchell takes this a stage further/

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65. Ibid.
66. Ibid, p.91
further, adopting the Manichean notion and description of deity as the "nameless thing", existing outside the world but pitted against its evils. If the gnosis granted Roger in "Daybreak" is not as spectacular as that accorded the heroes of "For Ten's Sake", and "The Life and Death of Elia Constantinides", it is noteworthy for the overt inclusion of the cosmic dimension to the struggle between good and evil.

In the following three stories the "nameless thing" is transformed into Christ, cast as the unrecognised 'alien redeemer', the bringer of gnosis. Echoing the theme of his poems "Lost" and "Dust", in "The Epic", "Cartaphilus" and "Forsaken", Christ's appearance on earth goes unrecognised by men save those granted gnosis. Connan, the central character of "The Epic", first published in The Cornhill in August 1929, is a novelist who arrives in Cairo in search of a girl who he hopes will epitomise the spirit of that city and of all humanity besides. An idle, affected and superficial individual it is Connan's intention to fashion his "epic" around the girl. He revels in the splendours of Cairo, awaiting the appearance of the girl who will grant him the knowledge necessary for the completion of his masterpiece, but Saloney, the narrator, is less than certain that the novelist is equipped for such a task:

"He had been the ruthless individualist, with a little courage and a little splendour, one who could sing of passion but not of pity... He might have been a genius but that he was a brute".67

Saloney in fact draws Connan's attention to the possibility that he will not recognise the girl in whom the essence of Cairo resides, remarking that:

"Perhaps like the Christ she will pass, poor and despised, with hidden face, without splendour or sin, this Cairo's soul you dream".68

68. Ibid, p.97.
Predictably, Connan fails to detect the spirit of Cairo in the shape of the hideous deformed servant girl who tends to his needs. It had been Connan's dream to write a masterpiece on "the song of Egypt and the world" 69 epitomised by a heroine drawn from real life, but his 'artistic' view of life is an essentially erroneous one and so is the masterpiece he creates. Brutish and arrogant by nature, Connan is insensitive to the ugliness of the real Cairo which surrounds him. In a spate of creative energy he writes his novel but, despite hailing it as a masterpiece, he destroys it preferring to see the reality of life in the girl he somewhat mysteriously knows will come to him that night. The reality is, of course, not the essence of beauty he had sought, but the ugliness of the hideous servant girl he had earlier described as being:

"as hideous as a harpy. Kinky and clumsy, with a plague-pitted face; a body and soul both embryonic .... Ugly as sin, though willing enough. Hangs round unnecessarily, as though she had something to say and had forgotten the way to say it." 70

The servant's message is indeed a terrible one; the reality of the ugliness and evil of the world being accentuated by the fact that the hideous reality of her ugliness is veiled by the bridal gown she arrives wearing. Connan cannot accept this revelation and shoots both the girl and himself, but the essential point has been made. While, for Southcote and Elia Constantinides, the realisation of life's evils is more than compensated for by the knowledge of Christ's passion and the existence of the redemptive process, Connan is not equipped to assimilate the awful knowledge contained in the girl's "plague-pitted face". His suicide may therefore be seen as the direct result of the revelation of the evil nature of the world. Connan is the only one of Mitchell's/ 69. Ibid, p.102.
70. Ibid, p.99.
Mitchell's characters depicted as being unable to perceive that knowledge of the world as evil necessarily implies the existence of good, and that therefore, in terms of Christianity as much as Manicheism, redemption is a real possibility. Mitchell may therefore be suggesting that for those 'brutish' and insensitive individuals like Connan, the assurance of redemption is withheld.

The possibility that there may be a moral basis upon which gnosis is granted or denied is not developed any further than that which is to be gleaned from consideration of Connan's character and of his actions. "It is Written", the next story to be considered, reveals that Mitchell can be seen to suggest that gnosis was available to those possessing the ability to feel pity and compassion. Surprisingly, in this story, it is an atheist who is granted gnosis and it is she who, in turn, passes on the knowledge to a minister of religion. First published in *The Cornhill* in May 1930, "It is Written" is the story of the confrontation which develops between Gillyflower Arnold and Godfrey Steyn in the desert of North Africa. The curiously-named Gillyflower is a liberated young lady in the mould of Clair Stranlay and Gay Hunter, being an oil prospector who camps with Steyn after their chance meeting. Steyn is in the desert in an attempt to uncover the last, lost testament of Christ which he believes will provide an explanation for the barbarity of the First World War. A chaplain in the trenches, Steyn's faith is at breaking point when he meets Gillyflower Arnold who, although an avowed atheist, is sensitive to his emotional turmoil. And it is, in fact, Gillyflower who saves him from suicide when on its location the last testament crumbles to dust, its message lost forever.

The text is alleged to have been written by one Polyorthes, a "Christian Manichean", though since Christ pre-dates Mani by 160 years.

71. "It is Written", *The Calends of Cairo*, p. 345.
two hundred years, it is doubtful how such a document could be said to contain Christ's last testament, unless it is the Manichean element brought to it by Polyorthes. Enthusing over the script, prior to the bitter disappointment accompanying its discovery, Steyn identifies its importance:

"The script - it must be explanation and plan of campaign in one, the Lost Message of Christ".72

Gillyflower considers Steyn's hopes and from a position of atheism advances a notion of "Christ the Captain" resonant with Mr. Britling's conception of the struggle seen earlier in the first work of Wells' theological phase. It is Gillyflower's function to define the unimportance of the actual existence of the text:

"Christ - the Great Captain ... Of course it's only dramatisation - hero personification of the Adventure's essence. But splendid enough, Steyn! Thrilling to think we may have had a Leader, Someone who saw the beginning and the end!" 73

And it is this notion that underpins the final conception of "the Adventure's essence" which saves Steyn from self-destruction. There does exist some outside force, identified by Gillyflower as the de-throned God in similar fashion to the gnosis John Garland is granted at the conclusion to Stained Radiance. In a manner akin to Wells' The Undying Fire, in "It is Written", Gillyflower proclaims that the "Someone" exists regardless of the existence or non-existence of His testament, His will being manifested through the human virtues of pity and courage:

"It is God who fights to reclaim the world! What does it matter the fable we accept or reject? Perhaps the old stories are all wrong, perhaps it was God, not Satan, who was overthrown in the beginning of time.

(continued overleaf)


73. Ibid.
"It is Written" thus asserts the transcendent element in the struggle of good against evil ranging man and, it may be asserted, the "divine spark" within him, identifiable as the virtues of "pity and courage", on the side of God. In such a way the cosmic dimension attains unification with the terrestrial fight against evil. Being, as Gillyflower Arnold puts it, "the champions of the de-throned God" however, brings us back to the central problem discussed previously of just how the concerned individual is to react in relation to the knowledge that the world is evil. In the precise context of Manichean theology the individual granted gnosis would be expected to observe certain devotional acts designed to gain his redemption. This pietistic aspect of Manicheism was of little use to Mitchell. As we have seen, the recognition on the part of many of Mitchell's characters - Garland, Clair, Gay, Spartacus and Ewan are the most obvious - on apprehending the nature and extent of the evils of life leads them to the conclusion that they must combat them. It has also been seen that the overtly revolutionary methods chosen by the latter two characters involves them in certain ethical problems. The following stories - "Cartaphilus" and "Forsaken" - have the dual themes of the Christ come to earth who goes unrecognised by men while also exploring the question of how the individual in possession of gnosis should react against evil.

In the first of these the narrator recounts the story contained in thirteenth century parchments, written by Neesen Nerses, the Bishop of Mevr. "Cartaphilus" centres on Baisan Evid, a proud, even haughty, knight who finds himself imprisoned by the king for an act of treachery.

In the damp, dark cell Baisan Evid has much time to think over the
aimlessness of his life and the selfish and pitiless way he had acted.
In a manner reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's story "The Secret Sharer",
Evid senses the presence of a mysterious figure in the dark cell. While
refusing to answer his questions the figure comforts Evid, who has been
tortured, wiping his forehead and soothing the prisoner by his presence.
Puzzling over his fellow-prisoner's actions Evid is gradually moved to
question his former selfishness. Just as Swan Tavendale experiences a
mystic empathy with the suffering and oppressed following his beating
in the Duncairn police cells, so Evid is similarly affected in his
prison cell:

"For he saw all the prisons of the earth, and
the maimed, forsaken multitudes prisoned
therein - .... And all his own years of easy
life and facile lust and unthinking cruelty
men in the dungeons of Sis had lain unpitied
by him in such agonies as his own body knew
at last. And like a great beast squatting
against the sun, he saw that unthinking cruelty
for the monster that ruled his world, terrible,
implacable, unsated ....

Why then did the Christ delay that Second Coming
of His that was to crumble away prison and
palace alike like the wrack of a dream?" 75

The real nature of the world is then revealed to Evid in a personification
of evil - "the monster that ruled his world". With such a perspec-
tive his perplexity as to Christ's Second Coming is understandable,
especially when the lordship of evil is identified as imposing the dark
dream which, in congruence with the Manichean schema, clouds men's eyes
and befuddles their sensibilities. Like Southcote and Elia, Evid's
realisation as to the nature of the predominance of evil suggests to
him that man is held in a state of ignorance denying him knowledge of
the counter-force represented by Christ. Why then does Christ delay/

delay exposing the dark dream life has become? The answer to Evid's perplexity is provided in the identity of his fellow prisoner who, although responsible for the imprisoned knight's regeneration, reveals himself to be one Cartaphilus, who, it is said, denied Christ's divinity and mocked the Passion. For this offence Cartaphilus, an old Jew, had been condemned to wander the world, the Second Coming delayed, pending his acknowledgement of Christ. Having vanished from the cell as mysteriously as he had apparently entered it, Evid is denied the opportunity of persuading Cartaphilus of his folly in denying Christ.

Evid's release from prison provides the opportunity for him to search out "the Wanderer" and persuade him of Christ's divinity, of His mission to rid the world of cruelty and evil. Searching for Cartaphilus, Evid wanders far, always searching, but spreading Christ's message of pity, forgiveness and compassion in word and deed. In so doing he is granted the startling realisation that provides a key to the understanding of the concept of Christ united with man:

"How indeed might a man become God's Huntsman of the Wanderer but that he himself was Christ-like? The Christ - and Baisan Evid!"

Strangely, however, Evid is mistaken more than once for the Jew who had denied Christ and this leads him to the ultimate realisation which the reader has already anticipated: Cartaphilus, the figure in the cell.

76. N. Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium, pp.62-63, 72, describes how the Jews in the medieval period came to be associated with the Anti-Christ on account of their denial of the New Testament. The "Wandering Jew" derives from the medieval legend of a Jew who treated Christ contemptuously on his way to the crucifixion and was condemned by Him to wander the earth until the Second Advent.

cell, the wandering Jew, is the Christ scorned and denied by men. The imitation of Christ, anticipated in the manner of Elia Constantinides and Rejeb ibn Saud's deaths in, respectively, "The Life and Death" and "Revolt" is carried to its logical conclusion in the story of Baisan Evid. For, of central importance, it is necessary that the redeemed actually themselves become redeemers and, like Baisan Evid, spread Christ's two-fold message that the world is evil but that a recognition of this fact leads to an awareness of the divine gifts of pity and compassion and the accompanying promise of salvation.

That there is a palpable contradiction in the depiction of Christ as Cartaphilus is obvious. Considered logically, it is difficult to see how the reader is expected to sustain a conception of the Wandering Jew as the same person who had mocked Christ, delaying the Second Coming, and who is yet himself Christ. Perhaps what is intended through this contradiction is a declaration of Christ's oneness symbolised through His personification as Cartaphilus who had previously denied Him. This would certainly equate with the Manichean notion of the "alien God" since, in the context of the story, it is not the Jew who denies Christ, but the world of men, numb and blinded by and to the lordship of evil. It may therefore be contended that, as Baisan Evid and the Jew "become" as Christ through their actions, the meaning of the story becomes clear to the reader: it is not the Wandering Jew but man who, because of his blindness, denies Christ, delaying the Millenium promised in the Second Coming.

The theme of the alien God denied by men is given a contemporary setting in "Forsaken". Set in Aberdeen in the early 1930's, the old wandering "Yid" is clearly identified as Christ, the reader's attention being directed toward:

"the/
"the holes where the nails had been, the dried blood on the long brown palms".78

The Jew is engaged on an apparently endless search for evidence of the divine spark in man through which the world might yet gain redemption:

"... often you'd blessed, pitifully and angrily, seeing the filth and the foolishness in folk, but the kindly glimmer of the spirit as well. Here, even in this stour and stench and glare there would surely be such folk - ".79

Such folk do indeed exist in Aberdeen. Befriended and given shelter by a family in which father and son are Communists, Christ's introduction exposes a crucial distinction between "Pa" and his son, Will. Christ had "known" the father from the instant of their meeting when Pa had invited him into the house, calling him "Comrade":

"Comrade! You knew him at once, with your hand to your head, to your heart, in greeting".80

Through "head" and "heart" - intellect and emotion - Christ hails Pa as a comrade. Given the strength of this recognition it is not surprising that it turns out to be Pa's belief that Christianity and Communism are ultimately compatible. This is revealed when he enquires if the stranger is a member of the Communist Party:

"... the man looked up and stared, and seemed to think, and syne nodded, half doubtful. 'All things in common for the glory of God' Pa said, 'Ay, just, that's what I tell Will. But he will not have it you can be religious at all if you're a communist, I think that's daft, the two are the same. But he kens his job well enough, I'll say that'".81

Christ may be "half-doubtful" concerning the enquiry but his answer is neither as evasive or enigmatic as it might seem. If, as the old Communist believes, Communism and Christianity are compatible then his avowal that Will "kens his job well enough" would indicate that his son/

78. "Forsaken", Scottish Scene, p.178.
79. Ibid.
son is acting "for", as the old Jew puts it, "the glory of God". Thus, Will, just as surely as Baisan Evid, "God's Huntsman", acts in accordance with God's cause, even if he doesn't realise it. But the story does not end there as the theme of the unrecognised Christ emerges more persistently towards its conclusion. Pa's comments provoke the stranger into posing the same question with which the poem "Lost" concludes when he asks who Christ is. Interpreting this enquiry as the result of a regrettable ignorance of Christianity, the family responds with suitable embarrassment. But Will is made of sterner stuff and he advances the argument that Christianity in particular, and religion in general, have been used as the means of assuring the dominance of the masters. He proceeds to lecture the Jew on the way in which Christianity had been turned to this use almost from its inception. Looking into the soul of the determined young Communist, the old Jew seems to be in agreement with Pa's perspective on the association of Christianity with revolutionary politics:

"Looking into his heart with that ancient power you saw the white, stainless soul that was there, but love had gone from it, faith and trust, hope even, only resolve remained. Nothing there but resolve, nothing else that survived the awful torment your name had become".82

If Will's creed retains nothing but resolve from its putative "starting point" at the crucifixion, it may be contended that it is the same resolve which hardens Spartacus and Swan into the resolute opponents of evil in the world. It is of crucial importance to recall, however, that, unlike the young Communist in "Forsaken", they are motivated by the mainsprings of pity, compassion and love, absent from Will's "stainless soul".

82. Ibid, p.188.
As Will departs on Party business the Jew disappears from the house to continue his wanderings, unrecognised by men, a two-fold meaning emerging from "Forsaken". Political commitment of the kind exemplified by Will is plainly deficient, but even so, he and others like him do work God's will in the struggle against evil even if their recognition of the fact is absent. Will thus occupies an ambiguous position in terms of the typology of characters investigated so far. He recognises plainly enough the evils of class-divided and exploitative society but has not been granted the revelatory experience enjoyed by others: acting in accordance with God's will, but insensitive to it, he is a kind of automated, unredeemed redeemer. "Forsaken" encapsulates the strength and weakness of revolutionary political action. Because of his materialist creed the revolutionary eschews the transcendent and spiritual, decreeing that resolve is indeed the sufficient condition for the success of his crusade against the evils of class division. But, because through his actions he would also redeem mankind - literally "buying back" the humanity denied in the matrix of class-oppression and exploitation—he must perforce acknowledge a spiritual, even transcendent element in this plan of salvation. What Mitchell seems to be saying is that resolve in itself is not sufficient to carry through the liberation and redemption of mankind. Love, of the kind manifested in Spartacus and Ewan's empathic identification with the downtrodden and oppressed is an obviously necessary emotional condition, but beyond this Mitchell was compelled to acknowledge man's need for the transcendent dimension ostensibly denied within the matrix of materialist, revolutionary politics. He may therefore be seen to be attempting the reconciliation of the material and transcendent: man cannot put his world to rights solely by his own efforts without a recognition of the spiritual and its provision of a definition of good and evil/
evil existing independently of man. In this respect he was fortunate in that the Marxian doctrine of class struggle adopted by Ewan lent itself to an interpretation far removed from the exclusively material.
CHAPTER 8:
Revolutionary Politics and Transcendent Authority

a) Marxism and "The Story of Religion"

Something has already been said in relation to the appeal of Marxism in the context of the economic and political dislocation of the early 1930's. It may also be suggested, however, that the success of that ideology can be attributed to its appeal on a more profound psychological level than that possessed by other contemporary politico-economic dogmas. Although formally antagonistic to the claims of religious belief, Marxism itself may be seen as the only religion - insofar as it claims an absolute vision of man and the human condition - to emerge in the modern age. In this respect Alasdair MacIntyre goes so far as to contend that:

"Marxism shares in good measure both the content and the function of Christianity as an interpretation of human existence, and it does so because it is the historical successor of Christianity".1

J.D. Talmon, Political Messianism, The Romantic Phase, (London, 1960), pp.505-506, draws attention to the extent to which Marxism drew from the general religious-political messianism of the early 19th century. Giulio Girardi, Marxism and Christianity (Dublin, 1968), provides a comprehensive theoretical exposition on the points of contact between Marxism and Christianity while Milan Machovec, in A Marxist Looks at Jesus, (London, 1976), argues for the centrality of Christ's message to the socialist and communist movement. Writing in Mitchell's own time John Middleton Murry, The Necessity of Communism, (London, 1932), p.117, argued thus: "Was the coming Reign of God, which Jesus foresaw, a thing of terror or a thing of joy? .... It was both, as Communism, its earthly paradigm, is both. That the individual man should make the thing of terror a thing of joy, by anticipating the revolution in his own mind, was the gospel of Jesus. It is the whole gospel of Marx ... The Communist Manifesto of Marx is the summons to the modern world to repent". Also quoted by Wood, Communism and British Intellectuals, p.68. Similarly John MacKerr, The Clue of History, (London, 1938), viewed Marxism as the reassertion of the social aspect lost from the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is also of interest to note Brian Magee's judgement in Men of Ideas, Some Creators of Contemporary Philosophy, (London, 1976), that the rise of Marxism in the past hundred years - where one third of the human race live under regimes calling themselves Marxist - is only paralleled by the early history of Christianity and Islam.
Historically it is not too difficult to find evidence of ideologies which, having mounted a frontal attack on the predominant ethos of their time, have ended by displacing it with something approximating to its mirror image. One thinks of the Anglican Church in relation to Catholicism and, perhaps most appositely in the present context, the centralised and stifling bureaucracies shared by pre- and post-revolutionary Russia. A similar comment may be made in respect of Marxism's challenge to organised religion. We should certainly be wary of accepting J.D. Talmon's argument that Marxism rejects religion because its founder thought it "the root cause of all evil". ² For one thing, Marxism perceives religion as a consequence, and not a cause of the evils besetting man in class divided societies. For another, the spiritual impulse was recognised by Marx and some post-Marxists as a legitimate aspect of the human condition. Thus, Marx may be adjudged to have conceded the centrality of the spiritual in man when he wrote that:

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart in a heartless world, just as it is the spirit in a spiritless situation".³

It may be remarked in this context, that Mitchell's designation of the 'uplifting' qualities of the Bible, contained in his essay "Religion", reflects something of Marx's thought. While Marxism most certainly questions the object towards which religious faith is directed, it may be contended that Mitchell, like Marx, recognised the validity of the religious impulse itself. Thus, in a passage echoing that of Marx's quoted just previously, Mitchell wrote that:

"The bitterly toilworn and the bitterly oppressed have been often sustained and cheered and uplifted for the cheerless life of the day to day by the lovely poetry of the Bible, the kindly and/

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2. J.D. Talmon, Political Messianism, p. 208.

and just and angrily righteous things therein. They have found inspiration and hope in the sayings and denunciations of some Jewish prophet long powder and nothing, but one who, like them, had doubted life because of its ills and cried on something beyond himself to redress the sad balance of things, to feed the hungry and put down the oppressor.4

Yet while apprehending the spiritual element in man, Marxism did, undeniably, represent a direct attack on organised religion. It did so for two main related reasons. Since those who controlled the structures of economic dominance used religion to legitimise and perpetuate their rule the political expression of Marxist philosophical analysis was perforce compelled to attack the churches. Marx may also be seen as seeking to replace the structures of organised religion which, in his view, encouraged passivity and resignation to palpable earthly evils, with a belief in man and his ability to mould his own destiny. Hence his view that:

"Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself".5

Man was to achieve this pre-eminence through actions based on a faith in the historical process viewed from the Marxian perspective as the history of class struggle. Antonio Gramsci may be identified as alluding to the end product to be gained from a belief in historical materialism when he contended that:

"Our religion returns to being history. Our faith returns to being man and his will and activity".6

5. Marx, "The Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right"; p42

The collection of essays in Erich Fromm's Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium, (New York, 1965), may be seen as an indication of the perceived need to develop a systematic Marxist ethical code.
Attacking the form through which men's spirituality was channelled has therefore to be carefully distinguished from an eschewal of spirituality itself. It might therefore be contended that there is a sense in which Marx sought to replace the formal religions of the nineteenth century through the systematic definition of the secular impulse of the new age into a "religion" in its own right. It will shortly be seen that it was this notion which was uppermost in Mitchell's mind when, in the synopsis for his proposed book to be entitled "The Story of Religion", he designated The Communist Manifesto as containing "the tenets for an atheistic Living Church of History". It is necessary, for the moment, to pursue briefly the extent to which Marxism can be seen as paralleling some of the more important aspects of religious belief. By so doing we may reach a greater appreciation that Mitchell's view of Marxism as the last great contemporary religion is not wholly idiosyncratic and without foundation. Indeed in the Communist Manifesto Marx assigned a retributive and soteriological function to the proletariat - which is resonant with the promise of Christianity - which will presently be seen reflected in Mitchell's thought.

In an article in the New York Daily Tribune Marx claimed, with evident satisfaction, that:

"There is something in human history like retribution; and it is a rule of historical retribution that its instruments be forged not by the offended but by the offender himself". 7

The strikingly moralistic tone of the above passage is replicated in the following quotation which is replete with the quasi-"theological" redemptive role Marx assigned to the proletariat. Thus Marx held/

that the proletariat:

"... claims no particular right because no particular wrong, but wrong generally is perpetrated against it. ... (it) cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society which, in a word, is the complete loss of man and hence, can win itself only through the complete re-winning of man. This dissolution of society as a particular estate is the proletariat".8

Although Marxist theorists would later seek to diminish this aspect of their mentor's thought, just as Marx's own work did, in fact, become more social scientific and analytical,9 it is possible to see in Marxism a powerful attraction for someone of Mitchell's sensibilities. The world view of Marxism is comparable to that advanced by Christianity: evil is defined as the oppression of capitalism; good as the historic function of the proletariat charged with the redemption of men; the millenium (situated on the earth as opposed to life hereafter) contained in the promise of the future society defined as the necessary and sufficient explanation of existence:

"Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution".10

8. K. Marx, "The Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", pp.56-57. Edmund Wilson, To the Finland Station, pp.119,146-7 attributes this aspect of Marx's thought to his desire to see the Jews freed from persecution. It is equally arguable that it originates in Marx's general concern for humanity, even if his remarks on the distinction between simple political emancipation and human emancipation are located in the Papers on the "Jewish Question".

9. Thus, for instance, Roger Garaudy, The Alternative Future, A Vision of Christian Marxism, (Penguin edition, Harmondsworth, 1972), p.94, argues of "Marx's successors" that, "In the historic context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they wished to exploit to the maximum the current prestige accorded to 'science', but, in its contemporary, positivist sense. By the time of Kautsky, Marxism had become simply a catalogue of economic laws that make it possible to form extrapolations based on present facts".

As Mircea Eliade contends, the clash of the classes preceding the attainment of the millenium:

"may well be compared with the apocalyptic conflict between Christ and Anti-Christ, ending in the decisive victory of the former".11

Bearing in mind Mitchell's use of the Manichean schema in the poems and short stories discussed previously - and particularly in view of "Forsaken" when considered in relation to his characterisation of Spartacus and Ewan - it may be suggested that he had apprehended something akin to Eliade's evaluation of Marxism and Christianity. This is most clearly seen in his synopsis "The Story of Religion". It must, however, be stated from the outset that the synopsis is less the story of religion and rather more Mitchell's attempt to harmonise his own spiritual impulses with the materialist base upon which his revolutionary politics rested. However, if we are to accept received ideas concerning Mitchell and religion even in this the foregoing statement would appear incongruous and absurd. Thus, both D.F. Young and G.A.J. Watt typify Mitchell as displaying what the former terms:

"a dogmatic antagonism to all religion".12

What is seen as Mitchell's rejection of religion is attributed to the rigours of his religious upbringing augmented by his reading of T.H. Huxley and H.G. Wells and later acceptance of the Diffusionist claim that, since Natural Man was irreligious, all theological claims were based on erroneous assumptions.13 Both Young and Watt emphasise what they/

12. D.F. Young, Beyond the Sunset, p.17.
they imagine to have been the oppressive nature of Mitchell's upbringing. Other problems relating to Mitchell's home life notwithstanding my investigation into this aspect of his youth invites a different conclusion. Indeed, in the light of the available evidence, it may be contended that the nature of his early exposure to religion was such as to have produced a slight disposition towards religious belief.

In this respect it is of importance to bear in mind Vergote's claim that:

"If family religious education has such a great influence on the children, it is because the family is the model for both religious relationships and values. The religious gestures and language of the parents fit into an affective experience ..."14

Vergote goes onto contend that an overbearing religious upbringing may often result in a rejection of religion in later life.15 It is just such a conclusion that Young and Watt advance in relation to Mitchell. Yet Mitchell's parents were in no way "hard-line" Presbyterians; there was, probably, little religious instruction or catechism in the household—though Leslie did read the Bible of his own volition—while both the family's attendance at church and their son's attendance at Sunday school were irregular.16 Indeed, the Mitchells' visits to church were, according to Ray Mitchell, as much the result of their desire to hear and exchange news concerning the community as from a devotional/


15. It may be remarked in this context that Rudyard Kipling's youthful exposure to a harsh religious regime typified in his "Ba Ba Black Sheep", where God is "a Creature that stood in the background and counted the strokes of the cane" - resulted in atheism. While Miyoshi, The Divided Self, p.300-301, mentions G.K. Chesterton's opinion that Dr Jekyll's evil alter ego in Stevenson's famous tale was the result of the author's puritanical upbringing.

16. Ray Mitchell, PT, thought it "unlikely" that there was any religious instruction in the Mitchell household. Nan Jeans, WT, 29/4/82 stated that "Leslie never came to Sunday School", while Robert Lemon, PT, recalled that Mitchell did attend "occasionally".
devotional impulse. Moreover, if his parents were not overbearingly religious it will be recalled that neither was the Reverend Peter Dunne. According to Robert Lemon and Nellie Riddoch, classmates of Mitchell who attended the church with him, Dunne was not given to the delivery of fire and brimstone sermons from the pulpit. He was, by all accounts, a rather kindly, if reserved gentleman who became fond enough of Mitchell to lend him books from his private library. Alexander Gray, Mitchell's dominie and afterwards life-long friend, was also a Christian, but one who, along with Peter Dunne and Mitchell's own parents, would have been unlikely to provide an affective model imbuing a seething hatred of religion in their young charge.

Yet Mitchell's essay entitled "Religion", upon which much of Young and Watt's conclusions rest, does contain evidence of Mitchell's hostility to some aspects of religious practice. This last point should be emphasised in that it is religious orthodoxy - particularly the "ghoul-haunted canon" of Calvinism - which Mitchell inveighs against. In "Religion" he takes to task the intrusiveness and unpleasantness of clerical practice in the Scottish past, quoting from H.G. Graham's Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century to do so. Reflecting the moral behaviour of the Reverend MacShilluck in Grey Granite, who cohabits with his "Pootsie", Mitchell contends that it is a well-known fact of rural life that the minister "sleeps with" his housekeeper. Before ever he wrote "Religion" Mitchell had already mined this particular

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17. Ray Mitchell, PT. This judgement may be seen to reflect Chris's in Sunset Song, p. 13, when she contends: "I don't think they were ever religious, the Scots folk, Will - not really religious like the Irish or French or all the rest in the history books. They've never BELIEVED. It's just been a place to collect and argue, the kirk, and criticise God".

particular vein of pillorying organised religion through exposure of the excesses of its 'full-time officers'. Thus, in the short story "Vernal" the Reverend Freeman is obsessed with the subject of sexual immorality, particularly that of his wife. Similarly, in Image and Superscription, Gershom's father is preoccupied with the prospect of his spouse's infidelity and is repaid in the same fashion as the nemesis befalling Freeman when he drives his wife to a life of prostitution. Both Freeman and Gabriel Jezreel are archetypal religious fanatics for whom - with the sins of the flesh uppermost in mind - retribution rather than forgiveness is the cornerstone of belief. In contrast, the portraits of McGibbon and McShilluck in A Scots Quair are mocking but not wholly unkind. After all, Mitchell could hardly condemn outright the sexual predilections of the clergy - except to highlight the possibility of hypocrisy - given the "liberated" sexual behaviour of some of his other fictional creations. A more serious consideration which emerges from his treatment of religion is the expression of the belief that it could warp and corrupt humanity. This is the central thrust of his comments on the sacrificial religious observances of the Maya contained in The Conquest of the Maya and elsewhere. It also emerges, however, in the context of sexuality, when John Guthrie seeks to legitimise his incestuous demands on his daughter by reference to the Old Testament. While Guthrie's unpleasant sexual impulses are at least/

19. Thus, for instance, in "Religions of Ancient Mexico", Religion: The Journal of Transactions of the Society for Promoting the Study of Religions no. 13, October 1935, Mitchell employed his customary flair for heightening the reader's awareness of pain and hurt: "Agony was the tribute that humankind paid to divinity ... the sacrificing priest using a sharp knife of flint or obsidian, cut open the victim's chest at a single blow, dragged out the heart, and offered it to the idol, finally smearing the idol's face with blood."

20. Sunset Song, p.106-107. Judging from the neutral tone which is adopted in respect of the brief appearance of Hiketas and Eradne in Spartacus, p.136, a brother and sister who live in incest, Mitchell saw nothing intrinsically wrong with such behaviour between, as it were, 'consenting adults'.
least partially attributed to his religious creed, Mungo Park's restrained relationship with his wife might also be seen as emanating from a similar source.  

There is no denying that Mitchell believed religion to be responsible for certain negative aspects of life. This does not, however, signify his outright hostility to the essence of belief in spiritual values. It has thus already been seen that even in "Religion", his most frontal attack on organised religion, he was, like Marx, careful to acknowledge that religion catered for the ineffable spirituality in man. It may be contended that it satisfied Mitchell's sensitivity and perception to see in religion an explanation for the evils of the world which also vindicated the actions of man in his attempt to eradicate those evils, since any such action could be interpreted as being in concert with the design of transcendent authority. Given the factor of his political sympathies, it is not surprising that he should attempt to find a conciliation of the material and the spiritual. "The Story of Religion" begins with "irreligious Natural Man" and ends with Marxism as the exemplar of the religion of revolution: throughout the synopsis Mitchell's purpose may be seen as the attempt to humanise the spiritual and deify the material.

There are ten chapters in "The Story of Religion". Chapter One advances the standard Diffusionist interpretation of "fundamentally irreligious" Natural Man who "had no Gods ... he neither feared in hell nor hoped in heaven". As such this may be seen as a re-working of the traditional man before the fall motif. Following the Diffusionist myth Mitchell interprets pre-civilised man as:

"an animal unvexed by the mystery of existence, and existence had no mystery",  

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21. Niger, p.256, Ailie Anderson, Park's wife, is described as "light-hearted ... a born flirt and a pleasure seeker". The cold and aloof Park, however, "never loved her as a woman should be loved - as a lover ...".

With the coming of agriculture and intrusion of evil into the world man undergoes an unexplained species transformation. It will be recalled from the discussion on Mitchell's concept of adventure and the explorer that he held the onset of civilisation to represent a mixed blessing: while it had caused man's fall, it had compensated by bestowing an insatiable curiosity concerning his world. This ambiguity is replicated in "The Story of Religion" where "man the animal unvexed by the mystery of existence" of the First Chapter is displaced by man whose quest it is to explain existence.

Indeed, there is an extent to which Mitchell's ambiguity towards the onset of civilisation can be seen as a reflection of that aspect of Marxist philosophy known as the Liberation Theory. This theory asserts the existence of a cruel paradox in man's development from the primitive state. His species nature leads man to seek control and mastery over nature, but in so doing he is forced to assume social forms based on class division and exploitation. The evolution of ever more sophisticated technological forms is, however, achieved at the expense of the imposition of ever more class divided and exploitative forms within which man is simultaneously offered and denied the prospect of individuation. Capitalism, as the highest exploitative form and most technologically advanced society required, in Marx's view, to be replaced by socialism, and ultimately communism, within which man would retain mastery over nature, but without being divided against himself. Moreover, Mitchell would seem to stand closer to the Marxist vision of man than to that held by the Diffusionists although both groups are in fundamental accord in their view of primitive man. Thus, according to Marx, pre-civilised/


civilised man:

"appears originally as a generic being, a tribal being, a herd animal ...".25

Thus far are Marxism and Diffusionism in accord: W.H.R. Rivers, one of the principal Diffusionists, in fact argued that there existed "a herd instinct in man" substantiating this remark by echoing Kropotkin's view that man was naturally co-operative and communal.26 Mitchell likewise accepted this definition of man's primitive state. As much can be seen in Three Go Back where the hunters move from place to place "in a drift of mutual convenience",27 as a herd of animals might, while the heroine of Gay Hunter defines the "primitives" she comes in contact with as a:

"people hardly individualised in the sense that the twentieth century had understood individuation".28

Repeating this conception in a non-fictional format Mitchell seems to follow Marx's conception of primitive communism outlined in Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations and, indeed, the Communist Manifesto, by contending that pre-civilised man had:

"co-operated in matters of mutual group life as a colony of modern anarchists would co-operate".29


27. Three Go Back, p.105.


One might be forgiven for anticipating that any grouping of "modern anarchists" would be prone to rather more disputatious behaviour than Mitchell conceived. This aside, it is just such a conception of man as a disingenuous communal being which can be seen to underpin Domina's belief that, some day, the future would turn full circle, leaving the world populated by:

"a world herd of men - not the bestialised brutes that civilisation has made of men".30

It will be recalled, however, that Maudsley rejects Domina's Diffusionism as being incapable of bringing such a change about.31 Marxism not only offered the potential for realising the goal of change missing from the Diffusionist model, but it offered the prospect of the evolution of a qualitatively different human being who, freed from class division and oppression, would become the true master of his environment. In stark contrast to the Diffusionist view of man, however, expressed by Domina and conveyed through Three Go Back and Gay Hunter, Mitchell also contended that:

"... the Natural Man of the world's future will plant trees and gaze at the stars and explore his atom, apart, alone, unafraid ...
His benevolence towards his fellow human-beings will be natural, individual, thalamic.
This kingdom will be self".32

30. The Thirteenth Disciple, p.194.

31. Thus, ibid, p.223, where Maudsley "upbraids the diffusionists" for their inability to translate their vision of man's potential into a creed which might produce results in the twentieth century. See also Chapter 2.

32. "The Prince's Placenta and Prometheus as God", The Twentieth Century, February 1932. There is a parallel evocation of man the supreme individual in "Glasgow", Scottish Scene, when, in the course of taking a swipe at cultural nationalism, Mitchell anticipates that "A time will come when nationalism, with other cultural aberrations, will have passed from the human spirit, when Man, again free and unchained has all the earth for his footstool, sings his epics in a language moulded from the best on earth ...".
Such a conception of man - the master of nature - would seem to have more in common with the Marxian notion of man the supreme individual who is yet conscious of his fellows, than the Diffusionist view of man in "a world herd" as Domina puts it in The Thirteenth Disciple. While the Liberation Theory postulates human development through individuation once the restraints of class division and exploitation have been sloughed off, Diffusionism presents a static picture of man as a noble savage now cowed and bloodied by the imposition of civilisation. It is no accident that although the opening chapters of Nine Against the Unknown and the synopses "The History of Mankind" and "The Story of Religion" outline the Diffusionist vision of primitive man, Mitchell soon leaves this behind, developing arguments in these works which substantiate a view of man - as a questing, inquisitive individual - which is fundamentally at odds with the Diffusionist notion.

So it is that "The Story of Religion" develops along this familiar format: "The Old Stale Fertility Cults" of ancient Egypt may, in congruence with the Diffusionist interpretation, bolster the ruling elite - "propitiation and sacrifice were the gifts demanded by the divine" - but the search for the true nature of God is couched throughout the first seven chapters of the synopsis as a quest for an explanation and mode of reacting to life's evils. Since such evils are obviously located in the terrestrial sphere, Mitchell's purpose in the synopsis can be seen as the attempted reconciliation of the material with the transcendent aspects of man's quest. Pre-fall man had been at one with his world; post-fall man must achieve this state once again. But, having lost his innocence he must consciously strive for that ideal state. In the Manichean context the fall may be seen as the assumption of the lordship of evil, a dominance which, in Mitchell's mind, could only be reversed by the terrestrial struggle of man against evil which was/
was itself a projection of the overall Manichean cosmogony. It may be suggested that Mitchell discerned in the retributive and soteriological function Marx assigned the proletariat a means by which this might be achieved. Standing at the culmination to "The Story of Religion" it is Mitchell's purpose to validate the notion of revolutionary change by reference to man's spiritual quest through the moral imperative contained in Manicheism. Because, although profoundly moral and religious, Marxism is ultimately a philosophy of action resting within a materialist cradle. Without the validifying context of Manicheism, its designation as the last of the great religions promising, as Mitchell puts it, "The Kingdom of God on Earth", Marxism would have had only contingent and relative merit.

With the opening chapter of the synopsis and its Diffusionist argument behind him, Mitchell reserves the rest of the synopsis for his central purpose, interpreting the transcendent in a material fashion and the material as profoundly spiritual. Chapters two, three and four deal respectively with Akhenaton, Buddha and Confucius. In Mitchell's view Akhenaton becomes convinced that the evils of life are attributable to "heedless and cold ... horrific Gods", whom he proceeds to banish, instituting:

"a reign of naturalism in all human relationships, human and divine".33

Similarly, Gautama Buddha is spurred on in his quest after "the truth", in the hope of gaining an explanation for "the unending Cycle of Pain ... the great and pitiless Hindu pantheon" that is life. He finds explanation in the conception that "The Gods themselves are prisoners in the chain" of evil and must therefore be substituted. Like Akhenaton, Buddha is held to have reacted to this knowledge by founding his own

33. "Story of Religion".
own 'religion' described as:

"The Eight-Fold Path whereby the pain of life may be forgone ... the doctrine ... of Life Defiance".34

Chapter four on Confucius continues this theme of the individual moved to articulate a response to the evils of life. Unlike the monotheism of Akhenaton, but in congruence with the "formally agnostic"35 thought of Gautama Buddha, Confucius rejects the old cruel Gods - "the Gods are beside the question ... The Unknown is the concern of the Unknown" - substituting an ethical code of conduct for man to live by.36

Mitchell's purpose in these opening chapters on Akhenaton, Buddha and Confucius may be judged from the emphasis placed on the material considerations held to have given rise to the speculation of the individuals under discussion. Thus Mitchell consistently seeks to diminish the undoubted spiritual element in their quest in which respect he is at least in accordance with the general uncertainty surrounding their thought.37

The next two chapters deal with Christ and Mani and, in them, the emphasis changes completely. Not only is the transcendent reinstated, but man is seen as inherently relevant to the divine purpose. Christ is judged to have brought a totally new element into religious thought:

34. Ibid.

35. T.O. Ling, Buddha, Marx and God, (New York, 1966), p.21, describes Buddhism in this way while also asserting its "spirituality".

36. Mitchell's definition of Confucianism in "The Story of Religion" seems to place him in the camp of those who interpret it as a humanist, ethical code. It is, however, of interest to note that, according to D.H. Smith, Chinese Religions, (London, 1968), p.32, it is open to argument as to whether Confucian "ethical and socio-political teachings were grounded in a rationalistic humanism or based on a deep religious faith ...".

thought:

"...- He teaches and proclaims that that Dark
Unknown is God, non-malignant God, God who
is towards Man a loving Father. He teaches
love as the terrestrial motive, and by means
of it the attainment of the Kingdom of God
on earth - ".38

The succeeding chapter on Manicheism is ultimately related to the
Christian message of hope. Manicheism may be seen as the synthesis of
the religious thought he has dealt with previously. Mitchell's view of
Manicheism thus asserts the validity of the Christian God of love within
the context of the humanism discernible in his interpretation of
Akhenaton, Buddha and Confucius. In place of the ethical codes - or in
the case of Akhenaton, the social revolution in terms of behaviour -
Mitchell's definition of the Christian-Manichean vision vigorously
asserts a notion of life as evil but an evil resisted and combated by
a force which is intimately related to man but which is nevertheless
distinctly transcendent. In place of the Christian vision of the lord¬
ship of good, Manicheism asserts the pre-dominance of evil:

"Life is an unending fight - between evil and
good, darkness and light, death and life. In
this unending conflict Light (representative
of God, who in the birth of time was over¬
thrown by Satan and still struggles to reclaim
the world) manifests itself age after age
through great Prophets - Noah, Abraham, the
Buddha, the Christ, and - Mani. The Dark
Unknown is an evil thing- but it lessens and
shrinks. By a combination of Light creeds -
a synthesis of Buddhism, Christianity,
Zoroastrianism - men may have the perfect
creed".39

As Mitchell appears to understand it, Manicheism explains much to
modern man who, like the prophets of the synopsis, is seen as groping
after an explanation for, and means of resisting and defeating the evils
of life. Mitchell found the explanation in the Manichean extension of/

38. "The Story of Religion".
39. Ibid.
of Christianity and the means in Marxism. Before the concluding chap-
ter on Marxism, in which the material and transmundane achieve uni-
fication, Chapters seven, eight and nine deal, in turn, with Mohammed,
Calvin and Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church.

There is little that is remarkable in Mitchell's portrait of these
prophets (as he styles them) save perhaps for the fact that an entire
chapter was to be devoted to the Mormon religion. The theme of man's
perceived need to apprehend a purpose to life, related to transcendent
authority, is restated in the chapter on Mohammed who is held, at least
initially, to have preached a God of love similar in all essentials to
the God of Christianity. The chapter on Calvinism follows the inter-
pretations advanced in Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of
Capitalism (1950) and R.H. Tawney's Religion and the Rise of Capitalism
(1926), concluding of Calvinism that it became:

"the battle cry of the rising commercialist
classes of Europe".40

No satisfactory explanation presents itself as to why Mitchell should
devote a chapter to Mormonism, especially when he seems to have inten-
ded dealing with the entire history of Catholicism, the Medieval Church
and the Lutheran revolution in the context of an introduction to
Calvinism. Perhaps, like Marx, he was intrigued by the colourful nature
of the rise of Mormonism, attributing it to the "peculiar cultural and
geographical circumstances" of North America.41

40. Ibid.

41. Thus, in the introduction to Chapter 10 of the synopsis Mitchell con-
tends that the growth of Mormonism and the Church of the Christian
Scientists "reveals a curious fact. New faiths are apt, in the nine-
teenth century world, to become localised. World religions appear as
a thing of the past". In similar fashion Marx, in his Papers on the
Jewish Question, had commented on the "infinite splits" of religions
in the New World.
The concluding chapter, entitled "Karl Marx and the Kingdom of God on Earth" locates Marxism at the culmination to man's spiritual quest. Mitchell charts the "loosening of the bonds of belief in any Gods" in the nineteenth century, explaining that:

"In place of worship of the Unknown arises Humanism, the worship of Man, belief in his goodness and perfectibility".42 Marx is located as the central and key figure in a process begun by Rousseau who supplies the notion of "man's perfectibility" with Socialism,"fathered by d'Holbach and Owen", enshrining this "new belief". Both the concepts of Natural Man and Socialism are, however, in Mitchell's view:

"handicapped for lack of the discipline and faith-inspiration of a rigid dogma".

"This", Mitchell continues, "is to be supplied by Heinrich Karl Marx".43 It is worth reproducing the final section of the proposed chapter on Marx in total since it reveals something of Mitchell's desire to unify the spiritual and the mundane:

"In the Communist Manifesto of 1841 he and Engels expound the result of his researches, the tenets for an atheistic Living Church of History:

Economic change is the supreme motivation. Human history is the history of class war. The last class but one is now in the saddle. Below it, the last class, the proletariat, rises to overthrow its oppressor. Then, in a classless world, Equality will come, the Millenium be established.

He creates the First International, rules the Socialist forces of Europe, dies in obscurity: but thirty years after is the deified inspiration of a great Church embracing millions of followers — the Communist International".44

42. "The Story of Religion".
43. Mitchell seems to have thought Heinrich to have been Marx's first Christian name. In fact it is the Christian name of Marx's father.
44. "The Story of Religion".
We may see in Mitchell's depiction of Marxism a conception of that ideology which vastly outstrips its political application. Natural Man may, in terms of Mitchell's Diffusionist-orientated explanation, have been irreligious, but his condition is beast-like and anodyne—"an animal unvexed by the mystery of existence", as he is termed. But in a state of innocence man hardly requires knowledge of the meaning of existence, since he is at one with his world and therefore at one with God, whether he conceives of His existence or not. Given the reality of post-fall man in a world ruled by evil, Marxism promised, for Mitchell at least, the potential unification of God and man ruptured by the fall: God in His heaven—the Satanic usurper deposed—and Man dominant on an earth at peace following the vanquishing of the class enemy according to the "tenets" of the "atheistic Living Church of History". In Mitchell's view Marxism thus stands as the virtual emanation of the Divine purpose—the light creed of the Manicheans—doing battle with the lordship of evil as it is manifested on earth. Marx, as the "prophet"—for so he is styled in the introduction to the synopsis—of the the "Atheistic Living Church of History" commands that his followers undertake this great task. We may be assured that not only did Mitchell depict Spartacus and Ewan with this thought in mind, but that he intended other of his 'revolutionary Messiahs' to be conceived of in this way.
b) The Revolutionary Messiahs

It has already been suggested that although his political sympathies were with working people, Mitchell found it difficult to portray individual proletarians as effectively as he might have done. He was, therefore, faced with the necessity of finding a mode of characterisation through which his dominant ideas might gain expression. Both Manicheism and Marxism were eminently suitable for the way in which he chose to personify the struggle for the realisation of the de-throned God’s transcendent purpose through political heroes and heroines, some of whom assume an almost mythical form in some respects analogous to the Prometheus myth. It will be argued that Spartacus and Swan are to be seen in the light of this observation, especially as Mitchell depicts other real-life political activists in the same manner. There is a sense in which Antoine Vergote’s argument in *The Religious Man* can be seen as relevant to Mitchell’s conception of the political activist’s role within the unfolding of history. Thus Vergote argues that:

"linking up with others and linking our present to our past we find a meaning for everything; ... The saints of Christianity, the heroes of past revolutions have never done anything else. They merely tried to believe that their fight was already won in heaven or history".45

It may be that Mitchell derived a notion of the way in which individuals contributed to the cause of humane values from H.J. Massingham.46

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46. H.J. Massingham was, for a time, a member of Grafton Elliot Smith’s archaeological staff at University College, London. He later came to doubt the Diffusionist account of the growth of civilisation claiming, in *Remembrance. An Autobiography*, (London, 1942), p.58, that “I do not think that the Diffusionists perceived (neither did/
Although not of a revolutionary disposition in political terms, Massingham propounded a version of the perception of tradition referred to by Vergote. Massingham was a Diffusionist for whom the putative verification of the existence of a one-time Golden Age was important because of the humane values he associated with its legacy. In his book entitled *The Golden Age, The Story of Human Nature*, he advanced a notion of the Golden Age transmitted through history as "a mould of ideas" by such individuals as Rousseau, Godwin, Shelley, Blake and others.47 Indeed, Massingham went so far as to suggest that the inspirational implications stemming from a belief in the Golden Age were as important as its actual one-time existence. Accordingly, he argued in favour of a conception of:

"The Golden Age which has existed intermittently throughout the history of civilisation as a tradition of poetry, a mould of ideas, a dynamic urge to the reconstruction of the social fabric and an inspiration to the heart of man".48

Mitchell was on friendly terms with Massingham, the latter having written expressing his liking for the depiction of the primitive hunters in *Three Go Back*,49 an action which subsequently earned him the dedication of *Gay Hunter*. Since *The Golden Age* was published in 1927 it may therefore be that Mitchell absorbed the general notion of such a tradition from that source. But, because of his left-wing views he was inclined to put this concept to a decidedly more revolutionary purpose than Massingham.

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49. Letter, Massingham to Mitchell, 30/1/1932.
Moreover, Mitchell's heroes and heroines may collectively be seen as the terrestrial projections of the extra-mundane struggle waged by the de-throned God to re-claim his lost kingdom.

_Three Go Back_ and _Gay Hunter_ provide examples of the way in which the heroines of these works achieve an understanding of the existence of evil but find comfort in the knowledge that good has always found powerful champions. In the former novel Clair is, in the moment of her utmost wretchedness and despair, moved to doubt God's existence, positing instead a universe governed by chance and arbitrary evil. Lost and alone following her separation from Keith Sinclair and the Cro-Magnards, Clair's loneliness is reflected in the anguish of her mental state:

"Far up there in the stars God still lay, unborn and unawakened ... Or dead, dead indeed if this were the last night of the world, swinging now a frozen star about an extinct sun".50

Immediately following her evocation of this bleak cosmogony she arrives at a startling realisation that her agonised doubts may in fact signify the existence of God. Clair may indeed be seen to advance a re-working of the central thrust of the ontological argument 51 as she exclaims:

"Then what am I? Why was I born to think those things? Oh, somewhere, surely, in some age to come there's explanation".52

Subsequently re-united with Sinclair and the hunters, the impact of her conception that there existed some purpose and reason to life is

50. _Three Go Back_, p.194.

51. The ontological proof turns on the argument that since men do conceive of God and the idea of God is perfection and since, moreover, we can conceive of nothing greater, then it is a logical absurdity to suggest that something as altogether perfect as God should not exist.

is indicated by her assertion that:

"... that night I was lost on the hills 
back there I began to think that there was 
some God after all. Not just a god. 
Something. Someone ... "  

In Gay Hunter the heroine advances an even bleaker cosmogony than Clair 
had when she had conceived of a God unborn or even dead. In Gay's 
estimation God is associated with meaninglessness and destruction:

"... death waited on all life that ever was, 
the flickering little flame in the dark 
wastes of space presently to be quenched by 
God as a hasting hand a taper".  

Gay's depiction of God as an anti-human, anti-life force has, however, to 
be balanced by consideration of the fact that the, in the context of the 
story, justifiable destruction of Houghton and Easterling in the ruins 
of the Hierarchs! London is attributed to divine intervention. Although 
Gay never achieves the certainty of belief in the existence of an explain-
ation granted to Clair Stranlay, Gay Hunter is, along with Three Go Back 
and Stained Radiance, important for the extent to which Mitchell conjoins 
a diversity of individuals who are adjudged to struggle for humane 
values in an evil world. 

In relation to Stained Radiance it will be recalled that James 
Storman comes ultimately to renounce his erstwhile belief in communism. 
However, during the stage immediately preceding this recantation Storman 
addresses a meeting of Welsh miners but fails to arouse them, his own 
growing cynicism and lack of enthusiasm being transmitted to the gather-
ing. When he is replaced by a miner who is the secretary of the local 
Minority Movement the situation changes dramatically, the miner/ 


55. The National Minority Movement was formed in August 1924 under the 
auspices of the C.P.G.B. to further the work of that party within 
the British trade unions. See L.J. Macfarlane, The British 
Communist Party, pp.15,17.
miner recounting:

"... an obscene jest in which a local coal owner was the butt. He spoke of Jesus, Buddha, St David, Spartacus and Karl Marx as early Communists. He entered into questions of pay, shifts, coal seams. ... 'in time there shall be no more weeping, neither shall there be any tears, as the first Communist, Jesus of Nazareth, prophesied ...'
The meeting cheered, leapt to hob-nailed boot-soles, swung, in a hysteric ecstasy of fine Welsh voices, into the chorus of the Internationale".

Just as the Welsh miners are aroused by the ostensibly unlikely co-mingling of questions of pay and shifts with Buddha, Spartacus, Jesus and Karl Marx, in Three Go Back Clair Stranley is saved from a potentially destructive pessimism by a similar appeal to a select band of witnesses to the bar of the court of history. For Clair the legacy of humane values bequeathed by the pacific communality of the Golden Age would never die but would:

"... rise again in the Christs and Father Damiens, the Brunos and the Shelleys, the comradeship of the slave pit and the trench".

It might thus be contended that Massingham's notion of the mode of transmission of the legacy of the Golden Age is given a revolutionary dimension in Stained Radiance and Three Go Back. In the former Jesus, Budda, St David and Karl Marx are bracketed together as standing in the same tradition while in Three Go Back Christ, Father Damien, Bruno and Shelley are associated with the slaves of the Spartacist revolt and the hapless infantryman in the oblique reference to "slave-pit" and "trench". Similarly, Gay Hunter finds renewed hope on the realisation that the/

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56. Stained Radiance, p.240.

57. Three Go Back, p.162. In relation to Father Damien, R.L. Stevenson's outline of his work in Father Damien may have provided an account of the former's life, while Oscar Wilde's claim in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" that "Father Damien was Christ-like when he went out to live with the lepers ..., may also have had a bearing on Mitchell's reference to him in Three Go Back.
the cause of right has always found powerful champions. Turning in
revulsion from the evidence of the Hierarchs' debased society:

"She remembered then the great heroes of the human
march in the far-off times before her own century
- Akhenaton and the Christ, Spartacus, the Buddha;
those who had believed in the triumph of the
kindly and the free, those whom men had taken as
beacon lights for two long millenia".53

The view of history expressed in these passages is essentially selec-
tive, isolating certain individuals, some of whom appear in "The Story
of Religion", others representative of a humane tradition, and still
others recruited from a nineteenth and twentieth century revolutionary
political tradition. Like Mitchell's own fictional, and in the case of
Spartacus, non-fictional heroes, they are individuals who, like Garland
in Stained Radiance, perceive the necessity to mount an offensive against
life's evils. Such a definition of history might be seen as an essen-
tially Manichean synthesis of prophets bearing a perennial message in the
struggle to alert men to the evils of life and the fact that they must be
resisted. Significantly, in terms of the Manichean view of life as ruled
over by a dark obfuscating evil, Gay designates such individuals as
"beacon lights" illuminating a dark world by their actions and very
presence.

Mitchell believed the capitalism of his own time to be on the verge
of collapse. As much may be judged from his gloomy foreboding concerning
the triumph of Fascism mentioned previously. In such a world Mitchell
may be seen as seeking to validate his belief that even if the lordship
of evil seemed on the verge of asserting itself in the even more objection-
able barbarism of Fascism there had always existed individuals who
had resolutely stood against evil. The following investigation of four
of Mitchell's poems, three of which remain unpublished, helps reveal in
what context the heroes and heroines of his fiction are to be viewed.

58. Gay Hunter, p.139.
Because his poetry almost certainly pre-dates the vast bulk of his work he may be seen as having used it to work out some of the main themes he would later more subtly expand upon in his fiction.

The torch of human freedom had, for Massingham, been passed on by individuals like Rousseau, Blake and Shelley. Mitchell was certainly prepared to admit such people into his own pantheon, even inserting the somewhat doubtful personage of Akhenaton through the agency of Gay Hunter and "The Story of Religion". However, his immersion in the left-wing politics of the earlier twentieth century inspired him to include some distinctly revolutionary personages. So it is that the revolutionary tradition is represented in his poetry by Spartacus, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, the Communards of Paris and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

The poem "Spartacus" provides a prelude to the depiction of the historical process as the history of class struggle later elucidated in Spartacus. It also utilises to the full the metaphors of dark and light, night and day; the slave horde struggling towards and creating the light of the dawn as yet so far from their own time:

"O thou who lived for Freedom when the Night Had hardly yet begun: when little light
Blinded the eyes of men, and dauntless seemed
So far and faint, - a foolish dream half-dreamed!
Through the blind drift of days and ways forgot
Thy name, thy purpose: these have faded not!
From out the darkling heavens of misty Time
Clear is thy light, and like the Ocean's chine
Thy voice. Yea, clear as unflinchingly
Thou ledst the hordes of helotry to die
And fell in full glorious fight, nor knew the day
The creaking crosses fringed the Appian Way -

Sport of the winds, O ashes of the Strong!
But down the aeons roars the helot's song
Calling to battle. Long as on the shore
The washing tides shall crumble cliff and more
Remembered shalt thou be who dauntless gave
Unto the world the lordship of the slave!" 59

"From out of the darkling heavens of misty Time/Clear is thy light ..." resonates with a conception of the Spartacist slaves' role in history, defined in Manichean fashion, with the slaves' revolt bringing light into a dark and evil world. Fighting for the light creed when "little light/Blinded the eyes of men ..." in the stygian darkness of history's most brutal epoch - a brutality evidenced by the evocative "creaking crosses" of the Appian Way - the slaves' message "roars" down the ages both as a battle song and also as a shaft of light penetrating and dispersing the darkness. The inevitability of the triumph of the "lordship of the slave" is signified by the reference to the natural attrition of sea on the shore. In this context the slaves' message, which on a purely political level can be seen as the vindication of revolutionary struggle, is further indicated by its association with the "ocean's chine"; the highest point of the sea's assault on the shore. The theme of necessary sacrifice to the cause of bringing light into a dark and evil world through revolutionary activity conveyed through "Spartacus" gains further expression in the following poem.

"The Communards of Paris" is a celebration of the defence of Paris mounted by the Communards during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, a choice of subject which may owe something to Marx's short work, The Paris Commune, and Lenin's pamphlet of the same title.

As in "Spartacus" the Communards who make the ultimate sacrifice are adjudged to have given their lives in the context of a greater reality and purpose:

"We shall not grieve: O splendid hearts of old! When we find for which ye dearly sought: We labour in the Dawn; in blackest Night: For this same Day full gloriously ye wrought.

From your red graves of treachery and woe We hear the battle-song that stirred ye on: And scaling the last barricades well known Yours is the glory, Pioneers of the Dawn!" 60

60. Unpublished poem entitled "The Communards of Paris".
The roar of "the helot's song" in "Spartacus" becomes the Communards' "battle song" with each group, although separated by two millenia, perceived as having engaged in the same deadly battle against a dark evil. The invocation that "yours is the glory" in the last line of the poem invites associations with the Twenty-Third Psalm. It is appropriate that this should be so as there is a distinct messianic element in "The Communards of Paris" which is also present in "Spartacus". Indeed, there is an unmistakable indication that Mitchell's intention is to convey the Spartacist slaves and the Communards in the context of the movement of history to the dawning of a new age. Thus, it is contended of the modern age, that "We labour in the Dawn", the slaves and Communards having struggled, respectively, in "the darkling heavens of misty Time" and "blackest Night". This being so it may be claimed that Mitchell was suggesting the final apocalyptic battle was to be joined in his own time.

While it may be contended that the Manichean schema is represented in these two poems by the use of the symbolism inherent in the light-dark imagery, in the context of the related struggle of the slaves and the Communards there is, however, no clear indication of the nature of their relationship with the transcendent aspect of that contest. This deficiency is remedied in Mitchell's poem entitled "On the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg" in which these two political activists stand revealed as emanations of the divine. Because of its subject matter the poem is worth quoting in full:

"They gathered a Hundred Splendid Souls,  
The Gods of the Heart's Day Dreams,  
And pointed down the verge of Space:  
'See! Where your planet gleams!  
Go down to the struggling Sons of Men,  
And teach Them all Ye know,  
And guide their feet to the only path  
From the surging Pit below!"  

Each/
Each Splendid Soul with a gladsome Heart
To its mighty Task went forth:
Some to the East, and Some to the West,
And Some to the Snow-capped North,
And Some where the luscious Southern Flowers
Are kissed by the burning Sun,
And Some where the Morn is dun.

And Two of the Hundred Splendid Souls
Went back but Yester-Eve:
The Road well-paved, the Beacon lit ...
Comrade, Ye need not grieve!
For the Ninety - and Eight shall marshall the Host
Ere the Night - Watch - Fires low burn,
And the longed-for Dawn shall glint our Spears,
And the Splendid Two return:"61

With the Manichean conception in mind that messiahs are regularly
despatched by God to reveal the "truth" to a fallen world it is apparent
that the "Splendid Two" are envisaged as performing an essentially redemp-
tive role. Perhaps they are acting in accordance with some "dream" as
the poem suggests but it is a dream exposing, rather than obscuring, a
greater reality. The message in "Spartacus" is of "a foolish dream half-
dreamed" but it is "foolish" only because the hope invested in the event-
ual "lordship of the slave" may in the light of the crucifixions seem a
whimsical fancy. Nevertheless, in view of the pointed validation of
revolt contained in "Spartacus" it may be suggested that Liebknecht and
Luxemburg's instructions to "guide" men's "feet" to the only path/From
the surging Pit below" is a vindication of the revolutionary perspectives
advanced in real life by these political activists. This is especially
so when it is borne in mind that the penultimate line of "On the Murder/

61. Unpublished poem entitled "On the Murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa
Luxemburg". In the original typescript the word "death" is crossed
out, having been replaced by the word "murdered". It is almost
as if Mitchell had second thoughts, finally deciding to acknowledge
the real circumstances of his subjects' deaths. Rosa Luxemburg
(1870-1919) and Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919) founded the revolution-
ary German Spartacist League (drawing inspiration and name from the
Spartacist slave revolt) in 1905. Arrested by officers of the
German Army they were brutally murdered on 15 January 1919.
Murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg" - "And the longed for
Dawn shall glint our Spears" - signifies the dominance of the code of
revolt and retribution rather than that of reconciliation and
forgiveness.

Through the medium of these three poems Mitchell identifies the
role of revolutionary political activity within the matrix of the
Manichean schema. His revolutionary heroes and heroines exist in a
complex dialectical relationship with their environment. Whereas they
are located within distinct historical parameters their actions bring
them into such stark conflict with their age that their demise is inev-
itale. Yet their deaths, in the throes of revolutionary activity, can
be seen as the necessary sacrifice to the unfolding of a divine plan of
salvation which, as Mitchell perceived it, inextricably linked the
mundane and trans-mundane. Despatched by "The Gods of the Heart's Day
Dreams" Luxemburg and Liebknecht discharge a task identical to that
which Mitchell assigns Spartacus and Ewan in the context of his full-
length fiction. Their function can be seen in terms of Clair Stranlay's,
Gay Hunter's and John Garland's conception of those individuals who have
championed the cause of humanity in every age. Their significance is
also to be understood in terms of the central meaning conveyed through
"Cartaphilus" and "Forsaken" in which God and man achieve unification
in Christ. What Mitchell can be seen as suggesting is that the
revolutionary activist, although pursuing political ends in the material
world is yet intimately, even causally, related to the perceived pur-
pose of the de-throned Manichean God. Given Mitchell's depiction of
Liebknecht and Luxemburg as emanating from the divine, there is a sense
in which the function of these bringers of light to a dark and evil
world can be described in the words of the Naassene Psalm of the Gnostics,
in which Jesus promises that:

"All/
"All the worlds shall I journey through, all the mysteries unlock".  

Just how we are to view the political activist in his relationship to transcendent authority is given a further gloss in the person of Marrot in *The Lost Trumpet*. Marrot, a young American communist, is generally sympathetically portrayed by Mitchell despite his description as being:

"prepared to do battle in defence of even the most minute curlieus on his political creed".  

Marrot's virtue resides in his general concern for the oppressed and particular desire that the native labourers hired to do the digging on the archaeological expedition should receive a fair wage. Unused to such consideration, the labourers regard him with a mixture of amusement and suspicion while his colleague describes him as:

"a communist more from sentiment than economics ...".  

Although a potentially disastrous admixture of naïve yet hidebound ideologue Marrot later delivers a judgement revealing Mitchell's own understanding of the Marxist promise invested in the proletariat to liberate all humanity from class divided society. Thus, the American communist informs his colleagues that:

"If either of you knew the elements of communist philosophy you'd be aware that the communists' only interest in the proletariat is its abolition ...".  

It is only when the positive and negative aspects of Marrot's advocacy of communism are appreciated that the key definition of him as:

"a clipped avatar of Spartacus".  

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64. Ibid, p.67.  
65. Ibid, p.179. That is, in a classless society the proletariat could not, logically, exist as a class.  
66. Ibid, p.49.
can be focused. Avatar is a term derived from Hindu mythology describing the descent of a deity to earth in human form. Thus, Marrot is a "clipped" or circumscribed incarnation of the great slave leader through his tiresome political pedantry, but is also, nevertheless, an avatar of Spartacus through his championing of the under-class of his own time. As it is, the term is neither used again (anywhere in Mitchell's work) nor is there any indication that Marrot is to be considered in any transmundane fashion. Nonetheless, Marrot, as a twentieth century communist not only stands in the revolutionary tradition of Spartacus but, by believing and acting as he does, he may be said to have become Spartacus in the mystical fashion by which Cartaphilus, in the story of that name, 'becomes' Christ by the act of imitation. With the evidence in mind of the poems previously discussed, this argument can be extended to include Spartacus and Ewan. It is they who most pointedly signify the extent to which Mitchell was prepared to go in order to suggest the unity of revolutionary perspectives and practice with the design of transcendent authority.

It is particularly appropriate to consider Spartacus in this context since Mitchell consistently describes the slave leader in terms which suggest his relationship to and consanguinity with deity. Considered in the sequence in which these references occur in the novel they can be seen to fall into the following three categories. Initially it is the slaves themselves and even, on one occasion, their enemies who identify that Spartacus is possessed by, and representative of, some extramundane element. The slaves' awareness that their leader is a man, yet something more besides, forms the background to the dawning of Spartacus's own realisation that he is acting in concert with a transcendent force. Finally, the mundane and transmundane achieve unification with the identification of the slave host with Spartacus, in a theological context.

It is Elpinice, the consort of the Rex Servorum, who first/
first identifies the fact that the slave leader seems possessed by an alien force. Considering his leadership of the slave army she asks:

"What God had stolen his reason and set there the strength of a lion when roused at last ...".\(^\text{67}\)

Next it is the slaves themselves who have reason to consider this aspect when Spartacus comes among them, compelling, almost by his sheer presence, the ending of their barbarity to captured Roman legionaries:

"The slaves stared their incomprehension and then, as he sprang among them, desisted from their torment of the legionaries, seeing that a God of madness had seized the Strategos".\(^\text{68}\)

It is natural that the slaves should see in their leader's display of mercy the actions of one possessed by a "God of madness" since their experience of life has led them to conclude it to be governed by evil necessity. Thus, if evil is the norm, then what could be more reasonable than barbarous behaviour? The "God of madness" possessing Spartacus is, of course, a God of goodness and sanity in a mad, evil world and, as such, indicates from the outset how it is we are intended to view the slave leader. Initially, however, Spartacus remains unaware of the extent to which his actions are determined by the great lordship of evil he fights. It is, in fact, Elpinice and Kleon who first apprehend something of the extra-mundane purpose vested in their leader. Following the second great battle with the enemy they perceive the startling transformation affecting Spartacus as he comes to the point of his first significant identification with the slaves:

"the Thracian was altering. He had altered in the space of a day; it seemed, the blankness was fading from the deep, dark eyes, there was a wakening purpose there, a fresh set to the giant head, the bearded mouth grown stern. Elpinice gave a cry, staring. Her child-savage possessed by a nameless God: he was changing and transmuting before her eyes".\(^\text{69}\)

68. Ibid, p.64.
69. Ibid, p.72.
This passage is striking for a number of reasons. Firstly, it marks the awakening of Spartacus himself to the transmundane imperative guiding his actions and those of the slave army he commands and directs. The stated reason for the change affecting Spartacus is his possession by "a nameless God" to which one might add, a God who is nameless because, like the Manichean conception of deity, he is unrecognised by man. Furthering the association with the Manichean schema it may be contended that in the passage under consideration Spartacus is being prepared for the revelation of the truth by the way in which "the blankness was fading" from his eyes.

There follows a number of definitions of Spartacus as possessed by this "nameless God" before the inward experience of the transcendent force and its relationship to his task shapes and finally becomes his central conviction. Thus, Elpinice refers to him as "the slave God-possessed",\(^{70}\) as through the struggle his purpose and resolve hardens. Significantly, however, it is not until he achieves the mystic empathetic union with the slaves that he is identified as not only God-possessed, but God-like. Knowledge is thus granted Spartacus in the categories of 'comprehension' and 'understanding' when, in relation to the slaves, he feels:

"... himself entering their hearts and thoughts, with a new and bitter impatience upon him - often; yet also a comprehension, an understanding, as though somehow he himself were these men, these women, these lost stragglers of rebellion against the Masters and their terrible Gods; as though the life in their bodies was a part of his, he the Giver of Life to this multitude ..."\(^{71}\)

Spartacus thus assumes the mantle of saviour of his people - at one with them in a surfeit of empathy and identification: "bound in a mystic kinship of blood"\(^{72}\) - the God-like "Giver of Life" ranged against the/

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70. Ibid, p.79.
the evil epitomised by "the Masters and their terrible Gods". It is rather pointedly this process of absolute identification which causes Spartacus to renounce the pleasures of the flesh described previously,75 his mind and very being filling instead with "a burning question of Gods and men".74 Moreover, even the enemy perceives in Spartacus an aura of the God-like. Thus, as the praetor, Gnaeus Manlius, assembles his force for battle he suddenly apprehends the figure of Spartacus "crowning" a ridge:

"... he gleamed like a God, gigantic, and the legions stared and murmured as they looked at the terrible figure. For there was terror in it ... And to the praetor Manlius it seemed he saw more than the Strategos Spartacus, he saw THE SLAVE himself".75

It is therefore, in fact, the slaves' enemy who identifies the extent to which Spartacus has come to represent and embody the will and being of the slaves. Gleaming "like a God ... THE SLAVE himself" Spartacus can be seen as embodying and signifying the unique purpose of the slave revolt to rid the world of the lordship of "the Beast", as the masters are characterised in the following passage. It is clear from this passage, which is located in the period directly preceding the battle with Manlius, that Spartacus achieves awareness of the mystic unity existing between himself, the slaves and the extra-mundane:

"... he saw himself neither as king nor dictator, a God drove him on, a God crowned with the knowledge that unless the Beast that squatted in the Seven Hills were killed, there would be no possible life ever again for men while the world endured".76

Emphasising the Satanic nature of "the Beast" in a manner which signifies/
signifies its authenticity as the terrestrial projection of the dark lordship of evil, Spartacus and the slaves prosecute their cause, but always under:

"the hate of that same Shadow - the Wolf that locked north from the Tiber mouth".  

It is Kleon who next indicates the extent of Spartacus's consanguinity with divinity, attributing the Strategos's military skills to the influence of "some strange God". Following this, Spartacus again identifies the force possessing him when, in the context of a discussion among the leadership of the slave army, he asserts, "his eyes remote", that:

"'There's a God in men. But an Unknown God'". Twice Nella, the little Sicel maid Spartacus sleeps with - more for companionship than sex - following the death of Elpinice, identifies the Strategos as representing something more than the merely human:

"she sobbed again, as though a God held her; ... all night she lay there, the God with her... she knew without doubt that he was a God, and shivered in fear".

It is not, however, until the slaves are on the verge of defeat that the meaning to be derived from the definition of Spartacus as embodying and signifying the collective will and being of the slaves, combined with his personification as the projection of the "Unknown God", identifiable in terms of the Manichean schema, receives its foremost evocation. The ultimate validation of Spartacus as an emanation of the de-throned God is contained in the conjunction of two passages at the conclusion to/
to the story. On the eve of the last great battle which heralds the collapse of the revolt, the resting slaves catch a "scent" of the enemy army shielding "the beast" which dwells in Rome. Sensing the inevitability of defeat the slave host are yet exultant at the truth which sweeps over them: "THEY THEMSELVES WERE THE MASTERS!"; those for whom life had comprised the "travail of wounds and death and birth". The meaning imparted in this realisation is that the underclass will, one day, triumph despite the bleak inevitability and imminence of their own defeat. This conclusion is strengthened by a recognition of the context within which this realisation is set. A soft rain begins to fall, refreshing the slaves and causing the parched vegetation to send forth new shoots; as surely as slave would rise against master in epochs unborn. Ultimately, however, it is the introduction of the theological element which validates the slaves' conception that, although they were destined to fail, others of their kind would some day succeed. This time it is the slaves themselves who are accorded the definition which identifies the true extent of their mission to claim the earth for themselves: after all, had they not:

"... bestridden Italy like a God these last two years ."

It has previously been contended that Spartacus, and also Ewan's, continual reference to the movement of history provides them with the source of ethical discernment which allows them to proceed in their task with the necessary ruthlessness. It may be contended that the central meaning of Spartacus is to be comprehended in the consistent transmission of the notion that insofar as Spartacus is possessed by a God, that in doing God's will he may be seen as a God himself.

82. Ibid, p.272.
84. Ibid, p.272.
Similarly, by participating in the achievement of the revolutionary purpose imputed to the God-possessed slave leader, the slaves - 'deified' by the consistent use of the term "slave host" in Spartacus - serve the ends of an altogether transcendent purpose vested in the historical process. The symbolic unity conveyed by Kleon's vision of Christ and the Gladiator - both recognisable as Spartacus and the slaves themselves - is the signifier of Mitchell's desire to unify the material with the spiritual.

A parallel has previously been drawn between Spartacus and Ewan in respect of their shared empathy and identification with the downtrodden and oppressed, considered along with their shared view of history as validating their actions. The theological dimension conveyed through Mitchell's depiction of Spartacus is transmitted within a different, more subtle, structure of meaning in respect of Ewan. The reader's perception of Spartacus is shaped by the references to him as God-possessed and God-like, as the virtual embodiment of the retributive function vested in the slave army. Ewan's relationship to the trans-mundane is signified by the way in which, at each juncture in his development of empathy and identification, he is permitted an insight into a truer and deeper version of reality. Mitchell may be seen as conditioning the reader for acceptance of this aspect of Ewan's evolution through his structuring of Colquhoun's final revolutionary sermon.

In the closing section to his remarks Colquhoun twice uses phraseology which can be seen to have direct significance for the way Mitchell depicts the Minister's step-son receiving knowledge and understanding. Thus, urging the rejection of passivity as a response to injustice, Colquhoun claims that man must:

"seek with unclouded eyes",\textsuperscript{85}
a creed which will deliver the world from evil. The creed to which he/

\textsuperscript{85} Cloud Have, p.221.
he refers - that which will "cut like a knife, a surgeon's knife through the doubt and disease" - is clearly identifiable in terms of Ewan's revolutionary beliefs. Colquhoun ends his sermon with the claim that:

" - men with unclouded eyes may yet find it, and far off yet in the times to be, on an earth at peace, living and joyous, the Christ come back - ".

Significantly, each stage in Ewan's development of understanding is depicted in language which indicates his attainment of an ever clearer perspective.

Just as Robert Colquhoun is jerked from his state of anodyne religious mysticism by the pain he feels at the news of the child eaten by the rats, so it is the physical torment of others which shakes Ewan from his cool and selfish individualism. Thus, Ewan cannot rid himself of the sights he has witnessed of the police brutality - and especially that of Sim Leslie - against those demonstrating against cuts in the Public Assistance rates:

"For days you couldn't forget that scream, tingling, terrified, the lost keelie's scream as that swine Sim Leslie smashed him down. Again and again you'd start awake, sweating, remembering that from a dream, Duncairn sleeping down Windmill Steps, all the house in sleep, quiet next door, that kid Ellen Johns not dreaming at all. Luck for her and her blah about history and Socialism: she hadn't a glimpse of what either meant ...".

The implication to be drawn from Ewan's belief that Ellen "hadn't a glimpse" of the real significance contained in such turbulent events is both an indication of the limitations of her Labour politics and the extent to which he has gained a startling insight. Ewan's awakening from a sleep troubled by the thought of the "lost keelie" smashed down/

86. Ibid.
87. Grey Granite, p.75.
down by authority, while the rest of Duncairn sleeps on, represents a metaphor for his own awakening to the injustice and evils of life. While Ellen rests in untroubled sleep, Ewan is granted the first in a series of revelations which lead to his absolute identification with the proletariat. The demonstration has a marked effect on him as, despite his attempt to distance himself from the keelies, Ewan is drawn inexorably to their cause. It is in the context of his next, this time clearly empathic identification granted him in the Duncairn Museum Gallery - "'twas yourself that history had tortured, trodden on, spat on ... you were every scream and each wound, flesh of your flesh, blood of your blood" that his feeling that Ellen hadn't "a glimpse" of the truth is to be fully understood and appreciated. As Mitchell describes this attainment of knowledge, Ewan sees the reality of history as the history of brutal oppression in a sudden flash of clarity:

"as though suddenly unblinded".

The gnosis granted Ewan in this illuminatory experience is almost too much for him to bear:

"... you gave a queer sob that startled yourself: Something was happening to you: God - what?"

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88. The utter isolation of the demonstrators from the rest of Duncairn is drawn with a fine precision by Mitchell in the three pages of narrative following the description of the demonstration. In Grey Granite, pp.63-65, the press, Church, Labour political establishment, Town Council and Police vilify and blame the demonstrators for the violence actually caused by the police. In a manner paralleling Ewan's growing isolation from Ellen, his fellow boarders and the rest of Duncairn seen in the passage quoted above, the demonstrators are depicted limping and stumbling "some half-carried all the way with their broken noses, (and) bashed faces" (p.65) to the isolation of the working class ghettos of Pootforthie, Paldy and Kirrieben.

89. Grey Granite, p.80.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.
What Ewan is in fact undergoing is analogous to the "transmutation" identified by Kleon and Elpinice as affecting Spartacus. Well might Ewan seek divine guidance for explanation as to what is overtaking him for, with the evidence of Spartacus before us, it may be contended that he is being groomed to discharge the purpose invested in the revolutionary messiah within the context of history unravelling the will of the deposed deity.

Fuelled by the resolve imparted from his empathic identification in the Museum Gallery, Ewan experiences his next glimpse of the 'truth' in the context of the Young League dance. Again it is as if he is privy to some underlying source of defining reality. It is Ellen Johns who identifies the state of abstraction which facilitates Ewan's mystic identification with his class, as he becomes their "blood and bones and flesh" in what is termed his "dreaming trance".\(^{92}\) It is indicative of his isolation as an individual who, through various stages, is granted gnosis that whereas his fiance can see the palpable change taking place in him, she has no inkling of its cause or its nature. In the next instance of identification Ewan's eyes actually become "blinded" but, in the context of the passage it is entirely appropriate that this should be so. Following his beating in the Duncairn police cells:

"he lay still with a strange mist boiling, blinding his eyes, not Ewan Tavendale at all any more but lost and be-bloodied in a hundred broken and tortured bodies all over the world".\(^{93}\)

The "strange mist boiling, blinding his eyes" conveys an understanding that Ewan is immersed in a totality of pain permitting an absolute identification with all those who had endured such torment. It is only when he has himself experienced the trauma of pain and agony - which is itself resonant with the function of the martyr who sacrifices himself, taking/

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\(^{92}\) Ibid, p.116.

\(^{93}\) Ibid, p.148.
taking on the sins of an evil world for his fellow men - that Ewan is ready to assume the form of the redeemed redeemer. He thus becomes, in one sense, the intermediary between God and man, and in another, the very personification of divinity as he takes on the function of being:

"eyes for the eyeless, hands for the maimed! - "  

As Ewan's inward resolve becomes increasingly manifest in his revolutionary perspectives, the "safe" Labour politics of Ellen Johns are thrown into sharp relief. Thus, compounding the emphasis which is placed on his development of clear sighted knowledge again it is Ellen who is given the role of identifying the change which Ewan is undergoing. As before, however, she has no understanding of what those changes signify. Following his explanation to her that they had no choice but to do history's bidding in relation to the class struggle, Ellen is startled to see his eyes as:

"cold, blank and grey, horrible eyes like a cuttlefish's - like the glint on the houses in Royal Mile, the glint of grey granite she thought once, and shivered".  

She can perceive nothing of value in Ewan's strengthening of revolutionary purpose - symbolised by the "glint of grey granite" in his eyes - because she is denied the understanding which invests it with moral purpose. Ellen can never share Ewan's vision: it is she, not Ewan, who ultimately abjures the struggle against life's evils and so stands out from the central meaning of the Quair, encapsulated and signified by Ewan. At the culmination to the trilogy it is significant that, as has been argued previously, it is Ewan whom we are to associate with divinity in the famous passage in which he compares his and Chris's response to life, as the struggle"between FREEDOM and GOD".  

While Chris makes a conscious/

95. Ibid, p.182.
96. See Chapter 5.
conscious choice to grasp the freedom to conduct her life without significant reference to others, within the matrix of the clarificatory experiences granted Ewan Tavendale, Ellen Johns signifies the purblind world of men oblivious to the existence of evil and the moral imperative which bids the individual in possession of gnosis to combat it.

An indication of Mitchell's conception of how we are to view revolutionary movements of the kind embracing a diversity of figures from Spartacus, to Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Lenin and Ewan Tavendale may be gained from certain passages in The Lost Trumpet and The Thirteenth Disciple. In the former Anton Saloney, a white Russian émigré, advances a definition of Lenin and the Bolsheviks as:

"Titans storming heaven with hammer and sickle,
Miss Simonsen - Titans a little crude in method and purpose, and unforgiving either the cruelties or the beauties of the gods ".98

The meaning of Saloney's judgement - which is remarkably free from the bias which his background might have entailed, although, perversely, he is described as having been "the only communist in the white armies" -99 is lost on the reader, as it is on his protagonist, unless it is considered in the context of Maudslay's earnest discussion with another post-revolutionary Russian émigré in The Thirteenth Disciple. Saloney's judgement that the Bolsheviks were engaged in an assault on heaven can be considered as the extension of Maudslay's dream that, someday man would:

"reach the palace of God and storm it, and capture the engine room and powerhouse ...".100

This association between Saloney's ostensibly idiosyncratic view of the Bolsheviks and Maudslay's notion that political activity and human/
human endeavour have a metaphysical aspect is to be understood in relation to the Manichean schema alluded to in The Thirteenth Disciple. It will be recalled that Meierkhold had defined Maudslay's quest in the following manner:

"Ahh, God it is the Satanists, not the socialists, to whom you belong... This sky-storming; it is poetry, dream of a struggle more remote from human purpose than any dream".

From the tone of Meierkhold's remarks it is clear he intends no insult in his effective designation of Maudslay as a Satanist. Unless the former's observation is to remain so arcane as to be virtually meaningless, Maudslay's assault on "the engine room and powerhouse of God" needs to be considered in the light of both Saloney's remark and the Manichean schema. Thus, if the actual ruler of the universe is Satan, known to the unredeemed world of men as God, then it is quite consistent in terms of the inverted terminology employed by Mitchell in this respect to see Maudslay's "sky storming", along with Saloney's definition of the Bolsheviks as "Titans storming heaven", as a direct challenge to the imposter who masquerades as God. Mitchell's poem entitled "Lenin 1919" adds further to the notion that revolutionary movements and revolutionary activists are to be conceived of as acting in accordance with the "remote purpose" identified by Anton Meierkhold in The Thirteenth Disciple.

The opening line of the poem resonates with the apocalyptic vision contained in the introduction to the Communist Manifesto and also reflects something of the foreboding contained therein: 102

"His shadow lies on Europe - - - (Whisper low!) - - -
Turning the day to blackest night below,
A Shadow wherewith hell-fires belch and glow:
The Shadow of a sword.


102. Thus, The Communist Manifesto begins: "A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre ...".
Your shadow, little man, I see your eyes,
Steadfast and cold, unutterably wise,
Look westward where the lingering sunset dies
By ridge and ford.

I hear your voice — — A prayer or a command? — —
Wild helot laughter fills a darkened land,
And old dreams die, and princes outcast stand
Disrobed, abhorred.

You move and all the nations of the Earth,
Shuddering in pangs of agonising birth,
Cry to the skies through wrack of doom and dearth
"How long, O Lord?"

How long? The years are sun-motes in your sight:
"It comes". And still by daylight and by night
Hangs sky-obscuring, making faint the light,
The shadow of a sword".

The first point inviting comment is the confusion and inversion of the light-dark symbolism employed previously in "Spartacus", "Salute to the Paris Commune" and "On the Murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg". In each of these poems light is clearly associated with revolutionary activity while in "Lenin 1919" the opposite is the case. It is in fact Lenin who brings the darkness; "His shadow" turning "day to blackest night" as he looks "westward" to "where the lingering sunset dies". But Lenin is neither simply nor unequivocally associated with darkness. The "wild helot laughter" invoked by his voice is a precise reflection of the line in "Spartacus" with its exultant acclamation that "Down the aeons roars the helot's song/Calling to battle". And in this congruity between Spartacus and Lenin, surely two of the most striking revolutionary leaders of their respective epochs, may lie Mitchell's intention in "Lenin 1919". The slaves' struggle is depicted as taking place when "downtime seemed/So far and faint": the twentieth century revolutionary struggle which, judging by the poem is epitomised by Lenin himself, is located in the dawn of a period of tortuous birth, "the nations of the Earth/Shuddering in pangs of agonised birth". Just as in Spartacus/

103. Unpublished poem entitled "Lenin 1919".
Spartacus Mitchell credits the slave leader with the knowledge of the course of future events, while in the poem of the same name he is credited with bequeathing to history the eventual "lordship of the slave", so Lenin is invested with an awesome prescience and equal ruthlessness. The passing years are mere "sun-motes", particles of dust, in no way obscuring his sight of a historical process which is destined to deliver the lordship of the helot and slave. The central meaning of "Lenin 1919" can be seen as according with the sentiments expressed through the quotation with which Stained Radiance opens:

"But before the Builders upbuild in Mu Tollan the City of the Sun, there shall be war, and the breaking of altars, and the rending of hearts".104

Thus, before the dawning of the "lordship of the slave", as it is expressed in "Spartacus", the "shadow of the sword" as it is expressed in "Lenin 1919", must intervene, cleansing the wicked from the earth.

Since it has already been argued that Mitchell, broadly speaking, accepted that ends justified means, the tone of "Lenin 1919" need not be seen as a poem hostile to revolutionary action. Just as Law and Berwick claim C.W. Grieve was attracted to Lenin's "obduracy of will",105 it may be contended that Mitchell entertained a similar conception of the Bolshevik leader. Certainly, the former's "First Hymn to Lenin" contains passages which might be seen as seeking, like "Lenin 1919", to advance a perspective against which the exigencies of revolutionary action might, to Grieve's mind at least, be more accurately judged. Thus, just as Lenin is depicted by Mitchell as the virtual midwife of the new order, born amidst protracted "pangs of agonised birth", so MacDiarmid's "First Hymn to Lenin" balances, then vindicates, the morality of harsh/

104. Stained Radiance, un-numbered page.

105. T.S. Law and Thurso Berwick, Foreword to The Socialist Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid, p.xvii.
harsh decisions taken to promote the greater good in a post-revolutionary setting:

"The Cheka's horrors are in their degree;
And'll end sunder! What matters't wha we kill
To lessen that foulest murder that deprives
Maist men o' real lives?".106

Grieve's grasp of ethical considerations might be questioned, - what James Young calls "his murderous streak of 'anti-humanity'" - 107 just as others have questioned Mitchell's depiction of Ewan Tavendale's growing revolutionary obduracy in Grey Granite.108 In view of the evidence of Mitchell's depiction of the historical process conveyed in particular through Spartacus and Grey Granite, Friedrich Engels' judgement would seem to be particularly pertinent in this respect:

"History is about the most cruel of all goddesses,
and she leads her triumphal car over heaps of corpses, not only in war, but also in 'peaceful' economic development. And we men and women are unfortunately so stupid that we never pluck up courage for real progress unless urged to it by sufferings that seem almost out of proportion".109

Yet, particularly in his depiction of Spartacus and Ewan, but also in respect of his poems on the slave leader, the Paris Commune and Liebknecht and Luxemburg, Mitchell can be seen as conveying the meaning that such individuals had made a sacrifice to a process of change every bit as demanding as that defined by Engels. It has already been contended that the Marxian view of history involves a definite moral imperative, even if the quotation from Friedrich Engels contains more than a suggestion of the primacy of bleak necessity. But because revolutionary politics/

106. Hugh MacDiarmid, "First Hymn to Lenin".
108. See Chapter 5.
politics are located in the material sphere. Mitchell was anxious to
discern a more 'objective' and fundamental source of validation for
activities which involved the individual in the sacrifice of the self
and, very often, of others besides. He found this source of ethical
discernment in the Manichean schema through the device of linking the
struggle of good with evil in its cosmic definition to the material
cause of revolutionary politics.
I believe there is an extent to which the effort to understand Mitchell has been complicated, if not hampered, by what has been seen as the fragmentary nature of his vision and its expression in his work. Such ambiguities and inconsistencies as exist can be partly attributed to the fact that death intervened practically at the outset of his career and that the work he did produce was completed in the hectic spell of activity comprising the last years of his life. The general picture of Mitchell which emerges from informed criticism is that of a writer who was deeply imbued in the patterns of meaning derived from his upbringing in the environment of the northeast crofting community. The expression of his resultant ambiguity towards the land has, predictably, attracted the major proportion of scholarly attention. As a result, although there are exceptions, the (majority) consensus proclaims the rest of Mitchell's views - particularly his political stance - to be less important, less valid, as signifiers of the writer's pre-occupations and emotions as they are transmitted through his work. In relation to his ambivalence towards the land I have tried to show that he can be seen as part of a tradition in which ambiguity towards the country and the city is, in fact, the norm. The aspect which particularly distinguishes Mitchell in this regard - apart from the distinctive character of the Quair - is the effect on his political perspectives entailed in his origins and consequential conception of the Scottish past. He was certainly out of sympathy with both political and cultural nationalism because of their association in his mind with the threat of Fascism. Beyond this however, it may be contended that as a north-east man - individual, anti-Celt, and with distinctive Protestant roots - he must, for the most part, have felt at odds with one of the main strands of the cultural and political/
political nationalism of his time which exulted in its 'Celtic-communist', anti-Calvinist, pro-Irish roots. Apart from one isolated (and perhaps, therefore grudging) reference to the "communist patriarchy" of the clan system, Mitchell's left-wing perspectives could find practically no basis in a Scottish past he defined predominantly as conditioned by the stern individualism enshrined in his conception of the "crofter permanent". Precisely because his definition of the Scottish past denied him the source of sustenance for his left-wing views, he was impelled outwards in the quest for an ideological basis upon which his emotional sensibilities could rest. This does not imply that his resultant views are any less important in respect of our attempt to understand the man and his work. Quite the reverse would, in fact, appear to be the case. Because his psychological disposition and emotional sensibilities determined his political outlook these views cannot, logically, be seen as a mere intellectual appendage acquired later in life. I have therefore tried to show that his psychological disposition led him to seek understanding through the politics of socialism and, as he grew older, in a broad appreciation of the Marxian perspectives which seemed to acquire greater legitimacy as the troubles of the 1930's deepened.

It is also, however, the case that the revolutionary perspectives proclaimed through Marxism, although containing the millenial promise which Mitchell found so conducive, were, on their own, insufficient for his needs.

Despite the extent to which the soteriological promise in Marxism can be said to correspond with man's spiritual impulse, the form which the ideology assumed was conditioned by the unquestioning faith in Science prevalent in the nineteenth century. The scientific aspect of Marx's thought - "scientific socialism" as its originator claimed - and the notion of human progress through knowledge did hold an appeal for Mitchell in the period of his youth anleven, to an extent, in his/
his adulthood. His non-fiction work, especially the Wellsian *Hanno* and the rigorous methodology he used in writing *The Conquest of the Maya* indicate something of the nature of this appeal. On a more profound level, however, Mitchell had, in view of the 1914-18 War, the Depression and the rise of Fascism, reason to doubt the notion of automatic progress. In this regard I have tried to locate a significant element in Mitchell's thought defined in terms of a reaction to the amorality implicit in the Darwinian universe. In a general sense therefore, I believe it to be the case that Mitchell's response to the problems of his age is to be understood in respect of the desire to find explanation for the existence of evil beyond Necessity. Moreover, given the near universality of the religious impulse, identifiable from the beginnings of recorded history and variously expressed across the range of artistic forms in every society, it is not too surprising to find his search for meaning culminating in his absorption of the central tenets of Manicheism.

One reason as to why Mitchell should embrace the claims advanced by Marxism and Manicheism - as he interpreted and understood them - can be discerned in the nature of these explanatory models. The world view of Marxism catered for both the analytical and the metahistorical, the former founded on the methodology of social scientific investigation, the latter, ultimately, on the strength of belief. Through the main characters in the bulk of his fiction Mitchell displays a yearning for an explanation by which the disparate elements of existence could be unified. He could only achieve this by first undertaking a primary act of faith in man's inherent goodness, in his ability to assert himself against evil and in the ultimate morality of the universe. Marx's vision of man enchained but promised the potential of liberation therefore appealed to Mitchell in his quest for understanding. And yet, because revolutionary politics invests its purpose in struggle conducted/
conducted within the material sphere, faith in the rectitude of such efforts was insufficient for Mitchell. This was so because as Arthur Koestler pointedly reminds us in his two essays "The Yogi and the Commissar" (1942 and 1944) revolutionary ethics are ultimately contingent. It is for this reason that we find Mitchell undertaking a second act of faith in order to validate the first. The Manichean notion of man in thrall to the lordship of evil but embodying a spark of the deposed deity which, when activated, so to speak, could be utilised in the struggle against the terrestrial manifestation of evil provided Mitchell with a validation in moral, emotional and conceptual terms. Revolutionary activity, of the type conveyed through Spartacus and Grey Granite, achieves a strength of moral purpose precisely because Mitchell believed the morality of such action was assured. In possession of, and indeed to an extent possessed by such knowledge, whether perfectly or imperfectly grasped, the individual is impelled to take responsibility for the rest of mankind something after the manner described by Georg Lukács in the following way:

"From the ethical point of view, no-one can escape responsibility with the excuse that he is only an individual, on whom the fate of the world does not depend".¹

Ethical problems do, of course, exist in respect of such a theology of revolution. Thus, if as Marxism and Manicheism proclaim, men are conditioned to perpetuate evil through the determining consequence of, respectively, class-divided society and the lordship of evil then they can hardly be blamed for acting as they do. In this regard the Marxist notion that those who act against their class interests display "false consciousness" is analogous to the Manichean notion that unredeemed man exists in a state of dull, bemused ignorance. Mitchell was aware of/

of the means-ends dilemma involved in the prosecution of the class war, which in the context of Manicheism became a virtual holy war, but like others of his generation he accepted the necessity, regrettable as it must have seemed, that ends justified means.

The movement in the main works of Mitchell's fiction from the actual and probable towards the mythical and exemplary can be explained as the desire to convey his understanding of the meaning inherent in this theology of revolution. Thus, Garland and Maudsley are ordinary, credible characters whose quest for meaning is related in the context of a real and conceivable matrix. Clair Stranley and Gay Hunter are equally credible in themselves but in a construct of the author's through which the meaning of these works is conveyed they are placed in a distinctly mythical and unreal environment. Even though these heroines join in the struggle against evil in the widely differing time locations in which the action of Three Go Back and Gay Hunter is set there is a distinct disunity between the actual and the probable and the mythic and exemplary. This conceptual dichotomy achieves resolution in Spartacus and Grey Granite. Thus, on one level Spartacus and Ewan are credible characters located within the determining reality of their historical epochs. On the intimately related, but more fundamental and illuminating level, they can be seen as heroic figures of myth by virtue of the significance and meaning Mitchell invests in the struggle of oppressed and oppressor in its relationship to the cosmic dimension of the struggle between good and evil.

In this latter respect there is an extent to which Mitchell's depiction of the semi-mythical hero can be compared with David Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus (1920), Geoffrey Trease's Boys Against the Barons, (1934) and Ignazio Silone's Fontamara (1934). Mitchell's work is closest to the political dimension as it is related in the latter two works/
works although there exists a parallel between the central meaning of Lindsay's book, in which the attainment of gnos is related to the experience of pain and suffering, and the way in which John Garland in *Stained Radiance* and Ewan Tavendale in *Grey Granite* achieve understanding. In *Bows Against the Barons*, ostensibly a children's book on the Robin Hood legend, Trease uses the moral validation inherent in the notion of the conflict between good and evil to legitimise the centrality of the class struggle. In this respect a similar contention may be advanced in relation to Mitchell's use of the Spartacist slave revolt. There is also an extent to which Silone's depiction of the part-real, part-mythical, anti-establishment folk hero has a particular relevance to Mitchell's conception of the revolutionary hero. The "Mystery Man" of *Fontamara* brings to mind folk heroes like "Captain Swing" of early 19th century English history and "The Wandering Hawk" as James Stephens came to be known some decades later in Ireland. Spartacus and Ewan may be seen as heroes in this mould who, although they are intimately related to the determining socio-economic configurations of their age, are yet also figures of myth in their role as signifiers of the teleological unity of past, present and future. Indeed, given the theme of "On the Murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg" it may even be suggested that Mitchell's conception of the revolutionary hero bears some resemblance to the "Sleeping Monarch" of Medieval legend who awaits the call.

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3. There are distinct teleological resonances in C. Day Lewis' poem "The Road These Times Must Take", *Left Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1934. The first verse concludes with a definition of the communist: "... it is the future walking to meet us all". The second and final verse ends with the declaration that the communist is "... what your sons will be, the road these times must take".
call to purge the world of evil. 4

It has finally to be appreciated that the development in Mitchell's work towards the utilisation of myth is to be understood in the related context of the movement away from self seen in the Maudsley - Garland progression, carried on through the intermediate stage represented by Clair Stranlay and Gay Hunter, to the negation of self explicit in the characterisation of Spartacus and Ewan. These last two figures represent the culmination of Mitchell's development of a structure of meaning which is to be understood in terms of the mythical and exemplary. They are exemplary figures whose actions we are intended to condone because they represent and embody Mitchell's vision of the existence of a truer more fundamental and relevant definition of reality invested with an enduring moral purpose.

4. The following might also be mentioned in relation to Mitchell since in E.R. Eddison's The Worm Curoboros (1922) and C.S. Lewis' Out of the Silent Planet (1938), Perelandra (1943), That Hideous Strength (1945) and The Silver Chair (1953) the struggle between good and evil provides the perceived determining reality within which the narrative action is set.
A Note on Sources - James Leslie Mitchell By Those Who Knew Him

Apart from the written testimony of those individuals referenced in the text I also interviewed the following people. I stayed with Ray Mitchell on three occasions; twice in 1977 and once early in 1978, during which time I consulted unpublished material and listened to her reminiscences. I interviewed C.M. Grieve in October 1977 and Cuthbert Graham in November of that year. I also interviewed Robert Lemon and Helen Riddoch in November 1977. The bulk of the written testimony of these and others collected during my research are deposited in the Mitchell collection in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Based on some of the reminiscences of those who knew Mitchell, the following is not intended to comprise a comprehensive account. Rather it is a view of the man from the perspective of those who knew him, constructed from material superfluous to requirements of the main text. It is drawn from the oral and written testimony of the following: Ray Mitchell, his widow; Nan Jeans, Helen Riddoch and Robert Lemon, his classmates; Margaret (Peggy) Fraser, a typist with the Aberdeen Daily Journal; Cuthbert Graham, a reporter with the Aberdeen Bon Accord; Ann Shearsby, a friend of the Mitchells during their Welwyn days; Jon Randall Evans, editor of The Twentieth Century; C.M. Grieve, Rebecca West and Walter Marsden, who knew him in the 1930's.

The picture of Mitchell's early life which emerges from the reminiscences of his former classmates at Arbuthnott reinforces the portrait of him as a gifted, sensitive and sometimes lonely child. The fact that Robert Lemon, his friend in this period, was two to three years his junior may indicate that Mitchell felt more at ease with younger children than with his peers. There is an obvious extent to which his position as the "teacher's pet" would add to his isolation. Thus Helen Riddoch/
Riddoch describes him as "a very moody person" who "never played with the other boys during the intervals ... He was a great favourite of Mr Gray our Headmaster, he was his star pupil". Another perspective is provided by Nan Jeans who recalls that he was always willing to make an extra journey into Drumlithie when her mother wanted extra provisions. For a time Mitchell delivered fish from Drumlithie to Mrs Jeans’ house and those of some neighbours once a week. His polite bearing and anxiety to please apparently remained intact since Margaret Fraser recalls him as a "very mannerly and pleasant" young reporter during his stay in Aberdeen. Perhaps such demeanour was designed to create a good impression on the young typist since he wrote her a seventy line poem extolling her virtues. It was all to no avail however, as his feelings were not reciprocated.

Apart from his widow, with some of whose reminiscences this piece concludes, I was in contact with no-one who knew Mitchell during the period of the 1920's. This is particularly unfortunate as I feel that, to an extent, his character was determined by his experiences during this time. In this respect it might be recalled that Ray Mitchell described him as "embittered and cynical about everything" prior to their marriage. Following this event Mitchell seems to have settled down and become much more confident and assured. Moving to those who knew him from the early 1930's, C.M. Grieve described him as "more emotional than intellectual", a judgement reflected in the opinions of Cuthbert Graham and Ann Shearsby, especially in respect of his abhorrence of suffering. Guthbert Graham recalls him as "religious in a fundamental sense ... a man who thought deeply about humanity", and who "when we discussed the political scene ... regarded revolution as inevitable, but likely to be a very painful, ugly and possibly violent process". Graham also recalls the astonishment of Charles Bannerman (the artist commissioned to draw Chris Guthrie for the dust jacket of Sunset Song) at Mitchell’s "feminine handwriting".
Graham advised Bannerman not to convey this opinion to Mitchell.

Ann Shearsby, a member of the Twelve Club which met regularly at the Mitchells', recalls an incident she believes exposed his attitude to women as "sound in theory, not so in practice". Mitchell was drying the dishes while Shearsby stood at the kitchen door arguing a point. Possibly exasperated by her "pontificating", as she puts it, he threw the dish-cloth at her with the comment that she should be drying. The evening discussions attended by Shearsby were "always intensely argumentative ... Leslie was always in the centre of things. I remember him hunched up on a chair with his arms around his knees, flailing out at everything he hated". Although he didn't attend any of these meetings, Walter Marsden recounts the story that during one particularly hectic evening James Barke's braces gave way under the strain. "Running repairs" were undertaken by Ray Mitchell as the argument continued.

Mitchell's friends - Shearsby, Evans and Graham - remember him as a considerate person, but one who would also speak his mind on important issues. Ray Mitchell recalled a discussion between him and the Scots writer James Barke in which Mitchell argued that the English temperament was preferable to the rather harsher and more abrasive disposition of the Scot. In this respect she likened her husband's temperament to that of his father - who disliked personal arguments and disagreements.

Mitchell could, however, on occasion, be less than considerate as when in the course of an evening discussion with friends he rather theatrically seized his wife's head, pointing out features which he said indicated a certain anthropological type. The incident caused some brief marital disharmony. In a different vein Ray Mitchell recalled a lighter side of the meetings of the Twelve Club: "I do recall Leslie, for the sake of argument, taking on the blue mantle and that the ensuing discussion was hilarious".
From the plethora of information provided by Ray Mitchell I have selected the following anecdotes as providing an indication of Mitchell the person as opposed to Mitchell the writer. During his tour of duty overseas he would write instructing her to think of a certain object or topic at a certain time on a certain day in order to test the idea of thought transference. The inevitable failure of these experiments would result in a light-hearted chiding to the effect that she had not been thinking hard enough. Mitchell was fastidious in matters of cleanliness and neatness, carefully folding his clothes and setting everything in its allocated place before retiring to bed. An indication of this facet of his character is provided by the following incident. On a trip into London during his Air Force service he stopped a passing Airman, ordering him to button-up his tunic. On being reminded by his wife that he was often to be heard complaining about the senseless discipline of military life, she was informed that neatness was nothing to do with such matters. Ray Mitchell also recalled his annoyance at her announcement to friends, who had come to visit, that he was in the toilet. He apparently regarded such information as private and confidential.

Three stories in particular told by his widow remain in mind. The first involved the occasion when she removed a pair of tight-fitting shoes and proceeded to walk home in stockinged feet. Mitchell was so "black affronted" that he proceeded on ahead and, having gained the house, refused to unlock it until she promised never to repeat such scandalous behaviour. The second concerned Ray's "uncle Eck" who worked a croft called "Stansachie" in the Mearns. Eck would brook no interference from officialdom and twice bodily removed a Government inspector from his land. When the official returned a third time with a police constable, he was permitted to inspect the facilities for storing the milk while the redoubtable Eck ostentatiously "cleaned" his shot-gun at the door of the croft. Mitchell would "roar and laugh" each time the incident/
incident was recounted. The last story concerned a huge magnifying
glass Mitchell had procured on a trip to London. On their arrival
home he took a piece of cheese from the larder and having inspected
it ran shrieking around the house in mock horror at what he alleged
he had seen. The joke rebounded on him however when he had to eat
the cheese, there and then, to allay his wife's fears - fears which
were, according to Ray Mitchell, as exaggerated as his earlier
behaviour.
APPENDIX II:

Details of Mitchell's Army and Air Force Service

The details of Mitchell's service with the army are derived from records obtained from the Ministry of Defence, Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex, and for his Air Force records, the Ministry of Defence, RAF Personnel Management Centre, Innswood, Gloucestershire.

Enlisted at Aberdeen as No. 3R52321 into Royal Army Service Corps Regular Army 26.08.1919
Discharged: Termination of Engagement 29.11.1920
Enlisted into Royal Army Service Corps Regular Army 26.01.1921
Posted to 'A' Supply Company 27.01.1921
Posted to 23rd Line of Communications (S) Company 24.02.1922
Discharged 22.03.1923
Cause of Discharge: Termination of Engagement

Service with the Colours:
26.08.1919 to 28.11.1920
and 26.01.1921 to 21.03.1923

Served Overseas:
Mesopotamia 28.01.1920 to 28.10.1920
and Egypt 16.10.1921 to 07.03.1923

Medals etc: General Service Medal with clasp 'Iraq'

The actual activities of the units Mitchell served with would have been contained in the "Commander's War Diaries", of which there is, unfortunately, no trace.

Particulars of the Air Force Service of 355442, Aircraftsman Leslie Mitchell:

Enlisted in Royal Air Force 31 August 1923

Ranks:

Aircraftman 2: 31 August 1923
Aircraftman 1: 01 October 1923
Leading Aircraftman: 01 April 1924
Corporal: 21 September 1927

Trade: Clerk General Duties

Postings

Royal Air Force Depot: Uxbridge 31 August 1923
HQ 1 Group: Kenley 31 October 1923
Attached to 2h (Com) Sqn: Kenley 31 October 1923
HQ 6 Group: Kenley 19 May 1924
HQ TA: Kenley 20 May 1926
3(F) Sqn: Upavon 13 March 1928
Transferred to 'E' Reserve 30 August 1929
Discharged from Reserve 14 March 1930
APPENDIX III

James Leslie Mitchell by Ray Mitchell

Transcript of hand-written account by Ray Mitchell entitled:

"James Leslie Mitchell"

Parents: - James Mitchell Married 1896 D 1936
Lilias Grassic Gibbon Married 1906 D 1939

Their Sons:
(a) George - Died in Canada 1949
(b) John " " Glasgow 5th Feb, 1966
(c) James Leslie:
Born 13 Feb 1901
Died 7 Feb 1935 at Victoria Hospital Welwyn, Herts.

J.L.M. Place of birth
Hillhead of Segget
Auchterless, Turriff, Aberdeenshire

1908 Mitchell's move to Aberdeen
1909 " " to Bloomfield, Arbuthnott, Kincardineshire
- Went to Arbuthnott Public School
  Headmaster Mr Mason
  Infant mistress Miss Archibald (Cluseburn)
1913 Alexander Gray became Head in place of Mr Mason, (retd)
  " from Kirkcauldy High School
  " Originated and organised Arbuthnott P. Sch as a
  Feeder School i.e. Promising pupils were given
  extra instruction on basis of that which would be
  taught at Mackie Academy - for 1 year. After which
  pupils were admitted to M.A. (i.e. Mackie Academy)
1915 J.L.M. at Mackie Academy Stonehaven. Unhappy, not understood,
  resentment for and by fellow pupils. He resents authority of
  teachers particularly the Rector "Sammy Dreep".
1916 JLM walks out of M.A. Goes to Aberdeen and gets work as a cub
  reporter on Abdn Journal.
1919 Appointed to "Scottish Farmer" Glasgow. Hard times, is found to
  have falsified the paper's accounts and the Editor dismisses him
  - and seems to have had Sadistic Satisfaction in so doing. Leslie
  must have felt shame and deep misery for he tried to commit suicide
  by taking laudanum. He survived and was taken home - disgraced.
  Poor Leslie. Poor parents. And what meat for gossip! What
  unhappiness at Bloomfield. ? could Leslie do for a living - he
  angrily rejects working on a farm so..."

Joins
  RASC 26. 8.19 to 19.11.20 as Pte
  ? 20.11.20 " 25. 1.21 = (66 days) ? do
  RASC 26. 1.21 22. 3.23 as Pte.
  ? 23. 3.23 to 30. 6.23 = (161 days) ? do
  RMF 31. 8.23 to 14. 3.30 (discharged)

(continued overleaf)
15 August 1925 Rebecca Middleton Civil Servant. In RAF stationed at Kenley where we go to live in rooms. Horrors. Absolute misery. I become dangerously ill with eclampsy and lie dying in Purley Cottage Hospital. Landlady unbelievably unkind and main reason for my breakdown. However I recover. Leslie finds pleasant room in Purley when I get out of hospital. From there we have holiday in Dawlish where I recover. Afterwards I go to Scotland to recuperate. Leslie moves to Uxbridge RAF on 8.7.26 while I was in Scotland. He finds rooms in Angel Rd Harrow and cycles each day to Uxbridge on a hard rubber tyre bicycle. Writes "Hanno" at Bryce Rd. I rebel against * at Bryce Rd offered accommodation at Percy Rd Shepherd's Bush - a Self Contained flat in * House - heavenly to be without a bitchy, nagging landlady - just on our own. We are so happy now. But on 13 March 1928 Leslie is transferred to Upavon Wilts. Comes home every 3 weeks. Continues writing and trying to place stories.

* writing is indecipherable in original but probably refers to landlady.

* writing indecipherable.
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iii) Stories not otherwise reproduced in The Calends of Cairo, Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights, Scottish Scene or A Scots Hairst

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- "The Road to Freedom", ibid.
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iv) Unpublished Material by J. Leslie Mitchell

Synopses: "Beginnings in America".
"Domina". "(The Thirteenth Disciple sequel)"
"History of the Continents of America Before Columbus".
"A History of Mankind".
"Memoirs of a Materialist".
"Men of the Mearns. The Covenanters".
"Stained Radiance Sequel".
"The Story of Religion".

Poems:
"Christ".
"The Communards of Paris".
"A Communist's Credo".
"In Memoriam. Ray Mitchell, b. 13 February, 1926. d. 16 February, 1926".
"Vimy Ridge. Seven Years After".
"Lenin: 1919".
"Lines".
"Lost".
"Michael".
"An Old Theme".
"On the Murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg".
"Renunciation".
"The Romanticist".
"Rupert Brooke".
"Six Sonnets for Six Months". (Numbers 2, 3 and 6 are missing).
"The Unbeloved".
"Then God Died".
CORRESPONDENCE

i) Letters Written by J. Leslie Mitchell to: -

H. B Cruickshank  -  3 November, 1932
-  August, 1932
- Two undated letters, probably late 1934, early 1935

C. M. Grieve  -  12 January, 1935

Neil Gunn  -  2 November, 1934

R. Middleton  -  16 January, 1921
-  19 December, 1921
-  20 December, 1921
-  27 March, 1922

H. G. Wells  -  12 June, 1928
-  29 October, 1930
-  15 January, 1931
-  29 April, 1931
-  5 June, 1931
-  28 June, 1931
-  12 July, 1932

ii) Letters Received by J. Leslie Mitchell from: -

James Barke  -  4 January, 1932
-  3 May, 1932
-  12 December, 1932
-  12 November, 1934
-  30 January, 1935

George Blake  -  31 December, 1934

Donald Carswell  -  17 August, 1932 (?)

C. M. Grieve  -  Undated letter
-  27 January, 1935
-  2 February, 1935
-  3 October, 1934
-  19 December, 1934

Neil Gunn  -  17 July, 1933
-  11 November, 1934

Leonard Huxley  -  3 April, 1928
-  3 December, 1928
-  20 February, 1929
-  31 August, 1929
-  10 September, 1929
-  19 November, 1930

David/
David MacSwan - 5 November, 1934
- 21 November, 1934
- 10 December, 1934
- 30 January, 1935

- 7 February, 1934
- 11 December, 1934

Compton MacKenzie - No date
- 23 November, 1934

A.S. Neill - 28 October, 1934

S. Parham - 7 December, 1931

J.B. Priestley - 18 January, 1932
- 6 August, 1934

Lewis Spence - 23 August, 1932

H.G. Wells - 21 September, 1930
- 2 October, 1932

T.H. Winteringham - 28 January, 1935

Fritz Wolcken - 12 July, 1934
i) Written Testimony to Present Writer by Those Who Knew

J. Leslie Mitchell

J. Randall Evans - 8 March, 1979
Margaret Fraser - 20 December, 1977
Cuthbert Graham - 2 November, 1977
- 10 November, 1977
Nan Jeans - September, 1973
- 29 April, 1982
- 31 October, 1982
Robert Lemon - 7 August, 1977
- 16 November, 1977
- 24 November, 1977
Walter Marsden - 14 December, 1977
Ray Mitchell - 21 August, 1977
- 29 October, 1977
- 8 November, 1977
- 14 November, 1977
- 4 December, 1977
Helen Riddoch - 6 August, 1978
A. Shearsby - 5 November, 1977
- 16 November, 1977
- 28 November, 1977
- 19 December, 1977
- 7 January, 1978
- 1 February, 1978
- 10 April, 1978
- 23 May, 1978
- 12 July, 1978
- 28 September, 1978
- 7 October, 1978
- 7 February, 1979
Rebecca West - 11 May, 1979

ii) Relevant Letters to Present Writer concerning Mitchell

Viscount of Arbuthnott - 18 July, 1978
- 26 October, 1982
Lord Ritchie-Calder - 11 June, 1979
Howard Fast - 8 June, 1979
Arthur Koestler - 27 June, 1978
Rt. Hon. Lord Shinwell - 29 October, 1977
R. Geoffrey Trease - 7 February, 1979
Jarrolds (Publishers) - 7 April, 1978
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-. Transcript of an Interview with Cuthbert Graham. 13 October, 1967.

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