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V. F. CALVERTON: INDEPENDENT RADICAL

by

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PREFACE

The cultural history of the 1920's and 1930's has recently gained growing attention. Particularly significant is the increasing interest in the radical movement of the 1930's. "Ambitious academic enterprises are already afoot to exhume neglected writers and forgotten books," observed Daniel Aaron recently.¹ Professor Aaron himself contributed a first-rate study in this subject, which introduced the reader to the complexity of the literary Left during the interwar years.² I am grateful to him for the guidance that his book provided me.

In spite of the appearance of monographs on the left wing intellectuals, V. F. Calverton's contribution to the radical movement has been almost entirely ignored. No specific study has been devoted to Calverton, hence the need for such a work.

This study attempts to examine V. F. Calverton's social and political ideas. It analyzes his shifting point of view from pious Christianity, through Communism to revisionist Marxism. Special attention has been paid to Calverton's position in the literary 'holy wars' and political factional struggles of the left wing movement. Thus, the main object of this study is to evaluate his role in and contribution to the radical movement during the twenties and the thirties.

The story of Calverton is, in a certain way, the history of the left wing intelligentsia between the two World Wars. An examination of the era through the eyes of Calverton means an analysis of the events

1. Daniel Aaron's comments are in The New York Times, Feb. 12, 1967.

2. Daniel Aaron, Writers On The Left (New York: An Avon Library book, 1965).

from a critical, though sympathetic point of view. It is my hope that this study on Calverton will add, in a modest way, to a better understanding of one phase of American cultural and political history.

I enjoyed the active cooperation of Calverton's friends and contemporaries, namely, George Britt, Leon Dennen, Max Eastman, Sidney Hook, Mina Melville, Max Nomad, Bessie Peretz, Max Shachtman and Herman Singer, to whom I am indebted. I am particularly thankful to Miss Una Corbett of Baltimore, who read great parts of the manuscript and made valuable suggestions. The librarians in the manuscript division of The New York Public Library; in the library of the University of Kentucky, Lexington; in the Houghton Library, Harvard University; in the Tamiment Library, New York City, and in the Newberry Library, Chicago, were very helpful.

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It is a real pleasure to express my thanks to the professional advice of Professor Dorothy Ganfield Fowler, chairman of the History Department at Hunter College, and to her tireless effort to improve the style of this work. My thanks go also to Professors John Cox and Sidney I. Pomerantz of City College, Madeleine H. Rice and Irving Howe of Hunter College and Gertrude Himmelfarb of Brooklyn College, who read the manuscript and made helpful suggestions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>DW</u>	<u>The Daily Worker</u>
<u>L</u>	<u>The Liberator</u>
<u>M</u>	<u>The Masses</u>
<u>MM</u>	<u>The Modern Monthly</u>
<u>MQ</u>	<u>The Modern Quarterly</u>
<u>N</u>	<u>The Nation</u>
<u>NF</u>	<u>The New Freeman</u>
<u>NL</u>	<u>The New Leader</u>
<u>NM</u>	<u>The New Masses</u>
<u>NR</u>	<u>The New Republic</u>
<u>SRL</u>	<u>The Saturday Review of Literature</u>
VFC	V.F.Calverton Papers, The New York Public Library

CHAPTER ONE

FROM YOUTH TO ADULTHOOD: 1900-1923

V. F. Calverton was born in 1900, along with the twentieth century. He was in his teens when the century was also in its teens. Malcolm Cowley literary critic and editor of The New Republic, remarked on his generation that they "fell into the habit of identifying themselves with the century," and were the "representatives of a new age".¹ The major events of the world, that took place in the first four decades, were also milestones in Calverton's intellectual biography.

The first important issue in his life was the outbreak of World War I. "I was born ...on August 4th 1914", he wrote in an autobiographical sketch, which was intended to be the opening of his autobiography, called "Between Two Wars". Though physically he was born in 1900, his real birth, his "intellectual coming of age, as it were, occurred on that memorable day when war became a reality in Europe." The importance of the war years for Calverton was not in his concern in the war itself, because he was indifferent to it. It was rather a period of transformation from youth to adulthood. At that time he became interested in the world beyond his personal life.²

¹Malcolm Cowley, Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920's (Rev. ed., E New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p.8.

²Calverton before his death had written only two pages on his autobiography, which he planned as his next book. Calverton, "Between Two Wars", The Modern Quarterly, XI (Fall, 1940) pp. 5-6. (The Magazine hereinafter cited as M.Q.)

During the post-war period of the early twenties, young Americans, disillusioned with the war and the commercial world" and fled to Europe on the first steamer.³ Calverton, unlike these young disappointed intellectuals who escaped to Paris, decided to stay in America. In 1923 he organized The Modern Quarterly as an independent radical journal dedicated to a "radical evaluation of American culture," to fight, what he called, "the chaos and disorientation".⁴

The Russian Revolution and the establishment of the Bolshevik regime, one of the most important issues of the twentieth century, strongly influenced Calverton's political, intellectual as well as personal life. One may state, without exaggeration, that Socialism - as Calverton understood it, which most of the time was a very different conception from the official "party line" - was the dominant factor in his writings and beliefs. He dreamt of a better world with a new social order. He hoped, with some self-delusion, that Communist life would be of higher order.⁵

The great depression, which brought unemployment and so much suffering to millions of people in the United States as well as in Europe, was the final proff for Calverton that capitalism was bankrupt and that the revolution would come soon.⁶ The apparent success of the Russian Five Year

³Cowley, Exile's Return, pp. 5-6.

⁴Editorial, M.Q., XI (Fall, 1938), 2.

⁵Calverton to Max Eastmen, April 26, 1935; Calverton to Maxwell Perkins, Feb. 6, 1938, in V. F. Calverton Papers (The New York Public Library). Thereinafter cited as (VFC). See also the opening editorial of The Modern Quarterly, "Modernism and the Modern Quarterly", M.Q., I (March, 1923), 1-2

⁶Calverton, For Revolution (New York: The John Day Co., 1932), passim.

Plan, especially at a time when the economy of the capitalist states was in an upheaval, was good evidence to the Communists, as well as to Calverton, of the superiority of a planned collective society over the individualistic capitalist economy.⁷

The rise of Fascism in Europe, especially after Hitler assumed power in Germany in 1933, frightened Calverton. He fought Fascism zealously, as he saw in it a real danger to Democracy and Socialism. He paid careful attention to the American situation, fearing that the economic crisis would lead to Fascism in the United States. The only way to fight the Fascist menace, according to Calverton, was by attracting the lower middle class, a potential element of rising Fascism, to the radical movement. The means of persuasion must be by appeal to them in the "American language" and not by talking to them in European terms. Only when the radical parties in America learn "to 'sell' their revolutionary doctrine in middle-class terms, will they be able to make headway with the American masses," wrote Calverton.⁸

The last major issue in Calverton's life was his battle against World War II, in general, and especially against American participation in it. Calverton wrote, "America has nothing to gain ...but it has everything to lose".⁹ Therefore he launched a vigorous campaign against American intervention in the war, throwing The Modern Quarterly into

⁷Calverton, "Leftward Ho!", M.Q., VI (Summer, 1932), 26-32.

⁸Calverton, "Our Future Dictator: Is It Huey Long?", Scribners Magazine,

⁹Editorial, "The Second World War", M.Q., XI (Summer, 1939), 7.

¹⁰George Britt, "V. F. Calverton", M.Q., XI (Fall, 1940), 12.

the battlefield with uncompromising zeal. It cost him not only money - when many old supporters of the magazine left it - but also friends, because many of his closest friends were critical of his anti-war attitude.¹⁰ Calverton opposed war because it was "for power, possession and economic supremacy ". In his opinion the Second World War was only the extension of the first. He opposed the two World Wars because the motivations which characterized them were according to him "the struggle for imperialist domination."¹¹

Thus, Calverton was deeply involved in the major problems of his time. He was passing through adolescence during World War I, and was broken by World War II. His story, as George Britt, a close friend, rightly put it, was "framed in time as a journey between wars."¹² It is that period, mainly, which this study is going to examine. Nevertheless, in order to describe Calverton's home, his childhood and the influence of his partents upon him it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the century.

V. F. Calverton was born as George Goetz¹³ on June 25, 1900, in Baltimore, Maryland, of German-American parentage. His family was made up of "violent contradictions," according to Calverton's own account.

¹¹Editorial, "The Second World War", M.Q., XI (Summer, 1939) 2-5; Editorial, "The Road Back", M.Q., XI (Summer, 1940), 2-3.

¹²George Britt, "V. F. Calverton: Notes Toward His Autobiography," Dec. 4, 1939 (VFC). That five page unpublished review had been written as an outline during the life of Calverton, showing how Britt thought the way that the autobiography whould have been written.

¹³The pseudonym V. F. Calverton was adopted in 1923 with the appearance of The Modern Quarterly under his editorship.

While his father's background was Catholic, his mother's was Protestant. The Goetz family came from Prussia but the Geiger family (his mother's) was originally of Hesse-Darmstadt lineage. Grandpa Geiger had left Germany in 1848, because as a radical "breathing revolution from every pore," he had been involved in the 1848 revolution in Germany, and had had to escape after its failure. The whole family, as well as Calverton himself, were very proud of his revolutionary ancestry. The Goetz grandfather left Germany to escape military service.¹⁴

Ida, Calverton's mother was a simple woman. She knew little about the world in which she lived. Really, "she wanted little from the world, but she got less," observed Calverton in the autobiographical novel "This Thing of Darkness," which he wrote in 1938.¹⁵ His father, Charles Goetz, or Charlie, as he was called in the novel, was a merchant tailor.

¹⁴Calverton, "Autobiography" (VFC) ; ----, "Between Two Wars," M.Q., XI (Fall, 1940), 6; Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1942), p. 239. The last source is an autobiographical letter that Calverton wrote to the authors, therefore it should be considered as Calverton's own account.

¹⁵Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", p.2. (VFC) As the unpublished autobiographical novel is the main source of information about Calverton's life associations, opinions and his first seventeen years, it seems to be relevant to discuss here the novel's importance, reliability and authenticity. Although "This Thing of Darkness" had the form of a novel, many of its basic facts, especially as far as Calverton was concerned, could be checked from other sources, written either by Calverton himself or by his friends. (For Calverton's own accounts, in addition to letters of autobiographical character, see footnote 14. For sources written by others, see the Memorial Issue on Calverton of The Modern Quarterly, XI (Fall, 1940), which contained articles and memories with invaluable information,) It is interesting to note that there are few fundamental issues in the novel which were in contradiction with other sources. Notably, the circumstances of Charles Goetz's death and his opinion on the World War. "This Thing of Darkness," mainly, added depth and better understanding of Calverton's boyhood. It colorfully depicted his parents conceptions and beliefs which were essential to grasp Calverton's own attitude toward several matters during his life.

It was his great sorrow that he had never been able to go to college and to read all the books he wanted. Nevertheless, he had never forgotten his love of books and devoted most of his life to reading. While Charles was busy reading books and drinking liquor, which was his 'second love', his wife, Ida, preferred to sleep, as if to escape from her problems.

Furthermore, Calverton's letter to Maxwell Perkins, the literary editor of Charles Scribner's Sons, explaining the significance of the novel for himself, could be evidence of the outstanding weight that "This Thing of Darkness" has. Among other things, outlining the main points of the rest of the novel, Calverton wrote:

I am particularly eager Max, to have you like this novel, because I think that it is the best thing I have so far written, synthesizing as it does, not only the history of my life associations but also a good deal of the philosophy of life which became later, as it matured, an essential part of the philosophy of my generation. (Calverton to Perkins, Feb. 6, 1938 (VFC).

Perkins, however, was not so enthusiastic about the novel as Calverton was. Although "the father's point of view is representative," and the reaction to the war "is extremely well done and true," the meaning of the novel, as far as the boy's life was concerned, "would not, I think, warrant us in publishing it." Perkin's main argument was that he could not allow to be published "such complete candor of statement." What Perkins had in mind when he wrote about that "complete candor of statement" was, the detailed description of the boy's (Calverton's) sexual problems and activities, which could be classified as pornography rather than art. (Perkins to Calverton, Feb. 28, 1938 (VFC).

Calverton, justifying the heavy sexual line of the book, criticized other authors that wrote books in entire disregard of this important element of a boy's life. Every work the boy read "treated boys as if they didn't have any sex at all," complained Calverton. Therefore, he decided to undertake the task of writing about the sexual life of a boy, promising to tell things that other people "were scared to mention." (Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", pp. 4-7). It seems that because of the opposition of Perkins to publication, Calverton dropped the topic, leaving an incompleated 456 page book, which never saw light.

Thus, one can conclude that the unpublished autobiographical novel is mainly reliable, suppling information of facts and point of views that otherwise would have left this chapter on Calverton's boyhood and family background, seriously limited.

"The only time I'm ever at peace with the world," she said, according to "This Thing of Darkness," "is, when I's asleep." What worried her more than anything else was the family's financial difficulties, which were caused, partly, by her husband's idleness.¹⁶

Charles Goetz was far more interested in his books than his business. Money was not important to him. It is not difficult to understand, therefore, the Goetz's economic condition. There was another reason for the decline of the income of the family. In the pre-war years, ready-made clothes became so popular and relatively inexpensive, that the business of Charles was unprofitable and he had to take out a second mortgage on his house to save the firm from bankruptcy. Ida worried much about the situation, but Charles took it with the "nonchalance of a philosopher," recalled Calverton.¹⁷

Calverton admired his father, at least he recalled so later, for his philosophic apathy about material things, his love of books and his sophisticated mind. Calverton's respect toward books as well as his indifferent mood toward saving money, was partly due to his father's influence.¹⁸

Although Calverton himself had never learned German,¹⁹ his home was run in a German style. In language, party songs and holidays the German

¹⁶Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness," pp. 1, 6.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 7, 199; see also pp. 157-158. To be sure, the situation of the Goetz family could not be classified as poor. They had middle-class status, living in the nice part of East Baltimore. The three story house at 2110 Pratt Street, where they lived, was their own house. Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 102, 367.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 248.

heritage was a dominant factor in his house.²⁰ Even his father, who in general was very critical and cynical about everything, was proud of the Germans. "German's a great language, and the Germans are a great people, and you can be proud you're German. Don't forget that," said Charles to his son, George.²¹

As far as religion was concerned, Calverton's home was contradictory. While his mother was a pious Protestant, his father was irreligious, to say the least. He told his son, "there's no heaven, no hell, no God, no devil, no angels." But if there were a God, "he ought to be shot for the mess he has made of the earth."²² The father did not believe in religion but for the sake of peace at home, he let his wife manage the religious education of the young Calverton. Her religious influence upon him was so strong that Charles was always afraid that she would make a preacher out of George.²³ He was basically right in this assumption, as we shall see later. Thus, George went to church and Sunday school and even got a medal for "perfect attendance."²⁴

Although Ida's religiousity strongly influenced Calverton's boyhood, he had already developed some critical ideas on Christianity.²⁵ Perhaps his father's atheism also had its effects on the boy, leading to his later skepticism and even hostility to anything connected with religion.²⁶

²⁰Ibid., pp. 80, 274, 296-300; Calverton, "Between Two Wars," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 6.

²¹Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness," p. 248.

²²Ibid., p. 119; See also pp. 179, 196.

²³Ibid., pp. 118, 404.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 112, 137.

²⁵Ibid., pp 356-358.

²⁶Calverton, The Passing of the Gods (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 313-315, 320.

Thus, the contradictory attitude of the parents toward religion stimulated in the son both the mystical and the rational side of his nature. At first the mother's influence was dominant, but in the long run the father's skepticism prevailed.

While Sunday school attendance was a matter of dispute between George's parents, and was eventually settled in accordance with his mother's wish, the choice of high school was heatedly discussed between the son and his father, with the latter the winner. After George had graduated from the grammar school he wanted to go to the Baltimore City College, which was the academic high school. But his father decided that he should be an engineer. So in spite of his protest he was sent to the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. He hated the school with his whole being because he felt that he was not suited for mechanical work. He was as much a mechanic, remarked Calverton ironically, "as Casanova was a Puritan." In the mechanical drawing class he read David Copperfield below the table. The blacksmith shop was also a waste of time, because he hated quantitative matters. The few subjects that he liked were English, history and zoology.²⁷

As a matter of fact the only field which really interested him and where he was always the best in his class, was literature. He felt that it was born with him. It is not surprising, therefore, that later he became a writer. But at this time, fourteen and immature, George had given no thought to his future. Although nothing in his school program aroused his intellectual interest, he did not complain to his father about the bad choice of high school. He spent a bored and unhappy year at the Polytechnic.²⁸

²⁷Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness," pp. 29, 305, 362.

²⁸Ibid., p. 353; The Baltimore Evening Sun, Sept. 12, 1932.

The influence of the father upon Calverton's teen age development was many sided. The political views of Charles Goetz made some impression upon the son. He was liberal in politics. With his low income and middle-class status it was quite natural for him to be critical of the Wall-Street bankers and big trusts. He voted for William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1896, supporting the great assault on the gold standard. For the same reason he admired and voted for Theodore Roosevelt. Though he objected to Roosevelt's aggressive foreign policy, he hailed the President's domestic program as "the best this nation's seen since the days of Jefferson." Charles enthusiastically accepted Roosevelt's anti-trust line as well as the "Square-Deal" policy toward the workers. He saw in Roosevelt the defender of the common men.²⁹

Calverton's father opposed any imperialistic war. He had strongly denounced the Spanish-American War of 1898. This point of view had a substantial influence upon the young boy, as he recalled later:

My first political recollection was of hearing my father denounce the Spanish-American War. His words had a profound influence upon me and led me, no doubt, to view society from the radical point of view, which has dominated all my literary work.³⁰

It is not impossible that Calverton, trying in 1940 to present himself as a radical from childhood, exaggerated a little the importance

²⁹Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness," pp. 203, 289. That was the way he saw President Roosevelt's domestic activities, but it was an oversimplification of Roosevelt's attitude. For a balanced analysis see George E. Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America, 1900-1912 (New York, Evanston and London: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 123-142; John M. Blum, The Republican Roosevelt (New York, Atheneum, 1965), pp. 58-60, 105.

³⁰Kunitz and Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors, p. 239.

of this fact, holding it as a dominant factor in his life. But one has to admit that his father's objection to any war in principle, could leave some deep impression upon the young Calverton.

From 1914, the war in Europe became the major issue in the Goetz home. Not only his father, who became a pacifist, was alert, but even his mother, who had never been interested in anything beyond the family affairs, began to read newspapers and participate in political discussions. "Every night, for weeks and months, George heard nothing talked about in his house but the War", he recalled later.³¹

The problems of the war agitated the American nation as a whole. The Goetzes, however, along with other German-Americans were confronted with a much more complicated situation. Most of them openly supported the German Fatherland, or at least advocated strict neutrality. As the war went on, they were denounced by American patriots as traitors. Xenophobia increased and "hyphenism", i.e., divided loyalty of the immigrants, became an important issue in American politics. The anti-German hysteria which seized the country, reached Baltimore too, where the Goetzes felt the general hostility.³²

Calverton's father was against war in principle, because it was "the worst crime of the human race". He was not pro-German, as his enemies

³¹Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness," p. 224.

³²On the war in American politics see: Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917 (New York, Evanston and London: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 145-148, 162-164, 174, 179, 250. On the German-American problem see Clifton James Child, The German-Americans in Politics, 1914-17 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1939), pp. 1, 4-7, 85, 149; 43-55; John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (Corrected with new preface: New York: Atheneum, 1965), pp. 196-197.

stated, but "pro-human", as Charles said.³³ He supported anyone who was against the war. Not only the father and the mother but her whole family were opposed to the war. But, according to the novel, there was a basic difference between his father's anti-war attitude and that of the rest of the family. He was against any war whereas they opposed only the fighting against Germany. Ida Goetz openly stated that she wanted the Germans to win.³⁴ The autobiographical novel described how Charles Goetz became more and more involved in peace organizations, how he spoke frequently at anti-war meetings and demonstrations, and was eventually beaten to death.³⁵

Since Charles Goetz did not die under the described circumstances but safely in his bed,³⁶ one can assume, then, that the report of his death during an address at an anti-war crusade was inserted by Calverton to dramatize the peace campaign. It seems that the whole picture of Charles' pacifism was exaggerated in order to convey Calverton's own attitude to war. Thus Charles Goetz's anti-war approach, was purposely exaggerated by Calverton.³⁷

³³Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", pp. 255, 290.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 347, unclassified p. 17.

³⁵Or only seriously injured. This point Calverton left open in his outline to the remaining part of the novel. Ibid., pp. 467, 452-54.

³⁶Two of Calverton's close friends saw Charles Goetz alive in 1923 and 1924. Both of them indicated that this part of the novel is entirely Calverton's fantasy. Bessie Peretz to the author, July 26, 1967; Una Corbett to the author, Sept. 4, 1967.

³⁷On Calverton's attitude towards war, see the editorials of The Modern Quarterly, XI (Summer, 1939), 5-7; XI (Winter, 1939), 2-8

It is interesting to note that Calverton did not get interested in the war, in spite of the fact that it was the major subject at his house. It was so removed from, so disconnected with, the things which concerned him that he could not be bothered with it. As he recalled later, "It would take another generation before George, emerging from the toys... to a storming adolescence, would begin to be able to discover the historical meaning of what was behind as well as ahead."³⁸ The fourteen year old boy was much more interested in women than in the war. Above and beneath all, the only subject that concerned him was "women with a capital W", he wrote years later.³⁹ His father tried time and again to talk to him about war, but in vain, because of the boy's indifference.⁴⁰

The war years were a milestone in Calverton's life. Not the war itself, but the era. The years 1914-18 were his "intellectual coming of age."⁴¹ At sixteen he felt himself a man. He passed through what he called "a spiritual crucifixion", which changed him from youth to manhood.⁴² In 1916 George grew up more rapidly than he had during six previous years.⁴³ Along with his physical growth a significant spiritual change came over him. Books began to attract his interest. Until that

³⁸Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", p.3, among the unclassified pages.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 224-26.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 383.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 353-54.

⁴²Calverton, "Between Two Wars", p. 5

⁴³Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", p. 350

year, he had never been a 'literary' boy and had not read a great deal for a boy of his age.⁴⁴ His new passion for reading caused him to become absorbed with a new world which he had never known before. Very soon he annoyed the librarian with requests for books she did not have.⁴⁵ The thirst for books and great enthusiasm for reading became later one of the most typical traits of Calverton's character.

The inspiration to read and improve himself, came to Calverton from his boss in the Bethlehem Steel Company. In January 1916 he left high school, without consulting his parents, because the Polytechnic made him "sick and tired". He did not want to be an engineer but that was all for which the Institute could fit him. He wanted to be either a writer or a professional baseball player.⁴⁶ At fourteen he had played in a semi-professional group receiving ten dollars for a game. Later the bush leagues in Texas offered him a contract, and he toyed a little with the idea that he might accept the invitation. But after a second thought he gave up the idea of a professional baseball career, not only because he preferred literary world, but also because of the vehement objection of his mother.⁴⁷ The New York World Telegram later noted Calverton's decision, with a headline: "Baseball Lost When Boy Star Turned Author".⁴⁸ But at that time Calverton was far from being a writer. He had just left high school and gone to work.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp.336-67; ----, "Between Two Wars", p.6

⁴⁵Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", n.p.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 361-62.

⁴⁷Britt, "Calverton", M.Q. XI (Fall, 1940), 10; Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", pp. 5-7 unclassified pages.

⁴⁸The New York World Telegram, Sept. 8, 1932

The position in the steel company was of a clerical type. He was an assistant time-keeper. Soon he did his work so well that his boss advised him to labor more leisurely otherwise he would lose the job.⁴⁹ He effectively exploited his free time for extensive reading. His superior brought the books and guided the boy's education, especially toward atheism. Consequently, he began to express doubts about his earlier faith.⁵⁰

One of the books which impressed him especially was Henry Thomas Buckle's The History of Civilization in England.⁵¹ He was so strongly influenced that he decided to complete his education and was admitted to the City College, the Baltimore academic high school, where he studied for three years until his graduation in 1918.⁵²

There in a liberal arts program he became a serious student in contrast to his indifference to studies at the hated Polytechnic. This new attitude toward learning was well defined in the Yearbook of his class: "he has a funny attitude," wrote one of his classmates, "he considers school a place to study." He focused his interest on literature, becoming the president of the Washington Irving Literary Society, which he had helped to establish.⁵³ Adolphus D. Emmart, a good friend, stated, "His great love of literature and his splendid capabilities in this line of work exactly suit him to hold the chief position of so excellent society."⁵⁴ One may

⁴⁹Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness", pp. 400-401

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 405

⁵¹Henry Thomas Buckle, The History of Civilization in England (London: J.W. Parker and Son, 1857-1861).

⁵²Baltimore Evening Sun, Sept. 12, 1932; The New York World Telegram, Sept. 8, 1932; Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967.

⁵³"George Goetz", Yearbook of Baltimore City College, 1918.

⁵⁴A.D. Emmart, "The Washington Irving Literary Society", Ibid.

conclude that Calverton's activities in high school explicitly showed the direction he would follow maturity. Calverton as a center of a literary circle would be a typical picture of his life.

The end of the World War found Calverton, like many of the American youth, "disillusioned and sickened."⁵⁵ The young intellectuals, who had returned from the war, were disappointed to find another world, an alien "commercial" atmosphere, a reactionary America.⁵⁶ Seeing that the Versailles Treaty could not assure the avoidance of a more destructive war in the future and that they stood hopeless and powerless to avoid it, the intellectuals "put aside with a kind of shame its broken and shattered ideals" and turned to irresponsibility and disinterest, wrote Floyd Dell, writer and editor of The Masses and The Liberator.⁵⁷ These young people, "trained in disillusionment," were known as the "Lost Generation" of the post war period.⁵⁸ This "lost generation" had a distorted vision of society and its role in it, and lacking the courage to face reality, many went into exile. People like Malcolm Cowley, Ernest Hemingway, E.E. Cummings, Harold E. Stearns and many others, fled to Paris, escaping the American "cultural desert."⁵⁹

⁵⁵Calverton to Perkins, Feb. 6, 1938 (VFC)

⁵⁶Cowley, Exile's Return, p. 38.

⁵⁷Floyd Dell, Intellectual Vagabondage; An Apology for the Intellectuals (New York: G.H. Doran Co., 1926), pp. 240-241; Dell, "Shell-Shock and the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers," M.Q., III(Oct.-Dec., 1926), 273.

⁵⁸Dell, Intellectual Vagabondage, p. 250. The generation was "lost" in the sense that it rejected the guidance of the older generation, that the existing world after the war was not suited for what they had been taught and prepared.

⁵⁹Cowley, Exile's Return, pp. 8-9. Cowley's account accurately described the life and philosophy of those exiles. A typical expression of the disappointed intellectuals was the symposium edited by Harold E. Stearns, Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1922).

While many Americans went to exile, there were intellectuals who, electrified by the Bolshevik Revolution, offered the Marxian solution to the American situation. V. F. Calverton was one of those young people who did not fall into despair or bitterness but endeavored to establish a better society. Thus, Calverton did not belong to the "lost generation", but to the revolutionary one.

Calverton made his first acquaintance with the radical movement in 1919. During the summer of 1919, while he was working in his uncle's law office in New York, he met a Socialist leader who commanded his "most profound respect and admiration." This new mentor tried to convince the young Calverton that revolution was the only path to follow. The latter conceded that although the old order was "degenerate and corrupt," but it still had some "particles of gold mixed within its dross," which it would be worth preserving. After he had been terrified by the miserable conditions of slum life in New York, and after his exposure to the Socialist propoganda, he understood the desire of the workers to rebel against the existing system. Furthermore, he admitted that a "complete upheaval is necessary." He was only dubious as to the success of a new order in changing the condition. He was sure, however, that "something must be done."⁶⁰

This first contact with the radical movement was so essential to him that he considered it as the starting point of his autobiography. Unlike other autobiographies, his began only at eighteen, when he "became conscious" of the left wing movement. Before that age he was only an

⁶⁰Calverton to Ries, Aug. 25, Sept. 2, 1919 (VFC).

"unconscious brat," he wrote in the opening sentence of his autobiography. To be sure, at that time he did not join any radical party and was not yet a Socialist. But his closer confrontation with the problems of the poor was so crucial to him that it divided his life into two parts: to an unconscious infantilism which only deserved a novel ("This Thing of Darkness"), and to a radical life for which he planned to write a full scale autobiography ("Between Two Wars").⁶¹

When he returned to Baltimore from his summer work in New York he was as yet far from embracing Socialism. It seemed that Calverton surrendered to his mother's wish to become a Lutheran minister. So in the summer of 1919, along with his undergraduate studies at Johns Hopkins, he had been admitted to a Lutheran Theological Seminary.⁶² Viewing the interesting correspondence between Harman F. Miller, a young teacher in a Theological Seminary, and Calverton, one has the chance to look into Calverton's religious beliefs.⁶³

In August 1919 Calverton had been "charmed by the lure of pure reason and diligent thought" and arrived at a definite conception of religion. He had some idealistic dreams which, according to Miller, were "a unique treasure." Nevertheless, his attitude was purely individualistic and philosophical, therefore it could not be put into the minds of the people.⁶⁴

⁶¹Two pages of the coming autobiography (VFC).

⁶²Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me," The Call, June 22, 1940. When Calverton wrote this article he bore in his mind to include it in his forthcoming autobiography, hence the special importance of the article. Gerry Allard (ed. of The Call) to Calverton, June 1, 1940 (VFC).

⁶³The letters from Miller are the single information about Calverton's religious philosophy, hence their significance. It is remarkable that this part of his life is completely unknown even to close friends. Probably Calverton was ashamed of this "spot" in his radical biography, therefore he concealed it.

⁶⁴Miller to Calverton, Aug. 26, 1919 (VFC).

Calverton, ignoring reality and reason, developed an idealistic version of Christianity. He elaborated an individualistic and utopian theory which had nothing to do with Christian dogmas. He wanted a church composed of individuals with "each man having the right to interpret Christ as he wills." He demanded so much from the believers that he could find, really, very few Christians. Any modern religion, according to Calverton, must allow freedom of thought as well as freedom of expression, because they are "the panacea for serving religion, especially Xy." He predicted that in his present generation there would come the decline of dogmatic religion, and Christianity "must break its shackles of suppression."⁶⁵

In this way he built up his utopian religious theory, where free interpretation and free expression should be the dominant forces. No wonder that his disappointment came soon. Originally he believed that Christianity, as he understood it, would be the answer to world problems, but the trouble was that he had met too many Christians whose patterns were entirely different from his expectations.⁶⁶ His friend, Miller, tried to warn him of possible disappointments stating, "it is good for you and me to have idealistic dreams, but inspirationalism and idealism must give way to thought of reason."⁶⁷ But the enthusiastic Calverton disregarded the warnings.

Consequently, Calverton departed from the orthodox beliefs, holding on to his heretical ideas. Gradually and reluctantly he reached his conclusion that Socialism, and not Christianity, was the only solution of the miseries of the world. It is interesting that not Karl Marx but the Christian texts

⁶⁵Miller to Calverton, May 8, 1920; See also Calverton to Ries, Aug. 25, 1919 (VFC).

⁶⁶Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me," The Call, June 22, 1940.

⁶⁷Miller to Calverton, Aug. 26, 1919 (VFC).

were the basic factor in turning him in the Socialist direction. He direction. He discovered, as many had done before him, that Jesus was a communist. Accordingly, he began to preach this theory in Lutheran, Methodist and United Brethren churches in Baltimore. Not surprisingly, his ministerial career was "drastically short," he recalled.⁶⁸

There are good grounds to believe that he took religion seriously and tried to find himself suited to a ministerial career. But his deep dislike of dogma, his hatred of old ideas, his intention to adapt religion to modern life of freedom of thought and interpretation, inevitably caused him to rebel against the orthodox teachings.⁶⁹ The advancement of those heretical ideas and his inclination toward radical views were an evolutionary transformation in Calverton's mind. It was a gradual development which did not disturb his college class work. As a serious student he was trying to do two years' studies in one. In his freshman year he covered so many courses that the authorities decided to change the regulations.⁷⁰

Calverton's ambitious personality as well as his urge for leadership found an appropriate outlet in the student clubs. He developed wide range of activities serving as the president of the social science club, of the literary club and of the class of 1922. In addition, he was the vice-president of the oratorical society and the editor-in-chief of the university magazine Black and Blue Jay.⁷¹ His oratorical skill, which he displayed later in

⁶⁸Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me."

⁶⁹Ibid.; Nina Melville also explained his transformation according to that line. Interview with Nina Melville, Nov. 14, 1966.

⁷⁰Whiting to Calverton, Dec. 18, 1921 (VFC); The Baltimore Sun, Sept. 12, 1932.

⁷¹"George Goetz," The Yearbook of Johns Hopkins, 1921.

endless lectures and debates, was recognized by the students who delegated him to represent the university in the Southern Oratorical Contest in North Carolina in 1920.⁷² Those activities indicate the diversity of his interest as well as his desire to be in the top of the society where he was working.

The literary club was Calverton's favorite group and the one in which he was most active. Some dozens of students met frequently, sometimes in his home, to discuss new trends in literature and literary criticism. He worked hard to persuade interesting speakers to contribute to the club's discussion.⁷³ A friend at Harvard, regretting that he could not attend the club's meetings, in a flattering way evaluated Calverton's literary organization as an "unparalleled undertaking in the history of Hopkins."⁷⁴

As an independent young man he did not want to rely upon his parents and went to work, while he was an undergraduate. They wanted him to enter his uncle's law office⁷⁵ but he preferred teaching to law. In 1920, as a junior he began to teach in Junior High School No. 40 in Baltimore, where he taught till 1927.⁷⁶ He used to discuss with his students almost every important topic even the delicate ones, encouraging them to treat every subject in a candid manner. This undogmatic attitude would turn out to be a typical line in Calverton's character.⁷⁷ From this group developed the

⁷²William Bobbitt to Calverton, March 19, 1920 (VFC).

⁷³L. Baker to Calverton, Sept. 28, 1919; Fulton Bramble to Calverton, Aug. 8, 1920 (VFC).

⁷⁴K. L. Lon to Calverton, March 2, 1920 (VFC).

⁷⁵Calverton to Ries, Aug. 22, 25, 1919 (VFC).

⁷⁶The Baltimore Daily Post, May 26, 1927. Before he got the teaching job he had worked to earn his living by reading books evenings to an old physician. Whiting to Calverton, Oct. 5, 1919 (VFC).

⁷⁷Vera Fulton (Una Corbett), "2110", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 33-35; Hunting-ton Cairns, Ibid., p. 43.

tradition of weekly meetings in Calverton's hours, which became almost an institution in Baltimore's intellectual life.⁷⁸

After his graduation in 1921 he planned to study toward a doctorate in psychology and psychiatry.⁷⁹ But he was too busy with other projects, such as writing short-stories and preparing the edition of a radical magazine. All these he could do only after he had finished his daily work as a teacher. It was difficult for him to devote himself entirely to his studies. Besides, it seems that his restless character was not suited to long periods of graduate work. Thus he left the university and concentrated on his ambitious projects.

It was as a short-story writer, or novelist, that Calverton at that time saw his career. Although years later his main specialization was in the critical rather than the creative field, during his whole life he dreamed, unsuccessfully, of becoming a great artist. The failure to attain this goal was one of his big disappointments in his life.⁸⁰ He was very eager to publish his stories, as he would be in later years, but unfortunately for Calverton that desire had been fulfilled only partly. The magazines rejected his stories because they were too sexy or psychological, and the publishers refused to accept them, partly because of their bad style, and partly because they were better suited for publication in a magazine than a book.⁸¹ One of the editors of The Century Magazine wrote him quite frankly: "...until you get away from the self-consciousness of style and the morbid-

⁷⁸The Baltimore Evening Sun, Sept. 12, 1932; On those meetings see infra, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁹Whiting to Calverton, Dec. 18, 1921 (VFC).

⁸⁰Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967; Even during the thirties the two fiction books he wrote were nearer to him than his critical works. Britt, "V.F. Calverton," MQ, (Fall 1940), 7.

⁸¹Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Publishing Co. to Calverton, Feb. 5, 1921(VFC).

ness which has characterized your work, I am afraid you are going to meet only with rejections."⁸² Thus, "Adolph Moore", "Money", as well as some other stories, had to wait to be published until Calverton became editor of his own magazine.

It would be unfair to Calverton, however, to dismiss his early literary activities as a complete failure. He had some connections with Current History and even received an enthusiastic comment from a writer who read one of his stories "with amazement at the multiplex knowledge which you wove into such an interesting tale."⁸³ Some of his articles were accepted by the Baltimore Sun, the influential paper of his home town.⁸⁴ In short, Calverton had to make the difficult way of a young writer toward success and publicity. The first step had been made during the college years of 1919-1921, nevertheless, his great achievements would come years later. The importance of this period for the young Calverton was in his self education. He read twelve books a week in order to repair the damage in his "miseducation" by his professors.⁸⁵

After his graduation in 1921 Calverton remained in touch with the intellectual circles. As a "thoroughly gregarious" person, as he himself admitted,⁸⁶ he offered his home to young writers, poets, musicians and college professors. Calverton, who took extraordinary interest in different

⁸² Maxwell Aley to Calverton, Oct. 28, 1921 (VFC).

⁸³ Don Williams to Calverton, May 19, 1919 (VFC).

⁸⁴ S. Warfield Hobbs to Calverton, Nov. 8, 1920 (VFC).

⁸⁵ Britt, "Calverton", MQ, XI (Fall 1940), 10. Calverton's correspondence clearly reflected his desire for books. See for example, Siegel to Calverton, Aug. 7, 1921, Feb. 24, Oct. 11, Nov. 14, 1920 (VFC).

⁸⁶ Calverton to Isidor Schneider, March 26, 1925 (VFC).

areas of culture, such as sociology, psychology, literature and politics, naturally became the center of that circle. His stimulating ideas and intellectual excitement were the source of inspiration for young Baltimore literati. A good friend depicted Calverton's influence upon him as follows:

Last Sunday evening seems to have brought me closer to you...with your masterful discourse on pleasure, which gave me not only the greatest intellectual thrill I have ever registered, but something more, that rarest of good feelings pregnant of an immediate knowledge there is in this world of life.⁸⁷

These weekly meetings became an institution in Baltimore intellectual life.⁸⁸ The mood of revolt was the common denominator of the group that gathered once or twice a week in "2110", Calverton's home. The circle included rebels against literary forms and ideas, as well as sex taboos. Social determinists, 'pink' and 'red' Socialists had equal share with esthetes in the group where Calverton's many-sided personality bridged many of the differences.⁸⁹ Perhaps the ultra-conservative atmosphere of Baltimore, that Calverton so complained about,⁹⁰ inspired those young people to revolt against it. The preponderance of Baltimore German middle-class

⁸⁷ Melvin Shelley to Calverton, July 5, 1923 (A); For a friendly picture of Calverton's parties see Vera Fulton, "2110", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 33-35; especially valuable is Herman Singer's analysis of the circle in the unpublished study "The Quarterly Circle", in the author's possession.

⁸⁸ The Baltimore Evening Sun, September 12, 1932.

⁸⁹ Zechariah E. Miller to Bessie Peretz, March 31, 1924 (VFC). The letter clearly showed the rebellious atmosphere at "2110".

⁹⁰ Calverton to Ries, August 22, 25, 1919 (VFC).

conservatives was a challenge for young intellectuals who preferred to go their own way. The rebellion of Calverton and his circle in such a conservative atmosphere was, as Herman Singer has so aptly put it, "the most orthodox of reactions".⁹¹

In that friendly, though critical, group Calverton had the opportunity to discuss and develop ideas that were taking form in his articles and books. The circle was also the forum where the establishment of The Modern Quarterly was planned and where the journal was nourished until it made its first appearance⁹² in 1923. Moreover, Calverton used to invite well known intellectuals to lecture to the group. At least partly he was led by his wish to enlist them as contributors to his magazine. During the twenties some of those he invited to his house were writers such as Sherwood Anderson, Louis Adamic and David Pinski, radicals like Scott Nearing, Clarence Darrow, James Oneal, Max Nomad, Ben Stolberg and William Z. Foster, journalists such as Donald Kirkley and A. D. Emmart. Men like Eli Siegel, Haim Kantorovitch and Samuel D. Schmalhausen were close friends of Calverton at one time or another during the decade and helped him to edit the Quarterly.

The group, then, filled Calverton's intellectual as well as personal needs. He liked people, he wanted to hear and discuss stimulating ideas.

⁹¹Singer, "Quarterly Circle".

⁹²Calverton to Schneider, March 26, 1925 (VFC); Fulton, "2110", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), pp. 33-35.

But he also needed people because he "had to be top one, he couldn't be in the second line, he had to dominate," as a friend has remarked.⁹³ His motive was not, however, entirely selfish. He was eager to persuade others to accept his viewpoint. It was essential for him to convert people to his ideas, which were really, challenging. One has to see not only what he took from others but also what he gave them. There were many young men in Baltimore, as well as in New York, later, who were thankful that he provided a new dimension to their outlook, especially in literary radicalism.⁹⁴

Calverton focused his interest during the years 1922-1925 in two major fields: Socialism and Literature. Eventually he found a method to synthesize them in what he called a theory of "Sociological Criticism of Literature."⁹⁵ At first, however, it seems important to deal with the two areas, separately.

His first contact with Socialism, as already mentioned, was during the summer of 1919. He was then impressed by a Socialist who almost convinced him of the need for revolution as the only alternative to the old social order. When he returned to Baltimore he was busy with theological studies rather than Socialist theories and it seems that he dropped the issue. Then he discovered Jesus was a communist so he came to Socialism through Jesus and not Marx.

⁹³ Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967: Britt also saw Calverton's character in this light. Interview with George Britt, April 5, 1967.

⁹⁴ Shelley to Calverton, July 5, 1923 (VFC); Huntington Cairns, "Tributes... Memories", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 43; Interview with Herman Singer, March 29, 1967; Singer, "Quarterly Circle."

⁹⁵ Calverton, The Newer Spirit: A Sociological Criticism of Literature (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925).

In 1920 Calverton became acquainted with Eli Siegel, a young poet, who introduced him to Marx as well as Marxian lecturers.⁹⁶ Later, in 1923, after a bitter quarrel between them, resulting in a break of relations, Siegel boasted that he had made Calverton a Socialist.⁹⁷ This Calverton denied. Siegel's company was undoubtedly stimulating, but his Socialist arguments did not convince Calverton, who stated that "I had to think out the whole Socialist problem for myself."⁹⁸

Speaking about Calverton's path to Socialism one must bear in mind his middle-class origin and the Baltimore conservative background. He had to overcome "a whole barrage of opposition," as he recalled later, before he could accept Marxism as a sound doctrine.⁹⁹ Some of his friends had to struggle, too, to overcome their bourgeois background. Melvin Shelly, for example, could never fully believe in Marxism. He should be a Socialist because he knew "no one sufficiently intelligent who does not believe in Socialism." But he rejected activity for the "Cause", classifying himself as a "passive Socialist."¹⁰⁰

Calverton arrived at the Marxian idea that social and economic conditions, that is environment, were the basic factors in human life. Human beings, according to young Calverton were, "reluctant unpredictable (...) mechanism." He believed that the time would come when the people would control conditions, and in a socialized state these would be, obviously, conducted in favor of the people. The Socialist state would permit time for cultural activities and education, instead of wasting energy on money-hunting. Calverton colorfully depicted such an ideal

⁹⁶Siegel to Calverton, Oct. 11,12, Nov. 14, Dec. 15, 1920 (VFC).

⁹⁷Siegel to Calverton, March 1, 1924 (VFC).

⁹⁸Calverton to Siegel, n.d. (VFC).

⁹⁹Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me."

¹⁰⁰Shelley to Calverton, Oct. 10, 1922 (VFC).

society, trying convincingly to convey the validity of Socialism.¹⁰¹

He felt unsatisfied with utopian Socialism, because his mind desired more convincing arguments. Therefore he decided in 1922 to join the Baltimore branch of the Socialist Labor Party. That party had few supporters and even less influence during the twenties. It was, however, a revolutionary party, preaching the Marxian gospel. The Communist parties were still underground.¹⁰² Therefore the Socialist Labor Party was almost the only choice for Calverton. He read The Capital of Marx twice, the first time under the supervision of a Socialist Labor Party member. Further readings of Charles Fourier, Henry Thomas, Buckle and Peter Kropotkin, led him, however, to some misgivings about Marx. He greatly admired Buckle's History of Civilization in England, and saw that Marx, though sounder than Buckle, had missed some important points. Therefore he meant to reconcile Marx and Buckle which would be the best synthesis of modern Marxism. Until his death he believed in the possibility of harmony between the pair.¹⁰³

Calverton's Socialism was not of a clearcut type in 1922-1923. He preferred anarchism (though not of an outright violent character) to State Socialism, because he was "always dubious of over-heavy state power."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Calverton to Ries, November 20, 1922 (VFC). At the end of the letter-article Calverton added, "Keep this as a good memory of a good part of me."

¹⁰²Between 1919-1922 there were two rival Communist parties: The Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party. While the former, under the leadership of Charles E. Ruthenberg and John Pepper, copied the ideology of the Russian party, the latter, under the leadership of John Reed and Ben Gitlow desired to apply Bolsherism to American conditions. The prose actions resulting the Red Scare of 1919-1920 drove the two parties underground. For a detailed analysis of the history of the Communist Party, see Theodore Draper, The Roots of American Communism (New York: The Viking Press, 1957).

¹⁰³Calverton, "What Socialism Seems to Me;" Calverton Perkins, Feb. 6, 1938 (VFC).

¹⁰⁴Calverton, to unidentified, n.d. (VFC)

It is not clear how long he was a member of the Socialist Labor Party. From the few references about the issue it is evident that he joined the party in 1922.¹⁰⁵ One may assume that Calverton followed Eli Siegel, who was expelled from the party in 1923 because of Marxian 'heresies' which Siegel wrote in the article "The Complete Socialism" which appeared in the first issue of The Modern Quarterly.¹⁰⁶ Since there is no evidence that Calverton had any relation with that party after 1923,¹⁰⁷ and since as editor of the magazine he agreed with Siegel's article,¹⁰⁸ it is possible that he severed all connections with the Socialist Labor Party in 1923.

In an article written in 1922 but never published,¹⁰⁹ Calverton firmly expressed his opinion concerning war and Socialism. At twentytwo he already opposed war; an attitude which he held constantly throughout his life. War was the product of the capitalist system, which protected and expanded itself, mainly, by war. Capitalism, according to Calverton, needed war for making profit out of sufferings of the lower classes. In the existing economic system future wars would be inevitable. He considered capitalist peace organizations, such as the League of Nations, total failures. Only in a socialized society, where wealth would be in public hands, could the first step be made toward permanent peace. Such a state would be definitely against war, in principle, because it would be governed by the people

¹⁰⁵Calverton to Perkins, February 6, 1938 (VFC). Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me."

¹⁰⁶Eli Siegel, "The Complete Socialism," MQ I (March, 1923), 27-35.

¹⁰⁷In 1926 he even attacked the S.L.P. Calverton, "The Case of Mr. Calverton," Daily Worker, June 23, 1926.

¹⁰⁸See the opening editorial of The Quarterly, MQ I (March, 1923), 2.

¹⁰⁹Calverton, "Concerning Partnership in Poverty" (VFC).

themselves who would be mostly interested in peace.

What was the "socialized state" which would be the first step toward the abolition of war? It would be "a condition where industry is owned by the state, so that the capital necessary to its organization does not have to come from, and the rewards go to private individuals, but operated and governed by the workers themselves".

Calverton's goal was well defined, but how was it to be achieved? "What we need", he wrote, "is... an organized struggle for a socialized state". In the phrase "organized struggle" he did not imply revolutionary steps, but "intelligent education", "intelligent Socialism" and "actual awareness of economic causes". Calverton was not ready, then, to support revolution and violence to achieve the ideal of a workers' state. He favored educational methods, accepting the Socialist Party's reform and evolutionary policy rather than the Communists' revolutionary idea.¹¹⁰ In 1923 he was so confident in his views on Socialism that he planned to produce "the most complete book on Socialism that as yet has been written", he wrote to a friend.¹¹¹

A friend criticized Calverton's purely logical attitude and scientific Socialism. Samuel D. Schmalhausen, one of the friends who influenced

¹¹⁰Calverton, "Concerning Partnership in Poverty", (ca. December, 1922) (VFC). Calverton sent this article to the New Republic as a reply to Pierre Hamp's "Partnership in Poverty", that appeared in NR on December 5, 1922, but the editors refused to accept it. Robert Lovett to Calverton, December 18, 1922 (VFC).

¹¹¹Calverton to Siegel, February 19, 1923 (VFC). The book, as many others that Calverton hastily outlined in a moment of enthusiasm, but soon dropped the topic, was never written.

Calverton in the second half of the twenties, attacked him as well as Marx himself for disregarding psychological factors in Marxism. Marx's logical analysis, argued Schmalhausen, left no room for irrational hypotheses. Calverton accepting Schmalhausen's point of view, tried later to emphasize psychological factors in literary criticism.¹¹²

Calverton's brand of Socialism, then, was incomplete and unorthodox. His interpretation of Marxism was a personal one. In the words of the Socialist writer, Lillian Symes he had a "flexible Marxist approach."¹¹³ One may wonder whether this attitude could be defined as Marxism at all. His rejection of the European conception of Marxism and his endeavor to evolve Socialism of an American type, indicated that Calverton was, perhaps, nearer to the native American egalitarianists than to the Communists. In spite of the doubts concerning Calverton's right to be called a real Marxist, for the case of clarity and convenience this study will treat him as he viewed himself, an unorthodox Marxist. His independent position brought criticism from both the left and the right wings of the radical movement. According to the Communists he was a liberal, a "parlor Socialist,"¹¹⁴ while the Socialists regarded him their enemy. The opposition from orthodox party members was an inevitable result of his undogmatic nature. The Communist assault during the 1930's which led to his exclusion from left wing political and literary circles, embittered his life, and beclouded his last years.

¹¹² Schmalhausen to Calverton, Feb. 6, 1924 (VFC).

¹¹³ Lillian Symes, "V. F. Calverton; Socialist", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 20; Interview with Britt, April 5, 1967.

¹¹⁴ Siegel to Calverton, Dec. 25, 1922; March 1,3, 1923; n.d. (VFC).

In addition to Socialism, literature was the second pillar of Calverton's career in the early twenties. To Calverton both were equally important, hence the need for combination of the two fields. As a radical he advocated a socialized state and as a man of letters he saw in literature an essential servant of Socialism. He believed that literature was "one of the windows of social change"; therefore he encouraged it.¹¹⁵ In the personality of Calverton the conjunction of the two subjects was almost natural. He was, or at least wanted to be, a social scientist, a realist and determinist, but he was also a romanticist in literature. "I always knew", wrote one of his dearest friends, Haim Kantorovitch, "that behind the stern Scientific-Materialist there is a poet". Kantorovitch hesitated to decide which one was the more important.¹¹⁶ That double course of materialism and literature determined his life work. He wrote and edited books on sociology, anthropology and psychology, and at the same time he tried to be a creative artist.

As a short story writer, he was influenced by Sherwood Anderson and wrote some stories in the style of Winesburg, Ohio and The Triumph of the Egg.¹¹⁷ He produced about half dozen short stories such as "Richter", "There are Crimes", "Faces", "Money", and "Main Street", and a novel "Adolph Moore". In spite of his confidence in the value of the stories and their

¹¹⁵ Calverton to Grant C. Knight, January 12, 1936 (Grant C. Knight Collection, The University of Kentucky Libraries).

¹¹⁶ Kantorovitch to Calverton, July 15, 1924; Schmalhausen to Calverton, December 18, 1924 (VFC).

¹¹⁷ Calverton to Anderson, August 21, 1924 (Anderson Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago).

chance to see light, his actual success as a story writer was very limited. Sidney Nyburg, a Baltimore lawyer and writer, to whom Calverton sent his story "Richter" for criticism, praised it saying he expected to hear about the "Conspicuous success you have won".¹¹⁸ Encouraged by Nyburg's favorable opinion, Calverton sent the story to The Dial Magazine.¹¹⁹ It was rejected. As a matter of fact, most of the stories were, according to a friendly critic, "tiresome monotonous tale of monotonous life".¹²⁰ A good friend was very frank with Calverton and clearly stated that his talent was in essays rather than fiction. Calverton's natural ability lay in "persuasive argumentative form".¹²¹

After Calverton failed to have his stories accepted by other editors¹²² the main outlet for his creative works were his own publications. Horizons, the magazine which Calverton edited in 1922, published two short stories in one issue ("There Are Crimes" and "Faces").¹²³ He followed that practice printing in The Modern Quarterly a story and a novel. ("Money" under the name Mark Rodson, and the novel "Adolph Moore" in six installments).¹²⁴ The rejection by Alfred A. Knopf of a book of six short stories,¹²⁵ and his failure to find a publisher for his novel,¹²⁶ led him to rethink the pros-

¹¹⁸Quoted in Singer, "Quarterly Circle".

¹¹⁹Calverton to the Editor of The Dial, February 16, 1922 (VFC).

¹²⁰William Bebbitt to Calverton, September 10, 1922 (VFC).

¹²¹Bobbitt to Calverton, June 21, 1922 (VFC).

¹²²Abdullah to Calverton, June 12, 1922; Calverton to Bobbitt, July 20, 1922 (VFC).

¹²³Calverton to Whiting, June 10, 1922 (VFC).

¹²⁴MQ, I-N (1923-125); Calverton to Siegel, November 17, 1922 (VFC).

¹²⁵Calverton to Bobbitt, July 20, 1922 (VFC).

¹²⁶Calverton to Anderson, August 30, 1924 (Anderson Papers); Abdullah to Calverton, June 12, 1922 (VFC).

pects of his artistic career. Disappointed that he could not win recognition as a creative writer,¹²⁷ he finally turned to literary criticism and writing. By 1922 Calverton accepted, though reluctantly and never absolutely,¹²⁸ Bobbitt's advice to stop writing fiction and to concentrate upon argumentative essays.¹²⁹

While in creative literature he had a romantic and even mystical approach, his criticism intended to be scientific. A friend "highly valued" his criticism, knowing it to be based on scientific grounds.¹³⁰ He tried to be a realist, tempered by a well measured judgment "arrived at from coordinates as clear and definite as the present state of human reaction and human criticism will allow", he explained his method to Anderson.¹³¹ Calverton himself, as well as his friends, were proud of his calm and rational approach, unlike the romantic, idealist one of A. D. Emmart, and the mystical outlook of Anderson.¹³²

Calverton was not satisfied with short stories and book reviews, especially when they remained, mainly, unpublished. He wanted to do much more. His ambition pushed him farther. He hoped to be a dominant figure in the field of literature. He was determined to exercise his influence

¹²⁷ Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967.

¹²⁸ In 1929 appeared his Three Strange Lovers and in 1936 The Man Inside. Those books in which he expressed his most deep feelings, were part of him, therefore the closest to him. Ibid.

¹²⁹ Bobbitt to Calverton, June 21, 1922 (VFC).

¹³⁰ Shelley to Calverton, February 26, 1924 (VFC).

¹³¹ Calverton to Anderson, August 21, 1924. (Anderson Papers).

¹³² Shelley to Calverton, n.d., (VFC), Calverton to Anderson, August 1, 1924 (Anderson Papers).

on the subject felt through editorship and by writing editorials. As early as 1922 he was involved in three different projects connected with editorial work.

His first experience as editor he had gained at John Hopkins when he had served as editor-in-chief of Black and Blue Jay, the college magazine.¹³³ In 1922 he sought to become the English editor of a new Portuguese-American magazine called The International Magazine of Commerce and Industry. The periodical would have, obviously, only "a slight...literary turn", as its name indicated and as Calverton admitted.¹³⁴ Though it would not be the job that Calverton had dreamed of, he was interested, mainly, because of some publicity and experience that it would provide, although the purely material point should not be overlooked. It seems that nothing came out of the issue, at least, the sources are entirely silent on the subject.

A more serious attempt to become editor was made to Calverton that year. He suggested to John T. Frederick, editor of the Midland, a literary "Magazine of the Middle West" published in Iowa, that he help him as co-editor to build the magazine up in the "unexploited" field of literature. "What we can do with a certain amount of erudition and skill and with direct and effective means of approach", wrote Calverton to the editor of Midland, "is not to be limited to anything in sight now". To be sure, Calverton's interest in the magazine was not materialistic. He did not intend to make profit out of it, on the contrary, he offered to invest five hundred dollars if he joined the magazine. The project was considered by Calverton as "something of actual life-meaning". Literature for him was not a game but "a necessary means of mental well-being", he explained to Frederick. The

¹³³"George Goetz" in Yearbook of Class 1921, Johns Hopkins University.

¹³⁴Calverton to Bobbitt, July 20, 1922 (VFC).

Midland venture also came to nothing.¹³⁵

In spite of their failure, these two attempts clearly indicated Calverton's ambition to challenge at the age of twenty-two, literary magazines and well known writers. His attack upon conservative as well as liberal magazines, his opposition to the status quo in literary criticism and especially his desire to combine Socialism with literature convinced him of the need for a radical literary magazine.¹³⁶

Horizons, a magazine "published by some students of Johns Hopkins University",¹³⁷ was the beginning of a realization of these aims. The single issue of the magazine which appeared in May, 1922 was a "one man venture", as Singer has remarked.¹³⁸ Calverton freely attached other names to its masthead, as he did later to The Modern Quarterly, but it was, mainly, his magazine. Two short stories by Calverton, still signed under his original name, George Goetz, appeared along with an article by Eli Siegel, which advocated Socialism. Encouraged by the successful experiment, especially by the recognition of the possible influence of such a magazine upon young intellectuals, Calverton decided to establish a truly radical magazine, "original in its aims".¹³⁹

Thus, in 1922 a period in his life terminated. During those twenty-two years he had been influenced by his father's liberal attitude and his

¹³⁵Quoted in Singer, "Quarterly Circle".

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Britt, "V. F. Calverton", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 11; Helen Goetz to unidentified, n.d. (VFC).

¹³⁸Singer, "Quarterly Circle".

¹³⁹Calverton to Bobbitt, July 20, 1922 (VFC).

mother's religion. His radicalism marked his departure from the past, personally and ideologically. The transformation from Protestantism to Socialism indicated Calverton's independent approach. His failure as a creative writer led him to concentrate upon literary criticism and editorship, fields in which he won recognition. When the young ambitious Calverton decided to launch an independent radical magazine of his own, he stepped up to the way of fame and success. The Modern Quarterly was one of Calverton's most important contributions to the radical movement. Therefore, its foundation in 1923 should be considered as the beginning of his service to the intellectual Left.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NEWER SPIRIT: 1923-1925

The Modern Quarterly, as the new magazine was called eventually, was Calverton's beloved child. He founded it in 1923 with the help of others, and until his death he took care of it almost alone. He contributed to almost every issue and bore the heavy burden of keeping it alive. In a way, the magazine was a reflection of Calverton's life and ideas. His books were only an attempt "to amplify and extend" what he was doing with the Quarterly¹. His friends were the contributors to the magazine, and his changing political position, as well as the shifting interest of subjects, have been clearly mirrored in the periodical. He maintained the magazine by endless money raising campaigns and lecture tours, which almost broke him. One can entirely agree with Herman Singer, an associate editor of The Modern Quarterly, who wrote that "it is difficult to think of another contemporary magazine which reflected the ideas, attitudes and personality of one man as completely as did The Modern Quarterly under the editorship of V. F. Calverton."² It is essential, then, to trace, at considerable length, the early history of the magazine, the causes of its foundation, the financial and personal problems involved, its basic ideas, the reaction of the radical and intellectual camps, and finally, its significance for Calverton's career.

Before launching The Modern Quarterly, Calverton and his friend, Adolphus D. Emmart, later an editor of The Baltimore Sun, made a thorough survey of the radical magazine situation in the country. Emmart, who worked under the pen-name Richel North, launched an attack upon the American magazines. The conservative Atlantic Monthly and the North American

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Kunitz and Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors, p. 240.

Review, as well as the radical Liberator had, according to Emmart, the same faults and found them in so grievous a manner that "none of these magazines can be satisfying to an intelligent person".³ Some of them served only "Delusion and Confusion".⁴ The main criticism, was that all of them dealt with "phases of life problems". They did not go "down to the causes" but stopped at the surface. Liberal magazines such as The Nation and The New Republic were "incomplete and contradictory", and their faults led to all sorts of "mystifications and sentimentalism".⁵ The Freeman, too, discussed only one phase of radicalism. According to Emmart, the latter's radicalism was near to the Nation's liberalism. He criticized The Freeman for being "very shy of Socialism". In other words, it did not show its radical trend and was afraid to speak out in favor of radicalism.⁶ As to the radical magazines, Emmart pointed out the lack of "hard thinking with those fitted to be radical, and not enough thinking of any kind with those only called radical".⁷ The Liberator was an "insignificant radical" magazine because it dealt only with some aspects of radicalism. It did not treat clearcut issues or basic principles, therefore it suffered from incompleteness and contradictions.⁸

² Singer, "The Modern Quarterly, 1923-1940," MQ, XI, (Fall, 1940), 13.

³ Richel North (A.D. Emmart), "The Limitations of the American Magazines", MQ, I, (March, 1923), 10.

⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶ MQ, I, (July, 1923), 24-27.

⁷ MQ, I, (March, 1923), 11.

⁸ MQ, I, (July, 1923), 22-24.

Calverton too, though less destructive than Emmart, was critical of magazines. The Dial made an "over-zealous searching for the leisure in form, no matter how superficial or valueless in substance". Most of the magazines were "pale conservative papers" and the radicals lacked the zealous mood.⁹ Even the Liberator lost not only the uncompromising vigor of the Masses, but also its audience and powerful leadership. It was, mainly, because of the factional fight in the radical movement.¹⁰ It is not surprising, then, that in a period of "chaos and disorientation" when according to Calverton the inferiority of the American magazine "needs little proof", he should have felt it essential that a journal which should "steer clear of sectarian partisanship and dogmatic utterance", should be established.¹¹ The young Baltimore intellectual wanted a coordinated and radical magazine which would be singular and original in its aim. Calverton wished the journal to be "the best magazine in the world"; one which should realize his ideas on Socialism.¹²

In general, the period 1922-1925 was a favorable one for new magazines. The Readers Digest, Time, The American Mercury, the Saturday Review of Literature, and the New Yorker first saw light during those years.¹³

⁹Quoted in Singer, "Quarterly Circle".

¹⁰Calverton, Liberation of American Literature, p. 455.

¹¹Editorial, The Modern Quarterly (Fall, 1938), 2; Calverton to Bobbitt, July 20, 1922 (VFC).

¹²Calverton to Bobbitt, July 20, 1922; Calverton to Siegel, n.d. October 23, 1922 (VFC).

¹³Singer, "Quarterly Circle".

For the radical periodicals, however, the situation was not bright. Calverton received discouraging answers to his appeal for financial and moral support. Radical editors depicted a black picture in the field of left wing journalism. Most of the papers, including the Socialist Review, the Labor Age, The Voice of the People and even the New York Socialist Call were struggling for their very existence. Calverton was warned not to¹⁴ "overestimate the difficulties involved". Nevertheless, he was told that if he really wanted to develop his project, then he should take the risk and go ahead with it. "Whether the American Sleepers hear or whether they forbear, we radicals...ought to continue to make brave music", wrote Mercer Green Johnston, the editor of the radical The Voice of the People¹⁵ of Baltimore.

In spite of the unfavorable position of other left-wing journals, Calverton and his friends were firm in their decision to launch the new magazine. During the preparations, which were made in the summer and the fall of 1922, they had to overcome some serious problems. Calverton, with his good sense for publicity, intended to spend over one hundred dollars for advertisement of the first issue in order to make it "one of the biggest things in America".¹⁶ He received hearty encouragements of support for the magazine from Upton Sinclair, the well-known radical writer, Gerald Gould of the London Daily Herald, from the Workers (Communist) Party as well as from F. W. Galton, the general secretary of the British Fabian Society. Sinclair promised not only to insert an advertisement but also

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Henry W. Laider to Calverton, December 27, 1922, (VFC).

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Johnston to Calverton, November 27, 1922, (VFC).

¹⁶

Calverton to Siegel, n.d. (October, 1922); January 1, 1923, (VFC).

to contribute an article to the first issue, and he stood by his word.¹⁷

As with almost every new little magazine, the financial question¹⁸ was the masthead as editors, helped with a considerable sum of money, but the major part of the expenses came from Calverton's own income, as was the case in the following issues. He bore the heavy burden of covering the magazine deficit, which constantly plagued the journal.

It seems however, that Calverton was not only bothered by the problems of covering expenses but was also searching a good name for the magazine. When in December, 1922 the issue was ready to go to the printer, a name for the magazine had not yet been decided upon. The Radical Quarterly seemed a good title and clearly expressed the aims of the editors. It was not acceptable, however, because Calverton was afraid of losing his job as a teacher if the conservative Board of Education learned about his radical activities. He discussed the matter with a counsellor who warned him that he was going to find some difficulty in maintaining his status. If an attack upon the Catholic Church appeared in the Quarterly, "your removal will be hotly demanded and¹⁹ ultimately conceded", Nyburg, the lawyer, told Calverton. The latter was afraid that his wife would also lose her position, which would be disastrous not only to the income of Calverton's family but to the magazine itself. It would make it impossible for the Quarterly to appear again. Therefore, Calverton decided to change the magazine's name but

¹⁷Calverton to Sinclair, October 16, 1922, Sinclair to Calverton, June 13, November 15, 1922; Galton to Calverton, December 29, 1922 (VFC).

¹⁸They collected 85 dollars (VFC).

¹⁹Nyburg to Calverton, November 24, 1922 (VFC).

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to retain exactly the same contents.

Then a search for a suitable name took place. Titles such as the Taper, The Advanced Quarterly, The Forward Quarterly, The Complete Quarterly, The Rational Quarterly had been immediately rejected. Calverton liked the name "1950 and Before", but the name "The Modern Quarterly" was eventually adopted.²¹ The adjective in the new title, "modern", was characteristic of Calverton, who tried to be in the vanguard of the intellectuals. His desire for modernism is shown also in the titles of his books, such as The Newer Spirit or The New Ground of Criticism. An exaggerated example was the following title: "For a New Critical Manifesto: A Challenging Revolutionary Proposal of a New Criticism With a New Critical Value For a New Generation."²² His editorials in the magazine were called "The Pulse of Modernity".²³ Scott Nearing, a radical writer and lecturer on political economy, criticized Calverton for the change from "Radical" to "Modern". There were many modern periodicals,²⁴ but few radical journals, argued Nearing. It seems, however, that considering the risk of the whole project, the new title was a good choice and one which clearly reflected Calverton's natural bent.

The removal of the word "Radical" from the magazine's title did not solve Calverton's personal problem. He was still afraid that he might lose his teaching post. Therefore, he decided to write under a

²⁰ Calverton to Siegel, December (n.d.), 1922 (VFC).

²¹ Calverton to Siegel n.d. (VFC).

²² Modern Quarterly Series, no. 3, (Baltimore; 192?), (The Yale University Library).

²³ For example, MQ, IV (November, 1927 - February, 1928), 175-176.

²⁴ Nearing to Calverton, December 23, 1924 (VFC).

pseudonym. He even urged his friends not to mention in Baltimore his connection with the magazine.²⁵ His wife, who wanted to see George Goetz's name in print and well-known, tried to persuade him not to hide under the cover of a pen name, and she promised to teach or to do knitting or outside work of some kind if he should lose his job. But Calverton, aware of the ultra-conservative atmosphere of Baltimore, was determined to use a pseudonym. At first he wanted the name T. Z. Georgas.²⁶ Later he decided to appear under V. F. Calverton.²⁷

The editorial board of the first issue, which appeared in March, 1923, included V. F. Calverton, Richel North (Adolphus D. Emmart) Sarington Crampton, Morton Levin and G. M. Shelley as circulating editor. The editors, none of whom were more than twenty-three years old, were mainly, Hopkins graduates.²⁸ Eli Siegel's name missing from the board was not incidental. Because of the rivalry between them, Calverton refused to

²⁵Calverton to Siegel, December 25, 1922 (VFC)

²⁶Helen Goetz to Siegel, November 6, 1922 (VFC)

²⁷"Calverton" was called probably after one of the early Baltimore manors. From March, 1923 until his death he was known as Calverton though his friends did not use V. F. but called him George. He never spelled out the initials V. F. According to Una Corbett he chose the letters V. F. because he thought them as "the most beautiful consonant sounds in English". Later, when Who's Who insisted on full names, he decided upon Victor Francis. (Corbett to the author, July 18, 1967.) Sherwood Anderson, who had known him since 1923, did not know the meaning of V. F. until Calverton's death. Anderson in MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 41. Nina Melville told that Calverton used to "explain" the meaning of V. F. as "Very Foolish". Interview with Nina Melville, November 14, 1966. Calverton continued to teach in Junior High School No. 40 until his resignation in 1928. During the years 1923-28 he wrote books, his photographs appeared in newspapers and announcements for lectures. Moreover, in 1927 he organized as the chairman of Hands Off China a demonstration before the British consulate in Baltimore. His picture and name were openly connected with radical activity with no harmful result. Therefore, in retrospect one can assume that Calverton's fear was exaggerated, though not without basis. See The Baltimore Sun, April 7, 1927; The Baltimore Daily Post, April 30, May 26, 1927.

²⁸Vera Fulton, "2110", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 34.

work with Siegel. One, whom Calverton would have liked to have had on the editorial board, was Maurice Hanline, but he rejected Calverton's proposal. Hanline opposed the modern literary currents, therefore he disliked the literary aims of the magazine. He also did not share the editors' Socialist beliefs. Hanline criticized the unhealthy situation where the board consisted of potential contributors to The Modern Quarterly which could lead to a "mutual admiration society"

without perspective and censorship.

The young editors enthusiastically declared in the opening editorial "We are Socialists". They advocated a metaphysical approach, i.e., "the science of the realities by their ultimate causes". Metaphysical attitude led to the "real knowledge". Therefore it brought about the only real change. Metaphysics was important to the editors because it led to Socialism. The editorial defined Socialism as "a condition wherein workers run their factories and wherein the people (...) own the land." The editors went on, explaining their unaffiliated standing among the left-wing radicals:

We feel that all brands of Anarchism, syndicalism, State Socialism etc. must work toward this end, and as such are merely part of Socialism; if they don't do it they are working toward incomplete ends.... We see as false all distinctions between intellectual and workers, between pure art and propaganda.... We are a Socialist magazine, that is, we belong to no brand of Socialism save the kind described above and that is The Complete Socialism. As a Socialist magazine, our considerations are for all things, literature and biology as well as ³¹ economics of the law of supply and demand.

²⁹ Calverton to Siegel, December 25, 1922 (VFC).

³⁰ Hanline to Calverton, June 8, 1922 (VFC).

³¹ Editorial, "Modernism and The Modern Quarterly", MQ, I (March, 1923) 1-2.

The magazine, then, devoted itself to a scientific synthesis of all aspects of life, trying to examine the causes and to understand them in the light of the new discoveries in the appropriate fields. The editors wanted to create a scientific journal whose chief aim was to be "the propagation of Socialist criticism and philosophy".³² Socialism, as the editors saw it, was not a movement, but primarily a philosophy of life, a philosophy which they wanted to develop, defend³³ and apply. In spite of the scientific trend it did not exclude art and literature. One of the editors invited the artists to emphasize the literary section, but he urged them to employ the metaphysical approach. The Quarterly wanted to be "as much a literary magazine as it wants to be anything", declared Emmart calling on writers to deal³⁴ with the real problems of life and society.

The first issue of the magazine was not impressive either intellectually or esthetically. Except the good article of Richel North (A. D. Emmart) on "The Limitations of American Magazines" and some short remarks from Upton Sinclair and Scott Nearing, the two known radicals, whose moral support was important, most of the articles were heavy, long and very ambitious. They were encyclopedic articles rather than ones suitable for a magazine. The titles were ambitious especially those written by Siegel: "The Complete Socialism", "The Scientific Criticism;

³²The editors of The Modern Quarterly to the American Fund for Public Service, n.d. (ca.1925) (VFC).

³³Kantorevitch to Calverton, May 6, 1924 (VFC).

³⁴Emmart, "Limitations of American Magazines", MQ, I (December, 1923), 24.

The Complete Criticism". There was no article of general type. The issue lacked liveliness and gaiety. Many of the theoretical discussions concerned issues in vogue in the nineteenth century, one of the editors
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conceded.

Schmalhausen advised Calverton to "introduce the life-enhancing
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principle of Variety", by bringing in different opinions. Nyburg, Calverton's lawyer friend, criticized the "heavy unappealing" side of
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the magazine. He recommended lightening it up. Some people criticized the magazine's unattractive appearance. The lines were close and the print so small that it was "in fact almost unreadable", wrote the
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secretary of the British Fabian Society.

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In spite of the criticism, which was mainly sound and acceptable the magazine made a good start considering the difficult circumstances. The Quarterly received serious attention and favorable comments, mainly from the left-wing and liberal circles. Joseph Freeman, the editor of
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the Liberator, liked the magazine, as did Upton Sinclair. Even John

³⁵Emmart, "Limitation of American Magazines", MQ, I (December, 1923), 25. See also the following criticisms: Nearing to Calverton, March 4, 1924; T. Swann, Harding to Calverton, November 28, 1924, Haim Kantorovitch to Calverton, May 6, 1924 (VFC).

³⁶Schmalhausen to Calverton, September 28, 1924 (VFC).

³⁷Nyburg to Calverton, April 4, 1923 (VFC).

³⁸Galton to Calverton, May 15, 1923; Nearing to Calverton, March 4, 1924 (VFC).

³⁹Harding's complaint that the magazine had no clear doctrine, seems questionable. Harding to Calverton, February 1, 1925 (VFC).

⁴⁰Siegel to Calverton, March 18, 1923 (VFC).

Marcy, the literary editor of The Nation, and H. G. Wells were encouraging in their comments. The British New Age as well as T. S. Eliot's Criterion found the magazine "extremely stimulating".⁴¹ The critic Ernest Boyd also congratulated Calverton on his success.⁴² Calverton was proud to receive high praises from a lecturer on Arabic at the American University of Beirut, Syria,⁴³ who considered The Modern Quarterly "the most excellent and up to date magazine".⁴⁴ The journal soon had subscribers in India, Japan, Sweden, Syria, Belgium and Britain. The actual sales of the Quarterly were quite satisfactory, considering the nature of the magazine and its limited appeal.⁴⁵ At the beginning the deficit was small but it soon became larger.⁴⁶

In the first issue scientific articles such as Siegel's "The Complete Socialism," appeared along with poems by S. Crampton; a short story by V. F. Calverton went together with "The Practical Metaphysics of Crime", by the same author. But gradually the creative sector was diminished and scientific criticism, political, psychological and philo-

⁴¹Calverton to Freeman, May 7, 1923; The New Age to Calverton, March 19, 1923; Calverton to Mrs. Carl Van Doren, October 15, 1923 (VFC).

⁴²Boyd to Calverton, June 5, 1924 (VFC).

⁴³At that time Beirut was part of Syria. Lebanon did not establish yet.

⁴⁴Nagib M. Nasser to Calverton, January 12, 1924 (VFC)_

⁴⁵Florence Baruhart to Calverton, April 16, 1924 (VFC).

⁴⁶Calverton to Siegel, n.d. (VFC).

sophical essays filled the Quarterly. As a matter of fact that was the basic difference between The Modern Quarterly and The New Masses in the second half of the twenties. While the former devoted itself to critical field, the latter was mainly interested in creative art.

The Quarterly was praised for its seriousness and high level. In the main because of Calverton's tactical editorship it escaped cheap pamphleteering and personal attacks. Reflecting Calverton's wide intellectual interests, the periodical covered many fields of intellectual endeavor, such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, medicine, literary criticism and Negro problems. The significance of the articles was in their Marxist outlook, that is, the analyses were lightened by the materialistic point of view. Another quality of Calverton's magazine was its individual and political toleration. Calverton did not hesitate to print articles with which he was in entire disagreement, either politically or intellectually. He allowed their appearance because he believed that "in this clash and conflict of ideas... there is more to be solved by the criss-cross of argument than by the isolation of dogma", he declared in an editorial. He firmly held the idea that

⁴⁷ Calverton, The Liberation of American Literature, p. 462.

⁴⁸ A notable exception was the heated and sometimes distasteful attacks between Sidney Hook and Max Eastman on the meaning of Marxism, which simmered and boiled in the magazine from 1929 to 1933.

⁴⁹ For some valuable comments on the characteristics of the magazine see Singer, "The Modern Quarterly, 1923-1924", MQ, XI, (Fall, 1940), 13-14.

⁵⁰ He opposed, for example, Schmalhausen's article, "These Tragic Comedians", but printed it in the MQ, IV (November, 1927-February, 1928).

⁵¹ Editorial, "The Pulse of Modernity" MQ, IV (November, 1927-February, 1928), 176.

any article could contribute something to clarify the subject under discussion.

Calverton's open-minded approach led him to attack reactionary trends as well as radical orthodoxism.⁵² Calverton welcomed to the magazine any criticism concerning conservative or liberal ideas. On the same token he attacked radical dogmatic approach. He was eager to put facts and common sense before Marxist theory, and the Quarterly mirrored his attitude. The magazine's independent line enabled him to pursue that course. Calverton clearly expressed his policy when he turned for financial help to the American Fund for Public Service, stating that The Modern Quarterly "is unaffiliated with any party and unfettered by any definite political policy except in its advocacy of a Socialist reconstruction of society."⁵³ Although the magazine, like Calverton himself, supported the Soviet Russia during the twenties Calverton, characteristically included in the magazine an article attacking the Communist leaders and the meaning of the Bolshevik Revolution.⁵⁴

Because of the magazine's independent policy Max Eastman, the editor of the Masses and the Liberator, has considered it as the real sucessor of those two periodicals. Calverton had good relations with

⁵² See for example the vigorous attack upon the idol of the young intelligentsia, H. L. Mencken. Calverton, "On Sherman, Mencken and Others", MQ, II (February, 1925), 170-177.

⁵³ Calverton to American Fund for Public Service, n.d. (ca. 1925).

⁵⁴ Haim Kantorovitch, "The Rise and Decline of the Neo Communism", MQ, I (Spring, 1924,), 21-43.

the Socialist Party as well as with the Workers Party. As a self-respecting editor he gave space for an answer from an attacked writer.

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This was one of the factors in Eastman's admiration of Calverton.

Eastman's statement, that Calverton's magazine and not the New Masses was the inheritor of the Masses, should be carefully examined because of Eastman's hatred of the Stalinists and their organs, including the New Masses, during the 1930's. In some aspects it seems that not the Modern Quarterly but the former continued the heritage of the Masses and especially the Liberator, as far as creative art and proletarian literature were concerned. The specialization of the Quarterly was in literary criticism and neither the Masses nor the Liberator possessed such a critical seriousness. In short, the Quarterly was the successor of the Masses and the early Liberator only in the sense that it was an unaffiliated, independent and undogmatic magazine.

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The basic function of Calverton's magazine was, then, a crusade for sociological literary criticism. He carried on the struggle for the Marxist approach in social sciences and vehemently attacked aesthetics and liberals who refused to accept his attitude. He opposed writers who

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Eastman, Love and Revolution, pp. 597-598. Although Eastman's remarks were directed, mainly, to the thirties when the magazine opened its pages to him, the same line that guided Calverton during the twenties was basically the same, hence its relevance here.

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See Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen and C. F. Ulrich The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 152.

57

Eastman admitted that except this central point, the Modern Quarterly was basically different. Interview with Max Eastman, April 10, 1967.

created art for art's sake because

If art is to become other than an amusement for the fatigued merchant, the tired flapper and to jaded libertines it must rise from the eccentric to the universal...to attain a social beauty commensurate with radical vision and aspiration.⁵⁸

The Modern Quarterly, in addition to Marxist criticism, was alert to contemporary problems, especially during the twenties. Articles on subjects such as "American Poetry", "Determinism and Modern Philosophy", "Spirit of Science", "Physicians in Rebuttal", "The Paradoxical Jew", "The Revolution in the Wordist", appeared in the magazine. Calverton's deep interest in the Negro was reflected in the Magazine's policy. Breaking the traditional opposition to race problems, the magazine opened its pages to Negro writers and journalists like Alain Locke, Abram Harris, George S. Schuyler and Charles S. Johnson. The latter, who was the editor of the Negro radical magazine Opportunity, regarded the attitude of The Modern Quarterly toward the Negro problems as "phenomenal and significant."⁵⁹

Sigmund Freud and his theories of psychoanalysis, sex and psychology occupied an important part of the magazine, second only to

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Calverton, "For a New Critical Manifesto", MQ, IV (January-April, 1927), 17.

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Johnson to J. S. Price, January 27, 1925 (VFC): In the issue where Abram Harris' "The Negro and Economic Radicalism" appeared and opened the gate to a long series of articles on Negro problems, the editorial stated that "In openly advocating cooperation between Negro and white intellectuals, the Modern Quarterly believes an intellectual and emotional sympathy and comradeship between the two races can be attained." MQ, II (February, 1925), 161.

Socialism. To Calverton, Marx and Freud were equally essential and the journal clearly showed the coincidence of the two important preceptors of modern thought. In addition to Calverton's natural tendency toward that field, he was influenced by the psychoanalyst Schmalhausen, who became co-editor of the magazine. The result of such cooperation was the heavy psychological line of the Quarterly during the second half⁶⁰ of the 1920's.

Thus Calverton with his wide range of intellectual interests was able to bridge two or three intellectual worlds. An orthodox Marxist, a sympathizer with Socialism as well as a modern anthropologist or sexologist found challenging ideas and intellectual curiosity in the Quarterly. Therefore one could find among the contributors to the magazine the names of Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold, Earl Browder along with Max Eastman, Sidney Hook, A. J. Muste, Robert Briffault, Waldo Frank, Floyd Dell, David Pinski, Alexander Goldenweiser, Havelock Ellis, Lewis Mumford, Charles S. Johnson, Abe Harris, Scott Nearing, Upton Sinclair, Louis Budenz, Ben Stolberg and Clarence Darrow.

The editor of the Quarterly constantly tried to improve the magazine's contents as well as appearance. The fourth issue was a decided improvement. The change was partly due to Haim Kantorovitch, a Russian immigrant, a Socialist theoretician, who became acquainted with Calverton and his circle in the Fall of 1923. He then became⁶¹ Calverton's intimate friend, in spite of ideological disagreements.

⁶⁰ Calverton's approach to psychology and sex will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁶¹ Calverton to Kantorovitch, n.d. (VFC).

Calverton was influenced by Kantorovitch's scientific materialism and
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Marxian interpretation. By the fourth issue, the latter was already
a member in the 'board of control' of the magazine along with Calverton
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and his wife (her pen name was Eileen Hood). The magazine was almost
double in length and had double spaces and a readable form. For variety
in contents, a sketch by V. G. Korolenko was translated from Russian
and more important was the translation of G. Plekhanoff's articles.

"The Rise and Decline of Neo Communism" written by Kantorovitch
was unquestionably the most significant departure from the adopted
policy. While the Socialism of Calverton and his friends was a purely
theoretical affair, looking upon Soviet Russia as the paradise, Kantor-
ovitch had lived there and had seen the Communist bureaucracy in action.
Therefore his attitude had meaning for the Communist regime. He mocked
the naive and romantic concept of revolution reported by John Reed in
the Liberator. It sounded like a fairy tale rather than historical
facts, argued Kantorovitch. He accused the Communist regime of using
terror against friends and enemies alike. The concept of social revol-
ution of Lenin and Bukharin, the Bolshevik Theoritarian, was "precisely
the reverse of the Marxian". He saw in the Bolshevik Revolution "an
armed uprising". Bakunin and Kamenev, the leaders of the Russian Commun-
ists, were also far from Marxism in spite of the fact that they quoted
Marx. Kantorovitch tried to prove that the Third International was only

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Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967.

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MQ, I (Spring, 1924), 87. On Kantorovitch see in the American Socialist Quarterly, V (October, 1936), 2-5, (December, 1936), 39-40.

a tool in the hands of Russian Communists to extend their power. The worldwide Communist movement had an "iron military discipline, as befitted an army, and the 'international' in Moscow became the general headquarters of this army", he wrote. ⁶⁴ Thus, Calverton opened his ⁶⁵ "high minded enterprise", as Schmalhausen called the one-sided magazine, to an open attack upon the Communist movement. That was really a "dis- ⁶⁶ tinct change of policy", Calverton wrote in reference to this issue.

Kantorovitch's article introduced to the Quarterly Calverton's point of view that clash of ideas contributed to the clarification of the subject under discussion. The following issue presented a symposium which dealt on the prospects of an American Labor Party. The participants represented the various organizations of the radical movement. Charles E. Ruthenberg, the general secretary of the Workers (Communist) Party, James Oneal, editor of the Socialist Party weekly organ and V. L. Reynolds of the Socialist Labor Party, debated on the question "Is America Ripe ⁶⁷ for a Labor Party". The discussion showed not only Calverton's inter-

⁶⁴ Haim Kantorovitch, "The Rise and Decline of Neo Communism, MQ, II (Spring, 1924), 21, 24, 33-37, 43.

⁶⁵ Schmalhausen to Calverton, September 28, 1924 (VFC).

⁶⁶ Calverton to Nearing, May 3, June 7, 1924 (VFC). At that time Calverton disagreed with Kantorovitch's conclusions. In 1940, however, he highly praised the latter saying "He saw then what all Socialists see now, that Bolshevism leads to Fascism, that within its roots resided the evils which are Stalinism today." Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me", The Call, June 22, 1940.

⁶⁷ MQ, II (Summer, 1924), 33-51.

est in an American Labor party, subject which was later to be near to his heart, but also his ability to persuade important and busy party leaders to contribute to his magazine. It was the first of many symposiums with the participation of well-known people such as John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells and George Santayana, which appeared in the pages of Modern Quarterly.⁶⁸

With the magazine's development and expansion its financial problems also grew.⁶⁹ The circulation increased from 800 copies after the first year to 1500 copies after the second year.⁷⁰ The annual deficit also rose from \$1,938 in September, 1925 to \$2,538 in September, 1926. The very existence of the magazine was possible only because of the monthly donations of the editors from salaries derived from other works. Calverton estimated that every editor donated over \$300 a year to support the Quarterly. It is not surprising that The Modern Quarterly, like many other little magazines, could not pay a cent to its contributors, most of whom understood the situation and did not complain. They got their payment in the honor and fame attached to publication.

⁷¹ Calverton, following Scott Nearing's recommendation, applied to the American Fund for Public Service for financial assistance. With

⁶⁸ See for example the symposium "Why I am not a Communist", with John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Morris Cohen and Sidney Hook, MM, VIII (April, 1934).

⁶⁹ Kantarovitch to Calverton, April 14, October 25, 1924 (VFC).

⁷⁰ All of the one thousand copies of the first issue was sold except eight. Calverton to Siegel n.d. The data concerning the magazine's circulation and deficit was taken from the appeal of The Modern Quarterly to the American Fund for Public Service, n.d. (VFC).

⁷¹ Calverton to Nearing, August 12, 1925 (VFC).

the discontinuance of the International Socialist Review there was no Socialist magazine of a philosophic character, hence the need of such a periodical. They were convinced that during the twenties a sufficiently wide audience would be created to make the magazine self-supporting. The editors emphasized the radical philosophy characterizing the periodical, its unpartisan appeal, its objective approach to social problems⁷² and the avoidance of sensational propagandistic type of writing.

Elizabeth G. Flynn, the secretary to the Garland Fund, the unofficial name of the American Fund, promptly notified Calverton that the directors⁷³ had rejected his appeal. It is notable that about the same time the⁷⁴ fund approved the sum of \$17,000 for the establishment of the New Masses.

Therefore political considerations rather than lack of money was the cause of the rejection. He went on with the magazine editing it "almost⁷⁵ by the skin of his teeth", Aaron rightly has remarked. The Quarterly appeared, in general, three times a year, and this should be considered as a notable success bearing in mind the financial situation of other radical magazines.

J. B. Salutsky (Hardman) had proposed in September, 1924 the unification of his American Labor Monthly with The Modern Quarterly, because the two periodicals were "much the same in the same plane of thought and differing but little in the manner of presentation of a cause which is

⁷²The editors of the Modern Quarterly to the American Fund for Public Service, n.d. (ca. August, 1925) (VFC).

⁷³It was less than two weeks after Calverton had sent the application that he got the negative answer. Flynn to Calverton, August 28, 1925. A second refusal for help from this institution is in C. S. Golden to Calverton April 2, 1926 (VFC).

⁷⁴Aaron, Writers on the Left, pp. 119-120

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 336.

based on one social fact." He argued that with consolidation the work would be performed more efficiently and economically.⁷⁶ Salutsky repeated his office in January, 1925,⁷⁷ but Calverton was not enthusiastic about the proposal. He knew that the financial troubles of the American Labor Monthly,⁷⁸ which ceased to appear in September, 1924, rather than ideological ones were the only factors in Salutsky's appeal. Therefore he did not respond at all. The significance of the episode lay in the fact that the young sixteen months old Quarterly was believed to be a good worth-while journal with which to write.

Thus the magazine established a good reputation and gained some recognition from radical and liberal groups as well as individuals.⁷⁹ It was the formative period in Calverton's life and the magazine was a helpful means of publicity and connections with literary and radical circles. The Modern Quarterly was Calverton's forum for his articles and short stories, most of which had been rejected by other publications. As his work and activity were essential to the very existence of the Quarterly, so the magazine was a wonderful tool for publicity and promotion of his career, and he skillfully, and sometimes with questionable taste, exploited it.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Salutsky to Calverton, September 30, 1924 (VFC).

⁷⁷Salutsky to Calverton, January 10, 1925 (VFC).

⁷⁸Schmalhausen to Calverton, October 14, 1924 (VFC).

⁷⁹John Macy (Literary editor of The Nation) to Calverton, May 3, 1923; The Nation to Calverton, October 18, 1924; Calverton to Siegel, n.d. (VFC).

⁸⁰Calverton was criticized by readers who resented his obtrusion in every advertisement. Calverton seemed "to hover rather too egotistically over the Quarterly for the good thereof". Harding to Calverton, October 30, 1925 (VFC).

For Calverton's tremendous energy an active editorship of his own magazine, in addition to a regular full-time teaching job, was not enough. During the years 1923-1924 he wrote about ten articles dealing with a variety of topics such as "The Practical Metaphysics of Crime", "Morals and Determinism," "The Great Man Illusion", "Sherwood Anderson", "H. L. Mencken", "Objective Psychology" and "Sociological Criticism of Literature." Most of these appeared in The Modern Quarterly, but some were published in the Psychological Review, The New Leader and Opportunity.⁸¹ Inspired by Kantorovitch, he developed a thesis of "neo metrealism" (sic), that is, the application of Marxian philosophy to several scientific fields.⁸² Calverton, regarding himself as suited for such an enormous task, undertook to examine sociology, psychology and literature from the sociological point of view. In each of these areas he developed a similar type of analysis and a continuity of thought, namely, the inseparable relationship of art and life. His underlining thesis was that every shape of life was "subject to the vicissitudes of social environment".⁸³

In a thorough examination of a literary period he found that "all the theories and concepts... of creative and critical effort are but the outgrowth of the social system", which had also been caused by economic conditions of its age.⁸⁴ The best article that he produced during those years was the "Sociological Criticism of Literature".⁸⁵ The essay, which

⁸¹Calverton, The Newer Spirit: A Sociological Criticism of Literature. Introduction by Ernest Boyd (New York: Boni and Liverwright, 1925), n.p.

⁸²Kantorovitch to Calverton, June 5, July 5, 1924 (VFC).

⁸³Calverton, Newer Spirit, p. 137.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 21.

⁸⁵The Modern Quarterly, II(Summer, 1924), 3.

was a clear statement of Marxian criticism, caught the attention of some Socialists, notably James Oneal, the editor of the Socialist Party weekly organ, The New Leader. Oneal praised the study as of "unusual merit" advising its expansion into a book which he said would certainly be welcome. Others also considered the approach as the first interpretation of literature from a pure Marxian point of view to appear in English.

Encouraged by friendly criticism, and moved by the desire to expand his ideas and name beyond the Quarterly audience, he decided to collect the essays into a book form. In spite of Ernest Boyd's warm recommendation, stating that the articles advanced a "new critical position in American literature". the manuscript was rejected by The Dial as well as by Harcourt, Brace and Co. Calverton was so eager to see his book in print that he proposed to pay two thirds of the publication expenses. Finally Boni and Liveright decided to publish the essays under the title: The Newer Spirit: A Sociological Criticism of Literature.

⁸⁶ Oneal to Calverton, September (n.d.), 1924 (VFC). Oneal wrote that the article was "the most original and suggestive that has appeared in any periodical in many months". It was "an important contribution to historical interpretation", and if expanded into a book "the work would prove a permanent contribution to the literature of social and economic interpretation". The N.L., September 6, 1924.

⁸⁷ Kantorovitch to Calverton, May 18, 1923, (1924?); Schmalhausen to Calverton, September 25, 1924 (VFC).

⁸⁸ Calverton to Liveright, September 16, 1924 (VFC).

⁸⁹ The Dial to Calverton, June 19, 1924; Van Wyck Brooks (Literary editor of Harcourt and Brace) to Calverton, September 9, 1924 (VFC).

⁹⁰ Calverton to Brooks, September 10, 1923; He repeated his wish to Boni and Liveright to share in whatever loss there would be. Calverton to Liveright, November 8, 1924 (VFC).

⁹¹ Liveright to Calverton, November 11, 1924 (VFC).

With the publication of the book Calverton confronted again the problem whether to retain his anonymity or to appear under his original name, George Goetz. In spite of pressure from friends in favor of the use of his own name, as well as the suggestion that his photograph be used in advertisements of the book, Calverton decided to continue to use the pseudonym, V. V. Calverton. He was still concerned about his teaching position.⁹²

The Newer Spirit, as Ernest Boyd remarked in his introduction, was a challenge to the moralist and esthetic schools of art, because it treated an area that they overlooked. Calverton, according to Boyd, rightly emphasized the social-economic factors as an answer to those who said "Morals, not Art", and to those aesthetics who created "Art for Paris' sake".⁹³

The book was, then, a collection of ten essays in literature, sociology, psychology and philosophy, whose common denominator was the Marxian analysis, Calverton emphasized time and time again that social and economic factors were essential for understanding life as well as art. In a sentence he clearly summarized his thesis stating:

Although revolutions in esthetics are due to revolutions in ideas, every revolution in ideas is a consequence of a revolution in the social structure that the prevailing material conditions have produced.⁹⁴

In "The Great Man Illusion" he developed the well-known Marxian-sociologist idea that environment, rather than inheritance, determined whether a man would be a genius. Economic conditions, education, environment and

⁹² M. Hanline to Calverton, December 15, 1924; Barron to Calverton, December 21, 1924 (VFC).

⁹³ Boyd's Introduction in Calverton, The Newer Spirit, pp.xi-xvi.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

stimuli, were among the factors which could promote a great man. Socialized society would create the suitable conditions for producing this kind of person. Therefore, Calverton insisted, the establishment of such⁹⁵ a society was an urgent need. He dealt with crime and its reduction in another essay. His argument that only improvement of the economic and social conditions of the poor could diminish crime, has been widely accepted⁹⁶ today.

In the literary field he developed the idea of three stages of education in literature; the aristocratic, the bourgeois and the proletarian periods. In the middle ages, feudalism, the aristocratic view, was dominant in life and literature. Shakespeare's tragedies, for example, dealt with only the life and problems of the aristocracy. The second period was inaugurated in the eighteenth century with the rise of the middle class, which changed the characters of the literary forms and ideals from feudal to bourgeois conceptions, as George Lillo's The London Merchant clearly showed. The industrial revolution, especially in its advanced stage, when capitalism reached its concentrated character in the last third of the nineteenth century, brought in the third and most important stage in the evolution of literature, namely, the proletarian period. The Centralization of capital in few hands caused a steady rise of the proletariat⁹⁷ which became a "force in the molding of social conception".

Through the proletarian motif a new psychological element was introduced into art, Calverton argued. Freshness, universality and realism

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 215-246.

⁹⁶ Calverton, "Practical Metaphysics of Crime", QI (March, 1923), 52-56.

⁹⁷ Calverton, The Newer Spirit, pp. 28-29, 35, 38-39.

Were typical of the proletarian art which sought to annihilate class distinction and possessed a comprehensive content. ⁹⁸ "Proletarian art" was defined by Calverton as "the ascendancy of the Proletarian as the subject for esthetic treatment". ⁹⁹ Accordingly he considered Walt Whitman along ¹⁰⁰ with Frank Norris and Stephen Crane as the first proletarian writers. The more the class consciousness of the workers increased in America in the twentieth century, the more advanced the public interest in proletarian life. The rise of proletarian literature in the first decades of the twentieth century was considered by Calverton as the single significant development in American literature. Consequently, the works of Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser and Edith Wharton were "the most important pieces ¹⁰¹ of fiction that have appeared in America during the last two decades".

There was criticism of his theory of three periods in the evolution of literature, and the development of the proletarian motive that created a new psychological dimension, a thesis for which Calverton claimed originality. ¹⁰² The division into three separate stages was superficial, one critic said, for it disregarded the common elements of the different classes during a given time. Furthermore, a writer's attitude towards proletarian life was for Calverton the sole criterion for evaluating his importance. This seemed to be a serious mistake. According to this standard Whitman was "lucky"

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 139, 145.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 41, 142.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁰² Calverton to Boyd, June 29, 1924 (VFC).

to gain some recognition but the position of Ralph Waldo Emerson was less fortunate because in his mid-nineteenth century milieu the life of the workers was not an impelling concern. The contribution of F. Scott Fitzgerald to American literature was neglected, as was that of Emerson, because he did not follow the example set by Sherwood Anderson in Winesburg, Ohio. Floyd Dell warned Calverton of his inclination to include every opinion that seemed to him as proletarian-revolutionary, although it was petit bourgeois, for example Whitman's viewpoint,¹⁰³

The Newer Spirit gained attention from conservative, liberal and radical circles. The important newspapers and periodicals reviewed it, most of them critically. Howard Mumford Jones, in The Chicago Post, was highly critical of Calverton's "naive" sociology that "confused by oversimplification rather than illumines". Jones remarked that the author did not distinguish between art and literature.¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Burke, in the Herald Tribune, was more friendly admitting that the aesthetic attitude was deficient. He regarded Calverton's division of three literary states as "superficial", overlooking the common elements of the classes.¹⁰⁵ The London Times criticized Calverton's style which was "as rigid as a schoolmaster's ferrule".¹⁰⁶

Waldo Frank's devastating attack in the liberal New Republic caught Calverton and the radicals by some surprise. In a scornful review entitled

¹⁰³Dell to Calverton, October 23, 1925 (VFC).

¹⁰⁴The Chicago Post, May 8, 1925.

¹⁰⁵The New York Herald Tribune, May 10, 1925.

¹⁰⁶Times, May 25, 1925; See also Spencer Broadney (editor of Current History Magazine) to Calverton, November 7, 1925 (VFC).

"No Spirit At All", Frank accused Calverton of oversimplification. The distinction between bourgeois and proletarian literature, disregarding the contributions of many important authors just because they were bourgeois, was also subject to Frank's attack. Calverton's popularization demonstrated "the intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy of our revolutionary labor movement... Beneath Mr. Calverton's preference for works of art 'exalting the working men'", wrote Frank, "is hidden an indifferented love of power".¹⁰⁷ Calverton, deeply hurt, answered in The New Republic on the "competent distortion of statement" written by the "new literary Cagliostro". He pointed out Frank's naive misconception of radical circles in citing Samuel Gompers, the President of The American Federation of Labor, as a typical example of the radical spirit.¹⁰⁸

Left-wing writers defended Calverton from the attack of liberals. James Oneal considered the review of Frank as "outrageously unfair and stupid". Frank wrote just what The New Republic reader wanted to read, remarked Oneal.¹⁰⁹ Michael Gold, one of the outstanding Communist intellectuals, who became acquainted with Calverton through the Newer Spirit, persuaded him not to discuss the matter openly with Frank. "What he says in the review", wrote Gold, "is what we fought over in all

¹⁰⁷Waldo Frank, "No Spirit At All", NR, XLIII (June 24, 1925), 131-132.

¹⁰⁸Calverton's letter in NR, XLIII (July 15, 1925), 210; Calverton invited Frank to discuss and clarify their differences on the pages of the Modern Quarterly. Frank agreed upon the debate but nothing came out of it. Frank to Calverton, August 29, October 4, 1925 (VFC). Years later the relations "warmed up" a little bit, but ideologically they had little in common. Frank to Nina Melville, February 4, 1941 (VFC). Another critic, H. W. Bointon regarded Calverton as "more sociologist than critic, and more Socialist than sociologist". The New York Sun, April 22, 1925.

¹⁰⁹Oneal to Calverton, June 22, 1925 (VFC).

our editorials... precisely".¹¹⁰ The Newer Spirit, then, became a ball in the liberal-radical playground.

The reaction of the radical camp to the book was not however, unanimous. Some of the writers, such as Joseph Freeman and H. M. Wicks, were very critical, while others, like Mike Gold and James Oneal, praised the book highly. Freeman charged that Calverton had borrowed freely from Dell's Intellectual Vagabondage and Plekhanoff's writings. The New World, as Freeman misread The Newer Spirit, was "a mechanical sociological analysis", which according to Freeman, was "neither Marxian nor dialectual".¹¹¹ In spite of the fact that Freeman published his book in 1936, when he was a disciplined Communist, and Calverton was the arch-enemy of the party, Freeman's basic criticism seems to be valid and sound. Even friends, such as Scott Nearing, pointed out the similarity of his thesis to the ideas advanced in Dell's articles "Literature and the Machine Age".¹¹² As to the remarks about the mechanical analysis of the book, even an objective scholar, Daniel Aaron, who is not hostile to Calverton, has agreed with that judgment.¹¹³ Freeman's insulting remarks, however, his hostile tone, his misreading of the book's title and attack upon the new title he himself invented,¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹¹¹Freeman, An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1936), p. 640.

¹¹²Nearing to Calverton, December 23, 1924 (VFC). Calverton, obviously, could not see and rely upon Dell's Intellectual Vagabondage which appeared a year after The Newer Spirit had been published. Dell's book, however, was a collection of articles that had appeared in the Liberator under the title: "Literature and the Machine Age". Thus, Freeman was not right literally, but his main criticism can be accepted.

¹¹³Aaron, Writers on the Left, p. 338.

¹¹⁴Freeman called the book The New World and then laughed at its "cosmic title". Freeman, American Testament, p. 640.

all these had nothing to do with the book itself, but rather it was the reflection of the Communist hatred of Calverton in the thirties.

Another serious assault from the radical group was H. M. Wicks's article in the daily organ of the Communist Party The Daily Worker. Wicks regarded "Professor" Calverton's ideas as "anti Marxian", "historically inaccurate" and "fringe of Marxism". He depicted Calverton as a vulgar Philistine and a bourgeois egghead.¹¹⁵ Wicks also challenged the originality of Calverton's thesis. Moreover, he accused Calverton of plagiarism, a charge that he suffered from during his whole career. Calverton frequently referred to a footnote in the book where he gave full credit to three authors who "caught hints of the effect...but in no fundamental sense attempted to coordinate the facts assembled. The coordination is what is significant", read Calverton's apology.¹¹⁶

Kantrovitch assumed that Wicks's attack was "inspired" by the party leaders to warn the Communists of Calverton's "Marxism".¹¹⁷ This was not the case. As a matter of fact two of the party leaders, Earl Browder and William Z. Foster, expressed their regret for the attack. Browder denounced "the spirit and method" of Wicks's assault since it did more harm than good and contributed nothing to the discussion.¹¹⁸ Wicks was stopped by special instructions of the party, though he continued to oppose Calverton personally.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵Wicks, "Another Professor Discovers Marx", D W , September 24, 1925.

¹¹⁶Calverton, The Newer Spirit, p. 29, n. 3, Calverton, "An Open Letter to the New Masses", MM, VII (March, 1933), 112. The issue of plagiarism will be traced later.

¹¹⁷Kantorovitch to Calverton, September 30, 1925 (VFC).

¹¹⁸Browder to Calverton, October 29, 1925 (VFC): Calverton, "An Open Letter to the New Masses", III.

¹¹⁹Calverton, "Open Letter", III: Irving Saltings to Calverton, August 17, 1925 (VFC).

The opinion that Calverton's approach was not original and that he had just restated an old and well-known thesis, was widely accepted even by friends and supporters. That H. L. Mencken, one of Calverton's targets, mocked at Calverton for being excited over the discovery of facts "known¹²⁰ to all the rest of us since childhood", was not surprising. But when Ernest Boyd, the critic who wrote the introduction to Calverton's book, questioned the originality of the method, which made economic factors the main cause of literary changes, Calverton felt it necessary to explain. The latter argued that what he saw and others failed to see was "the change of esthetic concepts as the result of the periodic rise and decline of social classes". He admitted that the connection between economics and literature was well-known, but no one showed clearly the significance in the rise of the proletariat and its psychological influence upon life and literature. Only for that part of the thesis did he claim originality, surely not for the general statement that literature was affected by social¹²¹ and economic conditions.

This explanation is not convincing. One may say that Calverton¹²² was not an original thinker, a fact that all of his friends have conceded. Therefore it seems that in spite of his claims of originality and in spite of the ambitious title of the book, The Newer Spirit, one can conclude

¹²⁰Mencken, The American Mercury, V (June, 1925), 252.

¹²¹Boyd to Calverton, May 25, 1925; Harding to Calverton, May 1, 1925 (VFC) Calverton to Boyd, June 29, 1925 (VFC). In this letter Calverton advocated his point of view regarding the essay "The Sociological Criticism of Literature". On the originality of the "Great Man Illusions" Calverton to Siegel n.d. and about "The Practical Metaphysics of Crime", Calverton to Liveright, September 16, 1924 (VFC).

¹²²Interviews with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967; George Britt, April 5, 1967; Herman Singer, March 29, 1967.

that the thesis was neither "newer" nor even entirely new. This does not mean, however, that the book had no importance. It examined literature from an angle which at that time was neglected. His approach at least aroused discussion, it was a challenge, "and all challenge is valuable", Boyd observed.¹²³

Calverton received a number of favorable and even enthusiastic comments from famous people who had never known him before. John Dewey, observed that "It is by far the best statement in behalf of sociological criticism I have ever read."¹²⁴ Sherwood Anderson, the writer, whose works Calverton had used as a "case study" of sociological criticism,¹²⁵ appreciated "the good sensible work" of Calverton in the field of criticism.¹²⁶

James Oneal's reaction was more enthusiastic. "A Remarkable Book", read the headline of his review in the New Leader. He hailed Calverton as the first original thinker that America had produced. He saw in The Newer Spirit the most important work in the field of social criticism that had been printed in America.¹²⁷ "I know no work of the past twenty-five years", wrote Oneal to Calverton, "that has so aptly vindicated the historical judgment of Marx."¹²⁸

¹²³Calverton, The Newer Spirit, p. xi; Boyd to Calverton, May 25, 1925 (VFC).

¹²⁴Dewey to Calverton, May 13, 1925 (VFC).

¹²⁵Calverton, The Newer Spirit, pp. 52-118.

¹²⁶Anderson to Calverton, August 17, 1925 (VFC) Anderson to Calverton, MQ, II (Fall, 1924), n.p.

¹²⁷Oneal, N L, April 25, 1925, The Milwaukee Leader, April 15, 1925; The Baltimore Sun, May 2, 1925.

¹²⁸Oneal to Calverton, March 15, 1925 (VFC).

Michael Gold praised the book in the Daily Worker as "the first serious attempt in this country to apply the touchstone of Marxian interpretation to every phase of human thought."¹²⁹ He predicted for Calverton an important intellectual career. Privately he was even more enthusiastic.

It delights me to see that we have at least a real philosopher in our revolutionary ranks. Your work is on a plane with the best writings of the Russian critics, the first class men among them. It seems incredible that a man of your insight, scholarship and temperament should be so red and fundamental. Most of the scholars become liberals and write for the New Republic or the Nation.¹³⁰

Gold went on to express his satisfaction that the Socialist-Communist movement finally had a man of Calverton's calibre. What he liked most was "The completeness of your revolutionary vision." Calverton, he believed had achieved the synthesis of art and revolution, an accomplishment that Eastman and Dell had failed to reach. "The Communist Party has some good fighters and some good pamphleteers, but not a real scholar and critic like yourself", concluded Gold.¹³¹ This laudatory letter had some far-reaching results. A close friendship developed between Calverton and Gold, who was an influential Communist intellectual. Gold introduced Calverton to leaders of the Workers Party such as William Z. Foster, Earl Browder, Jay Lovestone and William F. Dunne, the editor of the Daily Worker. They sought his friendship and asked for contributions to the Party organs.

Along with the connections that Calverton made with the radical camp,

¹²⁹Michael Gold, D W, May 30, 1925.

¹³⁰Gold to Calverton, May 4, 1925 (VFC).

¹³¹Ibid.

The Newer Spirit opened to him liberal and even conservative periodicals. Mark Van Doren, the literary editor of The Nation, promised to send him books to review.¹³² From that time Calverton became a contributor to The Nation and The New Republic book review section, covering the fields of literature, sex, the Negro and sociology. He, who was "primarily interested in the field of books above everything else", wanted an appointment to the book division of Current History.¹³³ Although he did not receive this position until the late thirties, his articles appeared from time to time in that periodical.¹³⁴

The lecture field became another channel for expansion of his ideas as well as income, as a result of the success of The Newer Spirit. Calverton was a good orator. Since his college years, when he represented Johns Hopkins in a debate contest in North Carolina,¹³⁵ he had lectured in several clubs.¹³⁶

In 1925, however, the invitations for lectures, mainly on literature,¹³⁷ increased. Calverton wanted a 'cathedra' in the Rand School of Social Science.¹³⁸

¹³²Van Doren to Calverton, December 10, 15, 1924 (VFC).

¹³³Calverton to Tracy, n.d. (VFC).

¹³⁴For example: Calverton, "The New Negro", Current History, xxiii (February, 1926), 694-698; ----, "The Nordic Myth", Ibid., xxiv (August, 1926), 671-677; Radical papers such as the Socialist New Leader and the Communist Daily Worker were eager to receive his contribution. See N L, April 12, 1924, October 18, 1924; D W, July 3, August 2, September 18, 1926.

¹³⁵Yearbook of Johns Hopkins University, "George Goetz", n.p.; Bobbitt to Calverton, March 19, 1920; Miller to Calverton, May 8, 1920 (VFC).

¹³⁶Siegel to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹³⁷He was invited among others for a series of lectures to the Pinguin Club, Washington, D. C., Zechariah to Calverton, March 9, 1925 (VFC), and to The Progressive Library of West Philadelphia, Bressler to Calverton October 9, 1925 (VFC).

¹³⁸The Rand School was the Socialist Party New York workers' school where lectures were given in social sciences.

He asked Oneal to use his influence to introduce him to the school directors. Oneal responded accordingly,¹³⁹ and in the summer of 1925 Calverton delivered six lectures on "An Economic Interpretation of American Literature" in the Tamiment camp of the Rand School.¹⁴⁰ When, in the fall of 1925 he was contracted to address the school's regular evening classes,¹⁴¹ he was on the road towards contacts and success. Through his frequent weekly visits to New York, and those Friday evening lectures, Calverton made acquaintance with New York radical circles. This was the beginning of his departure from provincial Baltimore to the heart of the radical movement, concentrated around Union Square in Manhattan.

Thus, the appearance of The Newer Spirit was a landmark in Calverton's career. The book indicated his interest in and tendency towards literary criticism rather than the creative field as the primary element of his intellectual activity.¹⁴² Through articles and the book, he carried on a fight for sociological criticism. His thesis was not original, but he was a good popularizer of the issue. He propagated the significance of social and economic factors in literature until the idea gained supporters, even among liberal writers, toward the end of the twenties.¹⁴³

Although the sales of the book were limited,¹⁴⁴ it received consider-

¹³⁹Oneal to Calverton, March 20, April 4, 1925 (VFC).

¹⁴⁰Calverton to Nellie S. Nearing, nd. (Summer, 1925)(VFC).

¹⁴¹Algernon Lee (Educational Director of Rand School of Social Science) to Calverton, April 1, 1925; Kantorovitch to Calverton, September 15, 1925 (VFC).

¹⁴²Singer, "The Quarterly Circle".

¹⁴³Calverton to Knight, January 12, 1936 (Grant Knight Collection).

¹⁴⁴Two and a half years after its appearance the sales were 989 copies. Clapp (from Boni and Liveright Co.), to Calverton, October 3, 1927 (VFC).

able attention from liberal and radical groups. The Newer Spirit introduced the young Baltimore teacher at the age of twenty-five to the left-wing literary and political circles. Socialist and Communist leaders such as James Oneal, Michael Gold and William Z. Foster looked for his friendship. The young naive Socialist of 1922 became in 1925 an authority in Marxian criticism not only in bourgeois camp but also in the radical movement. In short, The Modern Quarterly and especially The Newer Spirit were a significant turning-point in Calverton's intellectual and political career.

CHAPTER THREE

REVOLUTION AND SEX 1925-1928

A significant characteristic of the radical movement in the years between 1922 and 1929 was the atmosphere of relative tolerance. The warfare among the parties was at a low ebb which enabled cultural, social and even political intercourse. The Workers (Communist) Party had not yet adopted its rigid and hard line, but even allowed sympathizers and freelance intellectuals to write in its organs. The policy of the editors of the Daily Worker in 1926 was, that of soliciting literary artistic and scientific material from non party literati, and they were even ready to pay for their contributions.¹

It is not surprising, therefore, that Calverton was a regular contributor to the Socialist New Leader and the Communist Daily Worker, simultaneously. By the same token The Modern Quarterly received articles from Earl Browder, Joseph Freeman and Michael Gold as well as from James Oneal and Haim Kantorovitch.

Calverton's acquaintance with the Socialist Party went back to 1923 when he was a young militant Socialist. Probably his departure from the Socialist Labor Party at that time left the impression on a Baltimore Marxist friend that Calverton should be a member of the Socialist Party. He sent an application form, but Calverton never filled it out.² It was the establishment of a new weekly organ of the Socialist Party, The New Leader,

¹Lillian Symes, "Calverton: Socialist," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 21; William F. Dunne (ed. Daily Worker) to Calverton, June 29, 1926 (VFC).

²William A. Tode to Calverton, April 15, 1923 (VFC).

which appeared less than a year later than The Modern Quarterly,³ that brought the editors of the two young periodicals into a relationship of mutual respect and need. James Oneal, as an influential 'big brother', favorably reviewed and encouraged Calverton's work and his magazine, offering him space in the New Leader for articles and book reviews.⁴

With the publication of The Newer Spirit Calverton found his way into the inner circle of the Socialist Party. In 1925 he delivered the first series of lectures at the Rand School, and a year later he became a weekly columnist in the New Leader. "Critical Cruising," as his section was called, dealt with literary criticism.⁵ In the mid twenties, then, Calverton was welcomed to the Socialist camp as a Marxian literary critic. He had a good reputation and was considered as a future leader of the young left wing intelligentsia. The two forums provided by the Socialist Party, lifted him from Baltimore provincialism to the heart of the radical center of New York. Calverton should have been grateful for the opportunity offered him by the Socialist Party, and in a way he was. Nevertheless, his desire for action and for extension of his influence pushed him towards the Communists who invited him to participate in the struggle for a socialized world.

In the early twenties Calverton was far removed from the Communist movement. His unfamiliarity with the party was clearly expressed when he chose a relatively unknown Mr. Epstein as the representative of the Workers Party for a symposium that he prepared for the Quarterly.

³The first issue appeared in January 19, 1924.

⁴See for example NL, I (September 6, 1924), 11; Oneal to Calverton, September (n.d.), 1924 (VFC). "The Modern Quarterly is the most stimulating and suggestive of the serious periodicals," wrote Oneal. NL, IV (March 30, 1926). Between 1925-27 they corresponded frequently.

⁵Oneal introduced him to the readers of the New Leader as "the keenest, most informed and suggestive writer we have today" in sociological criticism. Oneal, "the Work of V. F. Calverton," NL, April 17, 1926.

Haim Kantorovitch, however, recommended Charles E. Ruthenberg, the general secretary of the Party, as the suitable man for that purpose.⁶

The first actual connection with Communists came after the appearance of the Newer Spirit. Gold's enthusiastic opinion about the book was the beginning of an intimate relationship. A meeting with Calverton turned Gold's abstract admiration to a real friendship, especially after he had discovered that Calverton was "a quite normal cigar-smoking American," despite the big themes on which he was writing.⁷ Gold immediately introduced the rising young star to the editors of the party organs.⁸ Calverton's concentration upon a magazine with so limited a circulation as The Modern Quarterly was, according to Gold, a waste of talent.

As he wrote to Calverton "There are too few all-around philosophers in the ranks of American Communism like yourself."⁹ He urged Calverton to contribute frequently to the Communist papers, because their wide circulation, in spite of their relatively low level, could turn them into a forum to reach and exert influence on the people that were interested in his subjects. Calverton gladly accepted the advice and sent an article to William Z. Foster, the editor of the Workers Monthly, and an important party leader. Foster was "very pleased" to see in Calverton a regular writer, but rejected the first article because it did not fit in with the Monthly policy.¹⁰ Calverton soon adjusted himself to the line and the September issue of the Workers Monthly published his first contribution. Thus, the relationship with a Communist leader was established.

⁶Kantorovitch to Calverton, May 18, 1923 (1924?) (VFC).

⁷Gold to Calverton, n.d. (ca. June, 1925), (VFC).

⁸Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Foster to Calverton, June 24, 1925 (VFC).

Foster tried to persuade Calverton to drop literary criticism and focus his attention on political issues. "Criticism is highly important," he write to Calverton, but "it seems to me that this game is not worth the candle." A revolutionary intellectual could "analyze the broad developing social situation," and provide appropriate means for the solution of the problems. He appealed to Calverton to become a revolutionary political penman, which was "the most dynamic of all writings."¹¹ The young Baltimore editor, who was reluctant to follow Foster's advice, sought Gold's views. Gold admitted that a writer should create in the field which he was most interested. But he questioned the intelligence of a man who was not concerned with contemporary political issues. Such a man would be narrow-minded in other forms of life also, argued Gold.¹² This was not, however, the case with Calverton, who was involved in politics, devoted a considerable part of his life to that aspect and eventually broke his career because of it. But he refused to "bend all efforts in that direction," as Foster demanded.¹³

Thus Calverton confronted the problem, so common among the radical writers, of the relationship between art and revolution. Many left-wing intellectuals, such as Joseph Freeman, suffered from this 'double loyalty'. "Fusion of intellect, emotion and will around the Communist idea had not yet been achieved," admitted Freeman.¹⁴ Party officials did not possess

¹¹Foster to Calverton, August 10, August 31, 1925 (VFC).

¹²Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹³Foster to Calverton, August 10, 1925 (VFC).

¹⁴Freeman, An American Testament, pp. 300,657.

a serious understanding of this psychological problem. Foster, as a typical party leader, disregarded literary and artistic activities so long as they were not directly concerned with political propaganda.

Calverton, as a free-minded radical, opposed any idea of disciplining the artist by political pressure. He agreed with Freeman's belief that "everyone serves the revolutionary movement best by doing that for which he is by nature and training best fitted."¹⁵ But Calverton demanded that a radical writer employ his social and political conceptions in his artistic work. He did not propose that the writer produce a political pamphlet but rather create a good radical art in which his political beliefs would be incorporated. He was critical of left-wing writers such as Waldo Frank and Floyd Dell, for disregarding economic substance, materialistic motive and class struggle in their works. He was perplexed as to how a writer, who regarded himself as a Communist, could deal with bourgeois sentimental and mystical themes without propounding his social or political beliefs. He complained that a writer like Frank, "an avowed radical in arts," wrote a mystical book like Virgin Spain that "breathes neither of reality nor revolt." Therefore, Calverton concluded in 1926, that the "challenge of social revolution" had yet to be answered.¹⁶

The independent attitude of the editor of The Modern Quarterly soon involved him in a controversy with Communist officials. In a review of David Saposs' Left Wing Unionism, he criticized the dogmatic approach of the radical parties toward unionism:

¹⁵Ibid., p. 308.

¹⁶Calverton, "The American Literary Radicalism", MQ, III (Oct. - Dec., 1926), 252, 260-262; Calverton, The Liberation of American Literature, p. 456.

The Socialist Labor Party of today with its firm faith in dual unionism¹⁷ as the only solution is as absurd as the Workers Party when it declares itself inflexibly opposed to dual unionism.¹⁸

The attack caused "something of a flurry" in the Communist headquarters,¹⁹ and Foster, who was an expert in that field, undertook the task of clarifying the party line to Calverton. While the party was "militantly opposed to splitting existing mass organizations," under certain circumstances, especially when the break had happened, or in several local industries where no unions had existed, the party "unhesitatingly" favored the establishment of new unions. Foster assured Calverton that the party policy regarding dual unionism was "far and wide the most scientific" that any radical party had had in America.²⁰

Calverton explained that he did not "take a dig" at the party's policy as Foster stated, but simply opposed any dogmatic attitude on the issue. He agreed that the policy of "boring from within," that is, Communist participation in bourgeois unions in order to break them from inside, was a feasible approach. He only demanded a flexible guideline which would consider every case separately and not dogmatically. There was, then, an agreement between Calverton and Foster, and Calverton's mistake was that

¹⁷Dual unionism in America meant the tendency to establish unions outside the American Federation of Labor with the intention of competition with its affiliated organizations. See William F. Dunne, "The Confused Mr. Calverton," DW, June 16, 1926.

¹⁸Calverton, "Four Revolutionary Thinkers," MQ, III (May-July, 1926), 243.

¹⁹Foster to Calverton, June 2, 1926 (VFC).

²⁰Ibid.

he regarded the stand of Saposs as the official party policy, which it was not.²¹ It is worth noting that the mutual satisfaction about the identity of opinions was considered by each side as his victory. Foster was glad to note that Calverton agreed upon the party line,²² and the latter was happy that the Communist Party was flexible and well suited to his view.²³

The Controversy over dual unionism would have been terminated at that stage if William F. Dunne the editor of the Daily Worker had not published a sharp attack upon the "confused" Calverton in his paper. Dunne poured on scorn at the "super intellectual" who made simple factual errors, such as the party attitude toward dual unionism. Calverton was accused of "trying to make a case against the Communists," and he put aside the scientific spirit when he got within what was believed to be "striking distance of the Communists".²⁴ Dunne's article, which was a typical Communist reaction to criticism that had been made by an outsider, especially an intellectual, revived the discussion. Calverton in his reply, which was published in the Daily Worker, as an unusual courtesy on their part, stated that Dunne's attack was "absurd" and the accusations were "decisively unwarranted and unjudicious". He had not tried to make a case against Communism any more than against the Socialist Labor Party. He only emphasized the need for a flexible approach, opposing a dogmatic one, he argued.²⁵ Dunne admitted that he might have erred in using "too

²¹Calverton to Foster, June 7, 1926 (VFC).

²²Foster to Calverton, June 10, 1926 (VFC).

²³Calverton to Foster, June 7, 1926 (VFC).

²⁴Dunne, "The Confused Mr. Calverton," DW, June 16, 1926.

²⁵"The Case of Mr. Calverton," DW, June 23, 1926.

sharp a tone," but failed to notice that Calverton recognized his mistake.²⁶ The final accord in the dispute came in the form of an apologetical letter from Dunne, who stated that Calverton's review and criticism was so "exceedingly irritating" as to demand an answer. Nevertheless, Dunne admitted, had he known about the correspondence between Calverton and Foster he would not have taken the trouble to write that article.²⁷

This was a typical case in the history of the relations between Calverton and the Communists. As long as the party line went in accordance with the young Baltimore intellectual's viewpoint, harmony and understanding reigned between them. But he was not willing to conform to any dogma. His position, then, was that of a fellow traveler.²⁸

Foster liked Calverton from the very beginning and thought that he was valuable to the party.²⁹ So did Dunne and asked him to join the Workers Party. Since Calverton carried his Marxian ideas into several fields of activity, he already "belonged" to the Communist movement, explained the editor of the Daily Worker, so it would be only natural if he would apply officially for a membership.³⁰ There was, however, in the party circle a persistent critic of Calverton. H. M. Wicks, who had contradicted Gold's review of The Newer Spirit, attacked Calverton's Marxism.³¹ Even before

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Dunne to Calverton, June 29, 1926 (VFC).

²⁸ The phrase "fellow traveler," coined by Trotsky, connotes, as Max Eastman explained "a man of independent judgement whose aims coincide with those of the party for a time. They can 'travel' together until or unless their routes diverge." Eastman, Love and Revolution, pp. 103, 166.

²⁹ Sallings to Calverton, August 17, 1925 (VFC).

³⁰ Dunne to Calverton, October 3, 1925 (VFC).

³¹ Supra., pp. 85-86.

the appearance of "Another Professor Discovers Marx," as he called his article,³² he denounced Calverton as a "petty bourgeois scribbler."³³ Wicks was silenced by Foster and Browder,³⁴ and the outlook for Calverton's future in the party was really very favorable.

In July, 1926, probably as an act of reconciliation after he had agreed upon the party's dual unionism, and as a hint that he had not been considered as a 'sinner' in the eyes of the party leaders, he was invited to become a regular contributor to the Daily Worker. With the establishment of The New Magazine Saturday Supplement to the party organ, under the editorship of Alexander Bittelman, the need for Calverton as a literary critic increased. His articles on proletarian cartoons was followed by a series of essays on Labor and Literature." Later he was responsible for the section "What and How to Read."³⁵ The editors showered him with special assignments such as the preparation of a comparative essay on American and Soviet culture, or an introduction to a collection of cartoons called The Red Cartoons of 1927.³⁶ They planned to publish the series of his essays that appeared in the Daily Worker in a booklet which would be printed under the auspices of the Workers Party.³⁷

³²Wicks, "Another Professor Discovers Marx," DW, September 24, 1925.

³³Sallings to Calverton, August 17, 1925 (VFC).

³⁴Calverton, "An Open Letter to the New Masses," MM, VII (March, 1933), 112.

³⁵Bittelman to Calverton, July, 15, 28, August 12, 1926; Dunne to Calverton, July 12, 1926 (VFC); DW, July 3, August 2, 28, September 18, 1926.

³⁶Bittelman to Calverton, September 21, 1926; Walt Carmon to Calverton, November 29, December 27, 1926 (VFC); Sender Garlin's review in DW, April 15, 1927.

³⁷Bittelman to Calverton, October 29, 1926 (VFC).

He became popular and was welcomed by different institutions of the Communists. Joseph Freeman invited him to lecture in the Party's Workers School on Sherwood Anderson. That was a great honor because other speakers of that course were Floyd Dell, Michael Gold and John Dos Passos, the well-known writer.³⁸ The New Masses asked for proletarian short stories and book reviews.³⁹ Furthermore, his name gained recognition even in Russia. Earl Browder, a party leader, brought The Newer Spirit to the Attention of Moscow's appropriate authorities, who were impressed and published it in Russian. The book, which was warmly accepted by some Soviet writers, was the beginning of a successful career for Calverton in that Country.⁴⁰ Thus, toward the end of 1926 Calverton was hailed by Communist Party leaders as the boy-hope of Marxism and was introduced to Russian literary circles as a Communist Wunderkind.

Along with those literary activities, an ideological shift took place in Calverton's mind. His literary criticism even in the New Leader, where he continued his weekly column, showed a Communist tinge. A friend noted that his articles sounded more like Daily Worker propaganda than Socialist agitation.⁴¹ Calverton's new belief included Lenin's theory and the conception of communization of the world.⁴² That was a decisive change from

³⁸Freeman to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

³⁹Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC); See also Gold's warm words in NM, I (October, 1926), 9.

⁴⁰Browder to Calverton, October 17, 1926; Foster to Calverton, November 26, 1926 (VFC).

⁴¹John B. Chapple to Calverton, October 10, 1926 (VFC).

⁴²Kantorovitch to Calverton, June 3, 1927; See also Meyer Steinbach's remarks about his intimate contact with the Communist movement. Steinbach to Calverton, January 18, 1927 (VFC).

his Socialist point of view. But his doctrine was only an intellectual affair for him, "a thing to write about, an idea, but not a practical movement, not something for which one must fight and sacrifice," remarked Haim Kantorovitch.⁴³ To a great extent that was true. Calverton was interested neither in problems of organization nor in strikes nor actual fighting. His most radical creation, the pamphlet For Revolution⁴⁴ entirely disregarded the role of the party, in spite of the fact that Lenin and the Bolsheviks considered the organization as a major factor in revolution.⁴⁵ But certainly that was only one side of the coin, because he was not indifferent to the happenings. He was a fighter for ideas, intellectually not literally, and led campaigns against old-fashioned conceptions. To say he was not ready for sacrifice would be totally unfair to Calverton, who suffered social and political isolation just because he stood for his basic principles. One may conclude, then, that Kantorovitch's criticism had some value, especially concerning Calverton's life in the twenties, but could not be a typical evaluation of his whole career.

In spite of a leftist inclination, Calverton tried to manage a non-partisan approach by contributing to the New Leader as well as to the Daily Worker, and lecturing in the Rand School together with the Workers School. He was ready to send his articles to any paper willing to print them.⁴⁶

⁴³Kantorovitch to Calverton, July 30, 1926 (VFC).

⁴⁴V. F. Calverton, For Revolution (New York: John Day Co, 1932).

⁴⁵His sole revolutionary action was the Baltimore Hands Off China demonstration, in which he served as Chairman. See Tufra, p. 112.

⁴⁶Steinbach to Calverton, January 18, 1927 (VFC).

He, who wanted to belong to an idea, not an organization, to a movement rather than a party, attempted to do the impossible; to keep on good terms with two antagonistic parties. "It is impossible to satisfy two irreconcilable enemies,"⁴⁷ Oneal warned him, because a praise of one would automatically be considered a denunciation of the other. How could Calverton, who was quite familiar with the Socialists' hatred of the Communists,⁴⁸ and vice versa, believe in the workability of a peaceful triangle? His effort to bridge the two radical parties seems unbelievably naive. He knew the facts but refused to believe in them. Until 1933 he rejected the notion that the Communists were intolerant and their methods unfair.

As long as Calverton devoted himself to literary criticism and historical materialism he could keep harmony with the two sides. His troubles began when he departed from this line and took sides in favor of the Communists, calling the Socialist Party "bankrupt." To put it more accurately, when the Daily Worker reported that he had made such a statement in a lecture delivered before a Communist group.⁴⁹

While Calverton denied the use of the word "bankrupt," he admitted that he condemned the Socialist Party for its compromising position. He denounced the party as "inactive, unalert, uninviting to youth and unexciting to the intellectual." With the exception of Oneal and Norman Thomas the Socialists were "without life or stamina." It was the alertness and activity of the

⁴⁷Oneal to Calverton, March 26, 1927 (VFC).

⁴⁸Kantorovitch as well as Oneal clearly expressed their determination that no compromise could be made with the Communists. It was a "life and death struggle" for Kantorovitch who tried to persuade Calverton of the intolerant methods of the Communists but in vain. Oneal to Calverton, March 26, 1926; Kantorovitch to Calverton, March 15, 1925, July 30, 1926, n.d. (VFC).

⁴⁹DW, March 10, 1927.

Communists which attracted the young, militant Calverton. Although he did not intend to join the Workers Party, nor approved of all its tactics, he certainly preferred it to the Socialist Party, he wrote in a statement of policy to a friend. He refused to write a letter of explanation to the New Leader on what the Daily Worker reported, partly to avoid a political polemic, and mainly because it would "scarcely be flattering" to the Socialists.⁵⁰

Calverton thought he could drop the matter and continue, as usual, his unallied position,⁵¹ but O Neal could not swallow such a bitter pill. Even before Calverton's open attack O Neal was subjected to criticism for keeping a writer on the staff of the New Leader who also wrote for the Communist organ, observed by O Neal as "the filthiest thing that has ever appeared" in America.⁵² The directors of the Rand School, too, were suspicious of Calverton's Communist inclination. They hoped, vainly, that he would have enough political experience to avoid an open clash.⁵³ The sympathetic remarks about the Communists, as well as the criticism of the Socialist Party in the enemy's daily paper, led to the inevitable decision to sever relations with Calverton and to reject his contributions to the New Leader.⁵⁴ Norman Thomas refused to intervene, leaving the matter to O Neal. While he was ready to accept constructive criticism, he opposed the

⁵⁰ Calverton to Edward Levinson (associate editor, NL), March 16, 1927 (VFC). In this important letter Calverton frankly stated his views regarding the Socialist party. As he wrote to a friend, not for publication, he expressed his stand without restrictions.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² O Neal to Calverton, March 26, 1927 (VFC).

⁵³ Walter Karp to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

⁵⁴ O Neal to Calverton, March 26, 1927 (VFC).

right of a regular writer of the Socialist weekly to tell a Communist audience that the Socialist Party was bankrupt.⁵⁵

Calverton's effort to maintain an independent position was crippled by the break with the New Leader.⁵⁶ His expulsion from that magazine inevitable moved him completely to the Communist side and closed the door to a non-partisan stand, he complained to Oneal.⁵⁷ In the Spring of 1927 he actually lost one of the pillars of his activity and the nearer he came to the Communists, the more he was critical of the Socialists.

His withdrawal from the New Leader was a result of, as well as a factor, in his move towards the Workers Party. He returned to the Socialist camp in the mid-thirties. Meanwhile its policy of compromise instead of violence was subject to his attack. The hope of Norman Thomas for a democratic revolution without class struggle was to Calverton a faith that could not work. Fear of class war and tendency to reform instead of revolutionary activities were the causes for setbacks of the Socialist Party in the 1920's⁵⁸ He went further, accusing Eugene V. Debs of being responsible, partly at least, for the failure of his party. Calverton had praised Debs for his American, not European, Socialism, for his courageous support of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Bolshevik Revolution and finally, for his vehement

⁵⁵ Thomas to Calverton, April 4, 1927 (VFC).

⁵⁶ Calverton to Oneal, April 29, 1927 (VFC). Each assured the other that no personal matters were involved in the dispute and promised to continue the friendship. Ibid., Oneal to Calverton, March 26, 1927 (VFC). But actually the case was different. The correspondence between them stopped at that stage and there were no further relations.

⁵⁷ Calverton, "No Way Out," review of Thomas' American's Was Out (1931), in VFC).

⁵⁸ Calverton, "No Way Out," a view of Norman Thomas's America's Way Out (1931) (VFC).

opposition to America's entrance into World War I. His ignorance of theory, however, had led him to accept the reformist evolutionary doctrine of Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger, the right-wing leaders, which diverted him from the revolutionary road. Therefore Calverton accused Debs of unwittingly preparing the way "for the transformation of the Socialist Party from a radical revolutionary organization into a reformistic evolutionary machine," with getting votes as the most important function of the party.⁵⁹

Under Communist influence Calverton organized a mass demonstration against the British imperialist policy. On April 6, 1927 he called a meeting in his home where fifteen labor and religious organizations were represented. A "Hands-Off China" movement had been founded with Calverton as chairman. They decided to arrange a mass meeting in Baltimore to protest against British intervention in Chinese affairs.⁶⁰ Accordingly, about a month later one hundred people demonstrated before the British consulate. The Baltimore press reported on some tension in the city days before the action. The police were determined to arrest any picket who disturbed the public order; consequently two girls were arrested. On May 9th Calverton addressed five hundred demonstrators, while the police guarded the meeting.⁶¹

The Hands-Off China Baltimore demonstration was an unusual activity in Calverton's career. It was almost the sole occasion when he organized and participated in a radical mass action. This was due to his close relationship with the Communists at the time. As a matter of fact he was all but

⁵⁹Calverton, "Eugene Debs and American Radicalism," (VFC); The article appeared in The Common Sense, July, 1933.

⁶⁰The Baltimore Sun, April 7, 1927. See also Calverton to Thomas, April 26, 1927; Calverton to John Dewey, April 18, 1927 (VFC).

⁶¹The Baltimore Daily Post, April 30, 1927; The Baltimore Sun, May 8, 9, 1927.

a party member.⁶²

One of the last stages of a fellow traveler on his way to Communism was the pilgrimage to Moscow. As early as May, 1926 Foster had urged Calverton to consider a trip of six months to Russia. It was "absolutely necessary" for Calverton to see with his own eyes the Soviet miracle and to get a first-hand impression of the situation, wrote Foster.⁶³ When Calverton responded affirmatively, Foster offered his good connections in the party to supply him with letters to save time and effort in Russia and to make the trip profitable.⁶⁴ The party leaders, even in the highest level, were very cooperative, helping Calverton to get the visa and to make his visit efficient.⁶⁵

To many Communists, such as Browder, Gold or Foster, a Russian trip was a devout pilgrimage. Others, like Freeman, hoped that Moscow would "illuminate the chaos" in his feelings and that direct contact with Communist reality would finally solve his contradictory beliefs.⁶⁶

⁶²But he never applied to join the party and did not intend to do so. Calverton to Levinson, March 16, 1927 (VFC).

⁶³Foster to Calverton, May 22, 1926 (VFC).

⁶⁴Foster to Calverton, May 30, 1926; March 8, 1927 (VFC).

⁶⁵"It was decided to lend you every possible assistance" wrote Foster to Calverton, May 2, 1927. Jay Lovestone, the next general-secretary, provided him with a recommendation to the Russian authorities concerning his reliability. Lovestone to Calverton, April 6, 1927. See also Max Bedacht to Calverton, June 3, 1927 (VFC). Calverton had planned to take an interpreter with him to ease the contact with the Russians but he was refused permission to enter the Soviet Union. (Bouravtseff [Secretary of Official Agency of the USSR in Canada] to Calverton, June 6, 1927 [VFC]); Calverton to Liveright, March 7, 1927 (VFC).

⁶⁶Freeman, American Testament, p. 405.

Max Eastman left for Europe "in a mood of inquiry," he recalled, but arrived as a pilgrim after he turned pro-Bolshevik en route to Russia.⁶⁷ Calverton went with the intention of focusing his attention on Cultural and intellectual aspects of Soviet life. He was not interested in the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, which reached its final dramatic stage just at that period. Studying the changing morality and sex life were the most important points of his tour. He wanted to investigate the effects of the new sex code, the provision for illegitimate children, the legalized abortion law and other elements of such phenomena of the changing morality.⁶⁸ Thus, investigation of the new cultural forms and patterns of behavior among the sexes concerned Calverton rather than ideological or political issues. He sailed for Russia on July 2, 1927 at the peak of his relations with the Workers Party, not as an orthodox Communist pilgrimage, but as an independent radical sociologist.⁶⁹

Unlike Bertrand Russell or Max Eastman, who had been disillusioned after visiting Communist Russia,⁷⁰ Calverton returned in the fall of 1927 from his three months trip in the Soviet Union full of enthusiasm for some aspects of Soviet society. He was deeply impressed by the cultural changes, especially in literature and morals, that had taken place in that country. The realistic attitude of the Russians in contrast to the sentimentalism of American radicals was welcomed by Calverton. The natural approach to sex,

⁶⁷ Eastman, Love and Revolution, pp. 285, 300.

⁶⁸ Calverton to Liveright, March 7, 1927; Calverton to Nearing, March 3, 1927 (VFC).

⁶⁹ Symes, "Calverton: Socialist," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 22.

⁷⁰ Eastman, Love and Revolution, pp. 202-203, 443-445.

marriage and changing codes concerning illegitimate children excited him because he found, at least partly, the realization of conceptions that he argued for years. The atmosphere of free experimentation in cultural forms and patterns of behavior convinced him that the Soviet society was going in the right direction.⁷¹ The unity of spirit and expression, the identity in goals and life conception in Russia seemed to be ideal for Calverton.⁷²

Since sex played a decisive role in Calverton's personal life as well as in his literary activity, especially during the second half of the twenties, it is necessary to examine his point of view in this field. Calverton's interest in sex was much deeper than that of an average young man in his twenties. It was the combination of a strong personal need with intellectual attraction that guided him to this direction. As a matter of fact Calverton reflected the rebellious mood of his generation against the existing moral standard.

The revolution in morals which was occurred during the third decade of the twentieth century, was led by the bohemians of Greenwich Village. To be sure, the revolution was not the product of the Village. World War I, the rise of the city, the change of social status, the disruption of family, the popularity of the theories of Freud, the new status of women, the automobile, the sex magazines, the movies-- all these contributed to bring about a revolution in morals.⁷³ Nevertheless, the Village and its rebels served

⁷¹Calverton, "Red Love in Soviet Russia," MQ, IV (November 1927-February 1928), 181, 190-191; Calverton, "Revolution in Russian Literature," MQ, IV (June-September 1927), 100 ff.

⁷²Calverton, "Creative Unity in the Soviet Republic," Labor Unity, November 12, 1927. While he was so enthusiastic for the cultural life in Russia, according to a friend he was depressed and "shocked" by Trotsky's persecution and exile. Corbett to the Author, August 5, 1967.

⁷³Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 85.

as the advanced-guard in the struggle against Puritan morals, and affected the course of the revolt.⁷⁴

Calverton enthusiastically supported this new trend. His character and fields of interest were well suited for his rebellious attitude toward sex taboos. New developments in sociology, psychology and anthropology together with his radical outlook led him to denounce, what he called "sex stupidity."⁷⁵ Along with many Greenwich Villagers, he opposed the institution of marriage and demanded non-interference of law in private matter, such as free love or abortion. He proposed the abolition of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children.⁷⁶

As a radical his approach toward sex and marriage was certainly different from that of the bohemians. While the latter were "playboys" and sex rebels in the eyes of Calverton concentrating on that single issue, he saw in sex only one aspect of life, a stage in the struggle for a classless society. His radical view gave him a new dimension in the fight for equality of women. He focused his attack upon monogamy, the "social anachronism" of the twentieth century. He argued that monogamy was forced upon the lower classes during the middle ages when economic conditions forbade polygamy. His basic idea was that social changes always determined sex relations. The upper class, the aristocracy, did not accept that situation,

⁷⁴Cowley, Exile's Return, pp. 59-64.

⁷⁵Calverton, The Bankruptcy of Marriage (New York: The Macaulay Co., 1928), p. 307.

⁷⁶Calverton, "Are Women Monogamous?," in Woman's Coming of Age: A Symposium ed. by V. F. Calverton and Samuel D. Schmalhausen (New York: Horace Liveright Inc., 1931), pp. 475-488.

but added the mistress to the official wife.⁷⁷ Monogamy was based on property relations between the classes, in which the woman was always subordinate. The monogamous system of life was to him unfair and immoral because the masculine "race," responsible for it, had never agreed to it actually. Prostitution and the mistress were obvious proofs. Only the women were subjected to that rule. Calverton attacked, then, the hypocrisy of the masculine attitude and the double moral standards.⁷⁸

The institution of marriage was criticized along with the monogamous life, because it was "an economic transaction" and a "private ownership."⁷⁹ Calverton propagated for the abolition of marriage because the change of economic conditions and social environment "have rendered monogamy a struggling fiction." Sexual desire as well as economic circumstances proved its failure.⁸⁰ Calverton's panacea for equality of man and woman had a utopian character. The ultimate freedom inherent in the new society could be achieved, only with the disappearance of classes and the termination of economic struggle as well as industrial imperialism.⁸¹ He conceded that such a goal could probably never be attained.⁸² The Soviet experiment, however, encouraged him that the right direction had been found. Therefore, the change in morals and the governmental "hands-off" policy

⁷⁷Calverton, "Is Monogamy Desirable?: A Negative Approach," MQ, IV (January-April, 1927), 37-41

⁷⁸Calverton, Bankruptcy of Marriage, pp. 327-330; Calverton, "Are Women Monogamous?", pp. 475-480.

⁷⁹Calverton, Bankruptcy of Marriage, p. 329.

⁸⁰Calverton, "Is Monogamy Desirable?", p. 41

⁸¹Calverton, Bankruptcy of Marriage, p. 378.

⁸²Ibid., p. 330.

concerning sex relations, gave hope for the realization of his theory.⁸³

In spite of his warning not to react on sex stupidities by sex exaggerations,⁸⁴ he did not appease his critics, who labeled him one of the "sex boys" of the radical and literary circles.⁸⁵ Calverton's characterization of his age as "sex monism and sex obsession",⁸⁶ certainly applied to himself. From 1921 on, he propagated his theories through lectures, articles and books.⁸⁷ Bankruptcy of marriage, monogamy, contraception and abortion were among the topics about which he widely lectured and debated.⁸⁸ It is notable that his attitude toward sex was an essential part of him, personally. He not only preached those theories but also practiced them. This threw light on his deep involvement concerning the phenomena of sex and provides satisfactory explanation for understanding his activities.⁸⁹

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Calverton, "Red Love in Soviet Russia," MQ, IV (November, 1927-February, 1928), 190-191; Calverton, "Are Women Monogamous"?, p. 488.

84

Calverton, Bankruptcy of Marriage, p. 307.

85

Unidentified to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

86

Calverton, Bankruptcy of Marriage, p. 306.

87

Calverton to Bobbitt, September 4, 1921 (VFC).

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In a list of his lectures there were the following topics, among others: The Bankruptcy of Marriage, The Rise and Revolt of Women in Modern Civilization, Freud, Jung and Adler and the new psychology sex and civilizations; Love, Marriage and Divorce in Russia, Is Monogamy Desirable? (VFC).

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Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967; Herman Singer, March 29, 1967. Calverton had an illegitimate child who was born in 1926. The dedication that he wrote for his daughter Joy, on his article "The Illegitimate Child" (appeared in The New Generation, ed. by V. F. Calverton and Samuel D. Schmalhausen, New York: 1930), indicated that he practiced what he believed:

The combination of Marx and Freud, who were for Calverton equally important, annoyed the Communist circles because they had no definite policy concerning that issue. Floyd Dell, who perhaps more than any other radical advocated the conjunction of sex and revolution, raised the problem of the correct revolutionary-proletarian attitude toward sex.⁹⁰ Dell intended in his question to show that there was no agreement among leftwing intellectuals upon that point. Moreover, he even applied to the editors of the Nethe New Masses for "specific information" of their opinion regarding the harmony of sexual arrangements with their revolutionary aims.⁹¹ The symposium, in which Upton Sinclair and Calverton participated, among others, clearly reflected the radical confusion in that subject. Sinclair supported revolution in politics but opposed revolution in morals. He was as Puritan as a Methodist minister could be, remarked Freeman.⁹² Sinclair's conception of freedom in life was "more of capitalist decadence than of Socialist renaissance", he admitted.⁹³

"to my dear precious Joy, who must always remember that she is a child 'by choice and not by compulsion', that her career is dedicated to an attack on an ethic that she must always fight, and which she must overcome by strength of conviction and belief in the ideal of life and not of property - let these words be the driving inspiration of your life, and let success be determined by how well you carry them out, and not by the extraneous values of more superficial achievement." Quoted in Una Corbett to the author, Aug. 5, 1967.

⁹⁰ Dell's "Revolution and Sex", review of Calverton's Sex Expression in Literature (1926) in NM, II (January, 1927), 27.

⁹¹ Dell's intention and inquiry are in John Darmstadt to Calverton, January 27, 1927 (VFC).

⁹² Freeman, American Testament, p. 249.

⁹³ Upton Sinclair, "Revolution, not Sex", NM, II (March, 1927), II.

Even more orthodox Communists such as Joseph Freeman, Bertram Wolfe and H. M. Wicks had been opposed to the sexual revolt. Wicks, for example, launched a bitter attack upon The Modern Quarterly because of an article that advocated sexual revolution.⁹⁴ "An Apology for Sex Anarchism Disguised as Marxism", read the headline of Wicks's criticism which was full of insulting remarks on the "sex anarchists", i.e., Calverton and John Darmstadt. They were "the worst features of the ruling class" and played only a "clownish" role in the radical movement.⁹⁵

Bringing forth what he regarded as the proletarian-revolutionary approach, Calverton pointed out the contradiction between monogamy and Marxism. Marriage was "private ownership", therefore it was "incompatible with life in socialized world." A revolutionary society could be built neither on mores of private property nor on the individualistic ethics. In that symposium more than anywhere else, in opposing marriage as a "private property morality", Calverton linked together the Marxian doctrine with the new sociological theories.⁹⁶ Looking over the Communist camp he was wondering how could they be so bourgeois in their view about sex. He accused the radical leaders of being revolutionary in politics, Marxist in economics but "narrow-minded and superficial" in sex. He attacked those

⁹⁴John Darmstadt, "The Sexual Revolution", MQ, IV (June - Sept. 1927), 137-147.

⁹⁵H. M. Wicks, "An Apology for Sex Anarchism Disguised as Marxism," DW, June 9, 1927; See also Darmstadt to Calverton, June 26, 1927 (VFC).

⁹⁶Calverton, "Sex and Economics", NM, II (March, 1927), 12.

Communists who accepted monogamy and so, indirectly, supported the conservative old morals.⁹⁷

Because the radicals were in disagreement on this issue, Calverton's approach, which was far from being free from serious handicaps,⁹⁸ lifted him to a favorable situation in debates about the topic. In many discussions with liberals and leftwing intellectuals, he led the attack forcing his opponents into a defensive position.⁹⁹ Calverton represented, especially in the eyes of college students, the scholarly Marxian method, which attracted the people.¹⁰⁰

The double course of sex and revolution put Calverton in a position which enabled him to attack leftwing intellectuals as well as bohemians. He criticized radicals for not having advanced enough in sexual issues, and opposed sex rebels for lack of revolutionary fire. Floyd Dell's Love in Greenwich Village was a case in point. A review of the book offered an opportunity for Calverton to emphasize the distinction between the sex revolts in the Village and his social revolutionary view point. Dell, according to Calverton, was an example of failure, a state at which some literary radicals arrived. Dell wrote sexy novels for "adolescent Mckenians and jaded bourgeoisie" instead of concentrating upon social art.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 11; Calverton, "Red Love in Soviet Russia," MQ, IV (Nov. 1927 - Feb. 1928), 183.

⁹⁸See the sound criticism of Harry Elmer Barnes on the superficial and unsuccessful combination of Calverton as a sexologist and as a Socialist in his review of Calverton's Bankruptcy of Marriage, (1928), in MQ, IV (Fall, 1928), 119.

⁹⁹Sinclair to Calverton, April 22, 1926 (VFC; New Masses, II (March, 1927), 11-12; MQ, IV (Jan. - April, 1927), 36-41; Dell, Home coming: An Autobiography (New York; Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1933), pp. 348-350.

¹⁰⁰Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967.

He was condemned by Calverton for his retreat from the left-wing scene breaking with fundamental revolutionary issues.¹⁰¹ Many literary radicals lost their way, like Dell, in the bohemians rebellion. The dream of a Communist writer, according to Calverton, would be far from the Village in a new society which would make love free and intelligent. Dell's basic mistake was that he turned sex to the center of life instead of a shade of life, he remarked.¹⁰²

The Modern Quarterly clearly reflected Calverton's devotion to that subject. During the twenties heavy emphasis was given to psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, the family, the problem of marriage and the sexual revolution. In a considerable measure that direction was influenced by Samuel D. Schmalhausen. Calverton, early in 1924, had become acquainted with Schmalhausen, a "part time literary critic, psychoanalyst and sexologist, defender and debunker of Communism", as described by Herman Singer.¹⁰³ From that time on, for nine years, Calverton was captured by Schmalhausen's cynicism, wit and provocative ideas. Especially after the departure of Haim Kantorovitch from the Quarterly Circle, the "sovietical, socratical, dynamical (historical-pastoral)" talks, as

¹⁰¹Calverton, "Love and Revolution", review of Dell's Love in Greenwich Village (1926), in NM, I, (October, 1926), 28.

¹⁰²Calverton, "Dell's Dilemma", review of Dell's book in NL, May 29, 1926: It seems that Michael Gold, sharing Calverton's thesis concerning Dell, took the advantage as the editor of the NM to strengthen the review by changing and omitting sentences and adding a concluding paragraph. See Calverton to Dell, October 15, 1926 (Floyd Dell's Papers, in Newberry Library, Chicago). Gold admitted that "some of your phrases were changed", but stated that the idea remained the same. Gold to Calverton, November 8, 1926 (VFC).

¹⁰³Singer, "The Modern Quarterly 1923-40", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 18-19.

Schmalhausen described his conversations with Calverton, became more frequent.¹⁰⁴

Schmalhausen urged Calverton from the very beginning to modernize his magazine and recommended including studies in "human and inhuman nature," psychoanalysis, and studies on sex.¹⁰⁵ As the pages of the Quarterly indicated, its editor gradually followed his advice. In 1927 they were already close friends. While Calverton's interest in sex and psychoanalysis increased under Schmalhausen's influence, the latter's attitude towards Marxism became more serious as a result of his association with Calverton. At this time the board of editors disbanded and Calverton accepted him as co-editor. For six years the two ruled the Quarterly and Schmalhausen poured bitter iconoclastic, and sometimes distasteful articles and ideas into the magazine. He worked hard, especially at the time Calverton was on his trip to Russia, when he carried the burden of editorship by himself.

The association with Schmalhausen was regarded by some of Calverton's friends as harmful. His ideas, the magazine's reputation and even his standing among left-wing intellectuals was hurt by the tag of "sex boy". A friend warned him not to "succumb to the smart alec style" of Schmalhausen because such "diluted Menckanism, Plain-Talk backwash, subway-tempo stuff sets on edge the teeth of scholars".¹⁰⁶ A severe critic of the psychoanalyst saw his chief specialties as "sadistic wit, sexy animadversions and sheer vituperation".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴Samuel D. House (pen name of Schmalhausen) to Calverton, December 13, 1926 (VFC).

¹⁰⁵Schmalhausen to Calverton, September 16, 1924 (VFC).

¹⁰⁶Grant C. Knight to Calverton, April 28, 1930 (VFC).

¹⁰⁷Unidentified to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

Calverton, although not always uncritical of Schmalhausen, disregarded the warnings of his friends in his enjoyment of the wit, style and challenging ideas of his co-editor.¹⁰⁸ The "brilliant madman", as Singer recently called him,¹⁰⁹ unquestionably influenced Calverton's life and added a good deal to his magazine.

The close cooperation had some fruitful results such as the co-editorship of two books on sex and one on education. The first of the two, Sex in Civilization¹¹⁰ was a symposium which covered all the fields that the title suggested. Havelock Ellis, a well-known British sociologist, wrote the introduction. Calverton was very proud of Bertrand Russell's favorable review. Russell "warmly congratulated" the courage of the editors who undertook such an enterprise. The book which was very useful and informative was recommended "wholeheartedly" by the famous British philosopher.¹¹¹ Sex in Civilization was a real success to the "Sex Trust", as they had been called.¹¹² Even the liberal and conservative press warmly welcomed it. The title of The Chicago Post's review "A Brilliant Symposium", well

¹⁰⁸ Calverton to Frank, September 20, 1929, (VFC).

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Herman Singer, March 29, 1967.

¹¹⁰ Calverton and Samuel D. Schmalhausen, eds., Sex in Civilization with an introduction by Havelock Ellis (New York: The Macaulay Co., 1929). The second book was Woman's Coming of Age (New York: Horace Liveright Inc., 1931). The New Generation (1930) was their third book, which dealt with modern attitudes toward children.

¹¹¹ Bertrand Russell's review in (VFC).

¹¹² Samuel L. Solon, "V. F. Calverton's Quest for Utopia", American Mercury, LII (May, 1941), 626.

summarized the issue.¹¹³ One may say that the editors deserved much more credit than they have received in recent references to them.¹¹⁴ Schmalhausen's cooperation with Calverton brought not only harm to the latter, as some of his friends argued, but good as well. Calverton accepted his friendship because he inclined naturally to the fields of sex and psychology. Thus, Schmalhausen's influence upon Calverton should not be disregarded.

The psychoanalyst's role in Calverton's life should not be exaggerated, however, and certainly there were many basic ideas that Calverton advanced independently. The tendency to synthesize several fields into one theory was characteristic of Calverton. The thesis of sex expression in literature was a typical example combining sex, Marxism and literature. As early as December 1921, he was already working on an essay concerning the relations between sexual problems and their expression in artistic creation, and delivered a lecture on that topic.¹¹⁵ Later, in a series of articles that appeared in The Modern Quarterly he examined the British literature as a case study, and tried to prove that changes in class psychology as well as in esthetic standards were the result of transformation in economic conditions. Variations of literary treatment with sex could be satisfactorily explained only by changes in social status, he argued.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Llwelllyn Jones, Chicago Post, April 12, 1929; see also Henry James Forman's review in The New York Times Book Review, June 9, 1929 and John L. Davies' in The New York Herald Tribune, March 31, 1929.

¹¹⁴ Daniel Aaron, for example, in his Writers On the Left ignored that field, as did Alfred Kazin in his Starting Out in the Thirties.

¹¹⁵ Calverton to Bobbitt, December (n.d.), 1921 (VFC).

¹¹⁶ Calverton, "Sex Expression in Literature: A Sociological Analysis of Sex Attitudes in Esthetics", MQ, II (July, 1925), 245, 241.

This theory was a further application of his sociological method of literary criticism, and to some extent was a repetition of what had been demonstrated in The Newer Spirit. Comparing the moral expression in three successive literary periods, the Elizabethan, the Puritan and the Restoration Era, he restated the fact that the rise of the bourgeoisie, surviving feudalism and aristocracy, certainly influenced British drama, novel and tragedy.¹¹⁷

The young Calverton was always busy, running from lectures in Baltimore to a debate in Boston, editing his magazine, writing articles to half a dozen periodicals, and along with all that he read books constantly until early in the morning.¹¹⁸ His books, then, because of lack of time as well as patience, were written hastily and mechanically. Most of his friends have attested to the superficiality of his works.¹¹⁹ Sex Expression in Literature was a case in point. In addition to the articles that had appeared in the Quarterly, the book included some hastily written chapters. Harry Elmer Barnes, the sociologist and historian, who wrote the introduction to the book, was "utterly astonished" to learn that the manuscript was going to the printer in a "rough first draft." The publication in such a form, Barnes warned, would be ruinous to Calverton.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Calverton, "Sex Expression in Restoration Literature," MQ III (January-April, 1926), 97; Calverton "Social Change and Sentimental Comedy" MQ, III; (May-July, 1926), 169-188; Calverton "Sex Expression in Literature". MQ, II (July, 1925), 265-266; "Calverton, "Sex in Puritan Esthetics", MQ, III (October-Dec., 1925), 1-15.

¹¹⁸ Calverton to Grant Knight, January 12, 1936 (Grant Knight, Collection, University of Kentucky.)

¹¹⁹ Interview with Herman Singer, March 29, 1967; George Britt, April 5, 1967; Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967; Max Eastman, April 10, 1967.

¹²⁰ Barnes to Calverton, July 13, 1926 (VFC).

The latter regarded the charge as "absurd", explaining to the publisher that the opposition of Barnes was based on fear of Calverton's sex candor.¹²¹

The extensive treatment of social and political trends in English literature rather than of sex, was a more substantial weakness of the book.¹²² He found the need to explain in his preface that the brief treatment of sex was caused by the fact that those periods of English literature were "notably sexless in substance".¹²³

Sex Expression in Literature was criticized for its over-simplification and for the claim of presenting a new thesis which in fact had been generally recognized.¹²⁴ Calverton was charged with failure to create a real revolutionary force in literature.¹²⁵ Allen Tate, critic and writer, strongly attacked his "vulgar thinking" and his sacrifice of literature to social order. Calverton's method, according to Tate was, "too muddled to be valid and too shopworn to be new".¹²⁶ For the radicals, Tate's criticism in the liberal Nation, was an evidence that Calverton was right both in his socio-

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Calverton to Liveright, July 22, 1926. Although Calverton was right that he had worked on the material over two years, the book itself, however, was written during a short time. Calverton to Barnes, August 13, 1926 (VFC).

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Liveright to Calverton, February 23, 1926; Barnes to Calverton, July 13, 1926 (VFC). See for example, chapter VII, "Politics and Poetry" in Sex Expression in Literature, (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926).

123

Calverton, Sex Expression in Literature, p. VIII. See also Calverton to Barnes, Aug. 13, 1926 (VFC).

124

Ford K. Brown in the Baltimore Evening Sun, March 5, 1927.

125

H. W. L. Dana in the New York Herald Tribune, January 9, 1927.

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Allen Tate, "The Holy War", The Nation, 123 (December 29, 1926), 694.

logical method and in his conclusions.¹²⁷

While left-wing periodicals warmly accepted the book,¹²⁸ Floyd Dell's review in the New Masses was less enthusiastic. He saw in the book "an important pioneer effort"¹²⁹ in the problem of class attitude toward sex. But Calverton's clear indebtedness to his own Intellectual Vagabondage, without referring to it publicly, bothered Dell. He made the charge of plagiarism rather mildly and sent it to Calverton for comments. "Why I should not, in a friendly way, make public claim to my own ideas", he asked.¹³⁰ Calverton conceded that he had been influenced by Dell's book and promised to include the Intellectual Vagabondage, which was "unfortunately omitted", in the footnotes and bibliography of the second edition of the book.¹³¹ Perhaps as a result of Calverton's confession and apology, Dell changed the manuscript. In the review that appeared in the New Masses, no direct charge was made about Calverton's plagiarism. Instead Dell simply stated that part of Calverton's thesis was not new.¹³²

¹²⁷ A. W. Calhoun, Workers Monthly, February, 1927.

¹²⁸ M. H. Hedges, Labor Age, February, 1927; James Oneal, Milwaukee Leader, December 18, 1926; Schmalhausen regarded the book as a brilliant scholarly work possessing "radiance and radicalism", (VFC); Bennett Robertson in London Sunday Worker, January 16, 1927; See also Spencer Browder's review in MQ, IV (January - April, 1927), 81-82.

¹²⁹ Floyd Dell, "Revolution and Sex", review of Calverton's Sex Expression in Literature (1926), in NM, II (January, 1927), 26.

¹³⁰ Dell to Calverton, November 24, 1926 (VFC).

¹³¹ Calverton to Dell, n.d. (Dell Papers, Newberry Library).

¹³² Dell, "Revolution and Sex", p. 27.

Sex Expression in Literature although less significant for Calverton's career than his first book, received wider attention in the United States as well as abroad. The sales were far better,¹³³ probably because of its title and possibly because the Newer Spirit had already paved the way for the radical readers. The translation of the book into German, Russian and even Japanese, in addition to a British edition in England, indicated the same public interest in the issue.¹³⁴ Thus, in the second half of the 1920's Calverton gradually focused his interest upon sex problems. The fact that he did not rely upon Marx solely, helped him to hold an independent position, saving him from a total surrender to the party organization.

The method of sociological criticism in literature was advanced by Calverton in his books and articles. The application of that system to other fields such as sociology, sexology, anthropology and psychology was made in a rather mechanical and unoriginal manner. The agitation was, however, useful for the radical movement. Calverton's popularization of the thesis gained supporters during this time.

One of the stages in his crusade for Marxian criticism was a manifesto with a very ambitious title: "For a New Critical Manifesto: A Challenging Revolutionary Proposal of a New Criticism with New Critical Values for a New Generation".¹³⁵ The old ideas were inadequate for the post-war period.

¹³³ John S. Clapp (from Boni & Liveright, publishers) to Calverton, October 3, 1927 (VFC).

¹³⁴ William Paul (editor, Sunday Worker, England) to Calverton, January 24, May 3, 1927; L. Gerns (USSR Office, Montreal) to Calverton, April 23, 1927; T. Okuma to Calverton, June 5, 1928 (VFC).

¹³⁵ Calverton, "For a New Critical Manifesto", MQ, IV (January-April), 1-18.

The Wilsonian idealism brought the terrible war upon the world and still threatened it with devastating chaos. At the edge of destruction, Calverton stated that the human race must face realism rather than hide under the cover of idealism. The salvage of civilization would be attained by social revolution and not by sermons or oration.¹³⁶ The present period was a transitory one, Calverton believed, in which fundamental changes were occurring. The new life emerging called for a new standard of evaluation, a social virtue rather than the individualistic one which had proved its bankruptcy. Calverton appealed to liberal intellectuals to create a new esthetic criteria in literature, and criticism as well, which "must transcend the pallid estheticisms of the recent years in its endeavor to attain a social beauty commensurate on radical vision and aspiration".¹³⁷

The manifesto did not contain new ideas. Nevertheless it was a voice in the left-wing choir that demanded a change in literary virtue from esthetics to a social one. Joseph Freeman, indirectly, backed Calverton's attitude, attacking the rootless Wilsonian literature. The old tradition of liberal and individual principles had run its course, but a revolutionary literature had not been established. With the exception of Sinclair, Dell and Calverton, no systematic methods had been laid down by left-wing writers, complained Freeman.¹³⁸ Calverton also lamented the

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 4-8.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 17-18, 9, 14-15.

¹³⁸ Joseph Freeman, *American Testament*, pp. 637-639;---, "The Wilsonian Era in American Literature", MQ, IV (June - September, 1927), 135-136; Michael Gold also cried for the creation of fresh proletarian poetry. Gold, "May Days and Revolutionary Art", MQ, III (January - April, 1926), 164.

"incomprehensiveness" of the radical offensive, especially in the field of Proletarian art.¹³⁹

As a supporter of proletarian literature, he contradicted the thesis of trotsky on this point. When he planned to analyze Trotsky's work, William Z. Foster asked him to give the subject the most careful consideration, because "one can easily break his political neck on the Trotsky's issue", as Max Eastman did. Trotsky had, according to Foster, undoubted value for the Bolshevik revolution in its early stages, but later, during the period of reconstruction, his talent was less suitable. His influence was unhealthy, said Foster.¹⁴⁰ In the thirties Calverton broke his political neck exactly on that question, but in 1925 it seems that he accepted the cautious advice and dropped the idea of investigating Trotsky's political contribution to the revolution. But as far as literature was concerned Calverton managed to challenge the Russian leader's thesis without risking his own political status.

Reviewing Leon Trotsky's Literature and Revolution (1925), he considered the author one of the greatest thinkers of the century. Along with his brilliancy and sharpness Calverton also noted Trotsky's dogmatic approach and hasty type of writing. The reviewer's criticism focused, however, on the central theme of the book. Since the aim of the proletariat was the abolition of the classes, and certainly the annihilation of class structure as well, any proletarian concept in culture and art would be impossible, argued Trotsky, with his dialectic reasoning. The idea of negation of proletarian culture, obviously repelled Calverton, who had long advocated the importance of that kind of literature. He criticized

¹³⁹ Calverton, "Beautiful America", NL, March 5, 1927.

¹⁴⁰ Foster to Calverton, September 8, 1925 (VFC).

Trotsky's theory for its oversimplification, dogmatic attitude, and hasty conclusions. According to Calverton, Trotsky disregarded the transition period when the working class would need a cultural expression which would reflect its life and problems.¹⁴¹ In that era, which might be longer than the optimistic expect, cultural support of, and propaganda among the working class could be crucial, and this aspect Trotsky had neglected. Calverton, who in a certain way defended his own point of view concerning that problem, restated his belief in the essential role that proletarian art should play in education of the labor class.¹⁴² Interestingly enough Calverton's criticism was hailed by the Socialist Oneal, and opposed by the Communist Browder. Browder seriously doubted the ability of the working class to create a new culture during the transition period.¹⁴³

Thus, Calverton was deeply involved in Marxian criticism. He advocated radical literature, but demanded craftsmanship from left-wing writers. The opposition to Trotsky's theory regarding proletarian culture, signaled Calverton's ability to discuss a matter without consideration of the author's fame or reputation. The invitation to serve as a member of the national executive committee of the Proletarian Artists and Writers League, an organization which was directed from Moscow and which aim was to help left writers, was one of the signs of his good standing in the radical literary circles.

¹⁴¹ Michael Gold, the proletarian writer, criticized Trotsky precisely in the same line. See in NM, I (October 1926), 8.

¹⁴² Calverton, "Conditions and Criticism", review of Trotsky's Literature and Revolution (1925), in MQ, III (October-December, 1925), 76-79; -- NL, II (May 16, 1925), 9.

¹⁴³ Oneal to Calverton, May 19, 1925; Browder to Calverton, October 29, 1925 (VFC).

He was then only twenty-six years old.¹⁴⁴

The more Calverton made acquaintance with the radical movement, the more critical of it he became. In an editorial he noted the backwardness of the workers, as far as revolution was concerned, and proposed a "revolutionary re-education" as the possible panacea. He distinguished between organizational and educational functions. While the first was the task of the political parties, The Modern Quarterly saw education as its assignment. The propaganda would be aimed, mainly at the bourgeois intelligentsia. Calverton wanted to re-educate the "intelligent proletarian" and to bring them into the sphere of the left-wing movement. The editorial attacked the "boxed-in and codified interpretation" of the radical parties whose record was a total failure, because of their unwillingness to adapt themselves to new realities of an ever changing world. He called for the establishment of an American movement based upon the understanding of the unique psychology of the American worker and for the departure from old unfitted European methods.¹⁴⁵

The idea of an American workers movement suited to the special conditions of this country was the very essence of the American Workers Party that would be founded in 1934 with Calverton's active participation. In 1928, however, such an opinion was an exception rather than the rule. The editorial, which was an example of Calverton's opposition to Marxism in its traditional type, was a source of trouble for him. Party members regard-

¹⁴⁴ A circular signed by Harry Freeman, secretary of the League, Oct. 5, 1926 (VFC). Freeman invited leading American radical writers, such as John Dos Passoss, Geneieve Taggard, Michael Gold, Joseph Freeman and Hugo Gellert, to help to lead its national executive committee. The League died after some months of activity. See Freeman, An American Testament, pp. 372-374.

¹⁴⁵ Editorial, "The Pulse of Modernity", MQ, IV (November 1927- February, 1928). 176-177.

ed it as an anti-Communist view.¹⁴⁶ and launched a general attack upon the editor.

As a matter of fact the signs of the storm had appeared several months before the editorial appeared. When Calverton was warmly received in Russia, the New Masses published a sharp satire from the pen of Joseph Freeman. In a critical way Freeman accused Calverton of ignorance in the many fields he wrote about; of pretending and appearing to be a scholar, although that was not the case. The main charge was Calverton's plagiarism of copying without credit or quotation marks "whole passages" from Upton Sinclair and Floyd Dell. Freeman went on mocking at the method of Calverton's research, his use of encyclopedias and reliance on girl friends to check references. The variety of subjects he dealt with, leaving "no topic untouched", was Freeman's last charge.¹⁴⁷

Some of the charges were partly true. Calverton himself admitted that he had been influenced by Dell's book and should have given him credit for it.¹⁴⁸ One might also question the way Calverton collected the material for his books. Being too busy and too impatient to carry out the necessary research work, he preferred to rely upon the assistance of young men and women who gladly worked under his instruction and guidance.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Unidentified to Calverton, February 26, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁴⁷ Joseph Freeman, "Bulgarian Literature: Or the Perfect Critical Method", NM, II (August, 1927), 9-10.

¹⁴⁸ Calverton to Dell, n.d. (Dell Papers); See Supra., p. 199.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Nina Melville, November 14, 1966, she accepted that picture. For example the research for large parts of Calverton's Liberation of American Literature (1932) was done by Henry Gage, a friend. Consequently the book was dedicated to Gage. See Gage to Calverton May 1, 22, 1928, n.d.: Calverton to Gage May 2, 1929 (VFC).

One can argue that many well-known scholars used researchers, and no one denounced their methods or contributions. That point, therefore, could be only a case for satire but not for real criticism. Freeman's attack, as a whole, however, was unfair. First of all, the satire appeared when Calverton was absent from the country and could not defend himself. Moreover, as Schmalhausen rightly remarked, the charges had not been proven, and no evidence had been submitted. In a protest letter to the editor of the New Masses, which the magazine did not print, Schmalhausen sharply criticized the "feebly malicious commentator" for failing to identify the pages he was referring to in his charge of plagiarism.¹⁵⁰

Freeman's satire was probably a personal venture and not the policy of the New Masses.¹⁵¹ But the accusations of H. M. Wicks in the Daily Worker represented the Communist Party line. In several bitter "literary" articles reviewing Calverton's magazine and books,¹⁵² Wicks condemned Calverton's "original writings" as plagiarism. He tried to show the sources for Calverton's ideas as well as style. But the whole charge of plagiarism, especially concerning the Newer Spirit that Wicks referred to, was really a "slandorous uncomradely" one, as a Communist friend admitted.¹⁵³ The argument of the author, that in a footnote he showed where he took the information,¹⁵⁴ was in vain, because the criticism of Wicks was political rather

¹⁵⁰Schmalhausen to the editor of the New Masses, August 10, 1927; Schmalhausen to Calverton, August 29, 1927 (VFC).

¹⁵¹The attack was not repeated until the early thirties. Moreover Calverton's contributions were welcomed and appeared in the magazine.

¹⁵²DW, June 26, 1927; February 4, 1928.

¹⁵³Unidentified to Calverton, February 17, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁵⁴Calverton to Wicks, September 22, 1927, Feb. 6, 1928 (VFC).

than literary. A friend who was closely associated with the Communist hierarchy, undertook to find out the cause of the charges. After consultations with Max Bedacht, Scott Nearing and Robert Minor, the editor of the Daily Worker, he concluded that

it is more or less the official attitude, because the majority of the executive are against your reaction towards the Party, some are against you personally, and those that are interested to an extent were not convinced of your possible contribution to the labor movement and are not enthusiastic enough to put up a fight for you.¹⁵⁵

What were Calverton's "sins" that made him so many Communist enemies? As a matter of fact his "Critical Manifesto"¹⁵⁶ had already aroused some suspicion of his Marxism, which was thought too undogmatic. A friend warned him of possible criticism in the Daily Worker that might be a "Marxian criticism" aiming to caution the party members about his heresies.¹⁵⁷ When Calverton returned from Russia, Wicks attacked him, with the approval of Robert Minor, questioning his devotion to the official Communist line. It was an assumption rather than a definite reason that caused the attack.¹⁵⁸ The next assault from Wicks in February 1928, however, was more clearly the expression of the party resistance to Calverton after he had criticized the radical movement for its dogmatic attitude and for failing to educate the workers.¹⁵⁹ Calverton's rejection of the employment of Russian revolutionary methods on the American scene, was obviously interpreted by party leaders as

¹⁵⁵ Jack Wasserman (Secretary of the Proletarian Writers and Artist League) to Calverton, March 12, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁵⁶ See Supra., pp. 136-137.

¹⁵⁷ Wasserman to Calverton, April 12, 1927 (VFC).

¹⁵⁸ Unidentified (with good information concerning the DW leadership) to Calverton, February 17, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁵⁹ See Supra., pp. 139-140.

an anti-Communist activity. So they decided to "expose" him. The Wicksian attack was, however, ineffective and "shameful", according to an influential Communist, not only for its "injustice" to Calverton but also for being a setback for the party itself.¹⁶⁰ Calverton was saddened and hurt by the Communist accusation. In his zeal for "clarity of thought which is born of courage and challenge", he found himself excluded from the movement of which he desired to be a part.¹⁶¹

The first link of the chain in the relations between Calverton and the Workers Party was broken. The official daily organ rejected his contributions and some party leaders severed contact with him.¹⁶²

There were many Communists, however, in Russia as well as in America, who sought his friendship. In contrast to the American Communists' opposition, in Moscow he had been accepted cordially.¹⁶³ He gained there recognition and new channels of publications were opened to him. D. Riasanov, the director of Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, welcomed Calverton's books as "very interesting and valuable".¹⁶⁴ Sergei S. Dinamov, an influential official in the literary world of Russia and associate editor of several literary

¹⁶⁰ Unidentified to Calverton, February 17, 1928 (VFC). See also Lillian Mendelsohn's protest of the publication of such an "indecent rubbish article". Mendelsohn to Robert Minor, Feb. 10, 1928. A copy of the letter in (VFC).

¹⁶¹ Calverton to O'Brien, Dec. 22, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁶² The correspondence with Browder, Dunne and Foster, which was so frequent before his leaving to Russia, stopped definitely at that stage.

¹⁶³ Calverton to Wicks, September 22, 1927 (VFC).

¹⁶⁴ Riasanov to Calverton, November 18, 1927 (VFC).

magazines, was interested in Calverton's work since he regarded Calverton as "the best Marxian critic in the United States of America".¹⁶⁵ Calverton was very proud of that praise, referring to it several times, especially in debates with Communists who denounced his Marxism. They corresponded until 1933, and Dinamov introduced Calverton's works to the governmental publishing house, in addition to articles that he printed in his Russian magazines.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, Calverton's prestige in the Soviet Union was at such a height that Anatol Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Education himself, wrote an enthusiastic foreword to one of his books that appeared under the official imprint in 1928.¹⁶⁷ That was undoubtedly a great honor for a young American radical sympathizer.

The contradictory attitude toward Calverton in Russia and America was more complicated by the fact that even in the United States there were official Communist organs which published his articles and book reviews. While the Daily Worker rejected his writings, a series of articles on "Literature and Economics" was published in The Communist, the theoretical monthly of the Workers (Communist) Party.¹⁶⁸ Calverton explained that curious situation saying that the controversy about him was a personal rather than political matter. He assumed that the Daily Worker severed relations because of Wicks' dislike of him personally, but Bertram Wolfe, of The Communist was

¹⁶⁵ Dinamov to Calverton, April 8, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁶⁶ Dinamov to Calverton, May 21, June 8, November 27, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁶⁷ Symes, "Calverton: Socialist", MQ, II (Fall, 1940), 21.

¹⁶⁸ Calverton, "Literature and Economics", The Communist, VI (June, 1927), 225-251; (July-August, 1927), 313-318; VII (March, 1928), 181-189; (June, 1928), 378-381.

"a man of intelligence".¹⁶⁹ Private feelings, certainly should not be disregarded, but in that case Wicks represented the party policy, as Jack Wasserman emphasized.¹⁷⁰ That line, nevertheless was not a strict one. The intellectual circles, especially, maintained friendly ties with Calverton and appealed to him for active help. Freeman invited him to the Workers School,¹⁷¹ and until 1931 the New Masses printed his essays which were sometimes the leading article of the magazine.¹⁷² Gold, the editor, was on good terms with Calverton. Even Foster was regarded by Calverton, in spite of the attacks, as a "good friend".¹⁷³

How could Dinamov correspond with Calverton after the official organ of the American Communist Party had "exposed" him? How could the contradictory attitude of Minor and Gold toward the editor of The Modern Quarterly be explained? It seems that the Russian situation could offer, partly, the explanation. Stalin was not yet the single despot in the Soviet Union and some kind of liberal approach was allowed as long as it was not concerned with Trotskyism. Only with the liquidation of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), did that line change radically.¹⁷⁴ The New Masses, which was not affiliated, officially, with the party, although strongly influenced by it, could manage a tolerant approach towards Communist

¹⁶⁹ Calverton to Unidentified, February 12, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁷⁰ Supra, p. 145

¹⁷¹ Freeman to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹⁷² For example Calverton, "Humanism: Literary Fascism", NM, V (April, 1930), 9-10.

¹⁷³ Calverton to Vern Smith (ed. Labor Unity), April 30 (?), 1928 (VFC).

¹⁷⁴ Aaron, Writers On the Left, p. 239.

sympathizers. All this enabled Calverton to survive for several years in the circles of the left-wing intellectuals.¹⁷⁵

In spite of serious Communist opposition, Calverton went on in his own radical way, teaching Marxism, as he saw it. He tried to be fair and far from propaganda when he dealt with Communists as well as their enemies. As he had the courage to disagree with Trotsky so he dared to challenge Lenin's reputation as a philosopher. He criticized the philosophic arguments of Lenin crediting him as a man of action rather than a great thinker.¹⁷⁶ He had even the nerve to be sympathetic towards Alexander Kerensky, the liberal leader of the February Revolution in Russia. Kerensky, according to Calverton, was not a treacherous dictator, as some Communists depicted him, but a "beautiful but ineffectual idealist".¹⁷⁷ Such unorthodox ideas which did not go along with the Communist rigid and dogmatic outlook, as Calverton himself charged, made the impression in liberal and radical groups that he was a "Marxian Revisionist".¹⁷⁸ That was not the case at that time. It was rather a misunderstanding of Calverton's character. In 1928 he was a devoted Communist but not a disciplined party member.

He fought for clarity and better understanding of the ideological as well as political problems of his era, for which free expression was a prerequisite. Therefore, he opened The Modern Quarterly to liberal or leftist writers with whom the editors disagreed. In a world of confusion, as the

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967.

¹⁷⁶ Calverton's review of Lenin's Materialism and Empirio Criticism, in The Nation, 127, (August 22, 1928), 182-183.

¹⁷⁷ Calverton, MQ, V (Fall, 1928), 120.

¹⁷⁸ John Adam Collier to Calverton, April 29, 1928 (VFC).

late twenties were, he believed that more could be settled by "criss-cross of argument than by the isolation of dogma".¹⁷⁹ This was, actually the old policy of the magazine since he had published Kantorovitch's assault on the Communist leadership and the Bolshevik Revolution.¹⁸⁰ But Calverton restated this line because of an article by Schmalhausen for which he refused to accept responsibility. The compliance with Schmalhausen's proposal, the latter's name was omitted, temporarily, from the editorial staff, and Calverton expressed his disagreement with the article through an editorial.¹⁸¹

"These Tragic Comedians", as Schmalhausen's essay was titled, was a total attack upon what the author viewed as a dying form of revolutionary Socialism. He painfully regretted that a wonderful dream of Socialism had become a "nightmare". "The Socialistic shambles all about us are like fevered ghosts returned to plague our false serenity", wrote Schmalhausen.¹⁸² He scorned, in his sharp Menckonian style, almost every leader of the radical movement, Socialist "sectarians" as well as "ritualist" Communists.¹⁸³

As if all that was not enough to stir left-wing anger, Max Eastman, the anti-Christ of the Communist Party, was singled out, as the only rational

¹⁷⁹ Editorial, "The Pulse of Modernity", MQ, IV (November, 1927-February, 1928), 176, 175.

¹⁸⁰ Kantorovitch, "The Rise and Decline of New Communism", MQ, I, (Spring, 1924) 121-43. Interesting that Calverton expressed in 1928 his regret for having printed that article. Steinbach to Calverton, January 6, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁸¹ Schmalhausen to Calverton, September 26, 1927 (VFC).

¹⁸² Schmalhausen, "These Tragic Comedians", MQ, IV (November, 1927-February, 1928), 195.

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 195-229.

thinker and the potential leader of the left opposition. Such remarks in behalf of Eastman, who openly defended Trotsky against the Stalinist prosecution, almost inevitably invited a Communist attack upon the Quarterly. Bertram Wolfe, "one of the greatest Trotsky-baiters," as James Cannon, one of his victims, depicted him,¹⁸⁴ undertook the task of condemning the Quarterly, as well as its editors in Trotskyism.¹⁸⁵

Bearing in mind the merciless campaign against Left Oppositionists, as the Trotskyists were called, which was in full swing at that time, Wolfe's attack was a logical conclusion of the situation. He interpreted Schmalhausen's criticism as an expression of the editor's view, and the sympathetic opinion about Eastman as a reflection of Calverton's judgment. Wolfe argued that the editors of The Modern Quarterly were "timidly flirt[ing] with the idea of luring it into an organ of the opposition."¹⁸⁶

The accusation was vehemently denied by Calverton, who called it "unquestionably, absolutely and grossly false." The magazine never had such an intention and Calverton himself had definitely agreed with the "correctness of Stalin's logic and the inapplicability of that of Trotsky," he wrote to Wolfe. He emphasized his unhesitating support of Stalin, refusing twice to speak in behalf of Trotsky. In his lectures and in a conversation with Foster he openly and totally accepted the approach of Stalin. As to his attitude towards Eastman, Calverton did not share Schmalhausen's praise. While Eastman had some "freshness of outlook" in his sociological doctrine, Calverton questioned his talent to lead a new radical movement.

¹⁸⁴James Cannon, The History of American Trotskyism: Report of a Participant (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1944) p. 44.

¹⁸⁵Bertram Wolfe, "American Discusses the Opposition," The Communist, VII (January 1928), 46, 55-56, Henry Gage to Calverton, February 4, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 55.

Therefore Wolfe's argument that the Quarterly openly flirted with the idea of Eastman's leadership of the Opposition, was unbased, Calverton stated.¹⁸⁷ Wolfe gladly accepted the explanation of Calverton, noting that Schmalhausen's article represented only the viewpoint of the author.¹⁸⁸

Calverton's strong declaration helped to ease a little the hostile attitude of some party members.¹⁸⁹ He presented a clear evidence that the Trotskyist charge was not right, by printing an anti-Trotsky article in The Modern Quarterly. Louis Fischer, the author, described the Russian leader's position as "out of place and harmful" to the Communist movement, and his program as "unworkable".¹⁹⁰ Accusations of that kind ceased for a while but the party's unsympathetic approach did not end. To be sure, Calverton supported Stalin's policy in 1928 but it was not because of his devotion to the Workers Party but rather due to what he described as Trotsky's unsound program. The fact was, however, that the editor of the Quarterly was a faithful Stalinist. As a matter of fact till 1933 Calverton was very uncritical toward the Soviet Union. Why then the Communist opposition? It seems that intolerance toward self-styled revolutionaries, such as Calverton was, provided part of the answer.¹⁹¹

Mike Gold advised Calverton to stay out of the factional fight of the radical movement. The magazines of those two editors could attain more by scientific and literary work than political intervention, observed Gold.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷Calverton to Wolfe, January 28, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁸⁸Wolfe to Calverton, January 30, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁸⁹Unidentified to Calverton, February 26, 1929 (VFC).

¹⁹⁰Louis Fischer, "Whither Trotsky", MQ, V (Fall (?) 1928), 57-58.

¹⁹¹Unidentified to Calverton, February 26, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁹²Cited in Singer, "Quarterly Circle."

Calverton tried to keep aloof, as Gold had suggested, but the Communist Party did not let him do so. They continued to accuse him of being a Trotskyite agent and his magazine an Oppositionist publication. All his efforts to deny that fact were in vain. "Certainly I am more pained than you think", he wrote to Gold, "at their error. After all, my attitude is a fundamentally revolutionary one. It is one, in fact, that would work hand in hand with them if they knew how to utilize it without such foolish attacks".¹⁹³ A friend told him not to be bothered by people like Wicks, Oneal and Stolberg, the "Holy Trinity", "deserving to be done in glass in some cathedral window".¹⁹⁴ But Calverton could not follow such a suggestion because he was interested in friendship with the Communists. After all he felt himself a revolutionary writer who tried to accomplish more for the movement by remaining outside the party.¹⁹⁵

It is interesting that the more the Communists attacked him the more radical he became. He realized that alliance with the left-wing movement should be highly important to the common cause, in spite of the differences and misunderstandings. The greater the cause was Calverton declared, the more should be the inspiration of the fighter. And what was more important for the editor of The Modern Quarterly than struggle for a revolutionized world? Calverton was faithful to his revolutionary aims in word as well as in deed. His anti-imperialist activity in the Hands-Off China demonstration, had caught the attention of Manuel Gomez, the secretary of the United States section of the All American Anti-Imperialist

¹⁹³Calverton to Gold, December 28, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁹⁴Arthur W. Calhoun to Calverton, February 20, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁹⁵Unidentified to Calverton, February 26, December 19, 1928 (VFC).

League. Gomez asked him to give hand to the establishment of a Baltimore branch of the League. Furthermore, he was honored to serve as the secretary of the future institution.¹⁹⁶

Characteristically Calverton was able to work for the anti-imperialist league, to teach the Marxian thought in a Calvertonian interpretation and simultaneously to criticize the radical parties. That was what made him so interesting a person. His editorial on the election of 1928 was point in the case. He condemned the left-wing parties for political isolation because they used European methods that had no meaning on American soil. The three radical parties together could not make any significant impression upon the voters because they spoke to them in foreign terms that they could not assimilate. While the Socialist Labor Party was extremely remote from realism, having a romanticist tendency, the Socialist Party became a "left-wing liberal party" because it excluded from its platform the principle of class struggle. He accused Norman Thomas of concentrating on bourgeois matters and neglecting the Socialist propaganda.

But his main bombs he directed against the Communists. Although Foster's "courageous intelligence" helped to carry on the proletarian fight, those efforts were limited by his party's ineffective policy. Calverton went on criticizing the Workers Party's "Mistaken tactics, error in vision, damaging precocities of program, stupid miscalculations of background and psychological motivation".¹⁹⁷ Calverton gave his support to William Z. Foster,

¹⁹⁶ Gomez to Calverton, June 5, 1928; Harry Garmes to Calverton, August 21, 1928; Rebeka Sklar to Calverton, June 28, 1928 (VFC). It is not clear whether Calverton accepted the secretariat or not, but the offer itself signified his position in the anti-imperialist front.

¹⁹⁷ Editorial, "The American Scene", MQ, V (Fall (?), 1928), 1-4.

in spite of his party's weakness and isolationist policy, and he urged readers of The Modern Quarterly to give their vote to support Foster.¹⁹⁸

In short, the period of 1925-1928 was the honeymoon period of Calverton's relations with the radical movement. He was never nearer to the Socialist leaders than in 1925-1926, and at no other time of his career was he so intimate with high Communist officials as in 1926-27. His visit to Russia was the peak of the close relationship with the Workers Party, and at the same time it was the beginning of the split with it. The basic causes of the break were the fundamental differences in character as well as in tactics between the two sides. As a good friend remarked, Communism and Calvertonism were just two opposites.¹⁹⁹ To put it more accurately, not Communism, but the intolerable attitude of Communist bureaucrats toward self-styled sympathizers, made it very difficult, to say the least, for an unorthodox Marxist, like Calverton, to work in harmony with the party. The split, however, was not total, and many channels remained open to Calverton in literary and sex issues.

In the field of sex he combined radical viewpoint with psychological developments. Challenging ideas, personal need and revolutionary outlook joined together for the creation of a synthesis of the theories of Marx and Freud. Thus, while the period opened with good relations with the left-wing political parties, it terminated with a total break with one, and a part cleavage with another. He continued to maintain a certain position in a sort of ideological no man's land for several years, but the chance for a leading role in the radical movement was closed to him forever.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p.4.

¹⁹⁹Kantorovitch to Calverton, June 3, 1927 (VFC).

CHAPTER FOUR

CALVERTON AND THE LITERARY CLASS WAR: 1928-1932

Calverton had made his first contact with the literary circles of New York as early as 1925 when he had visited the city for weekly lectures at the Rand School of Social Science. But it was only in 1928, after he had resigned from his teaching position in Baltimore, that he became a permanent resident of New York. Since he wanted to make his living from literary work, his move to the Empire City was essential because the publishing houses and literary editors were concentrated there. The shift to the city symbolized Calverton's promotion from the provincialism of Baltimore to the midstream of American intelligentsia. He arrived in the radical center of the country as a self-made Marxian and therefore was regarded in New York circles as an outsider. One can understand, then, his extraordinary effort to be accepted into that society. The already noted desire to play a central role among the Baltimore intelligentsia, as well as his eagerness to gain friends who were ready to accept his generosity, were intensified in New York. In the metropolis he was able to extend the field of the writers available as potential contributors to The Modern Quarterly and as participants in his social gatherings.¹

Shortly after his arrival, Calverton succeeded in establishing a

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Herman Singer, "The Quarterly Circle"; Interview with Singer, March 29, 1967. Calverton's apartment contract from October 1, 1928 (VFC).

significant status for himself by his open-house system and expensive parties. Almost every evening his place was packed with people discussing political, ideological or artistic matters. Communist symposiums as well as debates on the future of American literature took place in his long, dark Greenwich Village rooms. His wide range of interests was well-suited to bringing under one roof liberals, Socialists and Communists. He was not original enough to influence decisively any significant segment of writers, but his catholicity, as Singer observed, "contributed toward² diffusing his own values in many directions." Calverton's parties were an expense that he could not afford, but he thought that only by such luxurious living would his existence be worthwhile. He worked hard to³ spend money, not to save it.

Among those who participated in his parties, were such prominent radical leaders of various factions as Michael Gold, Joseph Freeman, Ben Stolberg, Scott Nearing, Louis Lozovitz, Joshua Kunitz, Sidney Hook, Jay Lovestone, Max Eastman, Max Shachtman and J. B. Field. The literary society also enjoyed his cocktails. In this group were James Rorty, Harry Hansen, Henry Hazlitt, Maxwell Perkins, Louis Adamic, Gorham Munson and many leading men in the publishing business. The creme de cacao cocktails that were served till early in the morning were "equally delicious under capitalist or communist system," remarked a friend, and were useful as an

² Singer, "The Quarterly Circle."

³ George Britt, "Calverton," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 9; Interview with Britt, April 5, 1967; Anna Schlossberg to Calverton, Sept. 8, 1926 (VFC).

⁴ Henry Hazlitt to Calverton, Nov. 25, 1930 (VFC); See also Louis Ginsberg to Calverton, March 19, 1932, (VFC).

The wide connections that he formed so easily with different circles certainly helped him to get for his magazine famous contributors to whom he could not pay a cent. Moreover, as a man who "cared enormously"⁵ whether his books were disregarded or favorably reviewed, acquaintance with literary editors and potential reviewers was essential for him. There was something snobbish in his ambition to know everybody who was⁶ or would become somebody. He had "pursued them unblushingly," noted a friend. His correspondence with John Dewey, H. G. Wells, George B. Shaw, Harold J. Laski, Bertrand Russell, George Santayana, Leon Trotsky, F. Scott Fitzgerald and other world-wide known intellectuals, was a case⁷ in point. Calverton's parities were stimulating and enlightening. People of various groups liked to visit his place because of the challenging opinions and the fun they found there. Everyone was able to speak freely in a provocative and frank manner, without making enemies. He⁸ created an atmosphere where unorthodox ideas were encouraged.

Calverton Gladly joined the "Meeting Place," a Greenwich Village club which included many of the New York literati, and soon became a⁹ dominant figure there. Being known as a "genius for rounding up a

⁵Hazlitt in MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 48.

⁶Britt, "Notes Toward His Autobiography," (VFC).

⁷See Louis Adamic's account in My America, p. 87.

⁸Hazlitt in MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 48.

⁹Eastman to Calverton, April 20, 1932 (VFC); Calverton began to participate about 1930. Among the club members were Sinclair Lewis, Floyd Dell, Theodore Dreiser, Leo Gershoy, Arthur G. Hays, Malcolm Cowley, Charles Boni, Hartley Davis, Fola LaFollette, Louis Lozowick, Gorham Munson, Art Young, Louis Adamic, Max Eastman, Egmont Arens, John Chamberlain and James Rorty. The list of membership in 1930 in (VFC). About the club itself see Eastman, Love and Revolution, p. 546. On the list of members in 1932, Calverton noted in his handwriting, "save with diary-staff autobiography." Thus he planned to include those activities in his coming autobiography "Between two Wars," (VFC).

miscellaneous group and for setting the whole gang to extravagant argument,"¹⁰ he was asked to organize a small discussion group consisting of only editors and writers. Louis Adamic called it "Literary Rotary,"¹¹ devoting to the meetings a chapter in his autobiography. Adamic hostilely and unfairly described Calverton as a sort of Len-Casanova-Pericles, a go getter and back slapper. Calverton's belief in revolution was not only "nonsense" in the eyes of Adamic who opposed such an idea, but he also intimated that Calverton himself did not really believe it.¹² This was untrue in 1931-32.

Thus, Calverton was easily absorbed into the intellectual society of New York. Characteristically, he did not select his friends solely from the radical camp but also made acquaintance with liberals and even conservatives. He was eager to impress and convince, regardless of the background of the people with whom he talked. Although he settled down in New York, he did not sever his relations with Baltimore. He returned every weekend to his hometown for lectures in the Labor College on Friday nights, and kept open house on Saturday and Sunday. Friends and admirers used to visit him in "2110", and continued the

10

Garmont to Nina Melville, January 10, 1941 (VFC).

11

Louis Adamic, My America, pp. 87-95. Most of the members of the "Literary Rotary" were included in the aforesaid list.

12

For Adamic's attack see Ibid., pp. 87, 92. Britt came to the defense of Calverton. G. Britt, "Calverton," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 9-10. Britt told the author that Adamic was apt to be unfair to others who were not quite so devoted to the same idols. Conversation with the author, April 5, 1967.

traditional free discussions. He went on until his death with that double life, insisting that his home remained always in Baltimore. New York was important to him, so he stated, in order to keep in touch with his professional interests.¹³

For a while after he had resigned from his teaching job in July, 1928,¹⁴ he had no steady income, and lived on money obtained from delivering lectures and writing book reviews.¹⁵ But being a "notable contactman,"¹⁶ as a friend called him, Calverton soon found work as book review editor of the Book League of America, literary editor at the Macaulay Company, and literary advisor of the Macmillan Company.¹⁷ In the summer of 1930 he severed his relations with the last two publishing houses and accepted a literary editorship with Richard R. Smith, publisher.¹⁸

¹³ See Who's Who in America, 1940, "V.F. Calverton"; Calverton to Grant C. Knight, Jan. 12, 1936 (Knight Collection, University of Kentucky); Britt laughed at those Baltimore visits, depicting Calverton as a "pastor of an eager flock." Britt, "Notes Toward his Autobiography" (VFC). The emphasis on his official residence being in Baltimore and not in New York was probably for the purpose of escape from the high taxes of New York. Calverton to the Collector of Internal Revenue, March 31, 1935 (VFC).

¹⁴ John Correbrum (Assistant Superintendent of Dept. of Education, Baltimore) to Calverton, July 19, 1928 (VFC).

¹⁵ Typically, the advance for his book, The Bankruptcy of Marriage, was spent long before the book was out.

¹⁶ Britt, "Notes Toward his Autobiography." (VFC).

¹⁷ L.H. Titterton to Calverton, July 30, 1929; Calverton to Peter Fireman, Jan. 2, 1930 (VFC).

¹⁸ The dismissal from Macmillan in Titterton to Calverton, July 3, Jan. 30, 1930 (VFC 2.6); Harold Salemsen to Calverton, July 28, 1930 (VFC). The New York Times, July 20, 1930.

In the field of reviewing, Calverton had a reputation for sound and sharp criticism. His contributions appeared in almost every serious periodical and newspaper, such as The Nation, The New Republic, The New Leader, The New Masses, The Saturday Review of Literature, The New York Herald Tribune, The New York Sun, The New New York World-Telegram and The Baltimore Sun.¹⁹ His articles, too, were equally welcomed by the New Masses and The Current History. His short stories appeared in This Quarter, the magazine of the literary exiles in Paris, while some of his editorials were translated into German. A new international journal, published in Amsterdam, The Front, honored Calverton as the first American writer to contribute to its first issue. It seems that T.S. Eliot, the famous British poet and the editor of the Criterion, was among the few editors who refused to print Calverton's work, sending them back as unfit for publication.²⁰

While he succeeded in the field of criticism, he failed to get any academic post either in literary criticism or in sociology or in book reviewing. New York University, for example, turned down his suggestion that he offer a course in book reviewing in the department of journalism.²¹

¹⁹ Suzanne LaFollette (ed. N.F.) to Calverton, Feb. 18, 1930; Amy Loveman (manager ed. SRL) to Calverton, June 29, 1929; Ruth Seinfeld (literary ed. New York Evening Post) to Calverton, Dec. 18, 1928; Irita Van Doren (New York Herald Tribune) to Calverton, May 4, 1929 (VFC).

²⁰ This Quarter (Paris), (March, 1931), 484-502; (Dec. 1931), 336-354; Calverton, "Demokratie und Diktatur," Die Auslese (Berlin), V (Marz, 1931), 211-213; Sonja Prins (ed. Front, Amsterdam) to Calverton, Sept. 4, 1930; T.S. Eliot to Calverton, May 22, 1928 (VFC).

²¹ Leon Whipple to Calverton, July 6, 1930, (VFC). For another rejection see Paul McGhee to Calverton, May 9, 1935 (VFC).

The scholarly world, in general, disregarded his writings, seeing them for what they really were, popularizations rather than works of original scientific research. He lamented that his books were welcomed solely by the general public, although they had been written for scholars. The Columbia University Press rejected his proposition to publish his book, Whither Art.²²

For Calverton, literary editorship in two publishing houses and scout for the third, managing and editing his own magazine, contributing articles and book reviews to half a dozen periodicals, giving weekly lectures in Baltimore and going on lecture tours throughout the country was not enough. He offered his help in establishing another radical magazine stating, "My chest is large enough, I think, for allegiance to two publications."²³ When the matter died before it began, he accepted Suzanne LaFollette's invitation to run the literary department of the coming New Freeman. But the editor, LaFollette, being insulted by his behavior and embarrassed by his questions, withdrew her offer. Calverton was hurt by the arbitrary dismissal, losing an opportunity for a good, influential and high salaried position. Moreover, he had already left his job in the Macaulay Company and thus suffered financially from her step. A check for one thousand dollars and a nice letter of clarification brought that episode to its end.²⁴

²² Calverton explained his wish that this book would catch the attention of the students as well as their professors. Calverton to Charles Proffitt (Manager of Columbia University Press), May 9, 1929 (VFC); Proffitt to Calverton, June 10, 1929 (VFC). Calverton's influence in literary criticism will be discussed later.

²³ Calverton to J.B.S. Hardman, Feb. 2, 1928 (VFC).

²⁴ The correspondence on that issue included the following: Scott Nearing to Calverton, n.d.; Calverton to Peter Fireman (the financial supporter of the magazine and the mediator between its editor and Calverton), Dec. 23, 1929; Jan. 2, 1930; Fireman to Calverton, Jan. 29, June 9, 1930; Calverton to Suzanne LaFollette, Jan. 2, 1930 (VFC).

Besides these futile editorial ventures, Calverton launched a series of symposiums in several areas. With the collaboration of Samuel D. Schmalhausen he edited three books on sex: Sex in Civilization (1929), The New Generation (1930), and Woman's Coming of Age (1931).²⁵ The volumes consisted of articles by well-known scholars on sex, the family, the problems of children vs. parents and the new position of woman. He also planned to edit a series of books on sociology for college students. It was a project by which he hoped to popularize the new developments in that social science. The initiative as well as the actual editorial work were Calverton's but officially Harry Elmer Barnes was the chief editor of the program. The main factor which induced Calverton to head such a project was financial, as he admitted.²⁶ Nevertheless, it meant a great deal to him as a writer. The publication of a good summary of the latest trends in the social sciences appealed to him personally, as he explained to Bertrand Russell.²⁷ Calverton's personal interest, seems to have been based on the fact that the program had as its purpose exactly what he was doing in his books, namely, popularizing contemporary scientific movements in the social sciences. Unfortunately for him and for the authors, the depression killed the whole undertaking.²⁸

In his zeal to publish books of a summarizing character, he proposed to edit, among many other titles, works that would deal with subjects such as "The Literature of the Soviet Union," "The Challenge of

²⁵ Supra; pp. 127-128.

²⁶ Calverton to Huntington Cairns, Nov. 26, 1930 (VFC).

²⁷ Calverton to Bertrand Russell, July 9, Aug. 6, 1930; Calverton to Howard Odum, July 24, 1930; Calverton to Melville Herskovitz, March 26, 1930; Calverton to C.K.O., Nov. 14, 1930 (VFC).

²⁸ Calverton to Herskovitz, Sept. 25, 1931 (VFC).

Civilization"; "Criticism Through the Ages"; "Sexual Morality Through the Ages"; "The History of Woman"; "Whither America" and "Revolutionary Classics".²⁹ Most of the propositions failed to materialize but there were, three books which he published, namely, an Anthology of Negro Literature (1929), The Making of Man (1931) and The Making of Society (1937). The first, on the Negro literature, was the most significant for Calverton, throwing light on his relations with the colored people in America.

One of the brightest chapters in Calverton's life was his connection with the Negro. Unlike the Communist or literary circles, which were full of bitter attacks on him or hostile views, his colored friends were always thankful and enthusiastic about him. When during the thirties his radical, and later his liberal, intimates left him one by one, the heartfelt response of his Negro comrades eased the pain of his disappointment. Since the mid-twenties he had openly advocated Negro-White cooperation, and encouraged inter-marriage between the races. As a Marxist he believed that race consciousness should be replaced by class consciousness, and no solution could be attained on a color basis. According to him, the proletariat would not be able to unite unless the American workers renounced their race bias.³⁰ He opened The Modern Quarterly to Negro thought without apology or censorship. Negro leaders welcomed the opportunity to discuss in the magazine

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The propositions, sometimes with detailed plan, in (VFC). Interesting is Russell's reaction to Calverton's proposal to edit a book on the history of woman. Russell to Calverton, June 13, 1930 (VFC).

³⁰

Calverton to Henry Schnittkind, Dec. 6, 1929 (VFC); Calverton, "The New Negro," D W, April 23, 1927.

all aspects of their life in a candid manner.³¹ Abram Harris, a Negro friend, who was a professor of economics at Howard University, hailed his free approach to the subject, complaining about the rejection of his articles on Negro economics and radicalism by the conservative magazines.³²

A close friendship developed between Calverton and some Negro intellectuals. He made special efforts to lecture before colored audiences in Howard University and West Virginia Collegiate Institute, inspiring the young students to accept the radical view. He was so eager to invite colored friends to his home in Baltimore that, according to one source, he bought the house at 2110 Pratt Street from his grandmother partly because she objected to such an association.³³ The "Unconstitutional Constitution," an inter-racial organization, whose aim was to develop "a spirit of broader understanding," was warmly supported by Calverton.³⁴ He was also interested in the American Inter-Racial Association, and proposed to organize an Inter-Racial magazine, which would be "an organ of challenge."³⁵

The "New Negro" was his favorite topic and he frequently lectured, debated and wrote about it. World War I and the successful activities of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,

³¹ Editorial, MQ, II (Feb. 1925), 161-162; Charles S. Johnson (editor of Opportunity), to J.S. Price, Jan. 27, 1925 in (VFC).

³² Harris to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

³³ Interview with Nina Melville, Nov. 14, 1966; Harris to Calverton, March 25, 1925, March 15, 1926 (VFC); M.B. Tolson, "A Man Against the Idols of the Tribe," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 31-32.

³⁴ The Washington Tribune, June 11, 1926.

³⁵ Lovett Fort-Whiteman to Calverton, Jan. 5, 1926; Calverton to Clarence Darrow, June 19, 1929 (VFC).

shifted the intellectual viewpoint of many Negroes from an attitude of surrender and compromise to one of challenge and fight. They were ready to battle for their rights. They became convinced, as Calverton predicted, that a renaissance would come in Negro literature and art which would reflect that change. The real revolution in their condition could not come unless they grasped their economic situation and sought "reality in radical reconstruction and revolutionary aspiration."³⁶

Publication of the new culture which reflected the view of the Negro in America, was a natural conclusion of Calverton's ideas and attitude toward that race. In his Anthology of American Negro Literature³⁷ he included a medium-length, comprehensive survey of the New Negro Literature, representing the main currents of that field. Negro and white writers congratulated him on this valuable undertaking.³⁸ Calverton, in his introductory essay, emphasized the unique contribution of the Negro to the American culture. Their spirituals, jazz and folklore were original American. "In fact, they constitute America's chief claim to originality in its cultural history," he wrote. This

³⁶ Calverton, "The New Negro," DW, April 23, 1927; Syracuse Daily Orange, Feb. 26, 1926; Calverton, "Negro as Hero: The Trend in American Morals," The Sunday Worker (London), Dec. 12, 1926.

³⁷ Calverton (ed.), Anthology of American Negro Literature (New York: The Modern Library, 1929).

³⁸ Thomas D. Dabney, a Negro leader, saw in the book "a credit to you as well as to our group." Dabney to Calverton, Dec. 9, 1929 (VFC); The New York Herald Tribune on April 30, 1930 regarded it as "the best of such anthologies and the most diversified." "A valuable anthology," read The New York Times review, March 23, 1930; The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette recommended the book as a nice Christmas present, Dec. 7, 1929.

unique art had social and economic factors. Slavery had obviously influenced the Negro life and was expressed in folklore.³⁹ Bernard Smith, a radical critic, warmly welcomed the book praising especially Calverton's introduction. His "penetrating" analysis was "one of the best essays on Negro literature,"⁴⁰ Smith wrote in the New Masses review of the Anthology.

Calverton was interested in more than just the literary aspect of Negro life. He planned to write a big book which would be "the most sweeping presentation of the position of the Negro ever attempted," remarked Elmer A. Carter, the editor of the Negro magazine, The Opportunity.⁴¹ Unlike proposals for books that Calverton used to outline hastily in a moment of enthusiasm and drop later, "From Timbuctu to Harlem," as the Negro book was to be called, was very near to his heart. Calverton and his associates collected the material for years in order to write an intensive study of the Negro culture in America.⁴² But being always busy with other projects, Calverton did not have the chance to complete it.

The theory of social intercourse among the races, and the abolition of the color basis as the solution of the Negro problems, were the sources of his disagreement with the official policy of the Communist Party. In the late twenties, the party had adopted a segregationist

³⁹ Calverton's Introduction to the Anthology of Negro Literature, pp. 1-17, especially 2-5, 15-17.

⁴⁰ Bernard Smith's review in the NM, V (Feb. 1930), 18.

⁴¹ Carter to Calverton, July 24, 1929 (VFC).

⁴² Calverton to Waldo Frank, July 2, 1930 (VFC). In addition to two completed chapters there remained a full folder of untouched material in Calverton's papers. (VFC).

policy, considering the Southern Negro a subjugated nation with the right of self-determination. Transferring the problem of national minorities from Europe to America, the party insisted that the Negro minority was entitled to demand the distribution of the Southern farms and to determine whether they wanted to live separately from their white oppressors.⁴³ Calverton opposed those "futile" tactics of the Communists because such a step would alienate the white workers from their Negro comrades rather than ally them. The idea of a Black Soviet Republic in the South Calverton not only considered "absurd", but also harmful to the interest of the radical movement. Race prejudice would disappear only when "the two races work together in a common front against a common enemy."⁴⁴

The close friendship of Calverton with the Negro, led a woman to think he was a colored man. She denounced his ideas and demanded he return "to the land of your forebears," i.e. to Africa. Calverton, in his reply, explained that he had been white instead of black either through "mischance or accident."⁴⁵ Running the risk of unpopularity among the conservative whites, he courageously supported the black race. He dared to advocate openly in the South racial inter-marriage. He became one of the few white patrons whom the Negro trusted. Negroes referred to him as "the white white man," a praise that he liked very much.⁴⁶

⁴³ William Z. Foster, The History of the Communist Party of the United States, pp. 266-267.

⁴⁴ Calverton to George Schuyler, April 17, 1933 (VFC); See also the editorial of the MQ, II (Feb. 1925), 161-162.

⁴⁵ Calverton to M.E. Alison, Oct. 3, 1929 (VFC).

⁴⁶ Tolson, "A Man Against the Idols of the Tribe," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 31. On Calverton's attitude toward the Negro, see also MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 12, 18, 29-32, 46-47.

His love for suppressed people who had been exploited for centuries caused him to sympathize with the Jews as well as the Negro.⁴⁷ His Jewish appearance, especially his nose, had annoyed him a little in his childhood. The Jewish factor was one of four elements along with the death fear, sex and radicalism, that he thought had been dominant in his boyhood.⁴⁸ But when he matured he did not mind being taken for a Jew. He refused to "deny" his unjewish origin when people thought him a Jew, and many made that mistake, because he did not want to add to the increasing anti-semitism.⁴⁹ Many of his intimate friends were Jews.⁵⁰ During the twenties he criticized the restrictive immigration policy discriminating against Eastern and Southern Europeans. "The Myth of Nordic Superiority", was the title of an article in which he attacked the "pseudo-superiorities" of the Anglo Saxon civilization.⁵¹ His connections with Jewish organizations were so wide, lecturing in synagogues, debating in their congregations, that he was mistakenly included in the Who's Who in Jewish America.⁵²

Calverton's boundless energy and his broad interests led him to deal simultaneously with politics, criticism, Negro problems, anti-semitism and anthropology. The last-mentioned field attracted him

⁴⁷ Calverton to Alison, Oct. 3, 1929 (VFC).

⁴⁸ Calverton, "This Thing of Darkness," pp. 30-35, 188 (VFC). (The last one in a separate sheet.)

⁴⁹ Ben Stolberg in MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 53-54.

⁵⁰ Among his nearest friends were Haim Kantorovitch, Samuel D. Schmalhausen, Bessie Peretz and Nina Melville.

⁵¹ Calverton, "The Myth of Nordic Superiority," Current History, XXIV (Aug. 1926), 671-677; The Jewish World (Philadelphia) gladly reprinted this article on Aug. 28, 1926.

⁵² Interview with Nina Melville, Nov. 14, 1966.

because it was considered an important one by Marxists. The Making Of Man⁵³ was a useful collection of articles on this subject which Calverton edited especially for college students.

While the editing of the Negro anthology and the anthropology collection could satisfy his curiosity and intellectual interest in those subjects, his creative impulse remained unsatisfied. He felt a need to express his own emotional feelings, for which fiction was the best outlet. This resulted in his writing Three Strange Lovers,⁵⁴ containing three short stories that dealt with three clinical cases of sexual dissatisfaction. The mystical atmosphere of the stories was in sharp contrast to Calverton's realistic attitude in criticism. Calverton, the great believer in science, appeared to be almost a fatalist. Death was the sole solution to the serious problems he had raised. The book strongly impressed Gamaliel Bradford, the writer, for its "profound and subtle probing and questioning of the inner life."⁵⁵ The stories, in spite of their involvement with sexual problems, were soul analysis rather than salacious tales as Calverton rightly indicated.⁵⁶ His psychological and philosophical treatment commanded the admiration of the short story writer, Edward O'Brien, who wrote an enthusiastic introduction to the collection. In the

⁵³ Calverton (ed.), The Making of Man: An Outline of Anthropology (New York: The Modern Library, 1931).

⁵⁴ Calverton, Three Strange Lovers (New York: The Macaulay Co., 1929).

⁵⁵ Bradford to Calverton, May 8, 1929 (VFC). See Bradford's review in The New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 23, 1930.

⁵⁶ Calverton to Bradford, Feb. 5, 1930 (Bradford Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University).

stories, that dealt with "romantic imperialism of sex," the author raised enough questions "to keep the philosophers busy for many years,"⁵⁷ O'Brien thought that the book was so good that in his Best American Short Stories for 1930 he called it "the best volume of short stories that appeared in America" in 1929.⁵⁸

Three Strange Lovers became a best-seller in Japan, and Calverton was invited to deliver a series of lectures there.⁵⁹ In America there was some talk of making a motion picture from the stories.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the book did not make Calverton a famous writer. His style, the integrity of the stories, and especially their depth were far better than those he had written in the early twenties, but the book was not epoch-making literature.

The short story form was not a suitable one for the expression of Calverton's deep feelings and theories regarding man and the universe. Therefore, he wrote a full scale novel with a strong psychological emphasis. The author was so eager to put in his ideas, that the long philosophical dialogues which occupied the larger part of the novel, somewhat impaired its esthetic values. "Know Not Thyself" was the novel's name, and was written in 1930. It dealt with three aspects of the "pathology of modern life," sex, fear of death and social hypnosis.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Edward O'Brien's Introduction to Three Strange Lovers in (VFC).

⁵⁸ Cited in Calverton to Edward Titus (ed. This Quarter /Paris/), Nov. 26, 1930 (VFC); For reviews of a different kind, see The New York Sun, Feb. 22, 1930; The New York Times (Book Review), April 27, 1930.

⁵⁹ Circular issued by the Macaulay Co. (VFC).

⁶⁰ Harry H. Lichtig (motion pictures agency) to Calverton, Sept. 17, 1930 (VFC).

⁶¹ An advertisement sheet (VFC).

Sex obviously had an enormous part in man's world. Clara, his favorite heroine, expressed this view in her discussions and in her behavior as well.⁶²

Much more interesting was the fact that Calverton's primary pre-occupation with that subject faded away in the novel. A new element was introduced into his life which won his attention during the thirties, namely, death. It is almost amazing to hear from Anthony Follett, the representative of Calverton's ideas throughout the book, that "the fear of death is the greatest fear in the universe."⁶³ It was the "eternal impulse" of life being stronger than anything else. That element was far more important to life than sex, Calverton argued.⁶⁴ "It is written into all our actions. It lives in the background of all our thoughts. It has eaten into the life of man ever since he found himself as an individual," declared Anthony.⁶⁵ For centuries the efforts of mankind had aimed at the destruction of that fear, but unsuccessfully. Religion offered some escape for frightened, lonely individuals. But in the twentieth century, when science replaced religion, and the latter lost its impetus and influence, the Church was no longer able, according to Calverton, to provide the escape that people so needed.⁶⁶

The inability of man to get rid of the fear of death forced him to build an unreal world. People thought that they were judging the

⁶² Calverton, "Know Not Thyself," pp. 159-163 (VFC).

⁶³ Ibid., p. 263.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 264.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 263.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

universe scientifically, but they were deluding themselves. The world was, to Calverton, an illusion, but people called their illusions realities; they would not otherwise be able to face their life.⁶⁷ This was strikingly contradictory to Calverton's articles and books which showed his faith in the power of science to solve world problems. But in the novel, which seems to represent Calverton's inner feelings, almost his subconsciousness, he was skeptical as to the power of science. He suggested that the energy of man be employed to conquer the fear of death by social hypnosis.⁶⁸

Calverton, therefore, suggested that collectivist life be substituted for the old way of individual existence, to free people from their fears. In order to achieve that, one had to forget himself, to destroy his individualism; ". . . no one could be saved . . . except by not knowing himself . . . Oh, God, there was the only salvation . . . know not thyself . . .". Again, repeating the central motif, he emphasized that "Know Not Thyself was the only salvation," because "to see one's self was destructive."⁶⁹ "Know Not Thyself was never published. Calverton was so busy with other work that he had no time to revise the 430 page manuscript. The bad season in the publishing business during the depression also played a part in delaying its publication."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 271, 273.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 274. Social hypnosis was defined by Calverton as "suggestion given in the mass." Ibid., p. 250.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 428, 408.

⁷⁰ Calverton to Bradford, May 12, 1931 (Bradford Papers, Harvard University). The book was already included in the list of books in print of William Godum, the publisher. It was going to appear in Oct. 1931. (VFC).

His next novel, The Man Inside (1936), incorporated the basic elements of fear of death and its escape by social hypnosis. The confidence in science as the basic power in modern life,⁷¹ which he had held during the twenties, gave way to skepticism. In his scholarly works he overcame the fear of death which haunted him, using that way as a channel of escape, as an illusion. But when his doubts of the capability of science increased, and frightened by his loneliness, he found fiction the best means of expression. Criticism and revolutionary writings were the product of V.F. Calverton the radical intellectual. "Know Not Thyself", and later The Man Inside, on the other hand, were the creation of George Goetz, the man who was interested in the inner mysteries of human being.⁷²

The importance of "Know Not Thyself" for the understanding of Calverton's intellectual life is not so much in its strange and interesting ideas, because most of them appeared later in The Man Inside, but rather in their early emergence in Calverton's career. "Know Not Thyself" shows that as early as 1930, the thirty year old Calverton was already disillusioned, in spite of his success in maintaining a good political and social standing.⁷³ Those two psychological novels, which were closer to him than any other of his works, clearly indicated the direction Calverton had decided to follow in his inner life.

⁷¹"To plumb the nature of our age is to see the place of science in it," he wrote. Editorial, MQ, V (Fall, 1929), 272.

⁷²Samuel L. Solon, "V.F. Calverton: Between Two Worlds," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 26-27; Solon, "V.F. Calverton's Quest for Utopia," The American Mercury, LII (May, 1941), 625-30; Michael March's interesting remarks are in MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 49.

⁷³He felt himself an alien on the American cultural scene. Calverton to O'Brien, Dec. 22, 1928 (VFC).

In 1930, however, Calverton was only at the beginning of that course. He was still leading an energetic life. Joshua Kunitz, a Communist critic and a friend at that time, was wondering, as many others did, about his enormous zest for life, writing:

Say, George, to me you are an amazing psychological phenomenon: Publisher, Editor, Critic, Sociologist, Psychologist, Anthropologist, Rebel, Fighter, Lover, and now--Creative Artist! Hell and damnation--I'm envious of you. Your timeless energy and versatility are enough to drive any normal plodding, and phlegmatic guy like myself to despair. What gets me is that you are damned good in everything you tackle.⁷⁴

Sociology, psychology and anthropology served Calverton's intellectual curiosity. But literary criticism always remained his main field of interest and to it he devoted most of his energy.⁷⁵ In a pamphlet, The New Ground of Criticism,⁷⁶ Calverton restated his method on criticism in a clear and informative manner. World War I and the Wilsonian idealism had led to ultra-individualism which collapsed along with the stock market in October, 1929. The bankruptcy of the bourgeois conceptions concerning life and literature necessitated the search for new standards of evaluation. "A synthesis of the sociological and the psychological is what we need as a background for any sound approach to criticism as an expression of our contemporary age," he concluded.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Joshua Kunitz to Calverton, Dec. 18, 1929 (VFC); See also Harry E. Barnes, MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 41; Michael Blankfort, ibid., p. 42; Unidentified to Calverton, Feb. 22, 1932 (VFC).

⁷⁵ Calverton to T.S. Harding, Dec. 18, 1930 (VFC).

⁷⁶ Calverton, The New Ground of Criticism (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Chapbooks, No. 34, 1930).

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 53; see also pp. 16-17, 24; Schmalhausen to Calverton, Oct. 5, 1929 (VFC).

This pamphlet indicated Calverton's return from sex topics to literary criticism. After Sex Expression in Literature and Bankruptcy of Marriage, he wrote no more books about sex, (although he still edited some), but concentrated on literature. With almost tireless zeal he carried on his campaign for change in the standard of evaluation.⁷⁸ This involved him in the literary wars of that period in which as a young war-horse, he gladly participated.

The revolution of the word was one of those literary controversies. The magazine of the American literary exiles in Paris, Transition, edited by Eugene Jolas, advocated a literary revolt of the word. Calverton, opposing that idea, organized a symposium of The Modern Quarterly versus Transition.⁷⁹ Jolas argued that in the era of the new psychology with its special attention to the role of the subconsciousness, the conventional tools of expression were insufficient. The regular word could not be used for a logical and irrational functions. He called for an end to the exclusively descriptive period of literature and the inauguration of a revolutionary era in the word.⁸⁰ Calverton, disagreeing with Jolas's point of view, demanded changes in the contents rather than in the forms. He was concerned with the communication of ideas and not so much with the ways of expression. The revolution should be in the type of the literature, he argued in a change

⁷⁸ For example, Calverton to editor of the "Bear Garden," The New York Sun, May 23, 1931.

⁷⁹ "The Revolution in the Wordists," MQ, V (Fall, 1929).

⁸⁰ Eugene Jolas, "The Necessity for the New Word," Ibid., pp. 273-275.

from individual to social writing, as the direction of the age indicated. Transition's literary revolt, he concluded, took a reactionary and not a revolutionary course.⁸¹

The discussion with Jolas was hardly over when Calverton was engaged in a fight against a more serious enemy of the radical movement, namely, the New Humanists. At the beginning of the twentieth century a new literary school was established opposing the naturalistic and romantic trends of the previous century. The movement, whose leaders were Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, was based upon Platonic and Christian philosophy. Discipline of personal morality as well as art was required by the Humanists. After the literary chaos and the political corruption of the twenties, the New Humanism, with its program of order, reason and ethics, offered a solution that was attractive to some intellectuals. The liberals were not inclined to accept it because the movement rejected scientific materialism, but their resistance was negative rather than positive. Only the radical camp was ready and able to launch a full scale war against the Humanists.⁸²

The attack in the New Masses against the "venomous spirit of social reaction" was led by V.F. Calverton. The young college students had replaced H.L. Mencken, their idol during the twenties, with Irving Babbitt and T.S. Eliot. While Mencken taught them not to believe in anything, Eliot, returning to religion, offered faith and Humanism as an outlet from the chaos. Calverton saw the inspiration as an "intellectual excape." The movement, in spite of its verbal innovations, was

⁸¹ Calverton, "The Revolution in the Wordists," Ibid., pp. 276-283.

⁸² For further information on the Humanist movement, see Daniel Aaron, Writers on the Left, pp. 249-258.

"reactionary to the core", avoiding the major issue of the day, the social one. The main interest of the Humanists was in self reform and religion and not in social revolution. Since they were concerned with a conservative approach, Calverton regarded them as "intellectual fascists."

Nevertheless, he found one positive point in the Humanist propaganda. It would force the intellectuals to take a decisive step in favor of consistent individualism or for consistent Communism. Instead of the unclear currents of the twenties, the 1930's put two definite and contradictory theories before the intellectual for his personal decision: one reactionary, the other, radical. The age of cynicism of the twenties gave way to what Calverton called "The Age of Convictions." The thirties would provide the battleground between the two convictions from which Calverton hoped Communism would emerge the winner. Humanism should be fought tooth and nail because of its fascist character. It should be attacked not as a simple "literary disease," Calverton concluded, but "as a philosophy of social reaction."⁸³

Michael Gold accepted Calverton's opinion that Humanism was not only a literary movement but also a political one, introducing Fascism into America.⁸⁴ He complemented Calverton on his great help in clarifying the danger of New Humanism, admitting that Calverton was "putting

⁸³ Calverton, "Humanism: Literary Fascism," NM, V (April, 1930), 9-10; _____, "The decade of Convictions," The Bookman, LXXI (Aug. 1930), 486-490; _____, "The Need for a Tradition in American Literature," (VFC); _____, "Humanism and Reform," review of J. Maritain's Three Reformers in (VFC); C. Hartley Grattan, The New York Sun, May 9, 1931; For Joseph Freeman's attack on Humanism, see Freeman, "Social Trends in American Literature," The Communist, IX (July, 1930), 641-51.

⁸⁴ Michael Gold, editorial in NM, V (April, 1930), 4.

some fine licks for the social point of view in literature."⁸⁵

The American literati had barely emerged from the Humanist controversy, when it became involved in one of the fierce battles of the literary class war of the early thirties. Fundamental issues were at stake, such as the relations between art and propaganda. In general, the main problem was the task of the literary critic, especially the Communist one. Michael Gold fired the first shot in his review of Thornton Wilder, entitled the "Prophet on the Genteel Christ."⁸⁶ Gold, in a harsh and impolite tone, criticized Wilder for appealing to a limited wealthy bourgeois group instead of to the wide strata of the masses. Wilder's style was a "neat tailor made rhetoric," whose serenity was "that of a corpse" and when pricked "it will bleed without violent ink and apartif." The reviewer's main point was that the author concentrated on the false issue of forms and aestheticism instead of writing about social problems.⁸⁷

The article aroused a violent controversy that raged in the liberal and radical magazines. Edmund Wilson, the literary editor of The New Republic, stated in an unsigned editorial, that the outcry for the defense of Wilder as well as the letters that supported Gold's point of view, indicated that a fundamental issue was at stake. Basically he agreed with Gold's economic and social interpretation. But he demanded from a critic, including a Communist one, consideration of the author's craftsmanship and not just his social views. Wilson accused Gold of

⁸⁵ Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

⁸⁶ Gold's review in NR, LXIV (Oct. 22, 1930).

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 267.

"denying the dignity of human work."⁸⁸ The issue, attracting such wide attention, was a sign to Wilson of "the eruption of the Marxist issues out of the literary circles of the radicals into the field of general criticism." Moreover, the economic crisis, directly or indirectly, had influence upon the intellectuals and created a literary crisis.⁸⁹

Unlike Wilson, who was at that time sympathetic to economic determinism,⁹⁰ Henry Hazlitt, the literary editor of The Nation, was hostile to Communist criticism. In his eyes, the Communist critics failed "disastrously" because their standard was too narrow, evaluating a piece of art from a single angle; that is, whether it was in accordance with or in opposition to the views of "a German economist who died in 1883." Hazlitt dismissed the Marxian criteria as unacceptable because literary values should be tested by more comprehensive principles, considering all aspects of the work.⁹¹

Calverton defended Communist criticism. He developed a clear attitude toward proletarian art and art versus propaganda. When no space was available to him in The New Republic, The Nation and The New Freeman,⁹² he dealt with the topic in his pamphlet American Literature at the

⁸⁸ Edmund Wilson, "The Economic Interpretation of Wilder," in The Shores of Life: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties (New York: Vintage Book, 1961), pp. 501, 500-503 (Appeared NR, Nov. 26, 1930).

⁸⁹ Wilson, "The Literary Class War," NR, LXX (May 4, 1932), 320.

⁹⁰ See Aaron, Writers on the Left, p. 267.

⁹¹ Henry Hazlitt, "Communist Criticism," N, 131 (Sept. 26, 1930), 583-84.

⁹² Bruce Bliven to Calverton, May 13, July 15, 1932; Suzanne LaFollette to Calverton, Dec. 1, 1930 (VFC).

Crossroads.⁹³ Calverton considered at some length Hazlitt's art-for-art's-sake approach. By denouncing such an attitude he began a long discussion with Hazlitt about the basic functions of a literary critic. It was not only a literary disagreement, but an ideological one; aestheticism against Communism.

Hazlitt, in his turn, launched an open attack on Calverton in The Nation. He admitted that the latter, though a radical, "knows better than to apply such a standard when he criticizes a book himself." But Hazlitt disagreed with Calverton's differentiation between social significance and craftsmanship.⁹⁴ Such a division was "too simple, too tidy," Hazlitt remarked. A piece of art should be examined "as a unit" looking at its total qualities altogether.⁹⁵ In a letter he alerted Calverton to the coming attack and threatened, perhaps jokingly, to bring in "all sort of personalities" if Calverton answered with a counterattack.⁹⁶

The ball was now in the hands of Calverton who did not want to lose it. Interested as he was in the subject itself, he wished also to exploit it in favor of his magazine, and probably for his own publicity. He invited the literary editor of The Nation "to discuss the fundamentals

⁹³ Calverton, American Literature at the Crossroads (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Chapbooks, No. 48, 1931).

⁹⁴ Hazlitt accused Calverton of borrowing that differentiation from Edmund Wilson who wrote that in an examination of an artistic work, "we must consider it not only from the point of view of its significance in the social system, but also from the point of view of its craft." Wilson, in Shores of Light, p. 501.

⁹⁵ Hazlitt, "How Novels Get Bad Marx," N, 132 (April 1, 1931), 354-355.

⁹⁶ Hazlitt to Calverton, March 26, 1931 (VFC); Calverton to Grant Knight, April 10, 1931 (VFC).

involved in an attempt to clarify them for the benefit of ourselves," and others who might be interested. Bearing in mind Hazlitt's threat of a personal attack, and having learned from earlier debates that individuals are often more concerned with defeating opponents than in clarifying differences, Calverton was determined to avoid personal accusations. He addressed Hazlitt eight questions that would be the basis for the coming discussion (and not debate, as Calverton emphasized). Hazlitt was asked about his initial approach to art; about literary values which had no class significance; the difference between good art and bad art and between art and propaganda; the relations between art and economics and politics, and finally, if he would agree to the assumption that a good critic should have a sociological approach in order for his work to be significant.⁹⁷

Hazlitt, taking up the challenge that Calverton had thrown down, concentrated upon Calverton's most important question concerning the relations between art and propaganda. He accused the Communist writer of spoiling pure art in his effort to achieve certain social goals. The Marxian approach, having a definite purpose, narrowed the scope of the creation. Hazlitt defined propaganda by saying that when a writer was more interested in his theory than in his characters, he was producing propaganda, which was certainly bad. But if the author gave more attention to his characters than to his thesis, he transcended propaganda.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Calverton to Hazlitt, April 25, 1931 (VFC).

⁹⁸ Henry Hazlitt, "Art and Social Change: The Eclectic Approach," MQ, VI (Winter, 1932), 11-14.

The definition, and the argument behind it, were criticized by Calverton, who argued that writers did not work in a social vacuum, and critics also were influenced, inevitably, by their environment. As a matter of fact before he began a project every artist had in mind some kind of pattern he wanted to follow. "Objectivity, thus," concluded Calverton, "in critical matters as well as in others, is a myth."⁹⁹ The evaluation of literature in terms of a class objective would be the best that a critic could do, since an absolute objective would be unattainable.

Edmund Wilson carried that argument further explaining that, actually everyone naturally propagated the ideas he absorbed from his intellectual environment. While the Marxian writers admitted their purpose and basic standards of criticism, liberals wrote capitalist propaganda under the false impression of being disinterested in class matters. Therefore, Wilson preferred the former, especially because there was nothing bad in propaganda itself.¹⁰⁰ There was complete agreement between Calverton and Wilson on this point.¹⁰¹ Both of them held the idea that if propaganda was bad it was due to the writer's failure as an artist. "What we want to fight today," declared Calverton, "is not propaganda in art, but bad propagandists who ruin art."¹⁰² The radical

⁹⁹ Calverton, "Art and Social Change: The Radical Approach," MQ, VI (Winter, 1932), 16-27.

¹⁰⁰ Edmund Wilson, "The Literary Class War," NR, LXX (May, 11, 1932), 347-348.

¹⁰¹ Calverton expressed his ideas in 1931, almost a year before Wilson's article appeared, so it cannot be argued that he borrowed that position from the latter. See Calverton's "The Need for Revolutionary Criticism," The Left, I (Spring, 1931), 9-10.

¹⁰² Calverton, "The Radical Approach," MQ, VI (Winter, 1932), 27.

critic differed from his reactionary colleague, not in his indifference to form, but in his "stress upon the end that form should serve." He believed that with craftsmanship the radicals' aim should be "to make art serve man as a thing of action, and not man serve art as a thing of escape."¹⁰³

Calverton's sharp criticism of Upton Sinclair's novels was a case in point. In spite of the theme of his books, which dealt with the problems of industrial society, depicting the suffering of the workers and condemning the capitalist system, Calverton disagreed time and again with Sinclair's oversimplification. Sinclair built up a situation and artificially created his characters, trying to fit them into the scene. Consequently, they lost their reality and became only puppets. That was an example of bad propaganda. Neither personal nor political disagreement caused the criticism, Calverton assured the novelist. It was simply that he felt Sinclair's works did not "click in terms of great or significant fiction."¹⁰⁴

The controversy about art and propaganda provoked some reactions in the radical camp. Granville Hicks, a newly converted Marxian critic,

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Calverton, "The Need for Revolutionary Criticism," 9-10. See also Calverton in The New York World Telegram, Aug. 5, 1932.

¹⁰⁴

Calverton's review of Sinclair's Mountain City in N, 130 (June 11, 1930), 680-681; Calverton, "Left Wing Literature in America," The English Journal, XX (Dec. 1931), 795-796; Calverton, The Liberation of American Literature, pp. 464-465; Calverton to Sinclair, Aug. 29, 1932 (VFC). Sinclair reacted indifferently to Calverton's attacks: "Of course I am sorry when you do not like one of my books, but I never quarrel with anybody about that. Sinclair to Calverton, Sept. 2, 1931 (VFC). Hicks basically agreed with Calverton's criticism, Hicks to Calverton, May 20, 1932 (VFC). Haim Kantorovitch argued that since 1925. Kantorovitch to Calverton, Sept. 15, 1925 (VFC). See also Freeman, An American Testament, pp. 323-24, 369-70, 599-600.

...

certainly opposed Hazlitt's attitude toward Communist criticism seeing it as "completely cuckoo."¹⁰⁵ He was, however, dissatisfied with Calverton's point of view, because he felt the case should have been presented in a stronger manner.¹⁰⁶ Newton Arvin, another critic who just at that time came nearer to the left wing movement, also supported Calverton's position, though not entirely. The latter had "at least nine tenths of the cogency and the clarity" in his discussion with Hazlitt. Nevertheless, the division between social background and craftsmanship, the very heart of Hazlitt's argument, missed the point, according to Arvin. Social significance did not provide any measure of value, it furnished only the approach. The basic function was the imagination of the critic, maintained Arvin.¹⁰⁷ Robert Gorham Davis, also a new recruit, grew tired of looking at the left wing intellectuals "hurling spears" through the ambiguities of Hazlitt's program.¹⁰⁸

Some critics probably became tired of the literary war, but not Calverton. Eager as he was to see the development of a proletarian literature in America, he realized that actually it was only "a form of wish-fulfillment."¹⁰⁹ Since the American intellectuals were of bourgeois origin, and their lives were remote from that of the lower class, they were ignorant of the mentality of the proletariat and of their problems. Any picture or novel about them would inevitably be

¹⁰⁵ Hicks to Calverton, March 14, 1932; S. Rudens to Calverton, March 15, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁰⁶ Hicks to Calverton, Feb. 28, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁰⁷ Arvin to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹⁰⁸ Robert G. Davis to Calverton, May 13, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁰⁹ Editorial, MQ, VI (Summer, 1932), 10.

artificial. Proletarian literature in America lacked the vitality and significance that Russian literature had. The first step should be the creation of a proletarian ideology. Only by education of the workers, by revolutionizing their minds, would class consciousness be awakened. What the left movement should produce was revolutionary literature and not proletarian literature. The former had some chance of success, the latter was only an utopia.¹¹⁰

Calverton was busy with the propagation of ideas that he developed, or absorbed, during the period of the literary wars of the early thirties. The final analysis of his point of view was incorporated into a full scale study of what he called a Marxian interpretation of American literature. *The Liberation of American Literature*¹¹¹ was Calverton's most important contribution to literary criticism from a Marxian outlook. The book traced "the development of American literature in relationship with those social forces, expressed in the form of class content," wrote Calverton in his preface. He believed that class psychology was the dominant factor in culture, therefore the study dealt not only with literary criticism but with social history as well. He tried to interpret literature in cultural terms, because the latter clearly reflected the conflicting class interests in society.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 8-10; Calverton, "Can We Have a Proletarian Literature," MQ, VI (Autumn, 1932), 39-50; Hazlitt dismissed the whole idea of class literature and proletarian culture. Hazlitt, "Literature and Class War," N, 135 (Oct. 19, 1932), 361-63.

¹¹¹ Calverton, The Liberation of American Literature (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932).

¹¹² Ibid., pp. xi-xiii.

The American literature of the last three centuries derived its inspiration, according to Calverton's thesis, from the British culture. Since the colonial period, no independent art had been developed on this side of the Atlantic; literature was subordinated almost completely to the European pattern. New England took a leading role in that cultural inferiority, which Calverton called "the Colonial Complex." The Puritans' indifference to art and literature, unlike their concern with religion, conjoined with the heritage of the "colonial complex," encouraged literary imitation rather than originality. Puritanism died before the American Revolution, but Calverton insisted its petty bourgeois psychology remained, especially its negative attitude toward art.¹¹³ The nationalistic coming of age that took place in the twentieth century and reached its climax in World War I, ended the cultural dependence of Americans on Europe. The United States emerged from the war as a world power, a fact which had influence upon the "liberation" of America from British culture. The choice of Sinclair Lewis as the first American writer for the Nobel Prize in 1931, symbolized the international recognition of his country's literature.¹¹⁴

That "Liberation" from the colonial complex caused a certain change in the character of American literature, from hope to despair, from order to chaos. The intellectual life of the twenties was marked by pessimism. According to the author, that change indicated the downfall of the petty bourgeois tradition. Individualism and democracy were the principles of the nineteenth century, but the modern industrial society, especially the

¹¹³
Ibid., pp. 1, 18-19, 41, 87-88.

¹¹⁴
Ibid., pp. 37-39.

depression, brought that period to an end, destroying the system of laissez-faire. Despair liberated literature from the "colonial complex" and petty bourgeois psychology. The next step should be an establishment of a new faith and a new tradition. Calverton singled out three authors whose outlook was that of hope, bringing forth the promise of a new society, namely: John Dos Passos, Michael Gold and Charles Yale Harrison. "Incidentally," all of them were radicals. They were the most important revolutionary writers in the early thirties, wrote Calverton, although there were some others with leftist tendencies such as Theodore Dreiser, Edmund Wilson, Waldo Frank, Granville Hicks and Newton Arvin. Outside that radical current Calverton did not find any significant effort worth mentioning.¹¹⁵

The Liberation of American Literature was hailed, even by some non-radical reviewers, as "a landmark in American criticism." ¹¹⁶ It was published shortly after the appearance of Vernon L. Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought; therefore comparison was natural. Grant C. Knight, professor of English at the University of Kentucky, considered it "worthy a position above even the trilogy of V.L. Parrington." Ernest S. Bates, the critic, was of the same opinion.¹¹⁷ John Chamberlain,

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Ibid., pp. 480, 468-479.

¹¹⁶

Ernest S. Bates to Calverton, April 29, 1932 (VFC); Grant Knight's review in The Book Reviews, IV (Jan. 1933), 109; Ernest Bates' review in The New York Herald Tribune, Sept. 11, 1932; Havelock Ellis in his "Mail Bag" in The New York American, Sept. 19, 1932; McAlister Coleman, The World Tomorrow, XVI (Feb. 8, 1933); A.D. Emmart in the Baltimore Evening Sun saw in his classmate's book "the most adequate synthesis." Aug. 10, 1932.

¹¹⁷

Knight, Book Reviews, IV (Jan. 1933), 409; Bates to Calverton, April 29, 1932 (VFC).

The New York Times daily book critic, stressed the parallel between Calverton and Parrington to prove the partisan approach of the liberals whenever they were criticizing a Marxian book. To be a sociological critic was considered to be unintelligent, but to be a Jeffersonian was "an open sesame" to the Pulitzer prize in history, complained Chamberlain. If Parrington received praises, Calverton deserved compliments, also claimed the reviewer.¹¹⁸

For Harold J. Laski, the British scholar, the book was "really an outstanding performance, full of suggestiveness and insight."¹¹⁹ William H. Prescott, the historian, was "most cordial" to the ideas of the book, recommending it to Preserved Smith, historian of the Reformation.¹²⁰ Unlike Chamberlain or Laski, other writers were annoyed by Calverton's attitude. The selection of only three contemporary writers as the great hope of American literature, at the expense of many others, was a tactical as well as a fundamental error. It was a fundamental error because to neglect prominent writers just because they did not "kiss the feet of St. Marx", but remained apart from the social problems, was unjustified. It was also a tactical mistake because the matter naturally became a major issue in the criticism of the Liberation.¹²¹ H. G. Wells, for example, complained about his exclusion from the book. While the American authors had some reason for their bitterness, Wells, as a non-American,

¹¹⁸ John Chamberlain's review in N, 135 (Dec. 7, 1932), 571-572.

¹¹⁹ Harold Laski to Calverton, Aug. 20, 1934 (VFC).

¹²⁰ Stanley Burnshaw to Calverton, Feb. 3, 1933 (VFC).

¹²¹ John Chamberlain, N, 135 (Dec. 7, 1932), 572; C. Hartley Grattan's review in (VFC); Harry Hausen to Calverton, Oct. 6, 1932 (VFC); Gilbert Seldes, The New York American, Sept. 17, 1932.

certainly belonged to a different category. Moreover, it would have been contradictory to Calverton's aim to include Wells in a book which dealt with the liberation of American literature from British influence.¹²²

Laski's praise, Santayana's criticism, Wells's protest, along with detailed reviews in important forums, such as the Literary Supplement of the London Times or The Saturday Review of Literature,¹²³ reflected the prominent role that Calverton occupied in the field of criticism. Even the hostile reviews opposed the Communist ideology rather than Calverton's thesis. Charles A. Beard, the historian, for example, saw in the book, "a real challenge" to literary people, and accepted the validity of its critical analysis, although he disagreed with its Communist doctrine.¹²⁴

George Santayana, the philosopher, aimed his criticism at another weakness of the Liberation, that is, its "colonial complex" thesis. He called Calverton's viewpoint "chauvinism and Anglophobia." The European influence upon American literature was not subordination but voluntary acceptance of a higher cultural level. What the author considered as "colonial complex" was, according to Santayana, a "universal intelligence, natural sensibility and good taste surviving in America." He pointed out the contradictory elements in Calverton's point of view: American patriotism on the one hand, and cosmopolitan Communism on the other hand.¹²⁵

¹²² Calverton assured Wells that "such exclusion is no reflection whatsoever upon your significance." It was "purely a geographical one." Calverton to Wells, Aug. 3, 1932 (VFC).

¹²³ The Literary Supplement of the Times (London), June 15, 1933; Henry Seidel Canby's review in SRL, IX (Sept. 17, 1932), 101-102.

¹²⁴ Charles A. Beard to Calverton, July 11, 1932 (VFC).

¹²⁵ George Santayana to Calverton, Nov. 18, 1934 (VFC).

The old guard of the Communist Party with the exception of Michael Gold, ignored the book because of the author's political "deviation" rather than its contents. Gold accepted the colonial complex idea, seeing Calverton's weakness in the modern scene, especially in the lack of sharp decisions on controversial topics.¹²⁶ The newly recruited fellow travelers, such as Hicks, Arvin, and Seaver, still enjoying an unorthodox approach, were in general sympathetic to Calverton, though they disagreed with specific details. The Liberation of American Literature was regarded by Seaver as "a pioneer contribution to American criticism."¹²⁷

As a matter of fact, that was the major point made by Granville Hicks in his defense of Calverton in The New Republic. The "slightly dull, somewhat repetitious" book had no special sensitiveness to literary values. Nevertheless its "crude and incomplete" form was justified by its pioneer character. No other work gave such an extensive consideration to the development of American culture from a Marxian point of view. Hicks objected, however, as Hazlitt did, to the neat division between form and content, seeing them as a unit in the creative process.¹²⁸ Hicks courageously continued to support the

¹²⁶ Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹²⁷ Edwin Seaver's review in (VFC); Newton Arvin to Calverton, Feb. 1, 1932 (VFC). Newton Arvin opposed the distinction between nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as if American literature began only in the recent one. Not only Mark Twain, Herman Melville and Whitman wrote American art, but even Benjamin Franklin. Arvin to Calverton, Nov. 15, 1931.

¹²⁸ Granville Hicks, NR, LXXI (Sept. 7, 1932), 104; Hicks to Calverton, Jan. 26, 1932 (VFC). Hicks continued Calverton's pioneer work, publishing a better book on American literature from a Marxian point of view called, The Great Tradition (1933).

Liberation of American Literature in the New Masses only a month after the magazine had printed a sixteen-page attack on Calverton.¹²⁹ In spite of Calverton's oversimplified Marxism, and regardless of his morals or style, the book was "applying the Marxist method to the best of his ability, and that so far as an understanding of the broad class bases of our literature is concerned," concluded Hicks, "the book is a useful one."¹³⁰

Thus, The Liberation of American Literature, which was his best book in literary criticism, gave Calverton the reputation of a leading Marxian critic. Even if one does not accept Newton Arvin's tribute that Calverton was alone in the field,¹³¹ his position was undoubtedly important. One may argue against the oversimplification of Calverton's Marxian, but this does not change the fact that in liberal and radical circles he was considered a Marxian critic. It seems, however, that his real influence on young intellectuals was through personal contact and The Modern Quarterly rather than through his books. His parties,

¹²⁹ David Ramsey and Alan Calmer, "The Marxism of V.F. Calverton," NM, VIII (Jan. 1933), 9-27.

¹³⁰ Hicks, "The Crisis in American Criticism," NM, VIII (Feb. 1933), 4. The praise caused the gossip that the editors of the New Masses tried to omit the phrase "a useful one," but Hicks stood his ground and the article was published without changes. Harry Hansen in The New York World Telegram, March 10, 1933. Hicks denied the story, demanded that Hansen uncover the source of his information, and if he refused, Calverton would be held responsible. Hicks to Hansen, March 14, 1933 (VFC); Hicks to Calverton, March 14, 1933 (VFC). As Hansen did not respond positively, Hicks publicly condemned Calverton (without mentioning his name) in a letter to the New Masses, claiming that he was responsible for circulating such a "slander" for his own advantage. NM, VIII (April, 1933), 26.

¹³¹ Arvin to Calverton, Jan. 7, 1932 (VFC).

and other social affairs, were partly for the purpose of getting contributors to the magazine. That was one of the "secrets" of his success not only in keeping the Quarterly alive, but also in publishing symposiums with the participation of prominent writers and philosophers.

The magazine was always in a condition of semi-collapse, financially speaking. The annual deficit was growing and no permanent income could be secured to cover it. Several "angels" supported the journal until they lost interest in the radical movement or became Communists and severed relations with the "social fascist" Calverton.¹³²

During the depression years, the magazine was unable to pay its debts and in one case was almost brought to court.¹³³ Special tactics were employed to pull the Quarterly out of its deficit, such as annual dinners and fund raising campaigns.¹³⁴ But Calverton was not ready to change his policy for money, as he frankly wrote to a contributor: "all the money in the world or the prospects of even a weekly magazine could not tempt me from pursuing what I consider is the important task of the Modern Quarterly to perform."¹³⁵

¹³² John McRoy contributed \$200 in 1927 and promised to give \$250 for the coming year if Calverton could find another three donors of the same sum. McRoy to Calverton, May 17, June 2, 1927. In 1928 he lost interest in politics. McRoy to Calverton, Jan. 7, 1928 (VFC). See also Ellen Nagle to Calverton, Jan. 24, 1928; Calverton to Mitchell, May 16, 1927 (VFC).

¹³³ Glenn Hughes to Calverton, March 1, 1931; Liveright Inc., Publishers to the Modern Quarterly, Nov. 12, 1931 (VFC).

¹³⁴ The first annual dinner was held on June 10, 1929. Theodore Shapiro to Calverton, n.d. (VFC). In 1932 the campaign was a great success. Diego Rivera contributed \$125, and a Mr. Hoffman gave an unprecedented amount of \$400.00. (VFC).

¹³⁵ Calverton to Nathan Rosenbaum, Jan. 28, 1928 (VFC).

The magazine, which was run from the beginning by volunteers who were enthusiastic but inexperienced in the business of editing, naturally suffered from organizational inefficiency. Editorial meetings, especially in the early years, were devoted to discussion of Calverton's books or even his new socks or trousers. Only "when the occasion presented itself" were important problems of the journal taken into consideration, complained a friend who was supposed to be the secretary of the magazine.¹³⁶

When Calverton moved to New York in 1928, the situation became even worse. He and Schmalhausen, the editors, lived in the Empire City, but the staff remained in Baltimore, a situation that aroused confusion and delay in the editing process. Calverton admitted to Waldo Frank, who complained about the bad editorship,¹³⁷ that since his permanent residence was in New York, he was unable to devote himself to the magazine as he had done before, and many things were beyond his control. During the period of 1928-32, the magazine received only minor attention from Calverton compared to the intensity with which he worked on his own projects. Consequently, The Modern Quarterly became almost an annual periodical instead of a quarterly. Between the fall of 1929 and winter 1930-31, no issue appeared.¹³⁹

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Salling to Calverton, August 12, 1925 (VFC). Salling turned down Calverton's offer to serve as a secretary unless the magazine were run with a businesslike efficiency.

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Frank to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

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Calverton to Frank, May 22, 1929 (VFC). See also the dissatisfaction of the advertising and circulating manager, William J. Wiscott to Calverton, November 2, 1931 (VFC).

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The third issue of volume five came out in Fall, 1928, and the fourth in Winter, 1930-1931. The editorial office eventually moved to New York, in May 1931, which was soon followed by other sections of the magazine. Godwin to Calverton, May 19, 1931; Wiscott to Calverton, November 2, 1931 (VFC).

Despite the deficit and the organizational weakness of the journal, there were some good issues that appeared during the years 1928-1932. The discussion about the revolution of the word,¹⁴⁰ as well as the Marxian symposium with the participation of John Dewey, Waldo Frank, Louis Boudin, Sidney Hook, Max Eastman and Arthur Calhoun,¹⁴¹ gained attention. The literary controversy between Calverton and Henry Hazlitt on Communist criticism led to lengthy debates,¹⁴² and the questionnaire "Whither American Writer," was discussed by the New York press.¹⁴³ Other issues of the magazine included the heated and sometimes bitter arguments between Sidney Hook and Max Eastman concerning the interpretation of Marx,¹⁴⁴ or the debate between Lewis Mumford and Calverton about the challenge of the American intellectuals.¹⁴⁵

An examination of the subjects dealt with in The Modern Quarterly clearly shows a shift from psychology and sex to Marxism and politics. Especially after the Wall Street crash in 1929, labor problems and the future of American intellectuals occupied the major part of the magazine. The achievements of Soviet Russia, the radical movement in America and the program of Leon Trotsky replaced articles on sexual revolution or sex in literature. The increase of the importance of

¹⁴⁰ MQ, V (Fall, 1929).

¹⁴¹ Ibid., V (Winter, 1930-31).

¹⁴² Supra., pp. 195-199.

¹⁴³ "Whither the American Writer," MQ, VI (Summer, 1932); Louis Adamic, My America, p. 77.

¹⁴⁴ For example, MQ, V (Fall, 1928).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., V (Winter, 1930-31).

Marx at the expense of Freud was a decisive change not only in Calverton's mind but in his generation as well. The cruel reality of the depression years which created suffering for millions, diminished the interest in Freud's gospel. This turn in Calverton's attitude gradually freed him from Schmalhausen's influence. Sometimes he was annoyed with the psychoanalyst's articles and behavior, condemning the latter's method of attack.¹⁴⁶ When the break came between the two friends, it was almost a natural conclusion of the new direction in which Calverton was moving. The withdrawal of the faithful co-editor from the magazine after seven years of collaboration did not shock Calverton.

Schmalhausen wrote his bitter letter of resignation after five weeks of pondering, and an additional week passed before it was mailed.¹⁴⁷ The decision, then, was not a momentary outburst, as Daniel Aaron has assumed,¹⁴⁸ but rather the result of a long period of irritation. The direct cause for Schmalhausen's anger was an advertisement of the Quarterly in the liberal magazines where his name was moved from the editorial staff to a footnote among the miscellaneous book reviewers. He was "stunned" by Calverton's rivalry. The basic reason for his leaving the editorship, wrote Schmalhausen to Calverton, was "this apparently uncontrollable tendency of your brain to use every one up who crosses your path for purposes of ego aggrandizement." As a psychoanalyst, he clearly saw that the key was that of Calverton's

¹⁴⁶ Calverton to Waldo Frank, Sept. 20, 1929 (VFC).

¹⁴⁷ Schmalhausen emphasized those details in his letter, Schmalhausen to Calverton, Nov. 7, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁴⁸ Aaron, Writers on the Left, p. 337.

"infinite egocentric narcissism, hitched to an infinite energy of personal ambition." He described his humiliating years of collaboration with Calverton which was a constant "underground rivalry." Schmalhausen decided to take a Sabbatical leave "for clarity's sake and new composure of mind."¹⁴⁹ Calverton declared that Schmalhausen had been removed from his editorial status even before he received his letter of resignation.¹⁵⁰

Although Schmalhausen exaggerated the situation, it seems that basically he was right. It was really difficult to work with Calverton on his magazine on an equal status. He saw The Modern Quarterly as his own private business, which legally it was, and did not allow any kind of rivalry. Moreover, his "inappeasable ambitiousness"¹⁵¹ was indeed one of his major weaknesses that brought many of his associates to resign on a personal basis.¹⁵²

In short, the end of the Calverton-Schmalhausen cooperation symbolized the termination of a period in Calverton's life. He matured from his sex ideas and symposiums that had kept him so busy in the second half of the twenties. As a permanent resident of Greenwich Village, and as a good contactman, he became a part of the literary

¹⁴⁹ Schmalhausen to Calverton, Nov. 7, Dec. 7, 1932 (VFC); Jan. 10, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁵⁰ Whether Calverton wrote so in a moment of anger, or that was the truth, it is difficult to decide. Schmalhausen to Calverton, Jan. 18, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁵¹ Schmalhausen to Calverton, Nov. 7, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁵² Oakley Johnson, for example, refused "to be a pose" which was "pretentious and misleading" because he was not consulted as an associate editor. Johnson to Calverton, Oct. 22, 1931 (VFC). That was Calverton's method: to appoint people to the editorial board without giving them, actually, any power.

circles of New York. He participated actively in the literary wars of the era, and with the publication of The Liberation of the American Literature he was recognized as a leading Marxian critic. This position was due, partly, to the fact that the radical Left lacked first-rate critics. During the thirties, however, when prominent writers and critics turned to the Left, Calverton's importance as a Marxian critic was seriously diminished. Furthermore, Calverton could not take command of the field because of his unorthodox Marxian outlook. The Communist Party attacked him for his deviations and eventually severed all relations with him. Calverton's political stand during the period of 1929-1933 will be traced in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: IN AND OUT OF THE COMMUNIST
MOVEMENT: 1929 - 1933

The third decade of the twentieth century was a prosperous era in American history. Many believed, especially the business-men, that a new era was coming. Then came the stock-market crash of October 1929. Optimism faded and deep despair took its place. About thirteen million people were unemployed and hunger forced many of them onto the bread line.¹ The way the government dealt with the situation seemed proof, not only to Communists, that the capitalist system was bankrupt.² There were growing numbers of intellectuals who believed that the depression was not an ordinary decline in the business cycle but a cyclonic break-up of the individualistic society and the end of the "myth" of American prosperity.³

Calverton, like other radicals, had predicted the inevitability of such a crash. The new situation planted hope in his heart for the possibility of hastening the socialization of society. "My hopes have had a fortunate way of coming true in recent years," he wrote in 1931

¹William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932 - 1940 (New York, Evanston and London: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 1-3, 28-29.

²See the symposium "Whither the American Writer," MQ, vi (Summer, 1932), 11-19.

³Louis Adamic, My America, p. 91; the reference to the "myth" of American prosperity was made in Calverton, "America's Opportunism," Current History, XXV (Feb. 1927), 641-647.

to Gamaliel Bradford - hence his optimism.⁴ It was the "end of an epoch," Calverton told his audience in the course of a lecture, calling for a "new order," a revolutionary one.⁵

Many intellectuals responded to this Communist appeal and turned leftward. It was almost a mass movement of the American writers. They "stormed the offices of the Left magazines and literary groups and begged, pled, wheedled, and even demanded to be taken in," recalled Joseph Freeman.⁶ What were the causes of this unprecedented movement in American history? The economic situation was undoubtedly a major factor in the turn of the intellectuals to the Left. Some of the writers wandered with empty stomachs trying to find a job, to write an article, to earn some money, and finally had no choice but to stand, shamefully, in the bread line. This personal experience brought them into direct contact with daily life. They recognized the literary value of their own experience.⁷

⁴ Calverton to Bradford, May 12, 1931 (Bradford Papers, Harvard University).

⁵ A lecture in 1930 on "The End of An Epoch" (VFC). The crash was regarded by Calverton as the end of the log-cabin-to-the-White House legend. There would be no class fluidity any more, he believed. Interview with Calverton in The New York World Telegram, September 8, 1932.

⁶ Quoted in Aaron, Writers On the Left, p. 287.

⁷ Alfred Kazin's experience as a hungry writer in Starting Out in the Thirties (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., An Atlantic Monthly Press Book, 1965), pp. 15-16. Calverton himself lost his job when the publishing house where he worked went bankrupt. The depression in the field of publications caused obstacles in printing his books. Many of his lecture tours also were cancelled. Consequently, neither Calverton nor his magazine were able to pay their debts. Calverton's personal position was the average rather than exception, from which one can see the situation of others. Calverton to Tennenbaum, May 19, June 9, 12, 1930; Howard Mumford Jones to Calverton, Nov. 23, 1930; Calverton to Howells, June 25, 1932; Chicago University Press to Calverton, April 30, 1932, Jan. 1, 1933. (VFC)

None of the traditional solutions for ending the depression were successful. The Communists, on the other hand, offered a fundamental remedy for the situation, a revolutionary one. "Nobody in the world proposes anything basic and real, except the Communists",⁸ said Lincoln Steffens, whose Autobiography became almost a textbook of revolution. Steffens influenced many writers to sympathize with Soviet Russia even if⁹ they were reluctant to become Communists. Granville Hicks, a newly recruited Marxist, a party member between 1935 - 1939, depicted the appeal of communism as follows:

The Communists wanted not merely to end this depression but to get rid of the system of exploitation that was at the root of all depressions. Their strength, in fact, was fourfold: they had a program of action, a disciplined organization, a body of doctrine, and a working model - the USSR. Each of these was a factor in their appeal to the intellectuals.¹⁰

The successful Five Year Plan in Soviet Russia, at a time when the world's most powerful capitalist country was staggering in economic chaos, was living evidence for many intellectuals as to which side had the truth, and which system they had to follow.¹¹ The prestige of the Soviet Union, especially in liberal circles, was high during the thirties. The Nation and The New Republic persistently supported Stalin, in spite of the Moscow

⁸Quoted in Hicks, "Communism and the American Intellectuals," in Whose Revolution: A Study of the Future Course of Liberalism in the United States, ed. by Irving DeWitt Talmadge (New York: Howell, Soskin, 1941), pp. 81 - 82.

⁹Aaron, Writers on the Left, p. 145.

¹⁰Hicks, "Communism and American Intellectuals," p. 82.

¹¹Arthur Koestler, Arrow in the Blue (New York: Macmillan Co., 1952), p. 278.

Trials of 1936 - 1938. It was easy to defend the Communist point of view after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and the United States in 1933. One of the most powerful factors in the support of the Communists during the thirties, particularly after 1935, was their fight against Fascism.¹²

Edmund Wilson's leftward turn was the case of many intellectuals. The literary editor of The New Republic in his "Appeal to Progressives"¹³ called the liberals "seriously to reconsider" their fundamental points of view.

The eighteenth century middle class principles that ended in "the cul-de-sac of an antiquated economic system"¹⁴ demanded the re-examination of the liberals' anti-Marxian approach. The depression was not the usual economic breakdown, but the "first real crisis since the Civil War".¹⁵ The liberals should grasp the importance of the situation, and if they were reluctant to follow the Communist Party, they must "take Communism away from the Communists", without ambiguities. Wilson's goal was government ownership of the means of production but without adopting the Communist Party tactics.¹⁶ His influence upon intellectuals was great.

¹² See Hicks, Where We Came Out, (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), p. 33, "Communism and American Intellectuals," pp. 89, 85-86. The Fascist point will be traced lengthily in the next chapter.

¹³ Edmund Wilson, The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties (New York: Farrar Straus and Young, Inc., 1952) pp. 513-33. Originally appeared in NR, January 19, 1931.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 526, 528.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 525.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 532.

He attracted, particularly, those who did not want to take the decisive step of joining the party, and were reluctant to adhere to party discipline. They accepted Wilson's analysis concerning the decay of the capitalist system.¹⁷

V. F. Calverton, who was a convinced Marxist, unlike Wilson, analysed the situation along the same general lines but in a somewhat different manner. The big crash was the final stage in the decline of the American petty bourgeoisie. With the growing centralization of American industry, the lower middle class had gradually lost its power and ideological outlook. Even the Democratic Party, which had supported that class in 1912, left it during the twenties, turning to such leaders of big business as Raskob, DuPont, Young and others. The depression destroyed the lower middle class, economically as well as politically. Losing any chance to get support from the big trusts, they would turn to their allies, to the proletariat, predicted Calverton. The decline of individualism and the tradition of laissez-faire, also contributed to the increase of the radical movement. The monopolistic character of industry and the political isolation of the middle class intellectuals, would lead, inevitably, to the radicalization of the American literati. The first step had been taken already, and the leftward movement of people like Theodore Dreiser, Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, Waldo Frank, Ernest S. Bates, Lionel Trilling, Granville Hicks, Newton Arvin, Clifton Fadiman, Edwin Seaver and Felix Morrow, clearly indicated that literary radicalism had become "a mainstream affair." Calverton emphasized the native sources of their revolutionary

¹⁷ See Aaron, Writers on the Left, pp. 202-203.

fervor. They were not outsiders but "clearcut products of American soil,"¹⁸ hence their importance to the radical movement.

To prove this thesis that the radicalization of the writers was a "deep rooted phenomenon,"¹⁹ Calverton published a questionnaire in the same issue, called "Whither the American Writer."²⁰ The aim of the inquiry was to find out "to what extent authors to the right as well as to the left were influenced by the new issues at stake."²¹ Six questions were addressed to seventeen writers: (1) Was American Capitalism "doomed to inevitable failure and collapse?" (2) What would be the writers' attitude toward the social crises that confronted him? (3) The relationship between the author's work and his political party was included in the third question. (4) The influence of being a Communist upon the writer's work was the fourth. (5) The path of American literature in the next decade was question five, and finally, (6) The artists were asked about the possibility of a near proletarian literature. All except two of the seventeen participants on the questionnaire,²² agreed that American capitalism was doomed, although some

¹⁸Calverton, "Leftward Ho!" MQ, VI (Summer, 1932), 26-32.

¹⁹Calverton, "Leftward Ho!", p. 26.

²⁰"Whither the American Writer," MQ, VI (Summer, 1932) 11-19.

²¹Editorial, MQ, VI (Summer, 1932), 5.

²²The participants were John Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest S. Bates, Floyd Dell, C. Hartley Grattan, Edwin Seaver, Henry Hazlitt, John Chamberlain, Randolph Fischer, Malcolm Cowley, Percy H. Boynton, Pierre Loving, Edmund Wilson, Henry S. Canby, Newton Arvin, Granville Hicks and Clifton Fadiman. Since there were among the writers conservatives, skeptics and fellow-travellers, it seems that there was a cross-section of American literary opinion.

thought that its total collapse would not come in the following decade. Ten years for John Dos Passos was too short to "ripen and drop off the tree in." Malcolm Cowley, the new literary editor of The New Republic, represented the others when he wrote that the collapse was "inevitable but not immediately." He was frightened, as many others like Edwin Seaver and John Chamberlain, of the menace of Fascism in America before it could recover from the depression. Most of the writers thought that the artist should take sides on the social struggle. To Dos Passos the crisis would occupy the writer "right in the neck," without leaving him a chance of ignoring the situation. As no one could avoid breathing the air around him, so no writer could disregard the existing social crisis, stated Edwin Seaver.

It is notable that even left writers (Dos Passos, Hicks, Seaver, Arvin and Cowley) were opposed to total surrender to party discipline. According to Percy H. Boynton, the writer "ought not to dedicate his art as a conscious duty." Being a Communist would certainly benefit the artist's work, suggested the Communist participants, but even they were ready to admit that doing so would not automatically improve artistic creation.

On the question whether becoming a Socialist would have the same effect as being a Communist, interestingly, ten out of the twelve who considered it disavowed the idea. Dos Passos expressed the Communist view when he wrote that joining the Socialist Party "would have just about the same effect on anybody as drinking a bottle of near-beer". Hicks opposed the Socialists for their reformistic tendency because "being a Socialist is like being a liberal." Cowley complained about the Socialist's lukewarm type that did not command the imagination of the intellectual. To Seaver it was like a subway that accepted

everyone from a "fake bohemian to a lawyer from the oil trust."²³

It seems that the major significance of the questionnaire lay in the fact that the overwhelming majority of the participants, including liberals, were convinced that the capitalist system was going to collapse and felt that the writer could not disregard the social crisis but had to include it in his artistic work. The additional importance of The Modern Quarterly undertaking was the intellectual refusal to accept the lukewarm character and reform methods of the Socialist appeal. The writers preferred the active and revolutionary fervor of the Communists.²⁴ The press dealt with the results of the questionnaire, emphasizing the clear leftward tendency of the writers.²⁵

Malcolm Cowley in an editorial in The New Republic indicated the reality of the leftward movement. Three years earlier the participants had been classified as liberals or uninterested in politics. In 1932 they saw the Socialist Party as too conservative. But not all of them boarded the "Red Express". They were rather traveling on a "left-bound local"²⁶ concluded Cowley.

The most significant manifestation of the ideological transformation of the intellectuals was the appeal of the fifty-three writers for support of Foster and Ford, the Communist Party candidates in the elections of 1932. Only two of the signatories were party members. It was an

²³"Whither American Writer," pp. 11-19.

²⁴See Hicks, "Communism and the American Intellectuals," p. 83.

²⁵Adamic, My America, p. 77.

²⁶Malcolm Cowley, "Leftbound Local" in NR, LXXII (Aug. 17, 1932), 6-7. A socialist friend, Haim Kantrovitch was angry at the propagandist implications of the questionnaire. Kantrovitch to Calverton, Aug. 16, 1932 (VFC).

unprecedented demonstration of prominent writers who denied their bour-
27
geois origin and declared their support of the muscle-workers.

The thirties were "an age of faith", as Cowley has stated recently.
The Marxism of the writers was apocalyptic rather than philosophical or
economic. They wanted the destruction of the existing order and looked
28
forward to the establishment of a new community. Daniel Aaron has
suggested that the literary left movement during that period was
"peculiarly American", that is, their Communism was a continuance of,
29
rather than a break from the traditional progressive values.

Some of the writers, notably Eugene Lyons, came to depict the 1930's
30
as the "Red Decade" when the Communists dominated American cultural
life. Lyons, an embittered, disillusioned, ex-Communist, by 1940,
sharply criticized the left writers who "in packs...migrated from the Left
Bank of Paris to the political Left of Moscow". He oversimplified the
causes of the turn to Communism, writing that "with the egocentric yowling
of their species they rushed into intellectual slumming as heatedly as they
31
had gone in for slummy intellectualism". It seems that the way, from

²⁷Culture and Crisis: An open letter to the Writers, Artists, Teachers, Physicians, Engineers, Scientists and other Professional Workers of America. (League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford, 1932). Calverton was not one of the signators, as we will see later.

²⁸Malcolm Cowley, "The 1930's Were an Age of Faith", The New York Times, Dec. 13, 1964.

²⁹Aaron, "Communism and the American Writer", The Newberry Library Bulletin, V (Aug. 1959), 84, 93.

³⁰Eugene Lyons, The Red Decade, The Stalinist Penetration of America. (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1940).

³¹Ibid., p. 129.

liberal outlook to a Communist one, was far more complicated than Lyons described. Not every one could join the party, simply because it was very selective and did not accept just anybody. Granville Hicks strongly opposed what he called the "myth" of the Red Decade, although he admitted that almost every publishing house employed a Communist or a fellow traveler.³² The age, however, was far from Communist rule. On the contrary, it was remarkable that "Communism achieved so little influence in a period that was so favorable to its growth", wrote Hicks.³³ Probably the decade was not as "red" as Lyons stated, especially for non-political writers. But even according to Hicks, the Communist Party had influence in the publishing houses and the liberal magazines. Daniel Bell, the historian, observed that, although the party "never won a mass following" in this country, it had a "disproportionate influence" on the intelligentsia. Through its sympathizers in the publishing houses, radio, Hollywood, the magazines, and other mass media, "it exercised influence on public opinion far beyond the mere number of party members."³⁴

For independent radicals such as Max Eastman, Sidney Hook and V.F. Calverton, the party cut off not only the radical avenues but also the liberal ones. Calverton and Eastman bitterly complained about the taboo of The Nation, The New Republic and some publishing houses against their writings.³⁵

³² Hicks, Where We Came Out, p. 51.

³³ Ibid., p. 69.

³⁴ Bell, "Marxian Socialism in the United States", in Socialism and American Life, p. 359.

³⁵ Calverton, who knew the situation in the publishing houses and the periodicals first hand, was able to prove his statement with facts. Calverton to Eastman, Sept. 29, 1934 (VFC).

The relations between Calverton and the Communist Party worsened, partly, because of the "hard line" that the party adopted. The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International decided in 1928 upon the sharpening of the struggle against the right-wing elements of the Communist parties and called for an intensified attack upon the Social Democrats. "Social Facism" became the stigma of the Socialists because "they were breaking down the workers' resistance before advancing fascism," explained William Z. Foster.³⁶ The Third Period of Communism, as the new period of belligerent policy was called, was aimed against Nikolai Bukharin, the Soviet theoretician, and his supporters in America, the group of Jay Lovestone. Furthermore, Stalin's ultra left maneuvers were made not only to get rid of the right wing of the party, but also to cut off the basis of the Left Opposition, the Trotsky faction. By that radical policy Stalin appeared to be more revolutionary than Trotsky, a step that was a serious blow for the Left Oppositionists in the world. The hard line of the Third Period vigorously attacked any turn from the party approach, charging the "deviators" with being Trotskyists. "Social Fascism" was a central slogan in the early thirties of the Communist struggle against Socialists. Typically to the Third Period tactics, the warfare was carried out with ruthless methods.

Calverton, who soon became a victim of these tactics, naturally found such methods "obnoxious." He hoped that they were "ugly but incidental manifestations of mistaken zeal", observed Lillian Symes.³⁷ Until 1933 he had been criticized time and again, but he had gone on

³⁶ Foster, The History of the Communist Party in the United States, p. 266.

³⁷ Lillian Symes, "Calverton; Socialist," MQ, XI (Fall 1940), 22.

with his radical projects, symposiums, and books, without condemning openly either the Comintern or Soviet Russia. As a matter of fact, Calverton was very uncritical in this subject. This chapter tells the story of the strange situation of Calverton, who felt himself a part of the Communist movement, but who was prevented by the party from achieving any position of influence.

The Daily Worker took the lead, accusing Calverton and his magazine of participation in a "world plot" with the Left Opposition against the Communist Party. The newspaper quoted a letter written by Armstead Collier, the business manager of the Modern Quarterly to James P. Cannon, the leader of the Communist League of America (the Trotskyite faction). Collier had written that he would try to convert Calverton to Trotskyism. Moreover, he offered to utilize the Quarterly as a medium for political publicity. This was evidence enough for the Daily Worker that Calverton was a "busy propagandist of anti-Communist, anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist 'philosophy'", and his magazine was surely an "anti-Communist" organ. Since Calverton was clever, unlike Collier, stated the party organ, he preferred to hide behind "long-winded super 'intellectual' attacks" of other persons, printing their attacks on the party in his Quarterly³⁸ while he himself was not yet ready to criticize it openly.

This assault was basically different from the earlier ones that the Daily Worker³⁹ had published. The previous attacks had had a literary character, at least it seemed so to an outsider. Wicks had criticized the books of Calverton and accused him of plagiarism. Though it was the

³⁸ "'Revolutionary' Renegades Aid Cannon's Group: Modern Quarterly and Lettish Splitter with Eastman and Cannon Is Part of World Plot," DW, January 12, 1929.

³⁹ Supra., pp. 144-147.

party line and not a personal venture,⁴⁰ the issue at stake was a book review and not an official political assault. It seems, therefore, that the recent case was far more serious than the earlier. The Communists were determined to diminish the political influence of the Modern Quarterly.

The letter of Collier to Cannon annoyed the editor of the magazine. In his position as business manager, Collier was unable to intervene in the editorial policy of the Quarterly, explained Calverton to the editors of the Daily Worker, therefore the offer to Cannon to use the magazine, was a "foolish remark" without any possible effect. Calverton went on to deny that he was a Trotskyite, indicating his strong pro-Stalinist attitude. In an open debate with Isaac Don Levine on the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, he defended the former and unhesitatingly opposed the latter's point of view. Furthermore, he included in the Quarterly an anti-Trotsky article, justifying the exile of the Russian leader. If he were a Left Oppositionist he certainly would not have allowed such an essay to be published, argued Calverton. He had made a clear statement to that effect some months earlier to Bertram D. Wolfe and William Z. Foster, and still held the same opinion that Trotsky was basically wrong.⁴¹ Trotsky was "impractical" while Stalin, though "less heroic", was "realistic".⁴² It was clear to Calverton that the Daily Worker's accusation was "absolutely incorrect at basis."⁴³ The publication of his letter would help to avoid misunderstandings, but as usual, the Communist organ refused to print it. Even his special appeal to Jay Lovestone, the party leader, to help to publish his denial of the Trotskyite charge, was in vain.⁴⁴

⁴⁰Jack Wasserman to Calverton, March 12, 1928 (VFC).

⁴¹Calverton to the editor of the Daily Worker, Jan. 17, 1929 (VFC).

⁴²Outline of lectures on Russia, Aug. 16, 1929 (VFC).

⁴³Calverton to the editor of Daily Worker, Jan 17, 1929 (VFC).

⁴⁴Calverton to Jay Lovestone, Feb. 16, 1929 (VFC).

Even good friends criticized Calverton, privately, because of his lack of complete devotedness to the Communist ideology.⁴⁵ He was pre-occupied with the psychology of sex instead of proletarian ideology. To be a Marxian critic he should have to combine literary work with political activity, argued Henry Gage.⁴⁶ Calverton disagreed with Gage. His articles, wrote Calverton, had been written "from a purely Marxian angle."⁴⁷ It seems that precisely that "purely Marxian" approach confronted him with so many attacks. The Communists denounced his historical materialistic interpretation. They could not let an outsider be the theoretician of Communist ideology. It was a shame for the party and also a menace, hence the strong opposition to his theories.⁴⁸

Following the example of the Daily Worker, A. B. Magil, a party functionary, led a harsh attack upon his "Marism."⁴⁹ Calverton, according to Magil, had a "petty bourgeois thought" and "social democratic vulgarity". The Quarterly became a forum for the enemies of the party. Since he was bound economically and socially, to the capitalist society, his Communist pretensions were undoubtedly false. Magil was troubled by the fact that Calverton achieved in the bourgeois circles almost an official status as the revolutionary critic of the country. That was the real menace of Calverton to the Communists. They feared that the competition would be too difficult, therefore they used tactics of character

⁴⁵Henry Gage to Calverton, July 17, 1929 (VFC).

⁴⁶Gage to Calverton, July 9, 1929 (VFC).

⁴⁷Calverton to Gage, July 11, 1929 (VFC).

⁴⁸Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967.

⁴⁹A. B. Magil, "The 'Marxism' of V. F. Calverton", The Communist, VIII (May, 1929), 282-285.

assassination, showing to the young left wingers Calverton's "true" face and his methods.⁵⁰

The pretext for Magil's criticism was an article that Calverton had published in the New Masses where he pointed out the absence of revolutionary vision among American intellectuals. He also stressed the need for a new and more radical outlook in literature than had existed before. Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank and Lewis Mumford were singled out by Calverton as rebellious writers, or critics, but he lamented the lack of radical fire in their works. They had not learned yet to command their revolt to revolutionary avenues, wrote Calverton.⁵¹ In spite of his criticism of Frank's "religious mysticism" and Mumford's "confused categories,"⁵² the article curiously brought them nearer. Frank, who had led a devastating attack upon Calverton's first book, The Newer Spirit, sought a reconciliation with Calverton. He believed not only in the possibility of modus vivendi, he wrote to Calverton, but also in a modus operandi.⁵³

The peace effort of Waldo Frank was heartily accepted by Calverton, who seized the opportunity to offer the establishment of a group consisting of various shades of revolutionary thought. Frank reacted positively, seeing the importance of bringing together social revolutionaries with those whose major interest was in "spiritual revolution", "(Mumford, and I suspect you, and me)", wrote Frank, revealing his ignorance of Calverton's

⁵⁰"...in a card index system that supplies him with appropriate quotations and historical allusions at a moment's notice," read Magil's charge on his method of discussing. Magil also criticized him of using others' researches and quoting impressive names whose books he never read. Ibid., pp. 182, 285.

⁵¹Calverton, "Revolt Among American Intellectuals," NM, IV (April, 1929), 3-5.

⁵²Ibid., p. 5.

⁵³Waldo Frank to Calverton, April 9, 1929 (VFC).

stand in the radical movement.⁵⁴ Taking the initiative, Calverton sent to Mumford a list of possible contributors to the symposium, which included, in addition to Frank, Mumford and himself, the following names: Samuel D. Schmalhausen, Joshua Kunitz, George Schuyler, Harry Elmer Barnes, John Dos Passos, Van Wyck Brooks, Walter Lane, J. B. S. Hardman, Michael Gold, Marx Eastman, Isaac Don Levine, Suzanne La Follette, Robert Wolf, Walter White, Spencer Broadney, and Stuart Chase. Scott Nearing wanted to join the group, but Calverton was doubtful whether a party member would be welcomed.⁵⁵

Mumford had no objection to Communist officials, provided they were able "to establish from the beginning the notion that we are searching for a new means of expression and action, and that there are no vested interests in ideas-even revolutionary ideas-to be protected." By the same token he wanted to include people like Edmund Wilson, who was at that time pretty far to the right.⁵⁶ Since Mumford wanted to discuss carefully the initial conception of the group's function to get a point of departure, at least, and as Frank was busy with his own projects, the symposium died before it started.⁵⁷

In spite of the failure of the plan, the proposed cooperation with Mumford and Frank is significant for understanding Calverton's position in the left wing movement in 1929. He considered himself a Marxist, a Stalinist and not a "spiritual revolutionist" as Frank thought erroneously.

⁵⁴Frank to Calverton, April 19, 23, 1929 (VFC).

⁵⁵Calverton to Mumford, May 6, 1929 (VFC).

⁵⁶Mumford to Calverton, May 8, 1929 (VFC).

⁵⁷In the spring of 1930 Mumford was still convinced of the need of such a symposium. Mumford to Calverton, March 27, 1930 (VFC).

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It did not bother Calverton to edit a book with liberals such as Harry Elmer Barnes or Spencer Broadney, or Trotskyites such as Max Eastman and Isaac Don Levine, or an economic materialist like Stuart Chase, or evolutionists like Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford. Calverton's Marxism never prevented him from working with other shades of left wingers. He served as a broker between the factions absorbing ideas from one part and discussing them with another side of the movement. Because of this undogmatic point of view he was able to work with both sides. Therefore, the notion of such a symposium was typically Calvertonian. His importance, then, was that of serving as a catalyst for the leftist ideas of his age.⁵⁸

During the years 1929-1931 Calverton was busy with several editing projects, namely an anthology of Negro literature, a book on anthropology, three symposia on sex and education (with the collaboration of Schmalhausen) and a series of sociological text-books. Possibly because editing was an easy way to earn money in those difficult years of the depression, and because he wanted to utilize the new connections he had made since moving to New York in 1928, this period was stamped by editorial projects. Symposia then, were the order of the day.

In the spring of 1930 Calverton proposed to Michael Gold the organization of a left wing group which would examine American culture from a Communist point of view. Unlike the project with Mumford and Frank, in which the participants were supposed to represent different ideological factions, the new one was intended to include only Communist writers.

⁵⁸In Calverton's Mss. there was a plan, which he made after 1932, to establish a radical club with the presidium of Scott Nearing, Norman Thomas, William Z. Foster, Max Eastman and Ernest S. Bates. The proposition shows Calverton's unsectarian viewpoint, but also his impracticality (VFC).

"The New Generation", as it was tentatively called, would contain genuinely radical material which would "dynamite a vast array of prejudices about the subject", wrote Calverton to Gold.⁵⁹ He offered his place for the weekly discussions and relied upon Gold's support to persuade such writers as Joseph Freeman and Robert Dunn, to come.⁶⁰

The project, which Calverton considered one of his best, gradually began to take shape.⁶¹ At the weekly meetings in his place the following people actively participated: Scott Nearing, Sidney Hook, Harry Potamkin, Samuel Schmalhausen, Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold, Bernard Smith, Louis Lozowick, Joshua Kunitz, Joseph Tauber, and Calverton himself. The title of the book was changed eventually to "America at the Crossroads". An elected executive committee included Scott Nearing, Sidney Hook and Calverton.⁶² Calverton tried very hard to attract other writers, such as John Dos Passos, with the assurance that no attempt would be made to describe the Soviet Union as a Garden of Eden.⁶³ Dos Passos, however, unconvinced by the argument, refused to join the group. In October, 1930 the symposium was still alive, when Gold read his paper at Calverton's place.⁶⁴ Toward the end of the year the meetings were canceled because the Communist members, as a result of a party order, severed relations

⁵⁹Calverton to Gold, April 16, 1930; Calverton to Robert Dunn, April 26, 1930 (VFC).

⁶⁰Calverton to Gold, April 26, 1930 (VFC).

⁶¹Calverton to Gage, June 14, 1930 (VFC).

⁶²Calverton to Robert Dunn, June 2, 1930; Calverton to Joseph Freeman, May 15, 1930 (VFC).

⁶³Calverton to Dos Passos, July 8, 1930 (VFC).

⁶⁴The address was delivered on Oct. 9, 1930 (VFC).

with the host.⁶⁵ William Z. Foster planned to launch an attack upon Calverton in the January issue of The Communist, giving him the tag of "social Fascist".⁶⁶ The party, certainly, was not interested in the cooperation with such a "sinner", particularly in a Marxist Symposium. The order to withdraw from the group was a logical one, from the Communist point of view.⁶⁷

Daniel Aaron, erroneously assumed that the Marxist symposium with Gold, Freeman and Hook was the extension or continuation of that with Mumford and Frank.⁶⁸ But it seems that there were two distinct projects with dissimilar aims and a different type of participants.⁶⁹

This symposium was an example of the Communist confusion regarding V. F. Calverton. Although the Daily Worker and The Communist stamped him with the Trotskyite tag,⁷⁰ the greatest heresy in those days, faithful Communists like Scott Nearing, Michael Gold, Louis Lozowick, Joseph Freeman and Joshua Kunitz continued to collaborate with him, attending

⁶⁵Freeman informed Calverton about the party order. Henry Gage to Calverton, Jan. 3, 1931 (VFC).

⁶⁶See Infra. pp. 246-247.

⁶⁷The party order somehow escaped the attention of Daniel Aaron, therefore he was unable to specify the reason of the project's failure. Aaron, Writers On the Left p. 261.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹The idea of Marxian symposium was picked up a year later by Newton Arvin, Bernard Smith and Granville Hicks. The contributors were supposed to be recently converted Marxians, therefore Calverton was not included. The editors wanted to express "a tendency rather than an achievement." Arvin to Calverton, Feb. 25, n.d. /ca. 1932/ (VFC). Hicks also explained the "tactical reasons" for Calverton's exclusion from such a program. Hicks was ready to abandon the plan if it disturbed Calverton's own project. Since the latter's went on the rocks he gave Hicks the green light to go ahead. Hicks to Calverton, Jan. 15, Feb. 28, 1932 (VFC).

⁷⁰Nearing was expelled later from the party, but at that time he was on good terms with the Communists.

weekly meetings at his place. Freeman and Calverton, who became personal friends at this time, were supposed to represent in the symposium the "radical Marxist position".⁷¹ The "Trotskyist" Calverton whose Marxism was put in the party organs in quotation marks, worked on a radical book with Communist intellectuals! This confusion one can accept the description of the poet Louis Ginsberg, which was not far from the truth, although somewhat exaggerated:

I dare say you soon will be the center of an eruption of Social Manifestos....It would be interesting to see Mike Gold, Ben Stolberg, William Foster, Edmund Wilson, Waldo Frank, etc., getting half-nelsons on one another, while your benignant smile blesses them all. ⁷²

The program of the Communist study of American culture had hardly petered out, when Calverton was engaged in a debate with Lewis Mumford.⁷³ Calverton criticized the latter, as he had Brooks and Frank, for a lack of revolutionary outlook. Brave as Mumford's revolt was, he "failed to appreciate the inevitable direction of the change that has come upon us."⁷⁴ Mumford took up the challenge of Calverton's essay. "If the issue were not properly defined and fought, there must be perpetual misunderstanding and mistrust between those who are potentially allies", he wrote⁷⁵ to Calverton. Since the New Masses refused to print Mumford's

⁷¹ Calverton to Freeman, April 28, 1930, May 6, 1930 (VFC 2.7). They had corresponded on official matters earlier, but Calverton became personally acquainted with Freeman, only at that time.

⁷² Louis Ginsberg to Calverton, March 19, 1932 (VFC).

⁷³ Supra., p. 234.

⁷⁴ Calverton, "Revolt Among American Intellectuals", NM, IV (April, 1929), 5; See also The Same attitude in Calverton, "The American Literary Radicalism," MQ, III (Oct.-Dec., 1926), 262. The challenge of social revolution has yet to be answered", concluded Calverton.

⁷⁵ Mumford to Calverton, March 29, 1929 (VFC).

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answer, Calverton took up the issue of arranging a controversy in the pages of The Modern Quarterly. "A Challenge to American Intellectuals" was the title of the discussion, with Mumford representing the evolutionary approach and Calverton the revolutionary one.

Lewis Mumford was convinced that revolutionary tactics and political upheaval were well suited to agricultural countries, but not to industrial ones like America. He saw in revolution a "catastrophe" which the United States should avoid. "Continuous pressure" rather than barricades and dramatic moments were needed for altering the existing conditions. The ultimate goals of Mumford's society were "the growth of a common culture, the development of friendly ways of living, the spread and renewal of the arts and sciences". To achieve these ends he proposed the control of industry, the socialization of the municipal utilities and the nationalization of communication facilities.

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Calverton opposed this line on a factual basis rather than in principle. Social change never would be attained through gradual development, as Mumford suggested. It would not work because of the absence in the "drive of inspiration." Calverton challenged the "catastrophic" vision of the revolution. It would not destroy economy because the workers needed a stable economy. It would only change its control. No ruler would give up his post peacefully, argued Calverton, questioning the practicality of Mumford's methods. The conflict between the evolutionary and the re-

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Mumford to Calverton, April 17, 1930 (VFC).

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Lewis Mumford, "A Challenge to American Intellectuals: The Evolutionary Approach", MQ, V (Winter, 1930-31), 407-410; Mumford to Calverton, December 25, 1930 (VFC).

volutionary approaches was "inconceivable", asserted Calverton, concluding that not words but deeds, would prove which side was right.⁷⁸ Fellow travelers and writers, of the left naturally supported Calverton's point of view. Newton Arvin as well as Maxim Lieber, the writers' agent, were satisfied with the attack upon the "mild mannered liberal", Mumford. The revolutionary case was so clearly stated, wrote a liberal reader, that he had been convinced by it, and had decided to dedicate his work to the development of the labor movement by employing radical means.⁷⁹

The disturbing years of depression led Calverton to become more and more enmeshed in collectivism.⁸⁰ He demanded that the artist change his outlook. The writer would be "forced to sacrifice the right of individual enterprise and will be driven to draft his talents to the demands of social organization and production".⁸¹ To increase his influence and to obtain a greater forum for his radical ideas, he decided to invade the college campuses. Stanley Burnshaw, the poet, who admired Calverton at that period, helped to organize radical clubs at the universities of Cornell, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Columbia, The City College of New York and at New York University.⁸²

⁷⁸Calverton, "A Challenge to the American Intellectuals: The Revolutionary Approach", M Q, V (Winter, 1930-31), 411-421.

⁷⁹Arvin to Calverton, [n.d.], 1931; Maxim Lieber to Calverton, Sept. 15, 1931; Samuel Romer to Calverton, Sept. 29, 1931 (VFC).

⁸⁰Calverton to Bradford, Jan. 21, 1932 (Bradford Papers, Harvard University).

⁸¹Calverton, "The Literary Artist in a Mass Civilization", (VFC).

⁸²Burnshaw to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

Calverton had a considerable influence upon students and young intellectuals. Since he himself was still a young man, in his early thirties, and already had a reputation as writer, critic, and editor, he impressed the students. His undogmatic approach also helped in attracting the rebellious youth. He invited them to work for his magazine and some of them accepted it enthusiastically-- Stanley Burnshaw, Michael Blankford, Alfred Kazin, Samuel L. Solon and Herman Singer, to name only a few.⁸³

Newly converted writers and critics such as Edwin Seaver, Granville Hicks, Newton Arvin and Robert G. Davis, had been especially attracted by Calverton's unorthodox approach. Arvin, for example, was drawn by the "dialectical flexibility" of the Marxian criticism in literature, that allowed a choice of the fruitful middle way between opportunism and "inflexible formulism", i.e., Communism.⁸⁴ Robert G. Davis, who was introduced to Calverton by Granville Hicks,⁸⁵ established a literary section in the Quarterly, since he had found it the single periodical with which he was sympathetic intellectually. Marxism in the early thirties was an inspiration which appealed to the intellectuals, Davis admitted, because it claimed an "enormous erudition to venture safely" into the period.⁸⁶

⁸³ Alfred Kazin, Starting Out in the Thirties (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), pp. 74-75; Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967.

⁸⁴ Arvin to Calverton, Nov. 29, 1931 (VFC).

⁸⁵ Hicks to Calverton, n.d. (VFC). "He is a bright boy and something of a scholar, but lazy about writing."

⁸⁶ Davis to Calverton, Nov. 20, 28, 1932 (VFC).

The case of Edwin Seaver, the writer, was somehow different. Though he was still not a party member, he was nearer to this stage than others. As a friend of the Quarterly Seaver strongly recommended the development of a department of revolutionary stories. Here was a good opportunity to encourage proletarian writers, and he urged Calverton not to miss the chance.⁸⁷ The editor accepted the proposal with one restriction, that the stories would not subscribe "to a proletarian kosherdom."⁸⁸ All of those intellectuals helped Calverton in the improvement of the magazine. Arvin and Hicks contributed book reviews, Davis ran the "Literary Front" under the pseudonym Obed Brooks,⁸⁹ and Seaver presented for publication short stories and part of his novels.

The course of Marxian literary criticism developed by Arvin and Hicks was so similar to Calverton's method, that C. Hartley Gratian and Burton Rascoe, two liberal critics, accused them of trailing behind Calverton. Hicks and Arvin objected to the charge not so much because of the statement itself, but rather because of the attempt to spoil their relations with Calverton.⁹⁰ Arvin conceded that Calverton had inspired himself as well as Hicks in their interest in revolutionary criticism, but he had never pretended to deny this fact. Nevertheless, he rejected the charge that he had stolen any idea from anyone. His turn to the left was a "personal necessity (intellectually and spiritually) to move thither", he concluded.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Seaver to Calverton, Dec. 7, 1932 (VFC).

⁸⁸ Calverton to Seaver, Dec. 13, 1932 (VFC).

⁸⁹ Davis to Calverton, April 10, 1932 (VFC).

⁹⁰ Hicks to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

⁹¹ Arvin to Calverton, July 22, 1932 (VFC).

Another recruit for the Quarterly circle was Ernest Sutherland Bates, the critic. He had come out of the West to New York and ideologically found his place in the left wing movement. He credited Calverton with⁹² being the most important single factor in his radical turn. The mutual respect between Bates and Calverton led to a close friendship. A year later Bates was an associate editor of the magazine. His articles were praised in literary circles. They remained intimates until Bates's death⁹³ in 1939, which was a terrible shock to Calverton. Michael Blankford also should be mentioned as a new friend and collaborator in the magazine. Blankford, who returned from Russia enthusiastic, but not yet a Communist, moved closer to the Left under the influence of Calverton. In 1933 he⁹⁴ also held the position of associate editor of the Modern Quarterly. Thus, it seems to be evident, that in any evaluation of Calverton's importance to the radical movement, his influence upon young intellectuals, mainly through personal contact, should not be disregarded.

An important escalation in the warfare between Calverton and the party came with an editorial in the Modern Quarterly in the winter of 1930-1931.⁹⁵ Analyzing the class war in the industrial age, Calverton noted that the democratic tradition, a bourgeois invention against the proletarian, was in a process of decline. Democracy was too weak to control the complicated situation of a centralized economy. According to

⁹² Ernest S. Bates to Calverton, April 20, 1932 (VFC).

⁹³ See Calverton's letter to Bessie Peretz which described his reaction to "Brachy" Bates's death. Calverton to Peretz, n.d. (VFC).

⁹⁴ Michael Blankford to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

⁹⁵ Editorial, MQ, V (Winter, 1930-31), 397-402.

Calverton "only a dictatorship can so integrate the political and economic factors and effect the centralization of control, which were necessary to the maintenance of modern industrial life."⁹⁶ Any proletarian support of that type of government, stated the editorial, would hurt the workers but surely would not help them out of their situation. The economic and social structure of the new society, then, led Calverton to the conclusion⁹⁷ that dictatorship would be the "next step in the historic process." Since dictatorship had two possible types, a Fascist and a Communist one, and Calverton certainly preferred the latter, he called upon the Communists⁹⁸ to be well prepared to meet the challenge and take the leadership.

The editorial brought sharp criticism from William Z. Foster, a leading member of the Communist Party. It was "a strange medley of fascist, social fascist and Communist conceptions," stated Foster in an article in⁹⁹ The Communist. He accused Calverton of developing fascist ideology. Instead of dealing with the true problem of Communism versus capitalism, Calverton raised the false issue of dictatorship versus democracy, and thus ignored the problem of the class war. He declared that Calverton was so anxious to prove the weaknesses of democracy that he did not find place to denounce capitalism. Therefore his arguments "echo the

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 399.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 401.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 402; Calverton's article, "The Literary Artist in a Mass Civilization" (VFC), also arrived at the same conclusions. He frequently debated on the topic, "Is a Proletarian Dictatorship the Road to Freedom?", taking the affirmative position. Calverton to E. Gilman, December 10, 1931; M. Smith to Calverton, March 10, 1932 (VFC).

⁹⁹ William Z. Foster, "Calverton's Fascism," The Communist, X (Feb., 1931), 107.

views of Mussolini and Hitler," and are far away from Marxism or Leninism. The conception of the proletarian dictatorship was depicted by the editorial in the "vulgar sense of the capitalists." Calverton's circle and his magazine received similar treatment from Foster. The "unhealthy" group, which included "social fascist" such liberal elements worked to defend capitalist revisionism. Consequently they were the "enemies of the revolution." Such a "reactionary" circle could not offer any real idea to the new left wing intellectuals, save fascist arguments as Calverton had done in his editorial, Foster concluded.¹⁰⁰

Calverton's reply to this devastating attack was surprisingly modest. In a seven-page letter, which Foster had pledged to print in The Communist, but never did,¹⁰¹ Calverton admitted that his article was not clear enough and caused serious misunderstanding, as Foster's essay indicated. There was no disagreement between them, Calverton claimed, and he certainly advocated class struggle and objected to capitalism. He had not stressed those issues because they were understandable and their logic was implicit in his arguments. Calverton was ready to modify some of the angles to avoid unhappy misunderstanding, but not because he felt he was wrong. Finally, he appealed in a conciliatory tone to Foster to stop the attacks upon sympathizers. Revolutionary advance could be obtained best "by aiming to clarify conflicts rather than by uselessly aggravating and developing them." Since the struggle was not of "individual vanities" but of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 107-111.

¹⁰¹ The letter itself is in (VFC), and Foster's promise to publish it, in Calverton, "An Open Letter to William Z. Foster", MQ, VI (Summer, 1932), 91.

"objectives" with social goals, he gladly conceded that Foster had made some valuable criticisms, despite the terrible distortion of the spirit of his article.¹⁰²

When The Communist refused to publish Calverton's reply to Foster, a conservative magazine offered space for it, but Calverton rejected the invitation because, as he wrote, he always avoided attacking the party in the bourgeois press.¹⁰³ When Foster repeated his condemnation of Calverton as a "fascist",¹⁰⁴ the latter broke his public silence. In an open letter he called the attack "bad strategy" and the tag of "social fascist" as "absurd." Foster's article, Calverton stated, was not honest criticism but a "wholesale condemnation." Calverton rightly indicated that he had become a scapegoat for inner factional struggle, as was reflected in Foster's "unfairness" and "stupidity." In spite of the Communist leader's "profound misinterpretation" of the editorial, Calverton expressed his hope that the revolutionary forces would unite to overthrow the capitalist system, and would not waste their energy tearing apart and dividing the radical thinkers.¹⁰⁵

Several party sympathizers denounced such bad tactics, because they showed the "theoretical dishonesty and educational poverty" of the Communists.¹⁰⁶ Another friend, a newcomer to the movement, who promised to follow the party line, was unable to swallow the "psuedo revolutionary

¹⁰²Calverton's reply to Foster, (VFC).

¹⁰³Calverton, "Open Letter to Foster", MQ, VI (Summer, 1932), 91.

¹⁰⁴William Z. Foster, Toward Soviet Russia (New York: International Publishers, 1932), p. 206.

¹⁰⁵Calverton, "Open Letter of Foster," pp. 91-94, 120.

¹⁰⁶Steinbach to Calverton, February 23, 1931 (VFC).

mysticism" of Communist bureaucrats toward Calverton.¹⁰⁷ The latter was praised for his wonderful self-control. He was comforted that he still escaped the odious charge of being counter-revolutionary.¹⁰⁸ Even devoted party members were reluctant to accept the social fascist condemnation. They raised the issue in party meetings and the topic became the central theme in some of the discussions. Party functionaires, such as William Weinstone, argued that Calverton's ideas were parallel to those of the Socialists, but more scientific, therefore he was more dangerous than they.¹⁰⁹

Since Calverton did not belong to either group the Socialists as well as the Communists attacked him. While Foster denounced him as a Social fascist, Haim Kantorovitch, a Socialist friend, accused him of being a Communist. Much as he liked Calverton personally, he advised Socialist friends to concentrate their fire against Calverton rather than against Foster, because the former's influence was "more enduring and less outwardly objectionable." Since Communism in the eyes of Kantorovitch was "poison," he declared he would fight it tooth and nail, including Calverton.¹¹⁰ Social Fascism was a central slogan in the early thirties of the Communist party's struggle against the Socialists. Typically to the Third Period Tactics,

¹⁰⁷ Stern to Calverton, October 24, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Schaffer to Calverton, August 12, 1932; Art Young to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹⁰⁹ Edith Wolfe to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹¹⁰ Kantorovitch to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

the warfare was carried out with ruthless methods. Calverton, "gaining" the gag of social fascist, was certainly the victim of that line. Granville Hicks, then a Communist, thought that calling people social fascists "did no good and much harm."¹¹¹ A. Landy, a Communist critic, not sharing this viewpoint, followed Foster's example and published an attack on Calverton's "latest caricature of Marxism."¹¹² Since Landy focused his articles on Calverton's "Cultural Compulsives" theory, it is necessary to examine, briefly, this thesis.

In an attempt to use anthropological illustrations in a sociological synthesis, Calverton analyzed the work of two anthropologists; a modern one, Edward Westermack, and that of Lewis Morgan, whose studies became part of the canonical literature of Socialism. The main interest of Calverton was not the accuracy or false basis of their theories, but rather the social response to them, or to put in his words: "It is not what has usually been called the truth of their doctrine, which makes them so powerful, but their adaptability to other interest, class interest, in the main, which they subserve."¹¹³ The compulsive nature of social thought clarifies the limited character of people's point of view. It showed the impossibility of an objective mind in social science, because the reaction to a doctrine had nothing to do with the thesis itself, but only

¹¹¹ Hicks was silent about this until he left the party in 1939. Hicks, "Communism and American Intellectuals," in Whose Revolution, p. 92. Sidney Hook was among those few intellectuals who openly attacked the social fascism. Hook, "The Fallacy of the Theory of Social Fascism," MM, VIII (July, 1934), 342-353.

¹¹² A. Landy, "Cultural Compulsives or Calverton's latest Caricature of 'Marxism'," The Communist, X (October, 1931), 851-864; X (November 1931), 941-959.

¹¹³ Italics in the original. Calverton, "Outlines for Compulsive Basis of Thought," (VFC),

with the sociological background of the people in a given period. The importance of the "cultural compulsive" theory, according to its author, was, in its assumption that no mind could be objective in evaluation of social phenomena. The recognition of that subjectivity would help people to be much more careful in their decisions, and would provide a certain extent of flexibility in criticism "within the radius of the cultural compulsive itself."¹¹⁴

Landy, who had before him definite political aims rather than scientific ones, carried on a wholesale condemnation of the editor of The Modern Quarterly. He argued that Calverton's thesis conflicted with historical materialism, undermining Marxian prestige among the proletariat. It planted "petty bourgeois illusions" in the Communist ranks, therefore he was "reactionary." The denial of objectivity could lead to the surrender of the interests of the proletariat, and were confused with other arguments. Calverton's Marxism was surely "bankrupt" claimed Landy with the recommendation that he "close up shop!" Calverton was accused, among many other things, of showing the inevitable hypocrisy of a class enemy; of being a social fascist; of borrowing other's ideas; of supporting the Second International (The Socialist one) in order to stem the advancing revolution tide in the working class.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴Ibid.; Calverton, "The Compulsive Basis of Social Thought as Illustrated by the Varying Doctrines as to the Origins of Marriage and Family," The American Journal of Sociology, XXXVI (March, 1931), 689-720; see also Calverton, The Passing of the Gods (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 14-18. A reply to Calverton see Edward Westernmack, "On Primitive Marriage: A Rejoinder to Mr. V. F. Calverton," The American Journal of Sociology, XLI (March, 1936), 565-84.

¹¹⁵Landy, "Calverton's Latest Caricature in Marxism," The Communist, X (October 1931), 851-865; X (November 1931), 941-959.

The "cultural compulsive" theory, dealing with the Communists' uncritical adoration of Lewis Morgan's doctrine, and with the subjectivity of man's mind, created discussion even in unofficial Communist circles, such as The Revolutionary Age, the organ of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Majority Group). Will Herberg, a leader of that Lovestonite faction who had been expelled from the party in 1929, saw in the essay "a striking piece of culture historical analysis." Therefore, Landy's attack was "the most absurd manner" of distortion of the issue under discussion, and "cast discredit upon Marxism." Herberg however, did not hesitate to criticize Calverton's theory, especially its failure to distinguish between the effect class bias of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat had on objective truth. Moreover, Calverton had ignored the third stage in social development, namely, the proletarian one. Even Herberg, who was excluded from the Communist Party, regarded the compulsive theory as weak from the Marxian point of view.¹¹⁶ Herberg's praises and moderate criticism of Calverton was unacceptable to another critic of that organ, B. Herman. He demanded that Calverton develop a new theory to explain the "cultural compulsives", since it did not solve anything for a Marxian.¹¹⁷

Thus, from a scientific point of view there was some ground for criticism of Calverton's Marxism, but Landy attacked the problem from the "fantasies of subjectivism," therefore his article was "manufactured",

¹¹⁶Will Herberg, "About the Theory of 'Cultural Compulsives': Marxism and History of Science," The Revolutionary Age, November 14, 1931

¹¹⁷B. Herman, "Marxism and the History of Science," The Revolutionary Age, Dec. 12, 1931.

admitted a Communist friend to Calverton.¹¹⁸ Landy's assault was an example of what one called the Third Period in Action."¹¹⁹

During the years 1931-32 Calverton became an important target of the Communist attack. The Friends of the Soviet Union, a Moscow-financed organization,¹²⁰ refused to let him appear before their group despite the fact that he had lectured for them several times before.¹²¹ Earl Browder, the general secretary of the Communist Party, demanded the removal of his name from the Quarterly letterhead.¹²² The Daily Worker reminded its readers from time to time that they should be aware of Calverton's "Communist" ideas, because his teaching included Social Fascism.¹²³ The favorable reviews which Calverton's Liberation Of American Literature had received in the bourgeois press, were further proof that he belonged to them.¹²⁴ Even when he propagated purely revolutionary ideas he was criticized because of the "curious places" where he expressed them.¹²⁵

One of the forums at which Calverton had been periodically attacked was the John Reed Club of New York. The club had been founded after the stock market crash to encourage young proletarian writers and to attract

¹¹⁸ Gage to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹¹⁹ Jim Cork, " 'Third Period Communist' in Action," Workers Age, July 23, 1932.

¹²⁰ See Ben Gitlow, I Confess, p. 157.

¹²¹ Julius Davidson to Calverton, Feb. 14, 1931 (VFC).

¹²² Earl Browder to Calverton, Aug. 4, 1931 (VFC).

¹²³ DW, Oct. 8, 1931.

¹²⁴ Robert Davis to Calverton, Sept. 21, 1932 (VFC).

¹²⁵ Gomez to Calverton, April 18, 1932 (VFC).

middle class intellectuals, who did not want, as yet, to join the party. The John Reed Club, served as an approach to the bourgeois class in the hope of winning them over to Communism. The editor, of the New Masses, which was the patron of the organization, as well as the many clubs that had been established in different cities, had been instructed by the Charkov Conference of Revolutionary Writers, in November 1930, to expand the proletarian basis of the John Reed Clubs and "to enlist all friendly intellectuals into the ranks of the revolution."¹²⁶ Thus, the John Reed Clubs, which came under the direct influence of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (IUWR), soon lost their independence and served as a camouflaged arm of the Communist Party.¹²⁷

Less than half a year after the establishment of the New York John Reed Club, Calverton applied for admission.¹²⁸ He was never admitted which is somewhat surprising, because in the spring of 1930 Calverton had a good reputation as a Marxian critic and many of the club's prominent members, such as Michael Gold, Joseph Freeman, Joshua Kunitz and Harry Potamkin, had collaborated with him in the Marxian symposium. It would be difficult to prove that the political stand of Calverton played an important role in his rejection in 1930 when cooperation with him and weekly discussions at his place were entirely legitimate. After Foster's attack in January 1931, the reason for the refusal would be understandable, but why was he rejected in April 1930? It seems that personal rather than political motives played

¹²⁶ On the Charkov Conference see N M, VI (Feb., 1931); On the John Reed Clubs, see Aaron, Writers On The Left, pp. 230, 236-247.

¹²⁷ Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967.

¹²⁸ Walt Carmon (Secretary of John Reed Club) to Calverton, April 8, 1930, (VFC).

a role. Some of the members were jealous of Calverton's success, in working for several capitalistic publishing houses,¹²⁹ and because his articles were accepted by bourgeois periodicals, in spite of his left wing point of view. At that time few Communist writers had the same prestige outside the movement.¹³⁰ Michael Gold, always friendly to Calverton in spite of the party attacks, stated that he had proposed Calverton's name for the club and had fought for his admission.¹³¹ Gold's letter indicated that political matters caused the rejection. Whether the case was personal or political, the fact was that Calverton remained an outsider both to the club and to its organ, The Partisan Review.¹³²

The John Reed Clubs soon adopted the party 'line' toward Calverton. Joshua Kunitz, a critic whom Calverton had encouraged, and whose book he had favorably reviewed,¹³³ wrote of Calverton's "much trumpeted 'Marxism'" which many bourgeois writers mistakenly identified with real historical

¹²⁹

In 1930 he worked for, or was advisor to three publishing houses. In 1932 he had some temporary economic problems.

¹³⁰

Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967. Since Dennen was a member of the club's executive committee his opinion here should be important. A friend asked Harry Potamkin in the club's Philadelphia branch about the rejection of Calverton's membership. Potamkin worked hard to give an appropriate answer, but unsuccessfully, because the friend "knew a little about some of the personalities in the club--Seaver, Charles Harrison, Joe Freeman and others." Meyer Steinbach to Calverton, n.d. (VFC). If the cause were political, Potamkin could more simply state so. Steinbach's letter supports Dennen's viewpoint. Sidney Hook also emphasized the fact that the Communist writers were jealous of Calverton's success and reputation. Hook to the author, Sept. 22, 1967.

¹³¹

Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹³²

Calverton to Steinbach, Dec. 14, 1932 (VFC).

¹³³

N R, 69 (July 17, 1929), 238-239.

historical materialism, Kunitz called Calverton and his type "vulgar materialists or pseudo-Marxists," who adopted historical materialism "as a pretext for not studying history."¹³⁴ Kunitz saw it as his "revolutionary duty" to criticize Calverton's false Marxian conception, but assured him that the attack in the New Masses was not personal. "I cherish a warm feeling for you" wrote Kunitz, and "it pains me to have to fight you on the ideological front."¹³⁵

As time went on the accusations against Calverton and The Modern Quarterly became more frequent and more bitter. Sidney Hook, a remarkable young essayist, who wrote on Marxism in the Quarterly, reported about the attacks in the John Reed Club of New York against Calverton's "deviations." The "united front of Calverton and Eastman" was one of the targets of the accusations. The whole atmosphere was hostile to Calverton. Only Joseph Freeman was friendly, reviewing favorably his articles. Hook decided to propose a clear-cut debate on V. F. Calverton in order "to clarify the matter once and for all," but the members were reluctant to deal with the motion.¹³⁶ The opposition to Calverton reached such a height that a new term was coined "Modern-Quarterly-ites," considering it and its supporters as a new faction among the Oppositionists, such as the Lovestonites and Trotskyites.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Joshua Kunitz, "Counter-Statement", N M VII (April, 1932) 10.

¹³⁵ Kunitz to Calverton, April 11, 1932 (VFC); Newton Arvin after talking with Kunitz, Gold, Hook and Freeman, concluded that there were no personal resentments but ideological ones. Arvin to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹³⁶ Sidney Hook to Calverton, Aug. 19, 1932; n.d; Calverton was criticized that his fiction book Three Strange Lovers was written for the amusement of the bourgeoisie (VFC). On the attacks in the club of Philadelphia, see Calverton to Steinbach, Dec. 14, 1932 (VFC).

¹³⁷ Davis to Calverton, Dec. 13, 1932 (VFC).

Whatever Calverton's "sins" were, he had never attacked the party in the bourgeois press, and always, supported the Soviet Union.¹³⁸ In 1930, as well as two years later, he unhesitatingly defended Russia. When he was asked to define his stand on the issue of imperialist war against Russia, he restated his position that the "Soviet Union must be preserved at all costs."¹³⁹ As far as the American Communist Party was concerned, he criticized its tactics and policy. But in elections, he always supported it. As late as the Autumn of 1932 an editorial in The Modern Quarterly urged its readers not to flirt with Franklin D. Roosevelt or Norman Thomas, but to vote for Foster and Ford, the Communist Party candidates.¹⁴⁰ Despite his championing of the party in the elections, Calverton's name was not included in the appeal of fifty-three intellectuals for support of Foster and Ford. One can assume that his exclusion was to satisfy the party officials.¹⁴¹

The opposition to Calverton, strong as it was, did not paralyze entirely his relations with Communist intellectuals in Russia or America. Sergei Dinamov, a leading bureaucrat of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers [RAPP], who was interested in American literature, corresponded with Calverton, and exchanged articles and book reviews with him. Calverton had a column, called the "American Letter," in one of the magazines of which Dinamov was associate editor. Calverton helped the latter to publish one of his essays in The Left, a new radical magazine, established

¹³⁸ On Dec. 21, 1930 he spoke on the topic, "Defend The Soviet Union." (VFC); he appeared before the Friends of the Soviet Union on Feb. 11, 1931 for the last time. (VFC).

¹³⁹ IURW to Calverton, Feb. 28, 1932; Calverton to IURW March 8, 1932. (VFC).

¹⁴⁰ Editorial, "Exit The Forgotten Man", MQ, VI (Autumn, 1932), 9.

¹⁴¹ The list of Signatures in Aaron, Writers On The Left, p. 473, n. 73.

established in the Midwest.¹⁴² Through Dinamov's connections, three of Calverton's books had been translated and published by the State Publishing Company.¹⁴³ The Dinamov-Calverton cooperation reached its peak with plans for the publication in Russia of a book on American criticism by Dinamov and Calverton.¹⁴⁴ The project was ready to go into print in the summer of 1931, but a sudden "paper shortage" caused its delay.¹⁴⁵

Russian enthusiasm about Calverton's book on sex faded as his political position became unclear. Dinamov reported on "lack of interest" in the country toward the theme. Moreover, Soviet scholars did not like to receive lectures on Marxism from an American writer. An American "is not likely to interpret quite satisfactorily Marxian principles for Russians," wrote Dinamov, because "it is difficult for him to know the Russian development of Marxian thought."¹⁴⁶ It was a hint that Calverton was not welcome any more in Russia. Although they continued to correspond to as late as January, 1933,¹⁴⁷ the letters had no meaning after the Soviet exposure of Calverton's "social fascism."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² Calverton to Dinamov, Aug. 12, 1931; Dinamov to Calverton, Sept. 9, 1929 (VFC).

¹⁴³ Dinamov to Calverton, Aug. 1, 1930; Calverton to Gold, June 11, 1930 (VFC).

¹⁴⁴ Calverton to Dinamov, April 30, 1930 (VFC).

¹⁴⁵ Calverton to Dinamov, Aug. 12, 1931 (VFC).

¹⁴⁶ Dinamov to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹⁴⁷ "If you are angry with me," wrote Dinamov in his last letter, "don't forget that we Russians consider self-criticism as the best method of growth and development." Dinamov to Calverton, Jan. 19, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁴⁸ A. Elistratova, "New Masses," International Literature, I (1932), 107.

The plan to take a lecture trip to Japan in the spring of 1932, and to return via the Trans-Siberian route, indicated that Calverton thought he was still on good terms with the Russians.¹⁴⁹ Though he was unable to receive recommendations from the American Communists, he relied upon his friendship with Dinamov, asking his help for the arrangement of his visa. Dinamov not only promised to do so but offered a work room, providing all the facilities for Calverton's convenience.¹⁵⁰ The Japanese invitation to lecture in several universities was canceled because of the war between Japan and China. The Japanese government, which was interested in arousing patriotic feelings, forbade left-wing propaganda in the country.¹⁵¹ It seems that even if the Japanese trip had been realized, it is unlikely that Calverton would have got a Russian visa in the summer of 1932. The lecture tour to Japan, though never carried out, served as a target for Communist attack. Since the Japanese government had persecuted the Communists, Calverton's acceptance of an official invitation indicated, according to A. Landy, that he agreed "to help the government in its murderous task."¹⁵²

There were also some Communist intellectuals in the United States, notably Michael Gold and Joseph Freeman, who were able to maintain friendly

¹⁴⁹ Calverton's plan is in a letter to Ki-Kimura (Tokio), Aug. 25, 1931 (VFC).

¹⁵⁰ Calverton to Dinamov, Aug. 12, 1931; See also Calverton to L. Gerns, Oct. 28, 1931 (VFC).

¹⁵¹ Ki-Kimura to Calverton n.d. (VFC). The Baltimore Evening Sun, March 3, 1932, reported on the postponement of the trip.

¹⁵² Landy, The Communist, X (Nov., 1931), 959.

relations with Calverton in spite of their political disagreements. Freeman, who had become close to Calverton during the Marxian symposium,¹⁵³ participated in Calverton's parties until the fall of 1932.¹⁵⁴ Michael Gold maintained a warm friendship with him for eight years. He urged Calverton to clarify his relations with the party. Accepting the criticism that there was too much backbiting, Gold wrote that "the sadistic pannings one meets when one does anything is a mystery to me."¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Communists were only human beings and they certainly made mistakes, but they worked in the right direction, he added. Gold appealed to Calverton to make clear-cut decisions for himself and his magazine.¹⁵⁶

To be sure, Gold by no means agreed with Calverton's point of view. He criticized "certain tendencies" in The Modern Quarterly and condemned some of Calverton's "deviations". But he also stated, that Calverton was doing "valuable work".¹⁵⁷ Gold was silent publicly about Calverton. He refused to join the choir of denunciators, but also declined to comment on Calverton's For Revolution, "until you get yourself cleared up with the party". The New Masses in general also followed that policy; it closed its pages to his contributions on the one hand, but avoided assault on the other hand. Gold still believed in 1932 in the possibility of good relationships between Calverton and the party, if the latter were really interested.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³Calverton liked Freeman "immensely". Calverton to Gold, April 16, 1930 (VFC).

¹⁵⁴Freeman to Calverton, Sept. 19, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁵⁵Gold to Calverton, n.d., (VFC).

¹⁵⁶Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC)

¹⁵⁷Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC)

¹⁵⁸Gold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC)

Another Communist friend, Henry Gage, was more frank with Calverton than Gold. Gage privately condemned the individualistic attitude of Calverton and his unwillingness to subordinate his position to the party. "You must hold up the warfare standard without the slightest equivocation," demanded Gage. For Gage, revolution meant more than life, therefore, when Calverton preferred free thought to party discipline, he was not a real revolutionary.¹⁵⁹

The criticism of Gage seems to be right and accurate. Calverton's reluctance to abide by party discipline was a basic factor in this situation. But that was only one side of the story. Why did the party attack him so bitterly? Probably, because as a free lance, as an independent Marxist, he caught the imagination of a certain group of youth. The bureaucrats of the party were unable to stand the competition and decided to fight him. "Nobody was as much a threat to the Communists as Calverton", said Leon Dennen recently, possibly with some exxaggeration, "they were definitely afraid of him".¹⁶⁰

It is interesting to note that Calverton on the treshhold of his total break with the Communist Party, when he was attacked as "social fascist" and "counter-revolutionary", wrote his most radical book, For Revolution.¹⁶¹ Max Eastman referred to the book as the essence of Calverton's revolutionary ideas and considered it as highly important for an understanding of his radical point of view.¹⁶² It is worth-while, therefore, to examine it at

¹⁵⁹ Gage to Calverton, Jan. 24, Dec. 26, 1930; n.d. (VFC).

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967.

¹⁶¹ V. F. Calverton, For Revolution (New York: The John Day Company, 1932).

¹⁶² Interview with Max Eastman, April 10, 1967.

some length. The twenty-four page pamphlet¹⁶³ was begun as an article of rebuttal to Against Revolution,¹⁶⁴ by Gilbert Seldes, hence its title For Revolution.¹⁶⁵

In the beginning Calverton stated his belief that whether voluntarily or not "it is only a revolution which can solve the social problems at stake."¹⁶⁶ Since revolution was "inevitable" people should labor to hasten, rather than avert it, in order to minimize its misery. Revolution should be considered as a "cleansing force". The idea that revolution was an evil was a bourgeois invention. Yet the middle class had glorified it in the eighteenth century in order to free itself from the feudal rule. As soon as the bourgeoisie seized power, it prohibited further revolutions suppressing with force, any attempt at liberation. The workers and farmers were disarmed and denied their right to change their social condition. Calverton tried to show that revolution as such had many virtues and its final results more than compensated for the immediate suffering it created. What were the goals of the coming revolution? The new socialized society would be based upon the collective principle, where economy would abolish

¹⁶³

Since For Revolution is unpagged, for the convenience of the quotations I pagged it, beginning with the first written page of the pamphlet.

¹⁶⁴

Gilbert Seldes, Against Revolution (New York: John Day Co., 1932).

¹⁶⁵

William Wiscott proposed the title first to Calverton. Wiscott to Calverton, n.d.; Calverton to Harris, June 28, 1937 (VFC).

¹⁶⁶

Calverton, For Revolution, p. 1.

exploitation and would not aim for profit but for use. That would be, certainly, a classless society.¹⁶⁷

The main part of the pamphlet was devoted to an analysis of the American scene. While there were in the United States sufficient external conditions for revolution, the subjective psychological ones were missing. America, as a highly industrialized country, was undoubtedly ready for revolution. The working class, however, was still unprepared for it. Unlike the European proletariat, which had strong class consciousness, their American brethren entirely lacked this quality. The Western frontier had played, according to Calverton, a major role in the creation of a unique situation among the American workers. The frontier had provided an outlet for the poor, who had easily obtained farms in the West. The individualistic character of the frontiersmen and the land owning type of settlement created a petty bourgeois psychology among the farmers and workers, a situation which did not exist in any other country.¹⁶⁸ Calverton adopted the frontier thesis of the noted historian Frederick Jackson Turner, to explain the cause of the proletarian psychological backwardness for the revolution.¹⁶⁹ The immediate task should be, therefore, the creation of a class conscious proletariat, which could be attained only by education. "It is absurd... for us," wrote Calverton, aiming his criticism at the Communist Party, "to talk about making a revolution until those steps have been taken."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 6-9

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 10-12

¹⁶⁹ While in 1932 Turner's thesis was in the peak of its popularity, recently many scholars have challenged it. For a balanced examination of the pros and cons see Francis S. Philbrick, The Rise of the West, 1754-1830 (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), pp. 379-387, especially the selected bibliography, pp. 387-88.

¹⁷⁰ Calverton, For Revolution, p. 21.

In the search for the best method to find the way to the heart of the petty-bourgeois-minded workers, Calverton restated his conviction that the American revolutionary tradition should be utilized "as symbols of challenge and advance."¹⁷¹ He appealed to the radical movement "not to scoff at the American revolutionary heritage but to build upon it."¹⁷² If the American workers were proud of their revolutionary past, they could be inspired by the possibility of such a movement in the future. Thus, Calverton demanded revolution as the sole way to realize the goal of a socialized community. But this action should come only "the day after tomorrow",¹⁷³ because the radical movement had before it a more immediate task, namely, the psychological education of the working class. This goal could be accomplished by understanding the unique American scene and by utilizing the revolutionary tradition in America.

The pamphlet gained warm praise from left-wing writers.¹⁷⁴ Sherwood Anderson saw it "amazing clear" and "corking".¹⁷⁵ Edwin Seaver thought it "excellently done & makes good horse sense."¹⁷⁶ Waldo Frank was enthusiastic. For Revolution was "a superb piece of work", "sound...and thorough." The pamphlet was "amazingly broad in scope" and "intensive in power," and yet it was acceptable to the masses. If the Communists and the Socialists had

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁷⁴The Liberals as well as the conservatives thoroughly opposed any idea of revolution, therefore no one could expect favorable reviews from these groups.

¹⁷⁵Anderson to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

¹⁷⁶Seaver to Calverton, October 28, [ca. 1932-], (VFC).

any sense they would print the pamphlet in million copies, argued Frank.¹⁷⁷ Ben Gitlow, the ex-Communist leader, then a Lovestonite, welcomed Calverton's turn to the American tradition, which would be an effective method to win the petty-bourgeois over to the radical camp. He also agreed with the inclusion of the farmers along with the workers. Although it "may not just fit in with the views of the strict Marxian dogmatics," it was, however, "absolutely correct," because the situation of the American farmer was not parallel to that of the European peasant.¹⁷⁸

Leon Trotsky's five-page single-spaced review was certainly the most significant piece of criticism which Calverton had so far received from a left-wing intellectual.¹⁷⁹ The review sharply condemned the theoretical rather than practical character of the essay, which could be regarded as an academic debate in a liberal club on the topic whether revolution would be necessary or not. Trotsky went on, accusing the author of disregarding the important instrument of the revolution, that is, the political party. Neither the Socialist Party nor the Communist Party was mentioned. Since the organizational machine of the revolution was neglected, the intellectual could be convinced of the inevitability of the revolution and could "quietly smoke his cigarette to the end and go on to the order of the day." The exiled Russian leader assumed that Calverton did not mention the parties

¹⁷⁷ Frank to Calverton, n.d.; Michael Gold also liked the pamphlet. Gold to Calverton, n.d.; See also George C. Counts's interesting view in Counts to Calverton, July 12, 1932; and Leo Huberman to Calverton, December 25, 1932; A friend thought it worthy to put side by side with Marx's Communist Manifesto. Jack T. to Calverton, October 29, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁷⁸ Ben Gitlow to Calverton, June 15, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁷⁹ The letter from Trotsky dated on November 4, 1932 was printed in The Modern Monthly. Leon Trotsky, "On the Revolutionary Intellectuals: An Open Letter to V. F. Calverton," MM, VII (March, 1933), 82-85

because he was afraid to take sides in the Stalin-Trotsky controversy. At this point Trotsky launched an attack upon the American fellow-travelers. Although a fellow-traveler would be "better than an enemy", nevertheless, a Marxist cannot "travel with the revolution", he must be part of it. The Marxist who did not carry his ideas out completely, "betrays Marxism". He demanded that American intellectuals decide which side they would like to take in the Bolshevik fight; otherwise they would "yield to the worst Philistine prejudice and be doomed to demoralization". Trotsky certainly made propaganda for himself and his movement by charging Calverton with ignoring: the Stalinist Menshevism in Spain (the united front policy of collaboration with Social Democrats); the Fourth International; the Communist failure in their struggle with the Fascist forces in Germany; and finally, of not mentioning the Stalinist dictatorship in Russia.

As to the American scene, Trotsky completely agreed with Calverton's proposal to use the American revolutionary tradition and to attract the people by speaking to them in local terms. He was ready to accept the slogan, "Americanize Marxism!" It did not mean to revise the Marxian philosophy, but rather "to root it in American soil and to verify it against the event of American history".¹⁸⁰

Trotsky's review was not one of total praise of For Revolution, as Calverton remarked to a friend.¹⁸¹ Probably political motivation rather than simple ideological interest stood behind the letter, as its publi-

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. , pp. 82-85.

¹⁸¹ Calverton to Steinbach, December 14, 1932 (VFC).

cation in the Trotskyite Militant indicated.¹⁸² Perhaps Calverton's uncertain position in the radical movement, plus the bitter Communist attacks on him also contributed to the special attention from the leader of the Left Opposition. Nevertheless, it was "a remarkable tribute", as Schmalhausen emphasized.¹⁸³ It was written with respect toward Calverton's thesis, a tone which was unusual with Trotsky to an outsider.¹⁸⁴

The international attention attracted by Calverton from allies and enemies alike, shows the strategically significant position he occupied in the American radical movement. The attack in the International Literature, the central organ of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (IURW), and published in Moscow singled out Calverton and Max Eastman as "social fascists".¹⁸⁵ In an essay that examined the activities of the New Masses, the magazine was accused of entrusting Calverton, who was "without a doubt ideologically connected with social-fascism", with the leadership in the fight against humanism.¹⁸⁶ The periodical was also criticized for keeping silent about Calverton, and not attacking his deviations. The twenty-year old author of that assault, whose English was imperfect and whose ignorance of the American situation was astonishing,

¹⁸²Leon Trotsky, "Respectives of Marxism", The Militant, December 31, 1932. Trotsky sent the copy of the letter to The Militant, therefore his propagandist aim was clear. See also A. Swabek (National Secretary of the Communist League of America) to Calverton, December 10, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁸³Schmalhausen to Calverton, December 21, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁸⁴A. Elistratova, "New Masses", International Literature, I (1932), 107.

¹⁸⁶The intention was Calverton's article "Humanism: Literary Fascism", NM, V (April, 1930), 9-10.

as Leon Dennen learned when he met her in Moscow,¹⁸⁷ directed the editors of The New Masses to overcome that "most serious shortcoming". They were ordered to launch "a ruthless exposure of the social fascist spokesmen", i.e., Calverton and Eastman. Every issue of The New Masses would be watched "with the closed attention" by the International Union of Revolutionary Writers, to see whether the magazine would repair its faults.¹⁸⁸

The Left, a new quarterly review of radical and experimental art, which first appeared in the midwest in March 1931, was also subject to criticism from Moscow. The fact that Calverton was the editor of the department of literary criticism, and contributed an article to the new periodical,¹⁸⁹ was certainly one of the causes of the attack. The second issue of The Left, which was its last, accepted the Moscow directive. In a letter to the International Literature, the editors of The Left admitted that at the beginning they had not been sufficiently informed concerning the factional struggle in the left-wing movement. This was changed in its second issue. The editors declared that they were "entirely severing our connections" with Calverton, his name was removed from the list of editors and no contribution from him was accepted. They confessed that the "insinuation" of Calverton into the magazine was a social fascist attempt to win over a revolutionary current in order to destroy it.¹⁹⁰ Leon Dennen's article in Left No. 2,

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Leon Dennen, April 10, 1967.

¹⁸⁸ Elistratova, "New Masses", pp. 107, 114.

¹⁸⁹ Calverton, "The Need for Revolutionary Criticism", The Left, I (Spring, 1931), 5-10.

¹⁹⁰ "Left No. 2," International Literature, Nos. 2-3 (1932), 146.

"Plekhanov and the Marxian Approach to Art", was welcomed in Moscow because of its attack on the social fascists in general, and on Calverton in particular.¹⁹¹ Dennen has argued recently that he neither called Calverton a social fascist nor attacked him especially in his article. He just briefly criticized Calverton's essay in the previous issue of the magazine. In Russia, however, the editors of the International Literature were eager to condemn Calverton and gladly exploited Dennen's few remarks, as if America had finally found a critic who recognized the fascist character of Calverton.¹⁹²

It is interesting that the accusation of "social fascist" in the pages of the International Literature, did not prevent the editors from printing in the same issue Calverton's pledge of support for Russia in the event of an imperialist war.¹⁹³

The editors of the New Masses following, voluntarily or reluctantly, the Moscow directive to begin a "ruthless exposure" of Calverton's "social fascist" character, launched a vehement attack on Calverton with the unprecedented length of sixteen pages.¹⁹⁴ The authors, David Ramsey and Alan Calmer, had been Calverton's students in Junior High School in Baltimore. They had admired him and participated in his weekly meetings at "210", his Baltimore home.¹⁹⁵ According to the order from Moscow they produced

¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁹²Conversation with the Author, April 10, 1967; See also Deming Brown, Soviet Attitudes Toward American Writing (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962). p. 60.

¹⁹³International Literature Nos. 2-3 (1932), p.8.

¹⁹⁴David Ramsey and Alan Calmer, "The Marxism of V. F. Calverton," NM, VIII (January 1933), 9-27.

¹⁹⁵Una Corbett to the author, August 24, 1967.

an extensive, biased picture of his life. One cannot remain unimpressed by their determination to find every evidence and reference to condemn Calverton.¹⁹⁶ Among other charges he was accused of fascism, ignorance of the principles of Marx, anti-Marxism, petty bourgeoisie and literary sex-racketeering. Calverton's high crimes were of being a Lovestonite, near to Trotskyism and finally a counter-revolutionary.¹⁹⁷

The "New-Masses Calverton Memorial Issue", as a Communist friend called the attack¹⁹⁸ which occupied the major part of that issue, fell like a bombshell in Calverton's circles.¹⁹⁹ Although the criticism was anticipated, especially in the light of the directive from Moscow, nobody expected a sixteen page attack upon one single person. The writer of one, out of the two dozen letters received by Calverton after the assault,

¹⁹⁶Some of the arguments seem to be, partly, right and acceptable. There were not a few points of weakness either in Calverton's Marxism or in his behavior. But the wholesale accusation was certainly of a political character where justice and logic were not the most important things to consider. From multiple citations they tried to prove that he failed to grasp the real conception of Marx. Probably Calverton's Marxism was an absorption of the ideas of Plekhanov, Kantorovitch, and Hook, among others. But this would be far from the charge that "the reactionary nature of Calverton's theory and its fascist implications, reveal not only the confusion of his mind but his Role as a disseminator of anti-Marxian ideas". Ramsey and Calmer, NM, VIII (January, 1933), 23.

The charge of plagiarism was a major part of their essay. Although he was a careless writer, a popularizer rather than a profound scholar, a "very quick and fluent handler of ideas", it seems to be an exaggeration to call him a plagiarist. Leon Dennen, who was not a friend of Calverton, was more objective in remarking that "no doubt that he was engaged in some plagiarism, but to say that Calverton was a plagiarist and to make a big case of it, is completely stupid". (Interview with Dennen, April 10, 1967).

One can also accept the criticism that he tried "to reconcile the irreconcilable". He tried to be a friend of everyone, contributing to Communist and bourgeois periodicals which was impossible in the American situation.

¹⁹⁷Ramsey and Calmer, NM, VIII (January 1933), 18-27.

¹⁹⁸Richard Paige to Calverton, March 29, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁹⁹The impression was so deep that even thirty-four years later, when the author interviewed several contemporaries, almost their first question was whether he had read the New Masses piece.

apologized that he had underestimated Calverton's importance. He doubted whether the magazine would print a longer article "if someone should discover suddenly that Stalin is a traitor to the revolutionary cause".²⁰⁰

The repudiation by the New Masses pained Calverton very much. It hurt him because he was classified as an enemy while he wanted to belong to this movement.²⁰¹ In his answer, however, he succeeded in covering his feeling, using his sense of humor. At the head of his "Open Letter to the New Masses",²⁰² he printed the order from International Literature to the New Masses to expose Calverton's "social fascism". He understood, therefore, that the magazine had to pay for its past sins of being silent about him. The authors of the article, however, "tended to protest just a little too much", devoting the bulk of the issue to his errors, and he did not expect that the magazine would "bend so far backwards in order to gain absolution".²⁰³

Since the political heresy-hunting did not take into consideration either fact or reason, the attack was "full of distortion, dishonesty and political Machiavellism". If he were really an anti-Marxist, plagiarist and sex racketeer, why during the twenties had his contributions been welcomed in the American and Russian revolutionary circles? He listed his long radical activities and connections with Foster, Browder, Dinamov, the Daily Worker and many other Communist institutions, which hailed him and praised

²⁰⁰ M. B. Schnapper to Calverton, January 29, 1933 (VFC). Schnapper was excluded from the party because of this letter. The same was the case of R. Paige. Paige to Calverton, March 29, 1933 (VFC).

²⁰¹ Interview with George Britt, April 5, 1967.

²⁰² Calverton, "An Open Letter to the New Masses", MM, VII (March, 1933), 110-114, 127-128.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 110.

his work as good and valuable for the revolution. The change was in the party policy, he argued, and not in his Marxism. Calverton's basic argument was that "the political instead of scientific character of your attacks betrays itself in your total lack of strategy".²⁰⁴

Calverton denounced the bad tactics of "lies and slanders" of the Communists which they used against everyone who refused to accept their "stupidities as thought and ... word-mongering as action".²⁰⁵ Real Marxism was dynamic and scientific, and not "a sterile dogma", he lectured Ramsey and Calmer who "distorted" and "misrepresented" his Marxian approach. The menace of the Communist movement, according to Calverton was that its leaders exploited Marxism "to stifle criticism and to preserve power" in the terrible factional struggle.²⁰⁶

The "Calverton issue" of the New Masses was echoed in the pages of The New English Weekly. Gorham Munson, its editor, supported Calverton's point of view and criticized the political motives of the attack, especially the omission of The Liberation of American Literature, Calverton's best Marxian work.²⁰⁷ Ramsey and Calmer, replying to Munson, exploited the non-radical forum to show to the liberal readers Calverton's "charlatanry".²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 127-128.

²⁰⁷ Gorham Munson in The New English Weekly, (May 18, 1933), p. 115.

²⁰⁸ Ramsey and Calmer, Ibid., (July 6, 1933), 286-287.

Calverton, with a good sense of humor, answered the accusations, regarding Ramsey and Calmer as "a self appointed publicity bureau" of Calverton in America.²⁰⁹

In spite of the humor in Calverton's reaction, the New Masses attack was crucial for him. It signaled the total break with the Communist Party and its sympathizers. The decade-long effort of Calverton, who was, and remained, an independent Marxist, to maintain a modus vivendi and even a modus operandi with the Communist movement ended in failure. The party should be blamed for its ruthless attacks and malicious charges against Calverton. The New Masses article uncovered the tactics of the Stalinists. Calverton's effort to maintain an independent position as a Marxian critic and at the same time to belong to the Communist movement was a failure because under the Third Period Communism this was impossible. The cleavage was inevitable and predictable. In such circumstances one can only wonder that he survived for a relatively long time in the no man's land. Since the exposure by the Daily Worker in 1929 of Calverton's "Trotskyism", he had been attacked time and again, but interestingly the Russian press had run his articles and published his books. Even in the United States noted American Communists had collaborated with him in the edition of a Marxian symposium. The opposition to him began in America and not in Russia, but it was not carried out with sufficient determination and efficiency until Moscow directed his political destruction. Then the relations were entirely severed. Party members and fellow travelers broke with him. Good friends stopped participating in his lively parties. The Communist boycott of Calverton was not only intellectual but also social. His name was taboo in the

²⁰⁹ Calverton to the editor of The New English Weekly, n.d. (VFC); Munson replied to the Communists once again, supporting Calverton's independent character. Munson in The New English Weekly, (Aug. 3, 1933), 384.

radical press. In the era when many American intellectuals were switching toward Communism, when Stalinism was supported by prominent newly converted writers, Calverton, hesitantly and even reluctantly, turned to the anti-Stalinist camp. As a direct result of his break with the party, Calverton was unable to play a major role in the literary thirties as a left wing critic.

One may add that his success as a radical critic and the position that he occupied in the intellectual Left movement was partly due to the fact that in the late twenties and the early thirties very few prominent intellectuals supported the Communist Party. After 1932, however, with the leftward turn of important critics and writers, Calverton's fame naturally diminished. From this time on, he openly belonged to the relatively un-influential non-Communist left, wandering among the various opposition factions.

CHAPTER SIX

"AMERICANIZE MARXISM": 1933-1935*

Since the late twenties Calverton had been disturbed by the suppression and exile of Leon Trotsky and the growing authoritarianism of Stalin. The turn from the dictatorship of the proletariat to a personal despotism of Stalin, was unacceptable for Calverton as well as for many others.¹ He criticized the bureaucratization of the Communist Party and its "Social Facist" policy. He also disagreed with the party's Dual Unionism, and its approach toward the Negro. In spite of all that, the editors of The Modern Quarterly even as late as January 1933, had decided not to become an opposition magazine. Calverton shared Robert G. Davis's opinion that an attack should be launched against the tactics of the Communists, but he found no necessity to do it at that time.²

Following the common belief among revolutionary circles that open criticism of the Soviet Union or the Communist party could only strengthen the capitalist camp, Calverton always avoided public opposition to Russia's theoretical and tactical errors. The New Masses attack in January 1933 which was the culmination of a stormy campaign against him, finally convinced him that silence on that issue would not only harm the Communist movement but would also be "treason to the workers' cause".³ This reply

*The slogan was suggested by Trotsky, and Calverton used it frequently. M M, VII (March, 1933), 85.

¹Una Corbett to the author, August 5, 24, 1967.

²Calverton to Robert Davis, January 15, 1933; Calverton to Granville Hicks, January 15, 1933 (VFC).

³Calverton, "The Crisis in Communism: A Reply to Leon Trotsky", M M, VII (April, 1933), 140. The Modern Quarterly became the Modern Monthly in February, 1933.

to Trotsky,⁴ where he spoke out firmly against Stalinism, was a decisive departure from his traditional policy. The new line was hastened by the New Masses "Calverton Memorial Issue".⁵

Calverton believed that his earlier refusal to criticize Communist blunders was a "fallacy", and regretted it. After a close examination of the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, he decided that the former's victory had done "indescribable harm" to the Communist movement. The bureaucratic fetters of the party and the heresy-hunting tactics of the Comintern had turned them from a "creative revolutionary instrument into a bureaucratic steam-roller machine".⁶ He regarded the suppression of Criticism as the cancer that devoured the vitality and plasticity of the movement. The prohibition against discussing party policy in a democratic and constructive manner, seemed to Calverton to be the fundamental error of Stalin's regime. The Communists preferred to build an unreal world fabricating the facts that best supported their opinion in order to justify the rigid tactics of the party. The lack of a sense of reality was "suicidal" to the movement, Calverton observed. The Comintern's decision on December 15, 1931, that the Social Democrats in Germany were the real enemy of the Communists and not the Nazis, was regarded by him as the worst and the most "catastrophic" error that the organization had committed.⁷

⁴On Trotsky's review of For Revolution, see Supra, pp. 263-264.

⁵See Gorham Munson in The New English Weekly, III (May 18, 1933) p. 116.

⁶Calverton, "Crisis in Communism", p. 140.

⁷Ibid., p. 145.

Trotsky's analysis of the German situation, calling for a united front against Fascism his attitude toward Stalin's policy, as well as his remarks on the Chinese revolution, were all acceptable to Calverton. The latter disagreed, however, with the theory that the Russian revolution had arrived at a "Thermidorian" stage, i.e., a reactionary period under Stalin's leadership. He still believed in the dynamic force of the Communist movement, but insisted that the prerequisite for its success would be the existence of an opposition which would be allowed to criticize the party's errors. Such a free, democratic and legal opposition was important for the health of the movement and its vitality. Calverton called for the fusion of all the Communist organizations which had departed from the Third International, into a "healthy, dynamic, constructive, revolutionary" party. This would allow autonomous status to the national parties, letting them take into consideration the countries, special conditions. It was for the creation of a new Communist organization, that would emphasize national variety and encourage interior constructive criticism, that Calverton promised to dedicate his energy and effort.⁸

The reply to Trotsky was, then, a decisive departure from his earlier support of Stalin's point of view, and a turning point in Calverton's attitude toward the Comintern. The debacle of the German Communist Party convinced him that he should fight Stalin's policy tooth and nail. According to Calverton's own account, the German failure was the most important single factor contributing to his change of mind.⁹

The sudden changes in the party's attitude toward the Socialists,

⁸Ibid., pp. 140-145, 151.

⁹Calverton to Gage, Oct. 23, 1933 (VFC).

from "Social Fascism" to "United Front from Below", and later to a "Popular Front", were subject to Calverton's criticism. Furthermore, Stalin's dictatorial rule that made Marxism a theology instead of a science, certainly played an important role in Calverton's new approach. He became "anti-Stalinist to the core", so convinced of the bankruptcy of Stalinism, that he was shocked when a reviewer accused him of praising the Communists.¹⁰

The radical change which took place in Calverton's political position in 1933-1934 should not be surprising. It was a process which had begun in 1927-1928, after his visit to Russia, and reached its climax in 1933 when he was denounced in Moscow and New York, and when Hitler seized the power in Germany. The sudden transformation, from pro-Stalinist to anti-Stalinist point of view was in his public appearance rather than in his mind. Privately he had for a long time been skeptical and critical of the party line.¹¹ The growing resistance of the Communists toward him, which was described at length in the previous chapter, was partly a reflection of his own position.

Following the new line that Calverton established in his answer to Trotsky, The Modern Monthly, the new format of The Modern Quarterly, published articles sharply critical of the Stalinist regime in Russia. Max Eastman led the fight, with a devastating attack on the suppression of the literary life in the Soviet Union. In a series of articles, which later

¹⁰Calverton to Joseph Shipley, Nov. 17, 1934 (VFC); see also Calverton's other anti-Stalinist statements; "Bankruptcy of Stalinism", (VFC); editorials, M M, VII (Jan. 1934), 707; VIII (Jan., 1935), 649, IX (April, 1935), 69-70.

¹¹Morton Levine to Calverton, June 28, 1930 (VFC); Una Corbett to the author, Aug. 5, 1967.

appeared in book form, called Artists in Uniform,¹² Eastman uncovered Stalin's literary inquisition. The charges, which received attention in the non radical press,¹³ aroused countercharges in the New Masses.¹⁴ Charles Yale Harrison, a writer who had just resigned from the New Masses with "a loud and clear bang", as a protest to the persecution of Trotsky's sister, who eventually committed suicide in Berlin,¹⁵ also contributed to the magazine's anti Stalinist approach. Harrison, a bitter excommunicant, who could not stomach "the murderous chicanery of the professional (...) Communists",¹⁶ condemned the "Communist demons" and their "petty-fogging tactics". The persecution of the Russian literati was also subject to his criticism.¹⁷

The anti-Stalinist policy received a new dimension when Calverton printed an anti Communist symposium with the participation of Bertrand Russell, John Dewey and Morris Cohen.¹⁸ Sidney Hook, an unaffiliated Marxist, like Calverton, criticized the "Fallacy of the Theory of Social

¹²Max Eastman, Artists in Uniform: A Study of Literature and Bureaucratism (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1934); The first articles were, Eastman, "Artists in Uniform", M M, VII (Aug., 1933), 397-404, Eastman, "Stalin's Literary Inquisition", M M, VII (Nov. 1933), 623-631.

¹³See for example The New York World Telegram, Aug. 3, 1933; The New York Sun, Aug. 4, 1933.

¹⁴Josua Kunitz, "Choose Your Uniform", N M, VIII (Aug., 1933), 14-15.

¹⁵Charles Yale Harrison to Calverton, Jan. 19, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Charles Yale Harrison, "An Excommunicant Replies", M M, VII (June, 1933), 313.

¹⁸"Why I am Not a Communist", M M, VIII (April 1934).

Fascism".¹⁹ The magazine so drastically changed its policy, that in January 1934, Corliss Lamont, a radical writer and a supporter of the journal, complained about the constant bitter attacks on Russia. Lamont agreed with constructive opposition but he objected to "uncritical criticism". He objected to the total denunciation of Stalin's government, as if there were no beautiful and successful aspects in the Soviet life. To disregard the achievements, by showing always the weakness, was an unfair and unjust method.²⁰ Mauritz Hallgren, the associate editor of The Nation, exaggeratedly pointed to the liberal tendency of the Monthly.²¹

The magazine certainly was not going backward toward liberalism, but it had a clear oppositionist inclination. To be sure, neither Calverton nor Eastman nor Hook were anti-Russian. On the contrary, they praised and defended the Soviet Union. They only objected to Stalin's bureaucratic party and his tactics. Calverton clearly expressed his stand on this subject, writing in an editorial, that "in spite of all its political defects, the social and economics accomplishments of the Soviet Union are a living inspiration" for the proletariat of the world.²² He wanted to regenerate Lenin's old party, by transfusion of new healthy blood.²³ While he attacked the Comintern and Stalin, and let others do the same in his magazine, he made some gestures toward collaboration with the

¹⁹ Sidney Hook, "The Fallacy of the Theory of Social Fascism", M M, VIII (July, 1934), 342-352.

²⁰ Corliss Lamont to Calverton, Jan. 6, 1934 (VFC).

²¹ Mauritz Hallgren to Calverton, July 17, 1934 (VFC).

²² Editorial, M M, VII (Jan. 1934), 707.

²³ Calverton, "Bankruptcy of Stalinism", (VFC).

party.²⁴

The Communists, despite his "rebellion", would have been ready for reconciliation with Calverton, if he had been willing to accept their dictation. They were interested in his magazine, as other groups were, and not only would they have given him a high price for it, but would also have granted him a leading position in the literary field.²⁵ But Calverton rejected such an offer, because he would not "sell out to the devil of Stalinism", as an anti-Stalinist friend has remarked.²⁶ Then the Communists began to act, using to eliminate his influence, such means as slander, social boycott and character assassination. Epithets like "plagiarist", "counter-revolutionary" or "vulgar literary tradesman", were commonly used against him.²⁷ In 1934 he was "honored" by a long attack in International Literature, which mainly copied from the New Masses the accusations of Ramsey and Calmer.²⁸ The "official corrupter of the left-wing intelligentsia", as he was called, served by his articles the anti-Marxian camp. With his "cruelly distorted Marxism" Calverton became the mouthpiece of the "bourgeois sociology". His Trotskyist tendency was the main target of the article, and a good opportunity for its author to accuse

²⁴Haakon Chevalier to Calverton, July 13, 1934 (VFC).

²⁵James Rorty in M Q, XI (Fall, 1940), 50.

²⁶Una Corbett to the author, Aug. 24, 1967.

²⁷M Q, XI (Fall, 1940), 50; Louis Corey, Ibid, p. 45.

²⁸A. Stork, "Mr. Calverton and His Friends", International Literature, No. 3, (1934) pp. 97-124.

Calverton's "sins" as well as Eastman's "lies".²⁹

Eventually, the party adopted a new tactic which was more effective and harmful to Calverton. It was decided not to mention his name, books or articles, just to disregard them.³⁰ Since he "cared enormously whether his books were noticed and ignored and whether reviews were favorable or unfavorable", as a friend observed,³¹ that strategy was painful to him. Liberal journals, such as The Nation and The New Republic, that favored the Soviet line and acted according to that interest, did not accept contributions from Calverton and reviewed his books in an unfriendly manner.³² Calverton was deeply disappointed when he lost his radical and liberal readers and audience.³³

His loneliness was intensified by the social boycott of former friends and collaborators. Party members and fellow travelers severed relations with Calverton, partly, because of the party order, and partly, because they could not swallow his oppositionist attacks. This was probably more painful for him than the official denunciation. Granville Hicks, who broke with the Lovestonites",³⁴ and decided to take side with

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Calverton to Knight, Aug. 24, 1936 (Knight Collection, University of Kentucky).

³¹Henry Hazlitt, M Q, XI (Fall, 1940), 48.

³²See for example the review of Eric Estorick, N R, LXXXI (Jan. 23, 1935), 311.

³³Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967.

³⁴Davis to Calverton, June 4, 1933 (VFC).

the Communists, was the first among the fellow travelers to resign from The Modern Monthly. Though he believed that a fellow traveler should be neutral in the factional struggle, Hicks, nevertheless, fully supported the party. Calverton's "positive alliance with the Lovestonites", and the Monthly's oppositionist point of view, compelled him not to be identified with the magazine, he wrote to Calverton.³⁵ The latter rejected this.³⁶

Calverton's reassurances, however, were not accepted. Many contributors left the magazine. Newton Arvin asked to have his name removed from the letterhead.³⁷ Kyle S. Crichton, an associate editor of Scribner's Publishing Company, who was a new convert, left the journal, as did Eli Siegmeister, a musicologist, and T. Sheel, an artist.³⁸ Edwin Seaver, the writer whose stories and novels appeared in the magazine, was not satisfied with Calverton's petty bourgeois trend. Although not a party member, Seaver found its line "sound and constructive and tried by much experience."³⁹ Stanley Burnshaw, the poet and critic, "a rarely fine fellow",⁴⁰ as Calverton had described him when they were associated in

³⁵Hicks to Calverton, Jan. 8, 1933 (VFC).

³⁶Calverton to Hicks, Jan. 15, 1933 (VFC).

³⁷Newton Arvin to Calverton, Sept. 15, 1933 (VFC).

³⁸Crichton to Calverton, Feb. 28, 1933; Siegmeister to Calverton, Sept. 21, Nov. 12, 20, 1933; Sheel to Calverton, March 12, 1934; Karl Pretshold to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

³⁹Seaver to Calverton, Feb. 17, 1933 (VFC).

⁴⁰Calverton to Angel Flores, Jan. 7, 1933 (VFC).

establishing radical clubs on college campuses, also decided to leave The Monthly. In February, 1933 he had cheered for Calverton's "shellacking" answer to the New Masses. In April he still heartily agreed with Calverton's attack upon the Communist yellow journalism, the "crowning achievements of their unquestionable incompetence of stupidity".⁴¹ In the fall of 1933, however, Burnshaw went over to the New Masses and stopped writing to Calverton.

Another critic who severed connections with the magazine was Robert G. Davis. Odet Brooks, the pen name of Davis, had edited the "Literary Front" for The Monthly for a year. He was interested in the success of the radical movement, and was wondering about the position of the fellow traveler in his relations with the party; should he continue to support it, even if he refused to be responsible for its intellectual errors? He recommended Calverton attack the party's "Social fascism", or its policy toward the Negro.⁴² Davis, seeing the chaos and the internal fight, was deeply discouraged by the Communist movement.⁴³ In spite of his agreement with the magazine's policy, Davis resigned, assuring Calverton that the decision had no political implications.⁴⁴

According to Robert Briffault, a noted anthropologist, whom Calverton admired, sympathizers had no place in the revolutionary movement. Two parties stood face to face, and fellow travelers had no place between them. He objected to a middle ground in political issues. "If you're

⁴¹Burnshaw to Calverton, Feb. 24, April 2, 1933 (VFC).

⁴²Davis to Calverton, Jan. 9, 1933 (VFC).

⁴³Davis to Calverton, Jan. 30, 1933 (VFC).

⁴⁴Davis to Calverton, April 4, 1933 (VFC).

not a Communist you're a fascist", wrote Briffault to Calverton. "Nothing else matters".⁴⁵ The latter's attempt to establish an American Communist Party was regarded by Briffault as "poisonous in the stinkiest degree". National Communism was even more dangerous than National Socialism, therefore he was sorry to see Calverton so deeply involved in "such a mess".⁴⁶

A severe blow to Calverton was the withdrawal of Michael Blankfort from the editorial staff of the magazine. He was a fellow traveler who had become associate editor of The Monthly, and a close friend of Calverton. He decided to resign because his Communist belief was in contradiction with the magazine's policy. He wanted to work for the party organs. Loving Calverton and trying to be loyal to him, as he was, he did not leave after Calverton's reply to Trotsky, which was a serious case against Stalinism, but chose a relatively quiet period for doing so, in the summer of 1933. Probably he could not stomach Eastman's attack in "Artists in Uniform"; therefore the article might be said to have caused the break. In the September issue Blankfort's name was omitted.⁴⁷ Calverton was deeply hurt by Blankfort's resignation. Withdrawing from his earlier sharp condemnations, Calverton wanted him to grasp the real character of the party, its ruthless tactics and dogmatic approach. He was saddened by Blankfort's decision to join "the most vicious elements" in

⁴⁵ Robert Briffault to Calverton, April 7, 1933 (VFC); Briffault, "Fellow Travellers", M Q, VI (Summer 1932), 48-53.

⁴⁶ Briffault to Calverton, Nov. 18, 1934 (VFC); The letter was mainly a review of Calverton's book The Passing of the Gods.

⁴⁷ Blankfort to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

the Communist ranks, who destroyed the chance for a nice future life.⁴⁸ As they were good friends the resignation was a painful act for both of them. Its announcement to Calverton was "perhaps the hardest hours I ever spent", recalled Blankfort.⁴⁹ They remained friends in spite of the ideological disagreement.⁵⁰

Michael Gold finally broke his public silence concerning Calverton. They had exchanged warm letters as late as 1933 and visited one another. The publication of Eastman's article and Harrison's letter, which attacked the party and the Soviet Union,⁵¹ "completely wiped out any lingering faith" in Calverton, admitted Gold.⁵² Either the late date of the appearance of Gold's article, November 1933, or its moderate tone, indicated Gold's sorrow about Calverton's new direction and his unwillingness to write an attack upon him.

Gold conceded that he had erred in believing in Calverton's "good will". He knew that the latter had some "ordinary complexes", but he had hoped that Calverton would "adjust himself". The opportunism which led Calverton to try to "reconcile every extreme" was among his weaknesses, but nobody had criticized him. Gold recalled the period of the mid-twenties, when he and Foster had encouraged Calverton, in spite of his "deviations". Gold confessed that he had always thought that Calverton "might be doing

⁴⁸Calverton to Blankfort, n.d. (VFC).

⁴⁹Michael Blankfort in M.Q., XI (Fall, 1940), 43.

⁵⁰Ibid. Calverton visited Blankfort's house, Calverton to Eastman, Sept. 29, 1934 (VFC).

⁵¹Supra, pp. 276-277.

⁵²Michael Gold, "What A World: Against V. F. Calverton", D W, November 6, 1933.

some good work along with the bad", by influencing the intelligentsia and attracting them toward Communism. The sort of articles that The Monthly printed, however, convinced him that it was a "dumping ground" where the enemies of the Communist Party were welcomed. It was the prejudice and hatred that the magazine preached that brought about the break in Gold's relations with its editor. The former also admitted that he had objected to the long attack in the New Masses, not because of its content, but rather because he thought it a "tactical error" to devote so much space to the heresies of a single man. He concluded his article with the denunciation of the tendency of The Modern Monthly which should be "fought and condemned."⁵³ Gold's confession, in the official organ of the Communist Party, was a guideline for fellow travelers and friends of Calverton to follow.⁵⁴

The break with the official party and Calverton's anti Stalinist position, then, was not only a political or ideological affair, but influenced his personal life. The withdrawal of contributors and associate editors from the magazine was followed by a break of personal relations with good friends. Calverton himself sharply distinguished between political or literary disagreements and personal affection. As far as he could, he tried to keep contact even with his ideological enemies. It was not unusual to find at his parties writers who had just attacked him publicly.

⁵³
Ibid.

⁵⁴ Eli Siegmeister was influenced by Gold's arguments, and refused to allow the continuation of the printing of his articles in the Monthly. Siegmeister to Calverton, Nov. 12, 1933 (VFC). Calverton regarded Gold's attitude as a "naive" Stalinist one, but he liked Gold personally, who was "really a swell guy". The basic error of Gold was that he accepted everything without critical analysis. Calverton to Siegmeister, Nov. 20, 1933 (VFC).

His friendship with Michael Blankfort and Henry Hazlitt was a case in point.⁵⁵ There were, however, others who did not accept his distinction between politics and friendship. Henry Gage, for example, preferred the party to Calverton.⁵⁶ The gregarious Calverton suffered from the Communist boycott. He was depressed by his loneliness. The more his old friends left him, the more he tried, superficially, to be among people. He gave more parties, inviting people from radical and liberal groups.⁵⁷

What was Calverton's position in the ideological struggle among the oppositionist factions? Did he belong to the Lovestonites, the Trotskyites, or did he prefer the Musteites, a new faction in the radical movement. For better understanding of Calverton's political activities during the period of 1933-1935, it is necessary to examine the political developments of the era. The aggressive policy of the Third Period Communism (1928-1935) was still in effect and the Communist Party's main target was the Socialist rather than the Capitalist. This policy proved to be fatal in Germany where the Communists attacked the Social Democrats instead of the Nazis. The Comintern did not realize its error of underestimation of the Fascist menace until 1933, and even then the policy was changed only half-heartedly and insufficiently. The Third International decided upon what was called the "United Front From Below", that is the

⁵⁵Blankfort in M.Q., XI (Fall, 1940), 43.

⁵⁶Gage to Calverton, n.d. (VFC); Calverton to Brenner Jan. 26, 1935 (VFC). Those who left him were probably "fellow marchers", but not real friends because the latter kept the contact. See Herbert Gorham, "Last Letter to George", M.Q. XI (Fall, 1940) 37.

⁵⁷Interview with Una Corbett, March 26, 1967: Alfred Kazin, Starting Out in the Thirties (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., An Atlantic Monthly Press Book, 1965), pp. 73-74.

Communists called on the workers of the left parties to unite in their fight against Fascism. But the new line was intended to appeal over the heads of the Socialist Party leaders, directly to the masses. That step, which seems to be more tactical than a real wish to oppose Fascism, met with little enthusiasm and little cooperation from the concerned parties. The Daily Worker's call for "A United Front to Fight Fascism"⁵⁹ did not receive the support of the masses.

While the Communists had little success in achieving inter-party collaboration, their decision to fight Fascism gained the sympathy of the intellectuals. The leftist movement of the American literati, which had been already strongly influenced by the depression, was intensified due to the anti-Fascist stand of the Communist Party. This policy, which was completed in 1935, when a "Popular Front" was declared, played a major role in the leftist turn of the American intellectuals.⁶⁰

Anti-Fascist as he was, Calverton could not accept the "United Front From Below" policy. In April 1933 he swiftly reacted to the Daily Worker's appeal for a united front. The new line of the party meant the recognition of its earlier blunder and it now realized that the true enemy was the Fascists and not the Social Democrats. Nevertheless, the new turn was strictly a tactical one, stated Calverton, whose aim was "to lead the masses away from their old leadership". What the radicals of America needed, according to the editor of The Modern Monthly to avoid the possibility of the establishment of a Fascist movement in this country, was

⁵⁹ Daily Worker, March 25, 1933.

⁶⁰ Granville Hicks, Where We Came Out, p. 41; Aaron, Writers On the Left, pp. 172-173.

the foundation of an "honest, genuine united front".⁶¹

The failure of the "United Front from Below" to unite the radical organizations, and the real meaning of that policy, were demonstrated in the Madison Square Garden affair. On February 16, 1934, a Socialist demonstration was held, protesting against the Dollfuss putsch in Vienna, where Socialist Democrats had been killed by the Fascists. The Communists invaded and broke up the meeting in Madison Square Garden, which ended in a violent and bloody fight. This Communist attack discredited the party as well as the revolutionary cause. United Front activities, as far as they had ever existed, ceased after the riot. Fellow travelers like Granville Hicks, who was at that time associate editor of the New Masses, were "heart sick" when they learned of the Communist tactics.⁶² While Hicks protested privately, many others preferred a public denunciation. In an "Open Letter to American Intellectuals", fellow travelers, independent Marxists, Lovestonites, Trotskyites and Musteites criticized the Communist Party and called for an armistice among the radicals in order to be able to stand against the Fascist menace.⁶³

⁶¹ Editorial, "For a United Front", M M, (April, 1933), 133-134; VIII (May, 1934), 197-199.

⁶² Granville Hicks, "Communism and American Intellectuals" in Whose Revolution, ed. by I. D. Talmadge, pp. 92-93.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 93; Another "Open Letter to American Intellectuals" appeared in The Modern Monthly whose signatures were mainly members of the American Workers Party, such as A. J. Muste, Louis F. Budenz, Sidney Hook, James Rorty, Calverton, James Burnham, J. B. S. Hardman and Ludwig Lore. M M, VIII (March, 1934) 91-92.

The Madison Square Garden affair was a blow to the prestige of the Communist Party. The method of violent intervention in meetings of other parties was not new. It had been used against the Trotskyites. James P. Cannon had bitterly complained about the "slander", "ostracism" and "gangsterism" that the Stalinists had employed in their attempt to annihilate his faction.⁶⁴ While this line had been successful during the first years of the Third Period, bringing "dog days" to the Trotskyites as well as to the Lovestonites,⁶⁵ in 1934 it proved to be a failure, as the Madison Square Garden affair indicated. The increasing menace of Fascism, on the one hand, and the bankruptcy of the Communist policy in Germany, on the other hand, could explain, at least partly, the change that took place. The Comintern was forced to re-examine its aims.

In the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, in the summer of 1935, a new policy, a "soft" one, was adopted. The "Popular Front" as it was called, was a 180° turn from the previous line. Collaboration with all the enemies of the Fascists was the order of the day. The yesterday's "social Fascists" now became allies. That policy was especially needed in France and Spain to fight the Fascist elements there. In the United States it changed the political face of the radical movement. The open cooperation with the Socialist Party and other left factions was based on a three-point program: to fight against Fascist forces in America; to cooperate with non Communist labor unions, (dissolving the "dual unions"); and finally to support the New Deal of President Roosevelt.⁶⁶ During the

⁶⁴Cannon, History of American Trotskyism, pp. 65-73.

⁶⁵Ibid, p. 90. James Cannon the Trotskyite admitted that Stalin's "left turn" was a successful maneuver which was a "devastating blow" to Cannon's faction.

⁶⁶Hicks Where We Came Out, p. 40; Daniel Bell, "Marxian Socialism

Third Period Franklin Delano Roosevelt had been regarded by the Communists as an anti labor president, a servant of Wall Street, and even a Fascist.⁶⁷ The Popular Front Policy was a total reversal and Roosevelt's left turn after the elections of 1934 was welcomed. The reform tendency of the New Deal was praised. In 1936 the party actually supported and worked for Roosevelt's reelection.⁶⁸ The new slogan was "Communism, Twentieth Century Americanism", and the names of Jefferson and Lincoln were substituted for Marx and Engels. The party made strenuous efforts to attract middle class intellectuals especially prominent figures, and used them as "stars" in manifestos and open letters. That was the heyday of American Communism. The popularity of the party was high, especially among the intellectuals. The membership increased from about 12,000 in 1929 to approximately 50,000 in 1935-1936, but its influence was much greater, particularly in the cultural field.⁶⁹

V. F. Calverton did not share the pride and joy of the victorious Communists. Years later, after the Moscow trials of 1936-38, and especially after the Soviet-Nazi pact in 1939, his point of view was proved to be eventually right. Meanwhile, before Stalin's ruthless methods were

in the United States"; In Socialism and American Life, ed. by Egbert and Persons, I, 355-56.

⁶⁷ See the "Manifesto of the Communist Party of the United States" of the party's eighth convention, in Earl Browder's Communism in the United States (New York: International Publishers, 1935), pp. 13-20.

⁶⁸ Bell, "Marxian Socialism", p. 357.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 353; Hicks, Where We Came Out, pp. 39-43; Hicks, "Communism and American Intellectuals", pp. 95-96. Since Hicks was personally involved at that stage as a fellow traveler, who joined the party in 1935 because of the Popular Front, his experience is important here.

uncovered, he suffered from the Communist partial dominance in the cultural field.

While Calverton was undoubtedly in the anti Stalinist camp, it was not clear, even to him, which faction he wished to support. In 1933 he had been inclined to accept, though not uncritically, Jay Lovestone's view. The Lovestone Opposition Group vehemently opposed the official party's sectarianism which was "the fatal blight" of the movement. Sectarianism led to sacrifice "realistic revolutionary achievement to high-sounding radical phrase mongering". The fundamental policy of this group was the emphasis upon "the specific national features" which should be examined before concrete attempts would be made on an international level. The Lovestonites insisted upon a "realistic estimate of objective conditions" in the labor movement. They opposed the "suicidal" policy of dual unionism, demanding the affiliation of all unions with the American Federation of Labor. As the Trotskyists, the Lovestonites rejected the "United Front from Below" approach, calling for a united front which would work "on the basis of a certain minimum program", every organization "retaining its full right of political expression and criticism." Will Herbert, the editor of the party organ, emphasized the importance of cooperation with the Socialist Party. Opposing the theory of "social fascism", Herbert stated that dictatorship as well as the Comintern's subordinate position to the Russian Communist Party led to the "mechanical transference of the methods and forms of struggle" which was suitable for Russia, to other countries. Consequently, the dual unionism, the factional struggle, and many other issues were copied by the Communists without examining whether the Soviet situation existed in their countries. Herberg

antagonized the Trotskyists too, because basically Trotsky also supported the system of political leadership in the Comintern. "Stalin is Pope, Trotsky is anti-Pope; we are against the Papal system as such", stated Herberg.⁷⁰

On several occasions Calverton declared that Lovestone's analysis of the American scene was "the soundest" in the country.⁷¹ Jay Lovestone, Bertram D. Wolfe and Will Herberg, the leaders of the Communist opposition, as the Lovestonites called themselves, frequently corresponded with Calverton, contributed to The Modern Monthly, and invited him to write for the Workers Age, their official weekly organ. Relations between Calverton and the group were warm, personally and ideologically; so good, that Lovestone asked him to deliver an address before Lovestonites in Montreal and to donate its income to the Workers Age.⁷² It is not surprising, then, that Calverton was classified by Communists and fellow trave-

⁷⁰ Will Herberg "The Crisis in Communism: A Viewpoint of the International Communist Opposition", M M, VII (June, 1933), 283-288.

⁷¹ Calverton to Hicks, Jan. 15, 1933; Calverton to Steinbach, Dec. 14, 1932 (VFC).

⁷² For a few examples of the close relationship with the Lovestonites in 1933 see: Will Herberg to Calverton, Jan. 28, 1933; Jay Lovestone to Calverton, April 18, Oct. 21, 30, 1933; M. Lurye (secretary to Lovestone) to Calverton, Oct. 17, 1933 (VFC); Bertram D. Wolfe, "The Mass as Hero", M M, VII (March, 1933); Wolfe, "Marx and America", M M, VII (Sept. 1933); Herberg, "NRA and America Labor", M M, VII (Octo. 1933); Lovestone, "Lights out in Germany", M M, VII (Nov. 1933); Lovestone, "What Next For American Labor", M M, VIII (May, 1939); V. F. Calverton, "Marxism and Democracy in America", Workers Age, VII (Jan. 15, 1933), 4.

lers as a Lovestonite.⁷³ He denied the charge.⁷⁴ Thus, in 1933 when the total break with the Communists took place, Calverton trying to find his way among the oppositionist circles, shared some of the opinions of the Lovestonite faction. He did not join the group, nor accept its discipline.

Sympathy with the Opposition Group did not mean, however, that Calverton was indifferent to the other faction's policy. Trotsky's review of his For Revolution was a real challenge for him. The reviewer clearly demanded that Calverton break his diplomatic silence and take side in the Stalin-Trotsky controversy.⁷⁵ Calverton was ready to attack Stalin and the Comintern, but he was still reluctant to side with Trotsky. In February, 1933 he called for a "radical proletarian party",⁷⁶ without naming the party and its living representatives. "A definite statement is absolutely necessary", said a newly converted Trotskyist pressed who urged him to support, publicly, the Left Opposition. "Either you are with him or you are against him".⁷⁷

Calverton was a great admirer of Trotsky as an extraordinary revolutionary figure, as a literary phenomenon and as a courageous rebel

⁷³ Hicks to Calverton, Jan. 8, 1933; Calverton to Gage, Oct. 23, 1933 (VFC).

⁷⁴ Calverton to Hicks, Jan. 15, 1933 (VFC); "...as to me being poisoned with the Lovestone virus", wrote Calverton, "my complaint is that Lovestone falls short of fighting what is the real cancer of the Communist movement today", Calverton to Gage, Oct. 23, 1933 (VFC).

⁷⁵ Leon Trotsky, "On the Revolutionary Intellectuals", M M, VII (March, 1933), 84.

⁷⁶ Calverton, "Backward March: The Liberal Command", M M, VII (Feb. 1933), 31.

⁷⁷ Steinbach to Calverton, Feb. 10, 1933 (VFC).

against Stalin. His friendship, however, "was not of a 'dogmatic' type", recalled Max Shachtman recently, "and to the extent he was a partisan of Trotsky it was not as a 'party member'".⁷⁸ Calverton admitted that Trotsky was right in his analysis of the German situation and the Chinese revolution, but he condemned the sectarianism of the Left Opposition, as well as its tendency to suppress democratic criticism and legal opposition within the movement.⁷⁹ For better understanding of that group, Calverton invited Max Shachtman, one of the founders of the faction, and B. J. Field, a Trotskyite labor leader, to present their policy. Max Eastman, Sidney Hook, Leon Samson and Ben Gitlow, among others, participated in the discussion.⁸⁰

The limited support of Calverton led to some degree of cooperation with the Communist League of America. James P. Cannon invited him to Kansas City for lectures; Max Shachtman was welcomed to Calverton parties; the Trotskyites were invited to The Modern Monthly annual dinner; and Calverton wrote reviews for The Militant, the Trotskyite organ in America.⁸¹ In spite of Scott Nearing's accusation, Calverton was not a Trotskyite, nor was his magazine.⁸² Calverton criticized the exiled Russian leader, and

⁷⁸ Max Shachtman to the author, Aug. 14, 1967.

⁷⁹ Calverton, "The Crisis in Communism", M M, VII (April, 1933), 141-145, 151. See also Calverton to Brenner, Jan. 26, 1935 (VFC).

⁸⁰ Calverton's engagement book, May 8, 1933; Calverton to Ben Gitlow, May 1, 1933 (VFC). The paper that Field read in Calverton's home was published in the M M, VII (June, 1933), 279-283.

⁸¹ Cannon to Calverton, July 20, 1933; The Militant to Calverton, March 1, 1934; Max Shachtman to Calverton, April 4, 1933 (VFC).

⁸² Nearing to Calverton, March 21, 1933; Brenner to Calverton, Jan. 17, 1935 (VFC).

especially his American party tactics. He was more anti-Stalinist than pro-Trotskyist. His magazine contained sharp attacks on Trotsky.⁸³

Thus, during 1933 Calverton had kept good relations with the Lovestonites as well as with the Trotskyites, accepting some of their ideas, and criticizing others. He certainly did not belong to either group. The sympathy of Calverton with the former faded after 1933, and his relations with the latter faction improved somewhat, but he was mainly interested in establishing a united anti-Stalinist bloc. He was eager to eliminate sectarianism and to strengthen those forces which opposed the official Communist Party. Characteristically for him, he worked for the reconciliation of the extremes, trying to find a common denominator for all the opposition groups.⁸⁴

Due to his impartial attitude and inclination toward compromise, the parties of Calverton became a natural meeting place of non Communist radicals. Alfred Kazin, the writer and literary critic, described in a vivid and accurate manner Calverton's role in the left wing circles of New York in the mid thirties. His home was the center of all sorts of radicals who were in disagreement with the Communists. All the kinds of New York political left and literary groups were represented in his long, lively and stimulating parties. Harry Elmer Barnes, Max Eastman, Max Shachtman, Jay Lovestone, Norman Thomas, Sidney Hook, A. J. Muste, Louis Budenz, Henry Hazlitt, to name only a few, out of many others, who willingly came to his place.⁸⁵

⁸³ Allen Stiller, "Critique of Trotsky", M M, VIII (Aug. 1934), 413-420.

⁸⁴ Calverton to Ben Gitlow, May 1, 1933 (VFC).

⁸⁵ Alfred Kazin, Starting Out in the Thirties, pp. 65-74.

The Modern Monthly, reflecting the life of its editor, was the single independent radical magazine in the country. Space was provided for every faction of revolutionary thought. From Lovestone to Norman Thomas, from Max Shachtman to Lewis Mumford all could explain their policy. Ben Gitlow could appeal for a new farmer-labor party, and A. J. Muste for the American Workers Party. Allen Stiller was permitted to attack Trotsky, and Shachtman to defend him. Louis Budenz was able to call for a new American party, and Leon Samson was permitted to explain that Americanism was the substitute for Socialism in the United States. John Dewey, Bertrand Russell and Morris Cohen explained why they were not Communists, and Sidney Hook stated his undogmatic Marxian point of view.⁸⁶

While he let others explain their point of view, Calverton himself had a definite political solution for the situation. The idea that the Communist movement in the United States should develop a policy which would take into consideration the unique conditions that existed in America, had been propagated by Calverton for years. His appeal for an American revolutionary party, which would accept the middle class petty bourgeoisie as well as the farmers, was intensified in 1933-1934. The United States had a different cultural pattern than the European countries, and its social struggle took dissimilar direction, he argued.⁸⁷ The official Communist attempt to plant the Russian experience into the most developed and industrialized country in the world, was unreal and futile, in his eyes.

In his eagerness to talk in American terms, Calverton tried to "sell" Marxism to his countrymen as the idealization of democracy. In the

⁸⁶ M M, VII-VIII (1933-1934).

⁸⁷ Calverton, "Backward March: The Liberal Command, An Examination of the Retrogressive Role of American Liberalism", M M, VII (Feb. 1933), 28-29.

depression years Marxism gave new meaning to the democratic concept, he wrote in an editorial. Democracy was "a child of economics and not politics", therefore as long as the economic power would be in the hands of a "wealthy minority", no democratic life could be attained. Calverton tried hard to prove that Karl Marx was "the great exponent of democracy", and The Capital and The Communist Manifesto were "great democratic documents". He was keenly interested in showing that harmony existed between Marx and the American traditional institutions.⁸⁸

Willing to carry his crusade to the wide public, he published the same ideas in Scribner's Magazine. He broke his rule not to attack the Communists in the bourgeois press, and was very critical of the radical parties for their "futile", "self defeating and self destructive" policy. By adopting the European terms and tactics they "isolate themselves from the strength-giving qualities of the American revolutionary tradition, and isolate themselves from the American masses". No party could win over the people in this country which did not appreciate the significance of the revolutionary tradition of the United States, concluded Calverton.⁸⁹

Consistent with this belief, he began to examine the philosophy of Thomas Paine, Philip Freneau, Roger Williams and other American rebels. Paine, for example, was "a great revolutionary" in his time, who fought for

⁸⁸ Editorial, "In Defense of the Democratic Tradition", M M (March, 1933), 69-70; This article appeared almost verbatim in the Workers Age, Jan. 15, 1933, under the title "Marxism and Democracy in America". It seems that by exploitation of the dialectic method of argumentation, nothing would be difficult to prove, and Calverton's article is a point in the case.

⁸⁹ Calverton, "The American Revolutionary Tradition", Scribner's Magazine XCV (May, 1934), 352-357; C. Hartley Grattan angrily resigned as a contributor from the Monthly because of Calverton's attack on the radical movement in the Bourgeois press. Grattan to Calverton, Feb. 21, 1935 (VFC).

truth, refusing to accept the "religion of lies".⁹⁰ By those studies he explicitly showed the meaning of utilizing the revolutionary thought and spirit of American history.

After the resignation of the fellow travelers from the board of editors of The Modern Monthly, because of its anti Stalinist line, Calverton reorganized the staff. The choice of Max Eastman, Edmund Wilson and Mauritz Hallgren was almost natural. While Eastman represented the strong anti-Communist approach, the last two were "radicals who write in the American instead of the European lingo", observed Calverton.⁹¹ Wilson, the noted critic, who constantly turned left, agreed with Calverton on the need for "translation of Communist ideology into American terms".⁹²

In accordance with the general line that Calverton developed, an approach which was endorsed by Ernest S. Bates, Max Eastman and Edmund Wilson, a statement of policy was prepared for clarification of the magazine's position. This document, which was written in October 1933, fairly represented Calverton's political ideas at that period. It declared the editors' belief that socialization of land and means of production was the

⁹⁰ Calverton, "Thomas Paine"; "God-Intoxicated Revolutionary", Scribner's Magazine, XLV (Jan, 1934), 15-22; Calverton, "Philip Freneau: Apostle of Liberty" M M, VII (Octo. 1933), 533-546. He planned to run in the Monthly a series of studies on American rebels and revolutionaries. Probably because of lack of time, he never published them.

⁹¹ Calverton to A. J. Muste, Oct. 28, 1933; The invitation to Hallgren in Calverton to Hallgren, Sept. 24, 1933 (VFC), but Hallgren refused to join the editorial board. Although Eastman and Wilson supposedly joined the editorial staff only in March 1934, Calverton consulted with them on important matters even earlier.

⁹² Wilson to Calverton, April 19, 1932 (VFC).

sole way out of the economic crisis. The creation of a new organization would be necessary, which would be able to unite the workers, farmers and middle class intellectuals into a radical movement. To meet the situation, the statement of policy called for an analysis of the American scene "in American terms and in American language". The Communist Party was not suited for that task because of its "Russian orientation and its bureaucratic boss-rule". The Socialist Party, too, could not be taken into consideration because of its "reformistic, parliamentary emphasis and reactionary leadership". Hence the need for a new revolutionary organization which would stand on the left, attracting all the left-wing elements. It would be "uncompromisingly radical", based on native sources, whose steps would be directed by "the logic of situation" rather than by dogmatic attitude.

The Communist International, which was directed by the Russian authorities and their interests, was directed by the Russian authorities and their interests, was "hindering the advance of native" movements, therefore the American revolutionary party should refuse to accept its directive. Only under the condition of international equality could the party take part in an international organization. Since such a party did not yet exist, the editors declared the independent course of the magazine.⁹³

Unlike Eastman, who agreed with the statement, Wilson was reluctant to accept it. He questioned the wisdom that the magazine should oppose so clearly the existing radical movements in favor of a hypothetical organization. Wilson objected to the open attack upon the Communist and the Socialist parties.⁹⁴ Calverton disagreed with Wilson. He did not want to omit large parts of the document. Either to publish it as it was, or not run it at all,

⁹³"Statement of Policy of the Modern Monthly", (VFC). One may wonder whether a party of such a native character could be defined as a Marxist.

⁹⁴Eastman to Wilson, Oct. 28, 1933; Wilson to Eastman, Nov. 4, 1933 (VFC).

he wrote to Eastman.⁹⁵ Since Wilson and Eastman joined the magazine only in March, 1934, Calverton was free, meanwhile, to write the editorials without the censorship of Wilson. The editorial of the October issue was very similar in its ideas and even in its phrases to the statement of policy. It attacked the radical parties, their inability to cope with the situation, and appealed for the establishment of a new revolutionary party which would orient itself to the American conditions.⁹⁶ It seems that the editorial was the basis for the statement of policy, and served as starting point of the discussions.

Thus, after Calverton had examined the different opposition factors, he was unable to support them totally. He did not join either the Lovestonites or the Trotskyites but favored the foundation of a new American radical party. In October his stand was clearly expressed in the editorial of The Modern Monthly and in the statement of policy that he prepared. Exactly at the time when he propagated for a hypothetical party which did not exist, he renewed his acquaintance with A. J. Muste who consulted with him concerning the establishment of a genuine American Workers Party. Muste suggested precisely what Calverton was dreaming about. It is not surprising, then, that his reaction was enthusiastic. "I am not only with you, but I am willing to work (and I mean work) for the formation of such a party", he wrote to Muste.⁹⁷ Active participation in a political party, and especially holding party membership, were quite contrary to Calverton's independent

⁹⁵ Calverton to Eastman, Nov. 18, 1933 (VFC).

⁹⁶ Editorial, M M, VII (Oct. 1933), 518.

⁹⁷ Calverton to Muste, Oct. 28, 1933 (VFC). Calverton had been acquainted with Muste for a long time, since he had delivered lectures in the Brookwood Labor College, where Muste was the director.

character. The short period of his activity in the American Workers Party, in 1934, was dissimilar to his political behavior in his mature life and is, therefore, worthwhile examining.⁹⁸

The American Workers Party started as a progressive movement in the labor circles. The Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA), as the labor organization was called, began to be active in the trade union field in the late twenties. Its influence was in general outside of the radical parties. Under the impact of the depression it inclined more and more toward a revolutionary outlook. Even before the crash, A. J. Muste, its leader, who was the director of the Brookwood Labor College, called for a militant labor action in order to attract the great mass of workers.⁹⁹

In the fall of 1933, serious consideration was given to transforming the labor organization into a political party. Muste, in an article, explained the causes that pushed him toward such a step. The frequent intervention of President Roosevelt in labor disputes weakened the power of the workers. A new party was needed to protect the workers from exploitation, and to prevent Fascism from gaining strength in the country. Neither the Communist Party, nor the Socialist Party, argued Muste, had made any constructive attempt to achieve those goals.¹⁰⁰

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One can wonder how such an important part of Calverton's political biography was totally neglected by Daniel Aaron, Alfred Kazin and Max Eastman.

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A. J. Muste, "Militant Progressivism", M Q, IV (May-Aug. 1928), 332-41.

¹⁰⁰

Muste, "An American Revolutionary Party", M M, VII (Jan. 1934) 713-19. For a favorable description of the CPLA see Cannon, History of American Trotskyism, pp. 112-115. For a critical account of a Communist, see Foster's History of the Communist Party in the United States, p. 249.

At the Pittsburgh Convention of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, on December 2-3, 1933, it was decided to establish a political party to be named The American Workers Party (AWP). The convention appointed a Provisional Organizing Committee which took all the necessary steps to launch the new party not later than July 4, 1934.¹⁰¹ The aim of the new party was "to abolish the profit system by taking over the government and industry". Strikes and mass demonstrations were regarded not only the tools for immediate achievements, but also as "training grounds" for the future workers' republic. The party should be based solely on American terms. "Only the American working class can defeat American capitalists and imperialism".¹⁰²

Both the aims of the proposed party and its proposed methods were perfectly in accord with Calverton's outlook. The talks with Muste about the new project electrified Calverton, who enthusiastically threw himself into action. He did much more for the party than just "lend his name", as Max Shachtman suggested recently.¹⁰³ He spread the idea among intellectuals, addressed radical clubs, spoke to young students, in his effort to attract intellectuals to the party. He persuaded people to organize new branches.

¹⁰¹The report from the convention in Samuel L. Solon to Calverton, Dec. 3, 1933 (VFC): The decisions of the Pittsburgh convention appeared on the letterhead of the Provisional Organizing Committee (VFC).

¹⁰²The aim of the party and the first quotation is in a mimeographed instruction of Louis Budenz, the secretary of the party, to organizers and branches of the AWP. (VFC). A good statement of the party's policy is in Muste, "An American Revolutionary Party", M M, VII (Jan. 1934), 713-719. The last quotation was taken from p. 718: See Lillian Symes to Calverton, Jan 5, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁰³Max Shachtman to the author. Aug. 14, 1967.

In short, he worked with devotion for the American Workers Party.¹⁰⁴

Muste authorized him officially to represent the new party among intellectual groups.¹⁰⁵

In January 1934 Calverton accepted the party card and became a member of the American Workers Party.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, he was elected to the Provisional Organizing Committee.¹⁰⁷ Unlike other radical institutions to which he had given moral support by permitting the printing of his name on the letterhead, in this instance he frequently attended the Committee's meetings and accepted special tasks and investigations. He was asked to serve as a chairman of a sub-committee which had to work out a program on the use of American revolutionary tradition for party and mass work. He was responsible for the selection of a party organizer for Baltimore, as well as for educational work in Washington. The endorsement of new party members and the investigation of the behavior of others was also part of his task. The organizer of the party organ, The Labor Action, especially its book review section, profited much from Calverton's experience in that field. He also advised on how to build a good library for the party. V. F. Calverton was a central speaker in party demonstrations along with Muste. He presided over an open debate between Lovestone and Muste on the

¹⁰⁴ Calverton to Muste, Nov. 12, 1933; Calverton to Symes, Jan. 5, 1934; Muste to Calverton, Dec. 20, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁰⁵ Muste to Calverton, Dec. 5, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁰⁶ Louis Budenz (Executive Secretary of AWP) to Calverton, Jan. 29, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁰⁷ Muste to Calverton, Jan. 29, 1934 (VFC).

right programs for American workers. There is no doubt, then, that Calverton played an active role in the development of the American Workers Party.¹⁰⁸

The leading position of Calverton in the new party complicated his stand as an editor of an independent magazine. The Modern Monthly was accused of being an organ of the American Workers Party.¹⁰⁹ Muste thought it essential to deny the charge publicly,¹¹⁰ and proposed a statement accordingly, that the Provisional Organizing Committee adopted after slight amendments. The official statement declared that The Modern Monthly was an independent unaffiliated journal and certainly was not a party organ. Calverton, as a party member, would be responsible as an individual for his political activities but could not attack the party. However, since the magazine's editorial board consisted of people who were not members of the party, it could print articles on any subject including essays hostile to the party. In spite of its non-partisan character, the party recognized that such a magazine had "a useful purpose to serve". Accordingly, organizers and members of the American Workers Party were urged to read the magazine and promote its sale.¹¹¹

The official denial did not stop the charges of partisanship on the part of the Monthly. Furthermore, the criticism came from within, from

¹⁰⁸ See the minutes of the meetings of the Provisional Organizing Committee from March 8, April 8, June 5, 12, Aug. 21, Sept. 18, Nov. 7, 1934. Calverton to Muste, March 3, 1934. On the address and the symposium, see in (VFC).

¹⁰⁹ Gold's criticism was mentioned in Muste to Calverton, March 1, 1934 (VFC).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Provisional Organizing Committee: "Statement on Relation Between the AWP and The Modern Monthly", March 8, 1934 (VFC).

the editors of the periodical, a situation that annoyed Calverton very much. The troubles began with the article of Louis Berg and Elliot E. Cohen, "May Day - 1934",¹¹² in which they condemned the American Workers Party for the failure of its members to appear and march in a united front with other left parties in the demonstration of May Day. Calverton sent the article to the party for reaction. The answer was printed as a footnote at the end of the essay without signature or an editorial comment.¹¹³ Sterling Spero, who was close to the Lovestonites, an associate editor of the Monthly, wrote a strong protest to Calverton for the change in the editorial policy. The magazine had departed from its independent course, stated Spero, and had become "the semi-official organ of the AWP". In spite of an editorial decision to publish a declaration regarding the journal's unaffiliated policy, Calverton did not follow it, and the June issue appeared without that statement. Spero went on to complain that the article of Berg and Cohen had been shown to the party officials prior to the publication. Such a privilege was not granted to any other group, he indicated. Why did not the note of the party bear the party's signature, for otherwise it appeared to be an editorial comment. "Has it really been a party organ without having the courage to say so", asked Spero.¹¹⁴

Spero's letter made Calverton "sore as hell", especially because the former demanded that it be published in the magazine. Calverton was afraid that the New Masses would learn about the "silly dissension" in the

¹¹²Berg and Cohen, "May Day - 1934: Record and Prospect", M M VII (June, 1934), 286-291.

¹¹³Ibid. p. 291.

¹¹⁴Sterling Spero to Calverton, June 14, 1934 (VFC).

editorial board of the Monthly. He decided not to print the letter, but instead to publish an editorial concerning the magazine's unaffiliated position.¹¹⁵ To Spero himself Calverton explained that he had always given space for reply to an "unjustifiable attack",¹¹⁶ As to the magazine's independence, he indicated that its policy had not changed. The American Workers Party was "more than willing to take over the Modern Monthly" along with its deficits, and all of his financial problems would have been solved in the easiest way. But he had rejected the offer as before he had refused other groups, because of his principle not to be dependent on any political organization.¹¹⁷

The explanation of Calverton was not entirely convincing. Max Eastman, from the inner circle of the editorial board, also protested against the non appearance of the statement concerning the independence of the journal. He agreed with Spero regarding the unsigned footnote of the American Workers Party. Furthermore, Eastman argued that the rejection of an essay which criticized the party,¹¹⁸ "must have been politically motivated". Eastman demanded that the coming issue print the editorial statement, as well as the attack on the American Workers Party, in order to restore the "erroneous impression" concerning the political position

¹¹⁵ Calverton to Bates, June 23, 1934 (VFC).

¹¹⁶ In general that was right, but in this particular case Calverton gave the attack to the AWP for inspection prior to publication. That was not his habit, and that was Spero's argument. For example: Allen Stiller's attack on Trotsky was not shown to Shachtman. But after its appearance Calverton invited Shachtman to reply on it. M M, VIII (Oct. 1934) 548-556: VIII (Aug. 1934), 413-420.

¹¹⁷ Calverton to Spero, June 23, 1934 (VFC).

¹¹⁸ Paul Mattick "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward".

of the magazine.¹¹⁹ Calverton received letters from readers who asked that he include essays which would represent a "considerable diversity of opinion" and not to concentrate on one party matter.¹²⁰

To satisfy his critics and to clarify the situation, he ran in the July issue an editorial restating the position of The Modern Monthly "an independent radical journal affiliated with no party". In order to serve this aim, the editors were convinced that the articles should be "uncensored by party and undoctored by dogma". They believed that the journal could serve the radical movement best "by opening its pages to any individual or group that has anything of importance to contribute to the American revolutionary scene". The criteria for the evaluation of the articles would be merely their literary and social merit and not their theses.¹²¹ To be sure, this had been Calverton's basic conception since the foundation of The Modern Quarterly in 1923. Probably because of his deep involvement in the American Workers Party he lost, for a moment, his objective position, or possibly his new stand made people highly suspicious of the magazine.

The Lovestonites were certainly suspicious, and saw the Monthly as the organ of the American Workers Party. They recommended that their members discontinue its support. The New Workers School, where Calverton's lectures

¹¹⁹ Eastman to Calverton, June 26, 1934 (VFC).

¹²⁰ Leif Larson to Calverton, June 14, 1934 (VFC).

¹²¹ Editorial, "Left Face", M M, VII (July, 1934) 325. He also included an erratum in which he explained that it had been a mistake that the signature of the American Workers Party had been omitted. Ibid. p. 382. Paul Mattick's attack on the AWP was published only at the end of the year. M M, VIII (Dec. 1934), 623-628, 631, 640.

had been welcomed only a few months earlier, banned the journal and refused to handle it. Calverton was hurt by the Lovestonite reaction. He restated to Bertram Wolfe what he had written to Spero, that he had rejected the offer of the party to take the magazine over and cover its deficits. He pointed out that he was the only editor who was a member of the American Workers Party. Eastman was close to the Trotskyists, Ernest Bates was a member of the Socialist Party, Sterling Spero was close to the Lovestonites and Edmund Wilson was not affiliated with any party at all. The accusation, therefore, was unjustified and irritated him "exceedingly". As he did not want to lose the friendship of the Majority Opposition, he asked Wolfe for an explanation of his attitude.¹²²

Wolfe replied that the Lovestonites had not yet decided to boycott the magazine. He admitted that the issue had been discussed, but no action had been taken. Had the Monthly continued to go in the direction that some articles indicated, certainly something would have been done. But the editorial, which declared the aim of keeping the journal as an open forum, satisfied the group, Wolfe reported. Calverton's dominant position in the magazine's editorship was the main factor in the assumption that the periodical followed its editor's political convictions. Wolfe called for "exaggerated caution" to distinguish between Calverton's personal opinions and the editorial policy.¹²³

As Calverton became a leading party member, he lost his impartial approach, and probably unconsciously directed the Modern Monthly toward a favorable, though not biased, attitude toward the American Workers Party.

¹²²The Lovestonite accusation cited in Calverton to Wolfe, July 30, 1934 (VFC).

¹²³Wolfe to Calverton, Aug. 6, 1934 (VFC).

The protest of Spero and Eastman, who were insiders, and as editors of the journal knew the situation at first hand, unlike Gold or Wolfe, indicated that Calverton had lost his objective vision. The sharp criticism from different directions forced him to maintain the traditional line. One can conclude, then, that the charge was not without basis, but that Calverton did not make the changes deliberately.¹²⁴

Since the Pittsburg convention of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, the Communist League of America suggested time and again the fusion of the two factions.¹²⁵ The Trotskyites in America were determined to take decisive steps to hasten the unification.¹²⁶ While Sidney Hook and James Burnham supported the fusion, Louis Budenz, Ludwig Lore and J. B. S. Hardman opposed it. Hook declared that unity between the two parties was not only "greatly to be desired", but also "essential" to the development of the radical movement. He emphasized the Trotskyists' experience in revolutionary struggle and their strength in theoretical issues.¹²⁷

During the intensive negotiations, which began in September, 1934, the Trotskyites, who were highly interested in the merger, took a conciliatory approach on the organizational side, claiming the question of program for themselves. On December 1-2, 1934, exactly one year after the decision

¹²⁴In the controversial June issue of the Monthly in an editorial, he openly praised the American Workers Party for its part in the Toledo strike. "It was the heroic leadership of Louis Budenz...that gave unity to the struggle of the workers", read Calverton's editorial. "The Strike Wave", M M, VIII (June, 1934), 263.

¹²⁵Cannon, History of American Trotskyism, pp. 129, 135.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 167.

¹²⁷Memorandum to all Provisional Organizational Committee members, Aug. 30, 1934 (a mimeographed circular) in (VFC).

to launch the American Workers Party, in a joint convention of the two parties, a new party was founded, namely, the Workers Party of the United States.¹²⁸

What was Calverton's attitude towards the fusion? No direct reference was found on the issue. Max Shachtman, who was very active in the negotiation, did not recall that Calverton opposed the merger. But he did not remember, either, that Calverton continued his membership.¹²⁹ Since Calverton was interested in eliminating sectarianism, and demanded unity as "the watchword of the hour", pointing to the fusion of the American Workers Party and the Communist League of America as a step in that direction,¹³⁰ it is very unlikely that he opposed the merger explicitly. While probably he did not object to it, it seems, that he was not enthusiastic about the American Workers Party losing its unique character. His active participation in the party schedule of 1934 definitely ceased in 1935. He never attended the meetings of the new party, did not receive its minutes and did not ask for membership; in one word, his political venture ended with the union. According to Max Eastman, the American Workers Party was a utopian hope for Calverton. With the fusion no special attention was given to the American revolutionary tradition; therefore he understood that the new party would not be able to attract the masses, especially the middle class.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Cannon, History of American Trotskyism, pp. 180-181, 185. See also the detailed correspondence between the two factions during the negotiation in mimeographed reports (VFC).

¹²⁹ Shachtman to the author, Aug. 14, 1967.

¹³⁰ Calverton, "Our Future Dictator", Scribner's Magazine, XCVII (March, 1935), 172.

¹³¹ Interview with Max Eastman, April 10, 1967.

Calverton's dream for an American revolutionary party, an idea for which he had worked so hard and so willingly and for which he had been ready to give up his independence, terminated with nothing but disillusionment. The year of 1934 which began with so many hopes, ended with disappointment. The venture of his political career soon reached an end because Calverton was not a political leader. His contribution to the radical movement, then, should not be sought in the political sphere, but in the intellectual one.

Since 1932 Calverton's concern about Fascism had increased. He was worried about its menace, in general, and for the United States in particular. As a radical, he saw Fascism in terms of class struggle, indicating its economic power in the capitalist system.

What was Fascism for Calverton? It represented the "lower middle class economics parading under the banner of nationalistic psychology". It was an expression of class forces and not a single alliance with big business. The aim of the Fascist state was, according to Calverton, the creation of a national capitalistic state which would rely upon the wealth of the big businessman and the support of the lower middle class as well. The Fascist state, being state capitalism, was based upon the concentration of industry under the control of the government. This purpose of relying upon modern economy, especially on mass production, was in contradiction to the interests of the lower middle class, which was the rank and file of the movement. The government, in the long run, would not be able to satisfy that petty bourgeois class, because its economic system was based on mass production and not on the old system of small enterprise. Fascism, therefore, would lose its mass base and eventually that would be "the very rock upon which the ship of Hitlerism will be finally wrecked", predicted Calverton. The incapability of Fascism to provide economic opportunity for

the small businessman, would lead, inevitably, to opposition and revolt.

To exploit that coming resistance, Calverton called for a real united front of all the radical forces. Hitler's victory in Germany was due, partly, to the failure of the Communists to appreciate his strength. He warned against repetition of the same blunders. "Only a united proletariat can defeat the advance of Fascism", he concluded.¹³²

The analysis of Fascism, as Calverton presented it, departed from the regular Communist argument. The latter stated that the Fascist dictatorship was only a more brutal form of Capitalism, and was controlled by the big businessmen for their own purposes. Calverton suggested that Fascism was based not on the upper class but on the middle class, and its aim was to oust the big capitalists from their power and the government wanted to control the economy.¹³³

The extension of the governmental power in the United States under President Roosevelt, and the intervention of the New Deal into private business, led some Americans to the idea that the country was moving toward Fascism. There were intellectuals as well as Communist Party members, who regarded Roosevelt as A Fascist.¹³⁴ "Will Fascism Come to America?" was a problem that worried not only Calverton, but also Stuart Chase, Charles A. Beard, Theodore Dreiser, Norman Thomas and Waldo Frank, among others.¹³⁵

¹³²Calverton, "What is Fascism?" (VFC). (Appeared in M M, VII (July, 1933). The major thesis of the article, the weakness of the Fascist government to satisfy the bourgeois interest, Calverton learned from the economist Abe Harris. Harris to Calverton, May 22, 1933 (VFC).

¹³³See Richard Paige to Calverton, Aug. 30, 1933 (VFC).

¹³⁴See the summer issues of the Current History in 1933, vol. XXXVIII.

¹³⁵The symposium "Will Fascism Come to America", with the participation of the above-mentioned people is in M M VIII (Sept. 1934), 453-478.

Calverton was convinced that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was not a potential Fascist dictator and the government was far from that of a Fascist state. Prerequisite for the rise of Fascism was a "definite breakdown in the ruling class" which would force it to employ extra legal steps to protect itself from a mass upheaval. In America, the power of the ruling class was secure and unchallenged, and the masses were in no rebellious mood. Roosevelt had been elected in an honest democratic way, the result of the popular protest against the Hoover administration. The President's policy of consolidation of industry and cessation of the traditional laissez faire system, led the country toward state capitalism, argued Calverton. This new trend was mistakenly interpreted by people as a Fascist one but he rejected that explanation.

The New Deal, by its program of consolidation of industry, hurt the small businessman and directed him to adopt a belligerent position. The petty bourgeois element, losing its economic status, would turn to Fascism in order to regain its power. The real Fascist menace in America, then, was neither the government nor the President, but the dissappointed lower middle class which was liable to be attracted by the Fascist appeal. The panacea of Calverton to prevent the swinging of the middle class to such a direction, was the expansion of the revolutionary propaganda among them, to win them over to the radical side. That task could be accomplished only by "selling the revolution" to the American working class "in middle class terms". Only when sectarianism and the tactics of "theological mouth-wash" would stop, could Fascism be destroyed. To compete successfully with Huey Long and his Fascist jargon, Marxism should be Americanized.

Thus, Calverton combined his analysis of the Fascist menace in America with his belief in the need for a revolutionary party, which would be based on American terms. The middle class, resulting from the economic

crisis, was the potential element which the workers must fight. But no battle could be won unless the radicals would write and appeal to the middle class in its own language. For years Calverton tirelessly repeated that doctrine, but with little success.¹³⁶

Since 1933 Calverton had argued that Huey Long, "the super salesman of American politics", the "Kingfish of Louisiana", one of the "most thrilling orators" of the day, as Calverton called him, was the potential Fascist in America and not Roosevelt.¹³⁷ Calverton saw the danger of Long in his ability to talk to the heart of the masses. Long's anti Wall Street and "share your wealth" policy, appealing to the economically stricken middle class in their own language, worried him. Therefore, he was anxious to tailor the strategy of Marxism to the American conditions. The "Twentieth century Andrew Jackson", the "mixture of Napoleon and Cocquelin", as Calverton described Long, succeeded where the radicals failed. Calverton was ready to learn from his methods, but the intellectuals underestimated Long's menace. It was time to grasp reality and to fight back before it would be too late, he warned.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ This survey on Calverton's theory concerning Fascism is based on the following sources: Editorial, M M, VII (Sept. 1933), 452-53, 457; Calverton, "Will Fascism Come to America?" M M, VIII (Sept. 1934), 469-478; Calverton, "Is America Ripe for Fascism?", The Current History, XXXVIII (Sept. 1933), 701-704; Editorial, M M, VII (Dec. 1933), 445-446; Editorial, M M, VIII (June, 1934), 261-262; Calverton, "Fascism is Embryo", M M, VIII (Aug. 1934) 389-90. For the reactions to Calverton's point of view concerning the Fascist menace in America, see Eastman to Calverton, July 20, 1933; Sept. 29, 1934; Hallgren to Calverton, Sept. 4, 1933; Albert Mordell to Calverton, July 11, 1933; Ben Gitlow to Calverton, June 15, 21, 1933; Richard Paige to Calverton, Aug. 30, 1933; Calverton to Hallgren, Sept. 9, 1933 (VFC).

¹³⁷ Calverton, "Huey Long" (VFC).

¹³⁸ Ibid.; Calverton to Maxwell Perkins, Sept. 22, 1934 (VFC); Calverton, "Our Future Dictator: Is it Huey Long", Scribner's Magazine, XCVII (March, 1935), 171-175; Calverton, "The Farmer Cocks His Rifle", M M, VII (Jan. 1934). 726-731.

Father Coughlin, the "silver Messiah", who had "disencumbered his mind of enough theological garbage" to electrify the minds of millions, was somehow less dangerous than Long. His Catholic faith and growing influence would arouse Protestant opposition. Though he could never be an American president,¹³⁹ his power was great and the coalition with Long could be a "monstrous menace".¹⁴⁰ "Americanize Marxism" was Calverton's slogan with which he concluded most of his articles at that period. That was his solution to the political problems of the era.¹⁴¹

The radical movement, especially the Communists, disregarded Calverton's suggestions and warning. The Popular Front policy, which was introduced in 1935 and called for left collaboration to fight Fascism, was directed from Moscow and proved to be highly successful, if not to fight Fascism, at least to strengthen the Communist prestige among the intellectuals. Although the Popular Front was, partly, what Calverton called for, that is, radical cooperation against the Fascist menace in America, he strongly opposed it. Probably it was because he was not as naive as Granville Hicks was, and recognized the tactical intention of Stalin in that maneuver.¹⁴²

¹³⁹He was born in Canada.

¹⁴⁰Calverton "Father Coughlin: The Silver Messiah", M M, IX (March, 1935), 5-12, 18.

¹⁴¹In an undated sheet bearing the title "My Manifesto", Calverton remarked once again that the revolutionary forces should stop the nomenclature method of the Communists. The success of Long, Father Coughlin and Francis Townsend proved the way preferred by the American people. "We must get slogans - a basic wage differential, etc. which will appeal - this has nothing to do with ultimate Marxian ideals or realizations", wrote Calverton, "but without such an approach we shall get nowhere /sic/. (VFC).

¹⁴²Hicks realized it only after the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939. Hicks, "Communism and American Intellectuals", in Whose Revolution, pp. 94-95, 105-106.

But there was also the possibility that Calverton so hated the Stalinists that he was unable to agree with their line. He accused the Communists of Menshevism because they collaborated with the Socialists and Anarchists in Spain.¹⁴³ Leon Dennen has assumed that he wanted to prove to the Communists that he was a better Marxist than they were.¹⁴⁴

While Calverton advanced the slogan "Americanize Marxism", and called for a struggle against Fascism in America, the management of The Modern Monthly, especially his collaboration with the editorial board, kept him busy.

The growing radicalism in the country, resulting from the economic crisis, multiplied fivefold the readers of The Modern Quarterly, and enabled its conversion from a quarterly to a monthly. Appearing twelve times a year, the editors believed that the magazine "can make its influence more widespread and immediate", and would carry on the revolutionary tradition more effectively.¹⁴⁵ The first issue of the new format had appeared in February, 1933, in which the editorial appealed "For a New America". Calverton declared that the magazine would address itself "primarily to the professional workers and all those groups who have been disillusioned by the crisis of their belief in American individualism and prosperity". Following the view of its editor, The Modern Monthly emphasized its attempt "to analyse the American scene in American terms." It should

¹⁴³ Editorial, M M, X (April, 1937), 3.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Dennen, April 10, 1967.

¹⁴⁵ Editorial, MQ, VI (Autumn, 1932), 5.

"expediate and intensify" the opposition "in every field of culture", and always bearing in mind the ultimate goal, namely the establishment of a new society in a new America.¹⁴⁶

Will Heberg criticized the editorial for its lack of clarity. It did not define precisely the fundamental point of view of the journal. Calverton did not explain explicitly what he meant by "opposition in every field of culture". Which opposition? What period? What political party would be identified by the phrase "A new society" placed in "a new America", asked Heberg.¹⁴⁷ Probably Heberg was right that the issue was not "substantial enough", but the cause for the vague statement lay in Calverton's own position at the time, as far as policy of the magazine was concerned. The direction was clear, "to analyse the American scene in American terms". The particular political formula was not yet established.

The Modern Monthly continued the revolutionary outlook of the Quarterly, but Calverton aimed at making it "timelier and more immediate in its challenge".¹⁴⁸ With the resignation of Samuel Schmalhausen in December 1932, the Monthly was devoted mainly to political affairs.¹⁴⁹ Literary criticism, as always, played an important role in the magazine. Obed Brooks [Robert G. Davis] ran the Literary Front, and Seymour Stern was supposed to

¹⁴⁶ Editorial, M M, VII (Feb. 1933), 6.

¹⁴⁷ Heberg to Calverton, Jan. 28, 1933, (VFC).

¹⁴⁸ Calverton to Sherwood Anderson, Oct. 22, 1932 (Anderson Papers, Newberry Library); Calverton to Kimmelman, Jan. 5, 1933 (VFC).

¹⁴⁹ Calverton to Scott Nearing, Dec. 10, 1932 (VFC).

manage the Cinema section.¹⁵⁰ Creative literature occupied relatively a small part of the journal. Sherwood Anderson and Edwin Seaver sent some short stories.¹⁵¹ Mark Rodson (V. F. Calverton) also inserted a story from time to time.¹⁵² The most important contribution to the creative field was that of the writer Thomas Wolfe, whose stories appeared frequently in 1934-1935.¹⁵³

The most important portion of the Monthly, however, was devoted to labor problems, political matters such as Fascism, the New Deal, the situation in Germany, the war in Spain, the case of Trotsky, the (social fascist) tactics of the Communists, the American Workers Party, the Farmer-Labor Party, to mention only a few important topics. Symposiums on Fascism, Marxism, Communism, and war also attracted attention.¹⁵⁴

The addition of Max Eastman and Edmund Wilson to the editorial board in March, 1934, was a source of pride for Calverton as well as a cause for troubles. The anti-Stalinist point of view was the common denominator of the editors. As the Statement of Policy indicated, they denounced the dogmatism of the Communists, recommending reasonable tactics which must Americanize Marxism.

¹⁵⁰ Calverton to Davis, Jan. 15, 1933; Stern to Calverton, Dec. 8, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁵¹ MM, VII, (Feb. 1933); (May, 1933); Seaver to Calverton, Dec. 15, 1932; Calverton to Alfred Keymborg, Dec. 20, 1932 (VFC).

¹⁵² Mark Rodson (V. F. Calverton), "Cats and Men", MM, VIII (Feb., 1935), 754, 768; _____, "See America First," MM, IX (March, 1935), 42-43.

¹⁵³ MM, VIII-IX (1934-1935).

¹⁵⁴ MM, VII-IX (1933-1935).

The magazine enjoyed the famous names of the new editors, but Calverton was unable to persuade them to undertake actual work on the Monthly. While Eastman was more helpful, launching a fund raising campaign, Wilson, being busy with his own literary projects, did not contribute much to the journal. Most of the time the latter was out of town, so Calverton alone remained responsible for the editorship. There was nothing new in this situation. Since the foundation of the magazine, he had been the sole editor, though on the letterhead other names had also appeared. What was unusual in 1934 was the strong personalities of Wilson and Eastman, who were familiar with editorial work. They were highly critical of Calverton's editorship, refusing to share "editorial responsibility" without receiving "active cooperation", wrote Eastman to Calverton, in one of his protests.¹⁵⁵

While Wilson and Eastman demanded "active cooperation", actually they did not give a hand to the daily work. Calverton, who was very busy, as always, with many other things, did not read carefully everything concerning a coming issue. His careless editorship irritated the new editors as well as many contributors such as Sidney Hook, Waldo Frank, Harry Elmer Barnes and Louis Budenz. Eastman and Wilson resigned several times on account of a missing footnote, an indecent phrase, a drawing in bad taste or an attack with which they disagreed.¹⁵⁶

Calverton's old habit of using the magazine for self-advertise-

¹⁵⁵ Eastman to Calverton, June 26, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.; Wilson to Calverton, June 2, July 16, 1934, Feb. 25, 1935; Sidney Hook to Calverton, April 23, 1934 (VFC); Interview with Max Eastman, April 10, 1967.

ment, a practice for which he had been criticized earlier, was "damned irritating" to Eastman. Many readers would be unfavorably impressed by the "bad taste" of Calverton in self-publicizing, he argued, rightly. Another cause for Eastman's "grouch" was a circular that referred to the magazine as "V. F. Calverton's Modern Monthly" disregarding the position of both Eastman and Wilson on its staff.¹⁵⁷ When Calverton referred to a work on literary criticism as "probably the most important book.... since T. S. Eliot's The Sacred Wood", Eastman angrily protested. "I think mine is about 5000 times as important as either of these", he wrote to Calverton, and Wilson surely had the same opinion about his own work.¹⁵⁸

It was not easy to handle those famous editors. Calverton had to employ all his blandishments to keep them from withdrawing from the magazine. The main argument he used to persuade them from quitting was, the probable reaction of the Stalinists and the editors of the New Masses to the split in The Modern Monthly. It would make it easier for the Communists to win over the opposition, he argued. "Come in write most of the editorial, plan the contents", instead of standing afar and criticizing, suggested Calverton to Eastman.¹⁵⁹ The former's arguments, convincing as Eastman admitted them to be,¹⁶⁰ could not cement the editorial board together.

¹⁵⁷ Eastman to Calverton, June 26, Sept. 25, 1934; As early as 1925 Calverton was criticized for using the magazine for egotistic reasons. Harding to Calverton, Oct. 30, 1925 (VFC).

¹⁵⁸ Eastman to Calverton, June 26, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁵⁹ Calverton to Eastman, June (n.d.), July 30, September 29, 1934. (VFC).

¹⁶⁰ Eastman to Calverton, n.d. (VFC).

The issue of April, 1935 was the last for which Edmund Wilson and Max Eastman appeared as editors.¹⁶¹ Wilson resigned because absence from the city made it impossible to give attention to the journal. He disagreed with Calverton's editorial handling but approved the magazine's contents.¹⁶² Eastman withdrew not from his friendship towards the Monthly, but from "journalistic preoccupation", which necessitated more time for writing.¹⁶³

The resignation of Eastman, who was a "close dear friend" of Calverton, as the latter stated, and not just an editor, was much more than a disappointment. It created "a poignant, piercing ache" for Calverton.¹⁶⁴ The personal affection and the intimate friendship continued. Eastman contributed frequently to The Modern Monthly, (no other radical magazine was ready to print his articles, therefore, he had no choice), and helped it by personal donations.

The period when the editorial staff included Wilson, and Eastman with Diego Rivera, the radical painter as art editor,¹⁶⁵ marked a peak in the history of the magazine. Their being experienced editors themselves, in addition to their sensitivity, provided a delicate task for Calverton, which he failed sometimes to carry out completely. It was not easy for him to give up his decade-long dominant role in the journal, but the fault was not entirely his, has been indicated. The one year cooperation with

¹⁶¹ M M, IX (April, 1935),

¹⁶² Wilson to Calverton, Feb. 25, 1935. (VFC).

¹⁶³ Eastman to Calverton, March 4, 1935. (VFC). Eastman reassured the author recently that only his desire to write books was the cause of his resignation. Interview with Eastman, Apr. 10, 1967.

¹⁶⁴ Calverton to Eastman, March 18, 1935 (VFC).

¹⁶⁵ Diego Rivera joined the editorial staff in June 1933. Rivera to Calverton, May 31, 1933 (VFC).

those equally strong and critically minded people, was the only period when Calverton felt the obligation to consult frequently his colleagues.¹⁶⁶

The resignation of Eastman and Wilson did not change the magazine's policy. Calverton went on with his independent direction, providing a general forum for the exchange of opinions among all the leftist groups. The influence of the Monthly was great, especially because of the growth of the radical movement in the 1930's. It became the only left-wing magazine that permitted open discussion on every important topic. Its significance extended further after 1933 when it became an anti-Stalinist forum. It took "courage and intellectual enterprise" on Calverton's part to stand against the ruthlessness of the Stalinists, recalled Wilson.¹⁶⁷ In no other radical journal could the Lovestonites, the Trotskyites, the Musteites and the Socialist Party be fairly represented as in The Modern Monthly. It was really "a clearing house of radical views", as a friend remarked.¹⁶⁸

Calverton's policy of opening the columns of his journal to individuals and groups on the left in order to clarify the subjects under consideration, along with the fact that the Monthly was the single non-

¹⁶⁶ During this time one can find an almost non-Calvertonian sentence occurring repeatedly in his letters: "Since we have four other editors on The Modern Monthly, now besides myself, I cannot say that... can be continued indefinitely". Calverton to Carter, April 14, 1934 (VFC). He had always had others on the editorial board, but had always been able to decide upon matters independently. There is no attempt to state here that in general he did not consult his staff, but to indicate his special position in 1934.

¹⁶⁷ Wilson to Nina Melville, Jan. 10, 1940 (VFC).

¹⁶⁸ E. G. S. to Calverton, May 9, 1935 (VFC).

partisan radical forum which provided space for independent Marxists, such as Max Eastman and Sidney Hook, seems to have been his most important contributions to the radical movement during the 1930's. Any consideration of Calverton's role in the intellectual Left should not disregard that aspect.¹⁶⁹

In addition to his political activities in the American Workers Party, the editorship of the magazine and the delivering of lectures, Calverton found time to write another book called The Passing of the Gods.¹⁷⁰ It was an attempt to interpret "the psychological consequences of religion in terms of the sociological factors which have created them", explained the author in his preface. While Marxian scholars dealt with psychological factors of religion or its implication on sociology, Calverton claimed originality in his treatment of the sociological sources of religion, i.e., "the source of its influence over people".¹⁷¹

Discussing the human mind, he concluded that its development was mainly influenced by economic factors and it was "an instrument to defend interests", and not a method to control reality.¹⁷² As a Marxian, Calver-

¹⁶⁹

See comments on the same line in Eastman, Love and Revolution, pp. 597-598; Eastman to Calverton, Sept. 25, 1934; Calverton to Eastman, Aug. 4, 1934; Ben Stolberg to Calverton, April 28, 1933; Steinbach to Calverton, April 7, 1934; Leo Stern to Calverton, June 18, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁷⁰V. E. Calverton, The Passing of the Gods (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934).

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. IX; Calverton to John Chamberlain, Oct. 3, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁷²Calverton, The Passing of the Gods, pp. 2, 9, 11.

ton believed that religion was an illusion, a necessary tool for the masses to overcome economic insecurity. Religion provided them "the illusion of power", a psychological force that gave the people the ability to fight their difficulties. Capitalism brought about the relatively secure conditions in the economy, thus, "robbed" religion of its earlier power.¹⁷³

Modern science, which provided man with power to rule his environment, replaced the old necessity for religion. As science had better techniques to control the economic conditions than religion, it won the battle for man's support. But science was only the means, for Calverton, to attain the goal of a classless society. The "identification of the ego with the group" was the force that pushed people to social movements, such as Fascism and Communism, which gained strength in the early 1930's.¹⁷⁴ Although the two movements had the same source, namely, the people's desire to belong to a social group, which would protect them, the Communist movement was obviously better for Calverton than the Fascist. The former would be "the only satisfactory and lasting solution to the ego problem", he stated.¹⁷⁵ In "Communism" Calverton did not mean the official party or its doctrine, as a reviewer erroneously understood,¹⁷⁶ but as "a synonym to Socialism", as Marx used it in his Communist Manifesto, explained the author.¹⁷⁷ Thus, the religious mentality of man, which did not come from his inner self, but from his economic necessity, found in the radical

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 133-134, 278.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 313, 315, 317.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 318-319.

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Shipley, NL, Nov. 17, 1934.

¹⁷⁷ Calverton to Shipley, Nov. 17, 1934 (VFC).

movement the needed force. Science and not religion, Marxism rather than God would be the ruler of the future, according to Calverton's conclusion.¹⁷⁸

George Santayana, the philosopher, was impressed by Calverton's analysis, which in spite of its partisanship, threw "an instructive light" upon complicated matters. He was especially delighted by the chapter which dealt with religion in America.¹⁷⁹ Harold J. Laski was even more enthusiastic. He found the book "illuminating and remarkable". It broke "new ground in Anglo-American scholarship". Laski accepted Calverton's basic argument about which there "cannot... be any serious doubt". He stated, however, that the author could supply additional important evidence to support his conclusions, such as the field of religious toleration.¹⁸⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, who lived in Baltimore and had been acquainted with Calverton, congratulated the author on his achievement, though he did not share his thesis. He particularly complained about the "high overtone of economics" in the book.¹⁸¹

The reviews of the Passing of the Gods in the liberal and radical magazines, throw light on their attitude toward Calverton's political position in 1934, rather than about the book itself. A Communist journal like the New Masses was silent about the new book on religion, but the

¹⁷⁸Calverton Chamberlain, Oct. 3, 1934 (VFC); Calverton, Passing of the Gods, p. 320.

¹⁷⁹George Santayana to Calverton, Oct. 5, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁸⁰Harold J. Laski's review in M M, VIII (Dec. 1934) 634-635.

¹⁸¹F. Scott Fitzgerald to Calverton, Oct. 17, 1934 (VFC).

liberal New Republic, which supported the Stalinists and sympathized with the Soviet Union, gave the review to an unknown Eric Estorick. The latter was highly critical of Calverton's "quasi-scientific" treatment which was "obtuse, dogmatic and visionless". He also accused the author of hiding "the personalities of the priests, the military and political castes and the property owners (...) behind such rubrics as 'social forces'".¹⁸²

Despite Calverton's anti-Stalinist point of view, and the persistent attacks from the Communists, the New Leader, the Socialist Party weekly organ, condemned his support of Russia and his praises of Communism. James Oneal, the editor, who was once close to Calverton, denounced his "dogma and pseudo-radicalism".¹⁸³ The New Leader had political motivation, as Oneal's remarks indicated. Calverton was angry at the reviewer, Joseph Shipley, for falling "for those stupid political interneceine fights in reviewing a book". He had not praised the Soviet Government, but the classless proletarian society there, argued Calverton. Furthermore, he certainly did not support the Communist Party because he was "anti-Stalinist to the core". He assumed that the hostile review was not written by Shipley, who was "a literary critic of high order", but by the editor of the New Leader.¹⁸⁴

John Chamberlain, in The New York Times, regarded the Passing of

¹⁸²Eric Estorick, NR, LXXXI (Jan. 23, 1935), 311; See Vera Fulton's reaction to Estorick's review, NR, LXXXII (Mar. 6, 1935), 103-104.

¹⁸³Joseph T. Shipley's review in NL, Nov. 17, 1934; James Oneal's short remarks, in NL, May 26, 1934.

¹⁸⁴Calverton to Shipley, Nov. 17, 1934 (VFC).

the Gods as a good synthesis of the work of Max Weber and Richard H. Tawney. The chapter on "Religion and American Culture", was "a popularization" of Thomas C. Hall's The Religious Background of American Culture, stated Chamberlain. In a friendly tone he considered Calverton as a "broker" for the thoughts of other scholars.¹⁸⁵ Calverton was highly upset by the "broker" reference, and accordingly wrote a long letter to Chamberlain to prove the originality of his theories.¹⁸⁶ Without entering into a discussion as to whether the reviewer really did a "serious injustice" to Calverton,¹⁸⁷ it would not be far from the truth to suggest, as this study did before, that the significance of Calverton's books was not in their originality, but rather in their popular character. He brought scholarly works to the public who never read the original, and that service was "all to the good", as Chamberlain remarked.¹⁸⁸

Thus, in 1933, as a result of Calverton's own conviction of the tactical errors of Stalin and the Comintern, which was hastened by the ruthless attacks upon him, the editor of The Modern Monthly definitely turned to the anti-Stalinist camp. He maintained good relations with the Lovestonites and the Trotskyites, but his heart was with the America Workers Party. He found in this organization the realization of his ideal of a proletarian party which would appreciate the significance of the American Revolutionary tradition. To the development of this party, he dedicated his energy and

¹⁸⁵ John Chamberlain's Review in The New York Times, Oct. 3, 1934.

¹⁸⁶ Calverton to Chamberlain, Oct. 3, 1934 (VFC).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Chamberlain, The New York Times, Oct. 3, 1934.

ability. The Americanization of Marxism was for him the only means to avoid the rise of Fascism in this country. Therefore, he was ready to leave his independent course to become a party member. The fusion of the American Workers Party with the Communist League of America brought his political venture to its end. Along with his critical sympathy with the Trotskyites, he showed growing interest in the Socialist Party, in the light of the victory of its radical faction. But he remained unaffiliated.

The growth of the radical movement in the early 1930's and the attention that his magazine gained, made possible the change from a quarterly to a monthly. The Modern Monthly established the reputation of a high level independent radical magazine, which was the only forum where unaffiliated anti-Stalinists could express themselves. When the Communists dominated the radical journals, and had strong influence on liberal periodicals and some publishing houses, The Modern Monthly stood, courageously, for an undogmatic Marxian outlook and democratic discussion. It seems to have been one of Calverton's most important services to the left movement during the thirties.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MAN INSIDE: 1936 - 1940

The events of the second half of the 1930's in Russia, Germany, Ethiopia and Spain, influenced not only Calverton's political outlook, but also his belief in science. Stalin's totalitarian regime and the victory of fascism in large parts of Europe, shook Calverton's self reliance and drove him towards a spiritual world. "The world itself is too unreal," he wrote to Eastman, "...somewhere behind it there must be something."¹ In accordance with this line of thought he wrote a novel that appeared in 1936.² He expressed in the book "the most significant things" that were within him.³ It should therefore be considered as a book of ideas rather than a work of fiction.

The plot of The Man Inside, as it was called, was a mysterious adventure in the jungle. Joly Coeur, the dominating figure of the novel, who expressed Calverton's point of view, was a strange scientist who in his jungle "laboratory" conducted experiments on the savages. Calverton's main interest in the book was "the man inside, the Occident was more interested in the world outside. The latter, with its industrial techniques, paid too much attention to the outside world, hence its inability to understand the human being. Only the fusion of the two worlds could solve the problem, wrote Calverton."⁴

¹Calverton to Eastman, October 4, 1938 (VFC).

²Calverton, The Man Inside: Being the Record of the Strange Adventures of Allen Steele Among the Zulus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).

³Calverton to Perkins, March 5, 1936 (VFC).

⁴Calverton, The Man Inside, p. 98; Calverton to George Santayana, Nov. 25, 1936 (VFC).

To create a new society, to get the man inside, people "must learn to master all the apparatus of suggestion," because suggestion was "the key to human reaction." It dominated life; people were convinced by it, and they even fell in love only because of the "suggestive mechanisms involved," argued Calverton.⁵ It became the most powerful instrument of the world which can be utilized for the advantage of human being or for its destruction. Radicals and revolutionaries, who wanted to change the community, needed at first to change the sources of suggestion, because whoever controlled these sources, dominated, in large part, the minds of the population.⁶

In totalitarian states such as Germany, Italy and Soviet Russia, the government, through the media of the advanced techniques of communication, strongly influenced the mind of the people. Hitler skillfully exploited mass-psychology, appealing to emotion rather than to reason. Calverton was disturbed by the failure of the American radicals to attract the masses. He was eager to learn from the success of the Fascists, and decided that "it is not logic but emotion which determines human conduct." He therefore, urged that this technique should be followed in an effort to win the American people over to the radicals.⁷

It is remarkable to note the drastic change in the attitude towards science of the editor of The Modern Monthly, a magazine which appealed only to intellectuals, and printed articles where reason and logic played

⁵Calverton, The Man Inside, pp. 295, 111-112, 232-235.

⁶Ibid., pp. 77, 297.

⁷Ibid., pp. 296-297.

the major role. The new devotion to mystery and hypnosis was contradiction to the belief of the author of Passing of the Gods, who envisaged science and not religion as the dominating force in the future. Calverton repeated in The Man Inside the idea that only the destruction of individualism could solve the problem of the socialized society. That was the only way to get rid of the fear of death, an element that was regarded by Calverton as "the key to life."

Human desire to get at "the man inside" was hampered by the economic preoccupation of the man outside. Only in a socialized society, where people would not be harrassed by economic problems, or by nationalism, which was a factor in economic life, would people be able to get at the man inside and achieve the "miraculous transformation of personality," explained Calverton.

Some of the central points of The Man Inside, such as the fear of death and social hypnosis, had appeared already in "Know Not Thyself." The significant change of the new novel was its highly irrational atmosphere. Calverton's skepticism as to the power of science to solve the basic problems of the world, led him to the idea that "the cosmos not only is, but must always remain an impregnable mystery to man." The difference between "Know Not Thyself" and The Man Inside was also clear in his attitude towards revolution. While in the former a considerable part was devoted to long discussions about the prospects of revolution and the methods to achieve it, in the latter Calverton's basic interest was the human being, the man inside. Whereas in the unpublished novel written in

⁸ Ibid., p. 179.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 122, 79.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 181-182; Calverton to Santayana, Nov. 25, 1936 (VFC).

¹¹ Quoted in Solon, "Calverton: Between Two Worlds," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 26.

1950, the idea of hypnotic suggestion was barely mentioned, by 1936 in The Man Inside this theory was elaborated and developed to the extent that it became the heart of Calverton's thesis.

The novel, whose philosophical insight was far more important than its fictional side,¹² was warmly welcomed by the press. Harold J. Laski found it "new in idea, exciting in treatment and suggestive."¹³ The New York Times reviewed the book twice, and on both occasions it was favorably treated.¹⁴ Herman Dinsmore, an old friend of Calverton, on the editorial board of The New York Times, enthusiastically praised the "fascinating and inspiring" novel. Only Diderot might have written such a book, he remarked.¹⁵ Upton Sinclair was "thrilled" to find out that Calverton, one of the "firmly fixed materialists," was interested in mystery and hypnotism.¹⁶

In short, one can agree completely with the analysis of Samuel L. Solon, who worked with Calverton during a whole decade, that The Man Inside,

¹²Calverton stated so, admitting that as a fiction the novel was not good art. Calverton to Miller, Aug. 24, 1939; Calverton to Rascoe, Jan. 18, 1938 (VFC).

¹³Laski to Calverton, 5. 1., 1937 (VFC).

¹⁴Robert Van Gelder in The New York Times, Oct. 26, 1936 wrote that the novel was "markedly original"; Alfred Kazin in the book review section, hailed the book's "freshness and integrity." It was "provocative to the last" and provided "thoughtful satisfaction." Ibid., Nov. 1, 1936.

¹⁵Dinsmore to Calverton, Nov. 16, 1936; for other favorable reviews see: John Haynes Holmes to Calverton, Dec. 9, 1936; L. M. Field to Calverton, Nov. 3, 1936; Henry Miller, the noted writer and dramatist, admired the style as well as the philosophic insight of the book. Miller to Calverton, n.d.; F. Scott Fitzgerald, on the other hand, criticized the artistic side of the novel. F. Scott Fitzgerald to Calverton, Nov. 4, 1936 (VFC); See also Dorothy Dayton's warm review in The New York Sun, Oct. 23, Nov. 6, 1936; Bruno Fischer in the Socialist Call, October 31, 1936; C. Hearn compared Calverton to H. G. Wells in the SRL, (Nov. 21, 1936), 18.

¹⁶Sinclair to Calverton, Oct. 1936; An old friend was deeply moved by Calverton's reaction to death. Morton Levin to Calverton, Nov. 14, 1936 (VFC).

showed Calverton's position "between two worlds: the clearly defined world of scientific achievement and possibility, and the world beyond science, of human strangeness and cosmic mystery."¹⁷

While Calverton was writing his novel, he did not lose his interest in politics. The internal struggle in the Socialist Party drew his attention. The failure of the Social Democrats in Germany and Austria strengthened the revolutionary element in the Socialist parties of many countries, including that of the United States. Young and active members rebelled against the old leadership. The Militants, as the new faction was called, included people like Maynard Krueger, Andrew Biemiller, Murray Baron, Paul Porter, Powers Mapgood and Haim Kantoróvitch. They represented the revolutionary elements in the party. Supporting the Soviet Union, they were in sympathy with the tactics employed by the Bolsheviks in serving state power. They were ready, though hesitantly, to cooperate with the Communists in a united front, and joined the League Against War and Fascism. The Old Guard, whose official organ was the New Leader and had the support of Louis Waldman. Max Steiner, Charles Solomon, James Oneal and Algernon Lee, continued the evolutionary and reform policy.

The Detroit Convention, in June, 1934, which adopted the Militants' "Declaration of Principles", marked their victory over the Old Guard.¹⁸ The latter, seeing that they had lost power, reluctantly left the party. The final break took place at the Cleveland Convention in June 1936.¹⁹

¹⁷Solon, "Calverton: Between Two Worlds," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 26.

¹⁸The "Declaration of Principles" and the full report of the Detroit Convention appeared in the Militants' organ The Americal Socialist Quarterly, III Special Supplement (July, 1934), 5-6.

¹⁹For the history of the internal struggle in the Socialist Party see: Shannon, The Socialist Party of America, pp. 211-216, 238-244; Bell, "Marxian Socialism in the United States," in Socialism and American Life, I, 374-384.

V. F. Calverton saw in the Militants "one of the healthiest, one of the most dynamic elements in the American radical movement today." He welcomed this revolutionary force and heartily supported it in The Modern Monthly.²⁰ The editorials became so friendly toward this group, that a Milwaukee leader, Andrew J. Biemiller, proposed the fusion of the American Socialist Quarterly with the Monthly to create "a good theoretical Marxian Monthly."²¹ Calverton's shift toward the Socialist Party was almost complete by 1936. In January he added David P. Berenberg, Robert Delson, Bruno Fischer and Herbert Zam to the editorial board of his magazine, because they were "infinitely closer to us than the Communist Party or any other organization," he wrote.²² All of them were Militants, who held important positions in the party organs.

The collaboration with the Socialist Party was intensified when Calverton decided to support the candidacy of Norman Thomas in the elections of 1936. "The Socialist Party is the only party in this election," read the editorial of The Modern Monthly, "which has refused to compromise its principles for votes," therefore it urged the readers to vote for this organization.²³ Calverton was among the signatories of the "Declaration for Thomas and Nelson," along with Max Eastman, Morris Cohen, Sidney Hook, Louis Hacker and Art Young, and other intellectuals. The "Declaration" criticized the distinction of the Communists between the two big capitalist parties, as if the Democratic Party was much better than the Republican Party, because the latter had a Fascist tendency. It was a "fatal illusion", declared the intellectuals who urged

²⁰ Editorial, "The Socialist Party Awakes," MM, VIII (July, 1934), 325-341; "Socialism Leans Left", VIII, (Jan., 1935), 645-649; Felix Morrow, "The New Socialism in America," Ibid., VIII (Aug., 1934), 398-405.

²¹ Biemiller to Calverton, Sept. 16, 1935 (VFC).

²² Calverton to Eastman, n.d. (VFC).

²³ Editorial, MM, IX (July, 1936), 4; See also the editorial "The Militants Score Again", MM, IX (April, 1936), 5, 10.

support for Thomas, to think that the struggle was between Democracy and Fascism. The real fight should be between Democracy and Fascism. The real fight should be between capitalism and Socialism.²⁴ Calverton even acted as a toastmaster at a great party dinner.²⁵

In the election of 1936, Calverton criticized President Roosevelt and his National Recovery Administration,²⁶ and accepted the platform of the Socialist Party. Although he welcomed the revolutionary tendency of the Militants, he did not join the party nor did he hold any political position in it. He remained merely a sympathizer. Thus, after a decade of hostility, Calverton improved his relations with the Socialists. He had changed his political point of view several times since his departure from The New Leader in 1927.

The Moscow Trials of 1936-1938, in which the old guard of the Bolshevik Revolution "confessed" that serving as the agents of Trotsky, they conspired with Hitler and Mussolini to assassinate Stalin and the Russian leaders, were a controversial issue among the intellectuals. The Stalinists and their supporters, including The Nation and The New Republic, sincerely believed in the guilt of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Radek along with many others. According to the anti-Stalinist circles, on the other hand, the trials were a complete frame-up which served to uncover Stalin's ruthless tactics in disposing of his rivals.

Malcolm Cowley, in The New Republic declared his belief in the confessions and defended the execution of the Soviet ex-leaders because they

²⁴"Declaration for Thomas and Nelson," MM, X (Oct. 1936), 13-14.

²⁵Ibid., p. 14.

²⁶Editorial, MM, X (Dec., 1936), 3-4; Calverton to McBride, n.d. (VFC); The Manchester Herald (Con.), Dec. 6, 1934, wrote that "Calverton Likens NRA to Fascism."

"formed a loose alliance with the Trotskyites and began a series of schemes for political assassinations and palace insurrections."²⁷ Dwight McDonald, a journalist and editor, who held at that time a "pro-Soviet bias," argued that the reading of the verbatim transcript of the Second Trial, The Case of the Anti-Soviet Center, "persuaded me for some time, that some kind of conspiracy was going on."²⁸

Granville Hicks was also convinced that "most of the men were guilty." But even if the Trotskyites were right that the trials were entirely frame-ups, "it still remains true that Russia is on our side in the struggle against fascism," stated Hicks.²⁹ That argument was useful in persuading fellow travelers to support the Soviet Union, in spite of their disagreement with some of its tactics. Furthermore, even a member of The American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky, an anti-Stalinist organization, withdrew from the Committee because he became convinced that the people on trial were "guilty beyond any doubt." He was also sure that Trotsky "had a hand in the conspiracy."³⁰

There were, however, many others who could not believe these fantastic charges. Calverton, who had stated for years that Stalin was a menace to the

²⁷ Cowley, "Moscow Trial: II," NR, LXXXXV (May 25, 1938), 79: See also NR LXXXXV (May 18, 1938), 50-57; LXXXIX (Jan. 10, 1937), 348-350; For the Nation's point of view see Eastman's criticism in his "Open Letter to the Nation," MM, X (April, 1937), 4-7; See also Lillian Symes, "Our Liberal Weeklies," MM, X (Oct., 1936, 7-10. Cowley recently admitted that he had played a "shameful part" in the thirties, along with many radicals. Cowley, "The 1930's Were an Age of Faith," The New York Times, Dec. 13, 1964. Eugene Lyons was highly critical to Cowley's hypocrisies; Lyons, "Malcolm Cowley: 1938," MM X (June, 1938), 6-8.

²⁸ Dwight McDonald, Memoirs of A Revolutionist: Essays in Political Criticism (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 10.

²⁹ Hicks, "Communism and American Intellectuals," in Whose Revolution, p. 97.

³⁰ Hallgren to Calverton, Jan. 29, 1937 (VFC).

Communist movement, not surprisingly criticized the conduct of the Moscow Trials. Stalin's object had been to put Trotsky on trial, but it was Joseph Stalin himself who had been convicted, wrote Calverton in an editorial entitled "Stalin On Trial".³¹ The trials were a "frame up" in which the confessions were "less convincing than a Hollywood court scene." The formula of "weird Raskolinkovian admissions", proved to Calverton that the case was "spurious".³²

Norman Thomas expressed the feelings of many non-Communist radicals, when he wrote that the trials caused him "bitter tears and deep humiliation."³³ Calverton was convinced that "the truth has not been told," and called for the formation of an "Impartial Committee" which would examine all the aspects of the trial. Since at stake was the indictment of the Stalinist regime or the Left Opposition, the foundation of such a Committee was "the most important issue of our time," wrote Calverton.³⁴

To enable Trotsky to defend himself against the charges of conspiracy, an American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky was established. John Dewey, the head of this organization, was much more interested in a fair trial, in justice, than in support of Trotsky's political position. He took the investigation seriously, trying to be impartial on the issue. Most of the active members of the Committee, however, were Trotskyists, who exploited

³¹ Editorial, "Stalin On Trial", M M, X (Aug. 1936), 3-4.

³² Ibid. See Arthur Koestler's interesting explanation why the prisoners confessed in his novel Darkness at Noon (London: Jonathan Cape, 1941).

³³ Norman Thomas, "The Moscow Trials," M M, X (March, 1938), 4.

³⁴ Editorial, "The Moscow Trials", M M, (March, 1937), 3.

the case for anti-Stalinist propaganda.³⁵ Calverton added his name to the list of the Committee and threw open his magazine to the defense of Trotsky, but actually he did not play any direct role in the organization.³⁶

Calverton had, however, some indirect connections with the issue, through the Beals' affair. Carleton Beals, an expert on Latin America and an associate editor of The Modern Monthly, was appointed to the Inquiry Commission and went with it to Mexico for the interrogation of Trotsky. Beals asked Trotsky some embarrassing questions and resigned from the Commission in the middle of the hearings. The highly publicized withdrawal with his accusations against the commission of partisanship and Trotskyism, was a useful weapon for the Stalinists. Ernest S. Bates, also on the editorial board of the Monthly, wrote an "Open Letter to Carleton Beals", criticizing the latter's activities and utterances in Mexico City as well as later in New York.³⁷ Beals replied shortly, dismissing Bates's accusations. He had resigned from the Inquiry Commission, he explained, exercising his rightful prerogative, because the proceedings were "unworthy of the name of a serious investigation."³⁸

³⁵Max Shachtman to the author, Aug. 14, 1967; The Committee included among others Louis Adamic, John Chamberlain, John Dos Passos, Max Eastman, James T. Farrell, Sidney Hook, Joseph Wood Kurtz, Ludwig Lore, Dwight McDonald and Burton Rascoe. Benjamin Stolberg and Suzanne LaFollette were among the active members of the Committee. Louis Adamic, My America, p. 81.

³⁶Shachtman to the author, Aug. 14, 1967; Interview with Eastman, April 10, 1967.

³⁷Bates, "An Open Letter to Carleton Beals", MM, X (May, 1951), 9.

³⁸Ibid, p. 10: To Calverton, Beals complained of the attack of Bates, who "based on the assumption that I am a son-of-a-bitch and everybody else is a gentleman and a scholar." Beals to Calverton, May 22, 1937 (VFC).

Calverton, still unaware of the seriousness of the situation, left for England on a lecture tour. When he returned, he found a letter from Trotsky, demanding the dismissal of Beals from the editorial board of the Modern Monthly. Beals had told the public "a series of lies and falsifications dictated by the interest of the G.P.U.," claimed Trotsky. If Calverton refused to remove Beals, he should take Trotsky's name off the list of contributors.³⁹ The pressure on Calverton for the dismissal of Beals was intensified when Max Eastman entered the controversy. He claimed that, aside from its political implication, Beals's "discourteous reply" to a fellow editor, Bates, was "in conflict with the spirit of the Modern Monthly."⁴⁰

Accepting Eastman's argument, Calverton removed Beals from the editorial board. The latter's personal attitude was such as to "seriously impair" his position as a member of the magazine's staff, stated Calverton. But it did not mean that Beals was working for the Soviet intelligence. "...We desire to make clear", wrote Calverton to Trotsky, that "his removal from the staff is in no way to be interpreted as indicating agreement with the view that he acted as a G.P.U. agent."⁴¹ To Beals himself Calverton explained that though he believed that Beals' motivation was "decent and honest", the "implication drawn" from his position, would lead "to a misunderstanding of the policy of the magazine," therefore his removal was necessary.⁴²

39

Trotsky to Calverton, Oct. 15, 1937 (VFC).

40

Eastman to Calverton, Oct. 23, 1937 (VFC).

41

Calverton to Trotsky, Nov. 26, 1937 (VFC).

42

Calverton to Beals, n.d.: Beals took his dismissal with humor.
Beals to Calverton, April 11, 1938 (VFC).

The acceptance of Trotsky's demand, created a wave of protest against the journal's "Trotskyist" tendency. Calverton denied this. The Monthly had no obligation to Trotsky and no peculiar interest in defending him, he declared. As a matter of fact the magazine was opposed by the Trotskyists as much as by the Stalinists. The journal, on the other hand, did not hesitate to condemn Stalin's "fake trials." No genuine revolutionary could accept the purges and persecutions, wrote Calverton.⁴³ The Trotskyists were fundamentally as "pathological" as the Stalinists were. The only difference between them was that the Stalinists had a "fatherland", a "state property" in which they could get rid of all their opponents. The Trotskyists "fortunately" lacked such an equipment.⁴⁴

Another complication resulted from the Beals' affair was the resignation of Diego Rivera from the editorial staff of the Monthly. Rivera, then a Trotskyist, was not satisfied with the removal of Beals' name, which would signify "covering him with protective silence." He demanded Beals' ejection to be accompanied by a public announcement.⁴⁵ Rivera criticized the magazine's approach of "clannishness above the elementary demands of political hygiene." Since he did not want any share in such a periodical, he asked to have his name removed from the editorial staff.⁴⁶

⁴³ Calverton to Margaret Lamont, Sept. 18, 1937; Calverton to Beals, n.d.; Calverton to Harry Dana, Aug. 24, 1937 (VFC).

⁴⁴ Calverton to Beals, April 24, 1938 (VFC).

⁴⁵ Diego Rivera to Calverton, Nov. 3, 1937 (VFC).

⁴⁶ Rivera to the Editors of The Modern Monthly, Jan. 18, 1938 (VFC). Rivera sent this letter of resignation to the Trotskyist organ The Socialist Appeal, despite the fact that he already knew Calverton's reply to Trotsky and Beals's dismissal. Calverton protested against that method, which was "not in accordance with the revolutionary integrity" that Rivera tried to represent. Calverton to the Editor of The Socialist Appeal, Feb. 4, 1938; See also Symes to Calverton, Feb. 3, 1938 (VFC). Another attempt to jeo-

In the same way that the Moscow Trials were a shock for some intellectuals, so the Stalinists' role in the Spanish Civil War was a source of bitter attacks upon the ruthless methods of the Communists. The Civil War in Spain, between the loyalist forces of the official government, and the fascist elements led by Franco, soon became an international affair. Germany, Italy and Russia intervened in the internal struggle, using Spain as a "preliminary experiment, a sort of laboratory test", as Calverton⁴⁷ rightly remarked. Against the increasing help that Franco received from Mussolini and Hitler, the Comintern appealed to volunteers to save Spain⁴⁸ from Fascism. Russian troops also took part in the fight.

The Communist forces created a People's Front with the Socialists, Socialist Trade Unionists, liberals and even with conservative elements. In America, this policy was highly popular among the intellectuals. There were, however, other groups in Spain that challenged the People's Front. The anarchists and the Left Socialist Party (POUM), wanted not only to fight against Fascism but also to establish a revolutionary state. They emphasized that the best way to beat Franco was by socializing the country and creating a workers' state. The People's Front, on the other hand, insisted, that the first objective should be the defeat of Franco, and not

pardize the Inquiry Commission of John Dewey, was made by Corliss Lamont, See Sidney Hook's version: "Corliss Lamont: 'Friend of the GPU'", MM, X (March, 1938), 5-8.

The Commission published its verdict in a volume entitled Not Guilty. Its abstract stated that the Commission "finds that the disproof of all... vital testimony invalidates the confessions of Karl Radek and other defendants." Quoted in the M M, X (March, 1938), 5.

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Calverton, "Will England Give Spain to Franco?" MM, X (Aug. 1936), 5-8. The Western powers at first sympathized with the Loyalists but later an embargo applying to both parties was declared.

⁴⁸

In the United States the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was founded, whose members actively participated in the war.

the achievement of the revolution. The only way to win that war, was by unification of all the democratic forces in their fight against fascism. Thus, while the Anarchists and POUM stated that the basic issue was between Socialism and Capitalism, the Communists emphasized that the immediate struggle was between Fascism and Democracy.⁴⁹

Calverton strongly attacked the People's Front policy. It was the "complete sell out to Menshevik principles," that Lenin would have fought tooth and nail. While unity was essential to the radical movement, this unholy alliance would be catastrophic to the revolutionary progress.⁵⁰ Supporting the "reactionary" and "retrogressive" forces, the Communists were working for "the destruction of a socialist Spain." By opposing the revolutionary groups of POUM, Stalin helped the capitalist elements and thus betrayed Marxism.

Just as the Mensheviks in 1917 wanted to fight for a democratic Russia, arguing that Socialism would come later, so the Stalinists in Spain were doing precisely the same thing. And as Lenin's objection to the Mensheviks was "sound", so the policy of POUM in Spain was the right one. Calverton called for a "united drive to rid the revolutionary movement of such practices, such violations of revolutionary decency, such criminal outrages against everything Socialism signifies as a movement and as an ideal."⁵¹

⁴⁹ A good survey of the situation in Spain is Ludwig Lore's essay "The Challenge to Catalonia", MM, X (May, 1937), 5-7.

⁵⁰ Calverton to Menefee, March 10, 1937 (VFC).

⁵¹ The last quotation was taken from the editorial, "Beyond Franco and Stalin," MM, X (Sept., 1937), 27; See also the Editorial, "Bolshevism in Spain", MM, X (May, 1937), 2; Calverton, "Will England Give Spain to Franco?," MM, X (Aug. 1937) 7-8.

Thus, Calverton was convinced that not the Communist but the Socialist Party should be sought for revolutionary guidance, and only the Socialists were "the Bolshevik party of our generation, to which all truly Bolshevik spirits can inevitably turn."⁵²

The Communists, as the price for their help in Spain, demanded from the loyalist government effective rule in several areas. Eventually, when they assumed power, they began to get rid of unfriendly elements. The Modern Monthly in a documented special issue dedicated to Spain, exposed the mass imprisonment and executions conducted by the Stalinist Cheka in that country.⁵³

The Moscow trials and the Stalinist terrorism in Spain led some people, like Calverton's friend Julius Gluck to be "so confused and discouraged, so disillusioned that I'm beginning to lose faith in everything."⁵⁴ Scott Nearing, an old revolutionary, who in 1935 still criticized Calverton's Trotskyist leanings, felt completely helpless. Stalin's dictatorship indicated that nothing had changed in Russia since the days of the Tsars, wrote Nearing. No society could be built upon fear and hate. He wondered whether to achieve such a Socialism at the expense of freedom was worth the price. "There is something fundamentally at fault about the Communist

⁵² Editorial, MM, (April, 1937), 3.

⁵³ Annita Brenner's long article "Class War in Republican Spain," MM, X (Sept. 1937), 7-17, was followed by documents that for the first time in America proved the atrocities of the Stalinists. "Dossier of Counter-Revolution: Documents," Ibid, pp. 18-27. The names of the "martyrs to Spanish reaction," who were killed by the Fascists were listed side by side with those who found their death at the hands of the Communists, Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Julius Gluck to Calverton, March 14, 1938 (VFC).

Party approach and organization" wrote Nearing, the problem therefore needed "a lot of rethinking."⁵⁵ If Nearing the old war-horse of the radical movement was so skeptical as to the value of the Socialist goal and its means, it should not be surprising that Calverton also called for a revaluation of Marxism.

Since 1938 Calverton had sought for a new rational synthesis of revolutionary thought. He was convinced that "rethinking is what's necessary desperately. Many of the outstanding theories of Marx today are open to question."⁵⁶ For Calverton, whose Socialism was flexible and who regarded Marxism only as an "invaluable historical method" but not an end which explained everything, such a conclusion was almost natural. He thought himself a "heterodox Marxian" rebelling against the authoritarianism that the Communists had entrenched about it.⁵⁷

Analysing the situation in Russia he found that it was based on "state capitalism" which had "actually nothing in common with Socialism." Therefore the defense of such a rule became "a pure and simple defense of declining capitalism."⁵⁸ Although Russia was certainly not a workers' state, he admitted that it would be "absurd" to deny its advance upon the capitalistic governments. Consequently, should the Soviet Union be at war with a capitalist state, Calverton was ready to support her, though very reluctantly. He expressed his hope that the workers would rebel

⁵⁵Nearing to Calverton, March 13, 1938 (VFC).

⁵⁶Calverton to Nearing, March 21, 1938 (VFC).

⁵⁷Ibid.; Calverton to Knight, Jan. 12, 1936 (Knight Collection, University of Kentucky).

⁵⁸Editorial, "Is State Capitalism Progressive?" MM, X (March, 1938), 2-3; See also Liston M. Oak, "Is Stalinism-Bolshevism?", Ibid, pp. 8-10.

against their "Socialist Emperor" and establish a real proletarian government there.⁵⁹

There was only one step needed to denounce the whole Bolshevik system. Calverton arrived at the conclusion that the "bankruptcy of Bolshevism dates not from 1926, [the fall of Trotsky] but must be traced back to the early years" of Lenin. It was not Stalin who spoiled Russia but Bolshevism itself, which had originated much earlier. Stalin only developed an already existing situation.⁶⁰

When The Modern Quarterly printed the symposium "Was the Bolshevik Revolution a Failure," the new line was certainly under way. The questions had been angled in such a way that it was clear at least for those who composed them, that the answers should be in the negative.⁶¹ Harold J. Laski, far from being a Stalinist, protested against the nature of the questions which could only "intensify the divisions in the left."⁶² The editorial, introducing the symposium, declared that the Bolshevik ideas had already "lost their significance as guiding principles to action. New, sounder, more significant conceptions must replace them." Thus, in 1938 Calverton was sure that the Bolshevik revolution was a failure.⁶³

The more Calverton criticized Stalin's dictatorship and attacked the People's Front policy, the more enemies he created. While the Soviet interference in Spain was regarded by The Modern Monthly as Menshevism and

⁵⁹ Editorial, "Shall We Defend the Socialist Emperor?", M Q, XI (Winter, 1939), 2-4.

⁶⁰ Editorial, MM, X (March, 1938), 2-3.

⁶¹ "Did the Bolshevik Revolution achieve its proletarian objective?" "Is the dictatorship of the proletariat consonant with Party Dictatorship?" These were two examples of the questions of the symposium. MQ, XI (Fall, 1938), 10.

⁶² Laski to Calverton, Aug. 29, 1938 (VFC).

⁶³ MQ, XI (Fall, 1938), 5. See also Lillian Symes's appeal for a "new

terrorism, many intellectuals heartily supported the Communist fight against the Fascist Franco. The Communist dominated American Writers' Congress, which included even non Communist writers such as Kenneth Burke, John Chamberlain and Waldo Frank, welcomed the United Front policy and the anti-Fascist drive of Moscow. Calverton, along with Eastman and Louis Hacker, was naturally excluded from this organization, because of his "Trotskyist" tendency.⁶⁴ Among American intellectuals Communist success seriously diminished the influence and circulation of the magazine. Furthermore, Roosevelt's left turn and reform policy led many radicals to abandon their movement, and to accept the President's leadership.

Thus, the activity and sales of the Monthly were "seriously curtailed" because of two opposite forces: the turn to the left of intellectuals who accepted the Communists' United Front, and the turn to the right of those who left the radical movement and "pledged allegiance to the Roosevelt program." Since Calverton challenged both, determining to fight the "dual tendencies of opportunism and sectarianism", as he called them, he was forced to reduce the frequency of the appearance of the magazine. In the fall of 1938 the journal once again became a quarterly. The new Modern Quarterly was definitely different in its policy from that of the early thirties. As the opening editorial declared, the journal called for a "thorough reexamination of radical doctrine."⁶⁵

The new line of The Quarterly, which criticized not only Stalinism, but Bolshevism as well, that questioned the success of the October Revolution, was contrary to Trotsky's conception that Stalin alone was responsible for

synthesis of revolutionary Socialism by a less ruthless and devious code of political morality." Symes, "Toward a New Beginning", MQ, XI (Fall, 1938), 37. Calverton encouraged her to write this article. Calverton to Symes, April 24, 1938 (VFC).

⁶⁴ On the aims, character and development of the four congresses of the American Writers, see in detail in Aaron, Writers On the Left, pp. 299-308, 319, 324, 371-375.

⁶⁵ The reasons for the change from monthly to quarterly are listed in

the degeneration of the Russian situation. Since Trotsky disagreed completely with the magazine's tendency, it was not a surprise when he demanded the removal of his name from the list of contributors.⁶⁶

Calverton's point of view and field of interest in 1938-1939, found its expression in The Awakening of America,⁶⁷ the first volume of a planned trilogy about the history of the American people written from a Marxian point of view. The book traced American history "in terms of the ruled instead of the rulers, the underdogs instead of the top dogs", declared the author in his preface. He wanted to give voice to the oppressed and the dissenters. He regarded his approach as Marxian, but not an orthodox one. No intelligent historian could disregard the contribution of Marx to the explanation of historical processes, thought Calverton. But he emphasized his intention neither to worship Marx nor follow him without criticism and revision.⁶⁸

The book focused attention on the revolts during the colonial period. The Puritan Dissenters received special treatment by the author because they had laid the foundation of the American democratic tradition.⁶⁹ Calverton was also interested in the early Communist settlements, a subject to which he later devoted an entire book.⁷⁰ The Negroes and the Indians,

the opening editorial of the new format. M Q, XI (Fall, 1938), 2-3.

⁶⁶ Trotsky to Calverton, March 6, 1939 (VFC); See also Calverton's - evaluation of Trotsky after his assassination, editorial, M Q, XI (Summer, 1940), 7-10.

⁶⁷ Calverton, The Awakening of America (New York: The John Day Co., 1939).

⁶⁸ Ibid; p. VII.

⁶⁹ Ibid; p. 65.

⁷⁰ Calverton, Where Angels Dared to Tread (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1941).

the oppressed minorities, were dealt with sympathetically because of their suffering. Calverton justified the cruelty of the Indians in the light of the white's harassment of them.⁷¹

Following the popular frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner, Calverton declared that the frontier had brought about the Americanization and democratization of American society. "In the cabin settlements of the frontier," wrote Calverton, "democratic America was born."⁷²

In his conclusions he distinguished between two types of democracy, a political and an economic one. While democracy during the early period in America was political and served as an adequate protection of the people, in the industrial society of the twentieth century, economic protection was what the citizens needed. A dynamic and a progressive economic democracy was necessary, he declared. The author saw as the task of his generation the achievement of an industrial democracy which could provide sufficient protection for the workers.⁷³

The book was warmly accepted by leading American historians. Allan Nevins recommended it as the Book of the Month and was eager to review The Awakening of America because he was "anxious to say an enthusiastic word about it." He invited Calverton to Columbia University to introduce him to the historians, Henry Steele Commager and Harry Carman.⁷⁴ Harold U. Faulkner thought the book "a real contribution to the interpretation of American history." He was wondering why the country had had to wait so

⁷¹ Calverton, Awakening of America, pp. 70-79.

⁷² Ibid, p. 433.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 436-438.

⁷⁴ Allan Nevins to Calverton, Oct. 10, 1939 (VFC).

long for such a book, the kind, "that we need more of."⁷⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr. regarded it as an "unusual achievement," full of "fresh and challenging" ideas.⁷⁶

The highest praises Calverton ever received from a prominent critic was made by Van Wyck Brooks in confirming Calverton's history with Vernon S. Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought. The letter, of which Calverton was so proud, that he sent a copy of it to many of his friends, read as follows:

...I feel that your book is incomparably finer than his [Parrington's], much more moving, written from clearer and deeper convictions, superior in style and concreteness and for me far more of a revelation. It is a revelation as Parrington was not for me, and I marvelled as I read it that you should have been the first to see our tradition... We have had proletarian interpretations, but they have not had your suppleness and authority, your fairness of spirit and your feeling for motives, not to mention your extraordinary wealth of knowledge.

I admire these traits beyond all words.... You build up a picture of my American tradition that I shall never forget, and I shall go back to the book again and again.... I feel the utmost confidence in your interpretation and deepest sympathy with your point of view.⁷⁷

Brooks's enthusiastic words were, according to a friend, "equivalent to knighthood in the British Isles."⁷⁸ Brooks was inclined to Socialism,

⁷⁵ Harold U. Faulkner to Calverton, Dec. 10, 1939 (VFC).

⁷⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger to Calverton, Dec. 11, 1939 (VFC); See also Carl Becker's praises on the cover of the book; George S. Counts wrote: "This is precisely the kind of history that must be written if American democracy is to check the spread of the totalitarian pestilence." Counts to Calverton, May 4, 1939; Curtis Nettels to Calverton, Sept. 25, 1939 (VFC); Bruce Catton's comments are in Spartanburg (S.C.) Journal, Nov. 19, 1939. The book was recommended for Pulitzer prize in history, along with Charles and Mary Beard's America in Midpassage, and Carl Sandburg's Abraham Lincoln SRL, XXII (April 27, 1940), 10-11.

⁷⁷ Van Wyck Brooks to Calverton, Dec. 26, 1939 (VFC).

⁷⁸ Grant Knight to Calverton, Feb. 6, 1940; Counts thought it "prac-

criticising dogmatic Marxians as purely European and not suited to the American psychology. Hence his agreement with Calverton's thesis. But James Truslow Adams, who was far from the Left, did not share the opinion of Van Wyck Brooks. Since the book did not present new evidence, its importance lay according to Adams in the selection of the sources. By Collecting all the revolts in America into one volume, the author distorted the picture of the Colonial Period, according to this reviewer. Adams, whose family had had two representatives in the White House, might well be worried about the new sympathy with the underdog, which led to the wrong impression as if he must be "a finer breed than the top one".⁷⁹

The fact that The Awakening of America was welcomed by important historians, although it was neither the first study on the subject nor provided original evidence, indicates, perhaps, more about the current frame of reference of the historians than about the quality of the book itself. The depression years and the New Deal aroused interest in social and economic issues. Social history and economic interpretation were the order of the day in the American historiography of the 1930's. The publication of such a work today, would certainly create different reactions. This provides a partial explanation for the popularity of Calverton's books in his time, and the almost complete lack of notice today.

James Oneal, the editor of the Socialist New Leader, was highly critical of Calverton. He compared The Liberation of American Literature, written in 1932, with The Awakening of America, and showed the "fundamental contrast in approach and interpretation." While the former disregarded the struggle of the working class movements, except that of the Communists, because of

tically priceless." Counts to Calverton, April 30, 1940; See also Laski to Calverton, March 6, 1940 (VFC).

⁷⁹Adams, "History on a Grand Scale," The New York Times, December 10, 1939.

their "bourgeois" character, in the latter Calverton suddenly became the defender of democracy. According to Oneal, Calverton represented many intellectuals, who moved from left to right not because of conviction, but only because in the early thirties Bolshevism was a fad and in 1939-40 it was no longer popular. Thus, Calverton, as one of the "play-boy dandies," without "fundamental understanding" of the democratic philosophy he adopted it, as he had accepted a "grotesque 'Marxism'" in the early thirties.⁸⁰

Calverton was angry at the "lousy stinking review" which he believed to be politically motivated.⁸¹ He admitted to Oneal that it was the latter's Marxism which proved to be correct. But he accused Oneal of mixing in his review political ideas with literary judgment.⁸² In spite of Calverton's protest, it seems that Oneal made a point. The comparison of Calverton's conclusion in the two books, pointed out what a long way Calverton had come during the thirties. He conceded to Brooks that as far as the last chapter of Liberation was concerned, it had been written in 1931, and he "would never write it in that vein today."⁸³ In a candid manner he confessed that he still identified himself with Marxism, only because "I feel that originally I owe such a debt to Marx and that a certain number of his theses hold true today."⁸⁴

Thus, toward the end of the thirties, Calverton was an elastic-minded Marxist, a revisionist, who looked for a "new terminology adapted to the

⁸⁰Oneal to Calverton, Feb. 1, 1940 (VFC).

⁸¹Calverton's remarks are on a letter accepted from Laski, Sept., (n.d.)

⁸²Calverton to Oneal, Feb. 5, 1940 (VFC).

⁸³Calverton to Brooks, Jan. 7, 1940 (VFC).

⁸⁴Calverton to Brooks, Dec. 27, 1939 (VFC).

American outlook,"⁸⁵ This he tried to incorporate into The Awakening of America.

Another channel for the expansion of his ideas was the lecture-tours he made throughout the country. In addition, these lectures served as an important source of income. They were useful for covering the magazine's deficit. There was one bright spot in these endless and sometimes wearing travels, namely, his activity among the Negroes. During the late thirties he visited several Southern Negro colleges, attracting the young students to radicalism.

When he was invited as a guest speaker for the Southern Association of Dramatic and the Speech Arts, he delivered a dozen lectures instead of one for which he was paid. He was supposed to stay a day but remained a week.⁸⁶ "You can't realize the tremendous effect your lectures made in these parts," wrote M. B. Tolson, a Negro poet. Several directors decided to put on radical plays. In Texas College a branch of NAACP was organized under the influence of Calverton's lectures.⁸⁷ He was an inspirer of the Negro intellectuals.⁸⁸

In the summer of 1939 a group of ninety-six scholars and artists led by John Dewey, organized a "League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism," which protested against the literary United Front. The Communist Party

⁸⁵Ibid. See also Calverton's introduction to The Making of Society, where he demanded to Americanize the Marxian approach. Calverton, "The American Pattern," in Making of Society: An Outline of Sociology edited by Calverton (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), pp. 1-11.

⁸⁶Tolson, "A Man Against the Idols of the Tribe," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 32.

⁸⁷Tolson to Calverton, March 7, Oct. 8, 1938 (VFC).

⁸⁸Among those whom Calverton encouraged were Virgil Richardson, Leonard Farmer, Benjamin Bell, Hamilton Boswell and M. B. Tolson. Tolson, "A Man Against the Idols of the Tribe," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 32.

dominated the American Writers Congress as well as other organizations of intellectuals, which were in effect the "apologists for the Kremlin dictatorship." These literary groups outlawed dissenting opinions from the Left, against which Dewey and the League revolted. V. F. Calverton, whose name appeared among the signatures, criticized those intellectuals who denounced the totalitarianism of Hitler and Mussolini, but failed to accuse Stalin's depotism. The League rejected the practice which exploited culture for political aims, demanding "complete freedom for art and science; no dictation by party."⁸⁹

The Communists reacted by publishing a statement, signed by four hundred intellectuals which protested against the "fantastic falsehood that the USSR and totalitarian states are basically alike."⁹⁰ A week later the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact was signed in Moscow.

The announcement of the pact was like a bombshell in the intellectual circles of the United Front. "That knocks the bottom out of everything" wrote Granville Hicks, in resigning from the party.⁹¹ Many left the party, others were expelled. The Communists had been supported by the intellectuals because of their uncompromising stand against Fascism. The pact was a total reversal of that policy. It was the denial of morality in politics, giving priority to Realpolitik, therefore the writers withdrew from the party.⁹² For many it was the time of agonizing reappraisal of all the principles they

⁸⁹"The League For Cultural Freedom," N, 149 (July 15, 1939), 83-84; The New York Times, May 15, 1939; See also Lyons, Red Decade, pp. 326-345.

⁹⁰Letter to the editor, N, 149 (Aug. 26, 1939), 226: See also Howe and coser, The History of The Communist Party; A critical History (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 315.

⁹¹Hicks, Where We Came Out, p. 80.

⁹²See the stimulating analysis of Norman H. Pearson, "The Nazi-Soviet Pact and the End of a Dream", in America in Crisis, edited by Daniel Aaron (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1952), pp. 327-348.

of all the principles they had believed. It was the end of a dream for the intellectuals, and the termination of the high prestige that the Communists enjoyed during the thirties in America.⁹³

For Calverton, and other anti Stalinist circles, the pact was a real victory. "We could not help enjoying their [the Communists] shame and dismay," recalled a friend.⁹⁴ For years Calverton had preached against Stalin's reactionary and opportunistic line, but he had been laughed at and attacked for his "deviations." Now his approach proved to be correct. As a matter of fact, he had predicted months earlier, "Undoubtedly, Stalin... is going to bend all efforts to renew alliance with GERMANY." Since Calverton had no illusions about Stalin, he was able to analyse the situation in terms of Realpolitik and he was sure that if England and France would object to Hitler's eastern policy, "Hitler and Stalin will become allies."⁹⁵

A week after the pact has been signed, World War II broke out and the question of American intervention became acute. Calverton, who vehemently opposed both sides, launched his last crusade against the war, and especially against the entry of the United States.

Since boyhood Calverton had strongly opposed wars. In 1935, when Italy attacked Ethiopia, he was convinced that the second world war was among the corner. To "abet encourage and intensify anti war propaganda on every front," the Modern Monthly had published a symposium "What Will I Do When

⁹³ Hicks, Where We Came Out, pp. 70-77.

⁹⁴ Una Corbett to the author, Aug. 24, 1967.

⁹⁵ A sheet of Calverton's lectures in 1938-39; A lecture was entitled "After Munich What? or A Treaty Between Germany and Soviet Russia Which is Now in the Air." (VFC).

America Goes To War?". He forced liberal and radical leaders openly to declare their point of view on the war issue.⁹⁶ Most of the participants unhesitatingly indicated their hatred to war, and objected to American intervention in it.

As Hitler's aggression increased, the occupation of Czechoslovakia and threat on Austria clearly indicated to Lewis Mumford and Waldo Frank, among others, that war would be inevitable. The choice must be "between a greater evil and a lesser evil," thought Mumford, and war with the Nazi beast would be the lesser evil. He published in May 1938 his "Call to Arms," in which he explained at length why America should fight Germany tooth and nail.⁹⁷

Calverton challenged Mumford's view. The war was not for democracy, but for "power, possession [and] economic supremacy." It was an imperialist war. The opposition of England and France to Hitler was due not to their hatred of Fascism, but rather to the Fascist threat to their imperial possessions.⁹⁸ Though Calverton would be glad to see the victory of the Allies over Fascism, he opposed the idea of "supporting one imperialist government against another." Help for England and France, he regarded as cooperation with thieves.⁹⁹

⁹⁶"What Will I do When America Goes to War," M M, IX (May, 1935). In the symposium participated John Dewey, Charles Beard, Sinclair Lewis, Archibald Macleish, Elmer Rice, James Truslow Adams, John Haynes Holmes, Walter Lippman, Van Wyck Brooks, Sidney Howars, Lewis Mumford, Norman Thomas, Scott Nearing, James Rorty, Herbert Zam, Bertram D. Wolfe, Albert Weisbord, Paul Mattick, and many others. Ibid, (May, 1935); (June, 1935).

⁹⁷Lewis Mumford, "Call to Arms," N R, LXXXXV (May 18, 1938), 39-42; Mumford to Calverton, Oct. 29, 1940 (VFC).

⁹⁸Editorial, "The Second World War," MQ, XI (Summer, 1939), 2-7.

⁹⁹Editorial, "Will America Win the War?", M Q, XI (Winter, 1939), 4; The reference to "thieves" appeared in the Baltimore Morning Sun Nov. 27, 1939.

The United States "has nothing to gain...but it has everything to lose" by entering the war. The real winner from such a step would be Fascism, he argued, because military activities and an atmosphere of war would lead to a totalitarian government in America as well as in Europe. War would create an "industrial feudalism," which meant for Calverton "nothing more than an American branch of Fascism."¹⁰⁰ To avoid further wars he proposed the adoption of two laws: A law which would ban conscription as a governmental resort leaving enlistment on a voluntary basis and another law to prohibit the declaration of war unless it was decided by plebiscite.¹⁰¹ He criticized those liberals who had opposed war in 1935 but now repudiated their old belief under the pressure of the war-mongers. Lewis Mumford and Waldo Frank were charged with yielding to the war hysteria.¹⁰²

Mumford, in his reaction to Calverton's accusations, explained that what Calverton called "courage" in opposing the war, was simple "willful blindness." While he had learned something from the catastrophic events since 1935, Calverton had learned nothing.¹⁰³ Sidney Hook also criticized Calverton's anti war policy.¹⁰⁴ A pacifist friend conceded that he decided to support the war because "it will be a major disaster, should Germany win."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰Editorial, "Who Are The War Makers," M M, X (Feb. 1938), 10; Editorial, "The Second World War," M Q, XI(Summer, 1939), 7.

¹⁰¹Calverton, "What Price Patriotism" (VFC).

¹⁰²Editorial, "The Road Back," M Q, XI (Summer, 1940), 2-5.

¹⁰³Mumford to Calverton, Oct. 29, 1940 (VFC).

¹⁰⁴Hook to Calverton, June 19, 1940 (VFC). Hook wrote a pro-war article for the Calverton Memorial Issue of The Modern Quarterly. The other editors were convinced that the publication of such an essay would be an insult to the memory of Calverton, therefore they refused to print it. That was the reason why Sidney Hook left the special board of editors to which he had originally belonged. Interview with Nina Melville, Nov. 14, 1966.

¹⁰⁵S. West to Calverton, April 11, 1940 (VFC).

Many friends left Calverton and stopped supporting the magazine because of his anti war policy. The Quarterly appeared only twice that year [1939] and in 1940 only once. Calverton however went on in his way disregarding the opposition and the difficulties.¹⁰⁶ The friendship with Scott Nearing was revived, partly, because the latter held the same opinion as Calverton on the war issue.¹⁰⁷

Norman Thomas, in opposing American intervention, gained the support of The Modern Quarterly for the election of 1940. He was the only one "who may be counted upon for unwavering opposition to the forces of reaction, alien-baiting and militarist hysteria and the drive toward war," read the editorial.¹⁰⁸

The war "worried and broke" Calverton, recalled a friend.¹⁰⁹ In his last year, in 1940, he was deeply disappointed that the world went on disregarding his ideas. He felt himself a "hopeless futile wanderer", a stranger to the world and even more stranger to himself.¹¹⁰ The loneliness and the fear of death, two elements that he had depicted in The Man Inside, overcame him. He was unable to get rid of them. He did not want to be alone. He sought for new friends and new parties to escape his loneliness.¹¹¹ The death of Ernest S. Bates and Thomas Wolfe terrified him.

¹⁰⁶Singer, "Modern Quarterly," M Q, XI (Fall, 1940), 19.

¹⁰⁷Nearing to Calverton, n.d. (VFC); Calverton complained that the number of people who opposed war gradually diminished. Calverton to Nearing, n.d. (VFC).

¹⁰⁸Editorial, "The Road Back", M Q, XI (Summer, 1940), 6: See also Thomas, "It's still an Imperialist War," M Q, XI (Fall, 1939), 7-17.

¹⁰⁹Britt, "Calverton," M Q, XI (Fall, 1940), 12; McAlister Coleman, Ibid, p. 44.

¹¹⁰"This is and always will be my philosophy...It is I," wrote Calverton (VFC).

¹¹¹"I am afraid to be alone...I know I cannot escape," he wrote on a sheet of paper, just to ease his feelings, (VFC); Samuel Solon, "Calverton's Quest for Utopia," The American Mercury, LII (May, 1941), 627.

The plan to write an autobiography also indicated this direction. He had already signed a contract, spent the advance, but wrote only a few pages. He wanted to put into the book, "Between Two Wars", as it was to be called, "everything of myself."¹¹²

Probably the double feeling of loneliness and fear of death directed him to the investigation of the Communist Utopian colonies in the early period of American history. In Where Angels Dare to Tread,¹¹³ Calverton praised the effort to build up Utopian settlements escaping the loneliness and chaos of outside world. The colonies were of two types: religious and economic. Both of them had social ideas trying to establish a "new way of life, a new world."¹¹⁴ The failure of the Labadists, the Ephratics and other farms, was not because the Communist idea was inadequate. It was important for Calverton to prove that "...it was not their communism which failed, but corrupting elements within the group which vitiated their communist resolve."¹¹⁵ In an agrarian economy such a system was not workable. But in the modern industrial society, Calverton was convinced that the communal settlement would be attainable.¹¹⁶

¹¹²Calverton to John Macrae, Feb. 3, 1940; Macrae to Calverton, Nov. 6, 1940, Jay B. Eggen mentioned the relation between his plan to write an autobiography, and his fear of death. Eggen to Calverton n.d.; Florence Bowers, a friend, encouraged Calverton to undertake the project. Bowers to Calverton, July 13, 1939 (VFC).

¹¹³Calverton, Where Angels Dared to Tread (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1941).

¹¹⁴Ibid., Preface, n.p.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 348.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 350. In Israel the kibbutz is a good example of the workability of the communal settlements. Samuel Solon emphasized the connection between Calverton's own feelings and the thesis of the book. Solon, "Calverton's Quest for Utopia," The American Mercury, Lii (May, 1941), 625-630. See the review of James Truslow Adams, SRL, XXIII (April 12, 1941), 6.

Where Angels Dared to Tread, which appeared after his death, indicated Calverton's interest in communism in its pure form. He remained a Socialist, as he understood it, until his end. Only a few months before his death, he published an article in which he explained "What Socialism Means to Me."¹¹⁷ That was the summary of his philosophy. Socialism meant "the destruction of economic classes, the elimination of privilege, the preservation of freedom (...), and the exaltation of commoners." The government should be controlled by the people themselves, by the masses, surely not by any party. He held himself a Marxist, but a revisionist. Marxism was only a "tool in social process." Socialism should encourage rational thinking and "healthy skepticism." Not authoritarianism, but a critical approach. Socialism was for him "the interest in the human race." He indicated that "if Socialism is not human as well as social, it is worthless."¹¹⁸ In short, social and economic equality, ruled by a government which controlled by the masses, was his ideal. Whether this would be called Socialism or Syndicalism, he did not care.

Herman Singer, an associate editor of the Quarterly, stated that since 1938 Calverton had been far from Marxism.¹¹⁹ An examination of the sources lead to a different conclusion. Lillian Symes's judgment seems to have been more accurate, though somewhat exaggerated, when she wrote that "George Calverton died in the tragic year of 1940 as convinced a Socialist as he had

¹¹⁷ Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me," The Call, June 22, 1940.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.; Calverton to Brooks, January 7, 1940 (VFC). Sidney Hook regarded the article "the best thing you have written in a long time. It had a genial and human quality..." Quoted in Calverton to Gerry Allard, July 27, 1940 (VFC).

¹¹⁹ Interview with Singer, March 29, 1967.

been at the age of eighteen."¹²⁰ Indeed, in his own way, he remained faithful to the basic conception of Socialism.

Thus, in his last years, Calverton ran "swiftly stumbling forward across the Wasteland of discouragement and dramatized disillusionment," as a friend noted.¹²¹ He called for a reevaluation of the revolutionary thought, criticizing not only Stalinism, but the Bolshevik Revolution as well, and denounced not only the dictatorship of one man, but also the dictatorship of the party. The People's Front in Spain and in America was a Menshevik plot, the betrayal of Marxism. It was the Socialist Party which guarded the revolutionary fire, and it was for that reason that Calverton had supported it in the elections of 1936 and 1940.

Calverton's lost campaign, which was also his last, was the issue of the war, to which he threw himself with uncompromising zeal. His anti war approach seriously damaged his influence and that of his magazine as well. He lost even the little authority that he had had before. Calverton thought himself a victim of the war hysteria. The position of Randolph Bourne, who vehemently opposed American intervention in World War I, was similar to that of Calverton. The latter frequently emphasized the parallel. In his last letters, Calverton pleaded with his friends to realize the situation in the light of Bourne's tragic struggle.¹²²

¹²⁰ Symes, "Calverton: Socialist," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 20. Leon Dennen and Una Corbett also stated according to this line. Conversation with Dennen, April 10, 1967; Corbett to the Author, Aug. 4, 1967. Probably the contradiction between Singer and Symes was based on their differing definition of Marxism. If Singer identified Marxism with current official Communism, then he was certainly right. But Calverton in this study may be regarded as a Marxist although he rejected the official line.

¹²¹ George Britt, "Calverton," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 12.

¹²² Michael Blankfort, Ibid., p. 43.

Calverton's death was so similar to that of Bourne, that Calverton's last editorial which was concerned with Bourne could well be applied to himself: "His unflagging efforts in the cause of sanity hastened his death. Most of his Bourne's friends deserted him in the crucial hour, only to regret it later."¹²³ V. F. Calverton died at the age of forty, on November 20, 1940, of pernicious anemia, after an illness of four days.¹²⁴

Although he was only forty years old, he died old, lonely and disappointed. Considering the two decades of his intensive and ambitious way of life, he was an old, experienced editor, author and lecturer. He died disillusioned, because he realized that years of effort were meaningless, expending them in hopes that "Socialism meant something different, something superior."¹²⁵ The rise of Nazism and the outbreak of World War II, especially the growing inclination towards American participation in it, broke him. Fighting for unpopular ideas, he had been abandoned by old friends. Such was the tragic end of a man who had tried to pursue an independent course in the midst of the highly sectarian movement.

¹²³ Editorial, "The Road Back," MQ, XI (Summer, 1940), 2.

¹²⁴ The New York Times, November 21, 1940.

¹²⁵ Calverton to Nearing, March 21, 1938 (VFC).

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

The story of V. F. Calverton is, in a sense, the history of the radical movement during the third and fourth decade of the twentieth century. But depicting the picture from Calverton's point of view means, that the era was described by a critical, independent sympathizer with radicalism. During the early twenties, inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, he was converted to Socialism, in which he believed until his death. During the second half of the decade he became the defender of the new trend in morals. He also actively participated in the literary 'holy wars' of the age. Then came the deep disillusionment with Stalin's regime. Calverton refused to distinguish between the varieties of totalitarianism, denouncing Stalinism as well as Fascism.

In the second half of the twenties, when he fully supported the Communists, they were a relatively small and uninfluential group. Therefore he was able to play a considerable role in Marxian literary criticism. A decade later, however, when the Communist Party and the United Front were popular among the American intellectuals, Calverton moved to the anti-Communist Left, losing the command of the critical field.

Between the two World Wars?

What was his part? Calverton was, certainly a well-known person. This is evidently clear from twenty-five massive volumes of newspaper clippings covering the last fifteen years of his activity. The fact that even The New York Times devoted an editorial to Calverton after his death,¹ also indicated that he was a prominent figure. More significant for this study is the question what was his role in and contribution to the radical movement during the twenties and the thirties?

Politically speaking, Calverton did not leave any particular impression on his age. He did not function in a position which enabled him to exert influence upon the political scene. His specialization was rather in the intellectual sphere. He was a unique phenomenon with wide range interest in literature, sex, anthropology, Marxism, hypnosis and sociology. His numerous books and articles, however, did not provide a new thesis. He could not be considered as an original thinker.

Nevertheless, Calverton was a pioneer in introducing the works of other scholars to the American public, and applying Marxism to the American scene. He popularized neglected ideas, and by doing this he served an important cause. Since the mid-twenties, he was one of the first critics who preached and practised Marxian literary criticism. By insisting on the direct relationship between cultural forces and their economic background, Calverton gave impetus to the social attitude in such diverse fields as history, literature, psychology and biography.

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The New York Times, Nov. 22, 1940.

His importance was even greater, perhaps, as a personal force than as a writer. Due to his charm and wide intellectual interest, Calverton's home was a natural meeting place for all sorts of radicals and liberals. To this circle he was the chief catalytic agent, compelling people to clarify their opinion on controversial issues. His independent course enabled him to serve as a broker between the Marxists and the liberals. Through his lecture-tours throughout the country, he diffused his ideas and fame, as well as his personal contact with intellectuals. His influence was great upon college students, attracting them to the left-wing movement. Particularly on the Negro campuses he had many admirers and followers.

In his effort to "Americanize" Marxism, Calverton departed from the traditional European theory, adopting a native American approach. The rejection of dogmatic Marxism and authoritarianism, directed him to maintain an unaffiliated line. Politically, one can say, he belonged to the "Calvertonian" faction of the Left: he was a one-man party. His magazine, which always reflected his ideas, was "uncensored by party and undoctored by dogma."² Dedicating The Modern Quarterly to the clarification of radical thought, he opened its columns to individuals and groups of different shades. The journal, despite its limited circulation, was influential among the left-wing intellectuals, especially during the thirties. Its high level and serious treatment of the issues at stake were hailed by H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, John Dewey and

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Editorial, MM, VIII (July, 1934), 325

Leon Trotsky among many others. Its importance rose particularly after 1934, when the Communists dominated the radical and liberal magazines. The Modern Monthly was the only independent organ which courageously voiced the opposition of unorthodox Marxists to the totalitarian dominance of Stalinism.

Thus, Calverton's contribution to the radical movement exceeded the sum of his own writings. By providing a medium for the non-Communist Left, Calverton served the left wing movement probably as much as by his own ideas and activities.

Shortly before his death, Calverton wrote a poem in which he tried to evaluate his own life as follows:

Before I die I should like to know
That what I've felt, been, was more than sense or sentence.
More than color, sound, smell compacted within my own brain,
More than the machinery of my own deception
Telling me what is not, is,
And what is, is not.
To know that I was really I
And not some chimera of corpuscles, ligaments nerves,
Anonymous as dust,
That I that lived above beyond, bone and tissue
Possessed in my I'ness a secret
Unprobable as light.
To know that would mean knowing all:
To quiet strength of trees, the warm fecundity of earth,
The sinews of silence, the magic of speech,
The whys, the wherefores, the whens.
Where knowing would be being, and being knowing,
Both without end.³

Did Calverton achieve all this? At least he tried.

³ Calverton, "Anonymous As Dust", (VFC).

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1. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Manuscripts

A. Calverton Papers.

V. F. Calverton's papers, which is an extensive collection, covering Calverton's mature life between 1919-1940, is on deposit at the New York Public Library. Since he corresponded widely with intellectuals in the United States and overseas, the papers consist of letters from Leon Trotsky, George B. Shaw, Bertrand Russell, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dewey, John Dos Passos, Granville Hicks, Edmund Wilson, Earl Browder, Jay Lovestone, George Santayana and Max Eastman, to name only a few. The collection does not include material of personal character, which are either sealed in the New York Public Library, or are in private possession of the people concerned. Since this study is not a personal biography, no attempt has been made to examine them.

In addition to the extensive correspondence which includes about thirteen thousand letters, the collection consists of forty nine boxes of manuscripts written by Calverton. Some of them were never published, notably the important autobiographical novel, "This Thing of Darkness", which was written in 1938 and covers Calverton's childhood. Another novel that never saw light is "Know Not Thyself", which Calverton wrote in 1930. Beside these two books, which were almost completed, there is material for a study on the Negro's cultural life in America, called, "From Timbuctu To Harlem". Only two or three chapters were actually

written. Many of Calverton's unsigned editorials in The Modern Quarterly, his book reviews, articles, and parts of his published books, are also available in manuscript form.

The Calverton papers also contain twenty-five volumes of scrap-books covering the years 1925-1941. They include criticism of his works, his printed articles, book reviews and publicity notices. Several clipping bureaus, with some repetition, extensively covered Calverton's activities, speeches, interviews and other public affairs.

Thus, V. F. Calverton's papers are indispensable, literally priceless, for any research on his life and ideas. Furthermore, because of his close relationship with literary circles and the left wing intelligentsia, his Mss. seem to be valuable to scholars investigating the literary radicals between the two World Wars.

B. Other Mss.

In addition to the special collection of Calverton papers in the New York Public Library, there are some other Mss. which contain letters to Calverton or from him, that are missing in the main collection. The most important is the collection of Grant C. Knight, deposited at the Special Collection Department of the University of Kentucky, Lexington. Knight was Professor of English, therefore most of the correspondence deals with literary criticism. There are, however, some important letters in which Calverton discussed his political and Marxist beliefs.

Manuscripts of minor importance, which include letters to and from Calverton, are the following: The Gamaliel Bradford Papers at Houghton Library, Harvard University; The Sherwood Anderson Papers and

the Correspondence of Floyd Dell at the Newberry Library, Chicago. Some of Calverton's letters are in the Indiana University Library, Bloomington; in the library of Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; and in the library of Duke University, Durham, N.C.

C. Interviews and personal Correspondence.

Since Calverton died young, many of his friends and contemporaries are still alive. The conversations and correspondence with them clarified unclear points and helped in an understanding of the era, and Calverton's role in it. Una Corbett, Nina Melville and Bessie Peretz, were close personal friends of Calverton for a long time, therefore the author profited much from the interviews and correspondence with them, especially with Miss Corbett.

Contacts with George Britt, Max Eastman, Sidney Hook, Max Nomad and Herman Singer were also valuable. In spite of their friendship with Calverton they held a somewhat critical point of view and readily admitted his shortcomings. Their opinion, therefore, along with that of Leon Dennen and Max Shachtman, provided a balanced picture of Calverton. The unpublished study of Herman Singer, "The Quarterly Circle", which depicted the group around Calverton, also contributed to the unbiased approach. The chapter which deals with Calverton is in the possession of the author.

2. Calverton's Writings.

A. Books

Calverton's first book, The Newer Spirit; A Sociological Criticism of Literature, with an Introduction by Ernest Boyd, (New York: Boni and

Liveright, 1925), signified his interest in Marxian literary criticism, a field in which he exerted some influence. In a somewhat mechanical way he emphasized the importance of social structure and economic conditions in evaluation of literature. He restated this point of view in two pamphlets, The New Ground of Criticism (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Chapbooks, no. 34, 1930), and American Literature at the Crossroads (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Chapbooks, no. 48, 1931). Probably the most important book of Calverton was his The Liberation of American Literature (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), which was regarded as a pioneer work in American literary criticism, examining it from a Marxian point of view.

Sex Expression in Literature, with an introduction by Harry Elmer Barnes (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), was the first of Calverton's books on sex. He tried to prove the influence of changing social conditions upon literary expression of sex. In The Bankruptcy of Marriage (New York: The Macaulay Co. 1928), he attacked monogamy and criticized the existing moral codes.

The literary activities of Calverton concerning sex problems, a field in which he was engaged in the second half of the 1920's, were further advanced by the publication of three symposiums with the coeditorship of Samuel D. Schmalhausen. Sex in Civilization, with an introduction of Havelock Ellis, edited by V. F. Calverton and Samuel D. Schmalhausen (New York: The Macaulay Co. 1929), dealt with the modern approach toward sex. Another symposium, The New Generation: The Intimate Problems of Modern Parents and Children, with an introduction by Bertrand Russell (New York: The Macaulay Co. 1930), traced the problem that its

subtitle indicated. The result of the fruitful cooperation with Schmalhausen was a third book, which dealt with Woman's Coming of Age, a Symposium (New York: Horace Liveright Inc., 1931).

In the field of fiction Calverton published two books. The first one, Three Strange Lovers, with an introduction of Edward O'Brien (New York: The Macaulay Co. 1929), was a collection of three short stories that depicted three clinical cases of sexual dissatisfaction. The full scale novel of Calverton, The Man Inside: Being the Record of the Strange Adventures of Allen Steele Among the Zulus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), described his inner feelings. Fear of death and social hypnosis were the keys to life and power. The philosophic novel tried to understand the ways how to get in the man inside.

In For Revolution (New York: The John Day Co., 1932), Calverton expressed his belief in the inevitability of revolution, and called for the adaptation of Marxism to the American scene. The Passing of the Gods (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), stated that religion was dying and science taking its place. The Awakening of America (New York: The John Day Co., 1939), signified Calverton's turn toward the American revolutionary tradition. The book dealt with the rebels and dissenters of the colonial period of American history. Writing about the underdogs, instead of the top dogs, Calverton appealed for the establishment of an industrial democracy in America.

The last book of Calverton, that appeared after his death, was Where Angels Dared to Tread (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1941). It investigated the Utopian communal settlements in America.

Beside the three symposiums on sex and education that Calverton edited with the collaboration of Schmalhausen, there were three books of which he was the sole editor. The diversity of the fields of those books, and his introduction to each of them, clearly reflected Calverton's wide range of interests: Anthology of American Negro Literature (New York: The Modern Library, 1929); The Making of Man: An Outline of Anthropology (New York: The Modern Library, 1931); and The Making of Society: An Outline of Sociology (New York: The Modern Library, 1937).

B. Calverton's Articles.

Calverton contributed to many periodicals, some of them unknown and very difficult to locate. Since his articles and book reviews appeared not only in the United States but also Canada, Mexico, England, France, Russia, Germany and Japan, it would be almost impossible to collect all of them. Thus, the following list, which is organized in the order of the date of publication, does not attempt to be a complete one. It represents, however, Calverton's main ideas and fields of interest. Some of the articles, or short stories, are directly cited from the manuscript, because the date and the place of their publication are unknown. Although Calverton wrote most of the unsigned editorials in The Modern Quarterly and The Modern Monthly, this list includes only the signed ones.

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XCV (May, 1934), 352-357.
- _____ "Left Face", MM, VIII (June, 1934), 261.
- _____ "The Strike Wave", MM, VIII (June, 1934), 263.
- _____ "The Mind's Coming of Age", MM, VIII (June, 1934), 275-285.
- _____ "The Socialist Party Awakes", MM, (July, 1934), 324-326, 341.
- _____ "Fascism Is Embryo", MM, VIII (Aug., 1934), 389-390.
- _____ "Will Fascism Come to America?", MM, VIII (Sept. 1934),
469-478.
- _____ "Literature Goes Left", Current History, XLI (Dec., 1934),
316-320.
- _____ "The Leftward Trend", MM, VIII (Dec., 1934), 581-582.
- _____ "Main Street Comes to Mexico", (VFC).
- _____ "Whither Mexico", (VFC).
- _____ "The Revolution in Education in Mexico", (VFC)
- _____ "Socialist Education in Practice", (VFC)
- _____ "The Challenge of the New Mexican Socialistic Education",
(VFC).
- _____ "Progressive Education in Mexico", (VFC).
- _____ "The Conflict Between Religion and Socialistic Education
in Mexico", (VFC).
- _____ "Mexican Episode", (VFC).
- _____ "Huey Long", (VFC).
- _____ "Socialism Leans Left", MM, VIII (Jan., 1935), 645-649.

- Calverton "The Wind Before the Storm", MM VII (Feb., 1935), 709-711.
- _____ "Marxism and Religion", MM, VIII (Feb., 1935), 715-717.
- _____ "Writing As an Art", The Writer, (Boston), XXXXVII (Feb., 1935), 43-45.
- Rodson, Mark [Calverton] "Cats and Men", (a story), MM, VIII (Feb., 1935), 754,768.
- Calverton "Literature as a Revolutionary Force", The Canadian Forum, XV (March, 1935), 221-227.
- _____ "Father Coughlin: Silver Messiah", MM, IX (March, 1935), 5-12, 18.
- _____ "Our Future Dictator: Is It Huey Long?" Scribner's Magazine, XCVII (March, 1935), 171-175.
- Rodson, Mark [Calverton] "See America First", MM, (March, 1935), 42-43.
- Calverton "In the Name of Marxism", MM, IX (April, 1935), 69-70.
- _____ "Red Rule in Mexico's Schools", Current History, XXXXVIII (Dec., 1935), 263-266.
- _____ "The Negro", in America Now: An Inquiry into Civilization in the United States, ed. by Harold E. Stearns (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), pp. 484-502.
- _____ "Mexico Goes American", Living Age, CCCXLIX (Feb., 1936), 509-515.
- _____ "Education and Socialism in Mexico", The Social Frontier, II (April, 1936), 217-219.
- _____ "The Bankruptcy of Southern Culture", Scribner's Magazine, XCIX (May, 1936), 294-298.
- _____ "Criticism on the Barricades", MM, IX (Aug., 1936), 16-18, 31.
- _____ "James Farrell and Leon Trotsky", MM, X (Oct., 1936), 15-17.
- _____ "H.L. Mencken: A Devaluation", MM, X (Dec., 1936), 7-11.
- _____ "The American Pattern", Introduction to The Making of Society: An Outline of Sociology, ed. by V.F. Calverton (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), pp. 1-11.
- _____ "Marxism and the American", MM, X (Feb., 1937), 9-11.
- _____ "A Plea for Proletarian Tragedy", MM, X (March, 1937), 14.

- Calverton "Our Hypnotized World", Scribner's Magazine, CI (April, 1937) 38-42, 89.
- _____ "The American Theatre: Maxwell Anderson", MM X (May, 1937), 3-5.
- _____ "Morals in Marriage: Marriage A'La Mode", Forum and Century, XCVII (June, 1937), 348-351.
- Rodson, Mark/Calverton/ "The Nations on Parade", MM, X (Aug., 1937), 9-10.
- Calverton "Will England Give Spain to Franco?", MM X (Aug., 1937), 5-8.
- _____ "Ernest Hemingway: Primevalite", MM, X (Dec., 1937), 6-7.
- _____ "The Prodigal Lewis", MM, X (Feb., 1938), 11-13, 16.
- _____ "The Cultural Barometer", Current History, XLV (March, 1937) ___L (Aug., 1939).
- _____ "William Faulkner: Southerner At Large", MM, X (March, 1938), 11-12.
- _____ "John Steinbeck", MM, X (June, 1938), 11-12, 16.
- _____ "The Making of America", MQ, XI (Fall, 1938), 38-56.
- _____ "Black Slavery in America", MQ, XI (Summer, 1939), 45-56.
- _____ "Ernest Sutherland Bates", MQ, XI (Fall, 1939), 2-5.
- _____ "White Slavery in America", MQ, XI (Winter, 1939), 20-32.
- _____ "The Sweedish Christ", MQ, XI (Winter, 1939), 36-44.
- _____ "Land of Literary Plenty", SRL, XXII (May 11, 1940), 3-4, 16-17.
- _____ "What Socialism Means to Me", The Call, June 22, 1940.
- _____ "Incomplete Haven", SRL, XXII (July 20, 1940), 6.
- _____ "Hopedale", MQ, XI (Summer, 1940), 55-64.
- _____ "Between Two Wars", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 5-6.
- _____ "The Mountains", (a poem), Mexican Life, XVII (July, 1941), 13.
- _____ "The Mormon Dream", (VFC).
- _____ "What Price Patriotism", (VFC).

Calverton "What is Radical Poetry?" (VFC).
_____ "Sinclair Lewis: An American Phenomenon", (VFC).
_____ "Virtue", (VFC).
_____ "The Challenge of Progressive Education", (VFC).
_____ "New Girls for Old", (VFC).
_____ "New Music for a New Age", (VFC).
_____ "The New Romanticism", (VFC).
_____ "The Passing of Ibsen", (VFC).
_____ "The Recovery of Understanding", (VFC).
_____ "Sociology and Culture", (VFC).
_____ "The Truth About Careers for Women", (VFC).
_____ "The Workers Drama", (VFC).
_____ "Jealousy", (VFC).
_____ "The World Beyond", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "Anonymous As Dust", (a poem), (VFC).
_____ "The White Jungle", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "We Want Bread", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "There Was a Man", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "Suicide", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "After Dark", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "The Escape", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "Just Two", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "Love in a Moment", (a story), (VFC).
_____ "The Wife from Omaha", (a story), (VFC).

C. The Modern Quarterly, 1923-40.

The Modern Quarterly, that between 1933-1938 appeared as The Modern Monthly, was Calverton's magazine. He founded it, with the help of others, owned it and the editorials were written by him or with entire agreement with his point of view. The periodical was his beloved child, and he bore almost alone the heavy burden of keeping it alive. The magazine's attitude toward Marxian literary criticism, its emphasis on psychology and sex during the second half of the 1920's, its anti-Stalinist line after 1933, its appeal to "Americanize Marxism," and its anti war policy--all these implicitly mirrored Calverton's own opinion. In short, the history of The Modern Quarterly was, in a sense, the history of Calverton's ideas and political approach. Therefore, no study on Calverton, or on the radical intellectuals during the thirties, could disregard such a highly important source.

The history of this magazine has yet to be written. There is however, some valuable information in Herman Singer's "The Modern Quarterly, 1923-1940," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 13-19; and in Frederick J. Hoffman's The Little Magazine, pp. 152-153.

3. Newspapers and Periodicals

The Baltimore Sun, the Baltimore Daily Post, The New York Sun, the New York World Telegram and The Brooklyn Eagle, constantly reported on Calverton's activities. His works were reviewed also by The New York Times, The New York Herald Tribune, The New York American, the Chicago Post and the London Times, to name only a few. The Daily Worker and the Socialist Call were the daily organs of the Communist and the Socialist parties, respectively.

The periodical literature is essential for understanding the literary wars of the intellectuals, and the factional struggle of the radical movement. While the liberal Nation and The New Republic were important for the former, The Communist, the New Leader and the New Masses, which emerged in the thirties to an influential position among the pro-Communist intelligentsia represented the latter. The Trotskyite Militant, the Lovestonite Workers Age and the Musteite Labor Action, provided valuable information concerning the oppositionist radical factions. In this highly sectarian period, The Modern Monthly was the only independent radical magazine.

Outside the left wing movement, Calverton had connections with many periodicals, as the preceding pages indicate. Particularly important are Current History, to which he contributed from 1924, to 1938 and in which, between 1937-1939, he had a section, called "The Cultural Barometer," the Scribner's Magazine, the Common Sense, The Forum, and The Saturday Review of Literature.

4. Contemporary Works directly concerned with Calverton.

A. Books

Surprisingly few of Calverton's contemporaries in their autobiographies mentioned him. Nevertheless, one can find some writers who devoted to him almost a chapter, such as Louis Adamic and Alfred Kazin. Others made only some remarks, like Joseph Freeman and Floyd Dell. While Adamic and Freeman criticized Calverton, Max Eastman and Kazin praised him. The major importance of the following autobiographies, however, did not lay in the fact that their authors expressed their opinion on Calverton, but rather in the description of their own experience during the twenties and the thirties. Particularly valuable were Freeman and Eastman for the 1920's and Eastman and Kazin for the 1930's.

- Adamic, Louis My America, 1928-1938. New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1938.
- Dell, Floyd Homecoming: An Autobiography. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1933.
- Eastman, Max Love and Revolution: My Journey Through an Epoch
New York: Random House, 1964.
- Freeman, Joseph An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1936.
- Kazin, Alfred Starting Out in the Thirties. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1965.

B. Articles

Contemporary articles on Calverton could be divided into three groups; of biographical character; reviews of his work either favorable or critical toward Calverton and; the Communist attack upon him which were, mainly, politically motivated.

The V. F. Calverton Memorial Issue of The Modern Quarterly (XI (Fall, 1940). contains important information of biographical nature, which friendly, though accurately, evaluated Calverton's life. Especially valuable are the following articles:

- Britt, George "V. F. Calverton," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 7-12. Britt also wrote a very important article "Calverton: Notes Toward his Autobiography," (Dec. 5, 1939) in (VFC).
- Fulton, Vera /Una Corbett/, "2110", MQ, XI (Fall, 1940), 33-35.
- Gorham, Herbert "Last Letter to George," Ibid., pp. 36-39.
- Singer, Herman, "The Modern Quarterly, 1923-1940," Ibid., p. 13-19.
- Solon, Samuel L. "Calverton, Between Two Worlds," Ibid., pp. 25-28.
Solon's "V. F. Calverton's Quest for Utopia," The American Mercury, LII (May, 1941), 625-630, is a completion of his article in The Modern Quarterly.
- Symer, Lillian "V. F. Calverton: Socialist," MQ, XI (Fall, 1940) 20-24.

Tolson, M. B. "A Man against the Idols of the Tribe," Ibid., pp. 29-32.

The following sources also provide some information on Calverton:

Editorial, The New York Times, Nov. 22, 1940 (Probable written by Calverton's friend Henry Hazlitt, who was on the editorial board at that time.)

Kunitz, Stanley J. and Howard Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature. New York: The H. W. Wilson, Co., 1942.

Who's Who in America, 1940-1941.

"George Goetz," in the Yearbook of Baltimore City College, 1918, Baltimore.

"George Goetz," in the Yearbook of the class of 1921, John Hopkins University, Baltimore.

Out of the numerous book reviews and literary criticisms of Calverton's work, the following articles seem to be the more significant:

Adams, James Truslow, "History on a Grand Scale," review of The Awakening of America, The New York Times, Dec. 10, 1939.

Review of Where Angels Dared to Tread, SRL XXIII (April 12, 1941), 6.

Barnes, Harry Elmer, "The Bankruptcy of Sex Taboo," review of Bankruptcy of Marriage, in MQ V (Fall, 1928), 113-119.

Bates, Ernest S., "A Marxian View of Letters," review of Liberation of American Literature, in The New York Herald Tribune, Sept. 11, 1932.

Bates, Ernest S., Review of The Passing of the Gods, in The New York Herald Tribune, Sept. 23, 1934.

Review of Awakening of America, in The New York Herald Tribune, Nov. 12, 1939.

Benedict, Ruth, "The Family as Scapegoat," review of The New Generation, in The New York Herald Tribune, April 27, 1930.

Bradford, Gamaliel, "All Lovers Are Strange," review of Three Strange Lovers, in The New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 23, 1930.

- Burke, Kenneth, "The Scientific Critic," review of The Newer Spirit, in The New York Herald Tribune, May 10, 1925.
- Canby, Henry Seidel, "A Marxist America," review of The Liberation of American Literature, in SRL, IX (Sept. 17, 1932), 101-102.
- Chamberlain, John, "Review of The Liberation of American Literature, in N, CXXXV (Dec. 7, 1932), 571-572.
- _____, "Review of The Passing of the Gods, in The New York Times, Oct. 3, 1934.
- Classents, August, "An Apostrophe to Sex and Freedom," review of Bankruptcy of Marriage, in NL, Dec. 8, 1928.
- Cork, Jim, "'Third Period Communism' in Action: Sectarian Sterility and Culture," The Workers Age, July 23, 1932.
- Dayton, Dorothy, Review of The Man Inside, in The New York Sun, Oct., 23 Nov. 6, 1936.
- Dell, Floyd, "Revolution and Sex," review of Sex Expression in Literature, in NM, II (Jan., 1927), 26-27.
- Ellis, Havelock, "Review of The Liberation of American Literature, The New York American, Sept. 19, 1932.
- _____, Review of The Passing of the Gods, The New York American, Oct. 23, 1934.
- Estorick, Eric, "Calverton on Religion," review of The Passing of the Gods, in NR, LXXXI (Jan. 23, 1935), 311.
- Field, Louise M., "From the Borderland of the Pathological," review of Three Strange Lovers, in The New York Sun, Feb. 22, 1930.
- Frank, Waldo, "No Spirit At All," review of The Newer Spirit, in NR, XLIII (June 25, 1925), 131-132.
- Gold, Michael, "A Marxian Criticism of Art and Science," review of The Newer Spirit, in DW, May 30, 1925.
- _____, "America Needs a Critic," NM, I (Oct. 1926), 7-9.
- Glicksberg, Charles, "V. F. Calverton: Marxism Without Dogma," Sewanee Review, XLVI (July-Sept. 1938), 338-351.

- Grattan, C. Hartley, "The Bear Garden," The New York Sun, May 9, 1931.
- Hazlitt, Henry, "How Novels Get Bad Marx," N, CXXXII (April 1, 1931), 354-355
- Herberg, Will, "About the Theory of 'Cultural Compulsives': Marxism and History of Science," The Revolutionary Age, Nov. 14, 21, 1931.
- Herman, B., "Marxism and the History of Science: Marxism and Cultural Compulsives," The Revolutionary Age, Dec. 12, 1931.
- Hicks, Granville, Review of Liberation of American Literature, in NR, LXXI (Sept. 7, 1932), 104.
- _____ "The Crisis in American Criticism," NM, VIII (Feb., 1933), 3-5.
- Jones, Liwellyn, "A Brilliant Symposium," review of Sex in Civilization, in The Chicago Post, April 12, 1929.
- Kazin, Alfred, Review of The Man Inside, in The New York Times, Nov. 1, 1936.
- Knight, Grant C., Review of The Passing of the Gods, in MM, VIII (Dec., 1934), 634-635.
- Mencken, H.L., Review of The Newer Spirit, in The American Mercury, V (June, 1925), 252.
- Mumford, Lewis, "A Challenge to American Intellectuals: The Evolutionary Approach," MQ, V (Winter, 1930-1931), 407-410.
- Oneal, James, "A Remarkable Book," review of The Newer Spirit, in NL, April 25, 1925.
- _____ "The Work of Mr. Calverton," NL, April 17, 1926.
- Opportunity, editorial, IV (May, 1926), 144.
- Potamkin, Harry Allan, "White Man's Negro," review of Anthology of Negro Literature, in The New York Herald Tribune, April 30, 1930.
- Russell, Bertrand, Review of Sex in Civilization, (VFC).
- Shipley, Joseph, "Calverton's Cavalry," review of The Passing of the Gods, in NL, Nov. 17, 1934.

- Smith, Bernard, Review of Anthology of Negro Literature, in NM, V (Feb., 1930), 18.
- Tate, Allen, "The Holy War," review of Bankruptcy of Marriage, in N, CXXIII (Dec. 29, 1926), 694.
- Trotsky, Leon, "On the Revolutionary Intellectuals: An Open Letter to V. F. Calverton," review of For Revolution, in MM, VII (March, 1933), 82-85.
- Westermack, Edward, "On Primitive Marriage: A Rejoinder to Mr. V. F. Calverton," The American Journal of Sociology, XLI (March, 1936), 565-584.

The major assaults of the Communist Party officials on Calverton are the following:

- Daily Worker "'Revolutionary' Renegades Aid Cannon's Group: Modern Quarterly and Lettish Splitter with Eastman and Cannon Is Part of World Plot," DW, Jan. 12, 1929.
- Dunne, William F., "The Confused Mr. Calverton," DW, June 16, 1926.
- Elistratova, A., "New Masses," International Literature, I (1932), 107-114.
- _____ "Left No. 2," International Literature, 2-3 (1932), 146-150.
- Foster, William Z., "Calverton's Fascism," The Communist, X (Feb., 1931), 107-111.
- Freeman, Joseph, "Bulgarian Literature: Or the Perfect Critical Method," NM, II (Aug., 1927), 9-10.
- Gold, Michael, "What A World: Against V. F. Calverton," DW, Nov. 6 1933.
- "Jorge," DW, Oct. 8, 1931.
- Kuvitz, Joshua "Counter-Statement," NM, VII (April, 1932), 9-10.
- Landy, A. "Cultural Compulsives or Calverton's Latest Caricature of Marxism," The Communist, X (Oct. 1931), 851-864; X (Nov. 1931), 941-959.
- Magil, A. B. "The 'Marxism' of V. F. Calverton," The Communist, VIII (May, 1929), 282-285.

- Ramsey David and Alan Calmer "The Marxism of V. F. Calverton," NM, VIII (Jan., 1933), 9-27.
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- "The Marxism of V. F. Calverton," The New English Weekly, III (July 6, 1933), 286-287.
- Stork, A. "Mr. Calverton and His Friends: Some Notes on Literary Trotskyism in America," International Literature, 3 (July, 1934), 97-124.
- Wicks, H.M. "Another Professor Discovers Marx," DW, Sept. 24, 1925.
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- "An Apology for Sex Anarchism Disguised as Marxism," DW, June 9, 1927.
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- "Mr. Calverton's 'Original' Writings," DW, Feb. 4, 1928.
- Wolfe, Bertram D. "America Discusses the Opposition," The Communist, VII (Jan., 1928), 44-57.

5. Contemporary Works: Background

A. Books

The following books, many of them autobiographies, deal with the left wing movement, especially with the intellectuals, between the two World Wars. Along with the books listed in the preceding section, they help to understand the problems of Calverton's age.

- Allen, Frederick Lewis Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's. New York: Harper and Row, 1931.
- Browder, Earl Communism in the United States. New York: International Publishers, 1935.
- Cannon, James P. The History of American Trotskyism: Report of a Participant. New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1944.
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- "American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism. New York: Pioneer Publishers 1947.
- Cowley, Malcolm, Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920's. Revised ed. New York: The Viking Press, 1951.

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- Think Back On Us: A Contemporary Chronicle of the 1930's. Ed. with an introduction by Henry Dan Piper. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967.
- Dell, Floyd, Intellectual Vagabondage: An Apology for the Intelligentsia. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1926.
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- Love in Greenwich Village. New York: George H. Doran Co. 1926.
- DeVoto, Bernard, The Literary Fallacy. Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1944.
- Eastman, Max, Artists in Uniform: A Study of Literature and Bureaucratism. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934.
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- Great Companions: Critical Memoirs of Some Famous Friends, New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959.
- Fast, Howard, The Naked God: The Writer and the Communist Party. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957.
- Flynn, Elizabeth G., I Speak My Own Piece: Autobiography of 'The Rebel Girl'. New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1955.
- Foster, William Z., Toward Soviet Russia. New York: Conard Mc Cann Inc., 1932.
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- Capitalism, Socialism and the War. New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940.
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- The History of the Communist Party of the United States, New York: International Publishers, 1952.
- Gitlow, Ben, I Confess: The Truth About American Communism. New York: E. E. Dutton and Co. Inc., 1939.
- Hicks, Granville, Where We Came Out. New York: The Viking Press, 1954.
- Jerome, V. J., Intellectuals and the War. New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940.
- Koestler, Arthur Darkness At Noon, London: Jonathan Cape, 1941.
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- Arrow in the Blue: An Autobiography. New York: Macmillan Co. 1952-1954.

- Lyons, Eugene, The Red Decade: The Stalinist Penetration of America. Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1940.
- Mc Carthy, Mary, On the Contrary. New York: Farrar Straus and Cudahy, 1961.
- Mc Donald, Dwight, Memoir of a Revolutionist: Essays in Political Criticism. New York: Farrar Straus and Cudahy, 1957.
- Rascoe, Burton (ed). A Bookman's Daybook. New York: Horace Liveright, 1929.
- Schmalhausen, Samuel D., (ed). Behold America. New York: Farrar and Rinehart Inc. 1931.
- Schneider, Isidor, The Judas Time. New York: The Dial Press, 1947.
- Seldes, Gilbert, Against Revolution. New York: The John Day Co., 1932.
- Stearns, Harold E. (ed). Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922.
- _____ (ed). America Now: An Inquiry into Civilization in the United States by Thirty Six Americans. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938.
- Steffens, Lincoln, The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931.
- Utley, Freda, A Dream We Lost. New York: John Day Co., 1940.
- Wilson, Edmund, The American Earthquake: A Documentary of the Twenties and Thirties. New York: Doubleday, 1958.
- _____ The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties. New York: The Vintage Books, 1961.
- Young Art, On My Way: Being the Book of Art Young in Text and Picture. New York: Horace Liveright, 1928.

B. Articles.

These articles deal with literary and political problems of

the twenties and the thirties. Special attention has been given to important articles that appeared in The Modern Quarterly or The Modern Monthly.

Barbousse, Henri,	"A Fighting Manifesto," <u>MQ</u> , V (Spring, 1929), 145-148.
Boudin, Louis,	"The Capitalist System and its Critics," <u>MM</u> , VIII (July, 1933), 333-362.
Brenner, Annita,	"Class War in Republican Spain," <u>MM</u> , X (Sept., 1937), 4-17.
Briffault, Robert,	"Fellow Travellers," <u>MQ</u> , VI (Summer, 1932), 48-53.
_____	"The Left Turn in Literature," <u>Scribner's Magazine</u> , XCII (July, 1932), 88-90.
_____	"The Anatomy of Liberalism," <u>MM</u> , VII (April, 1933), 158-159.
Brooks, Van Wyck,	"Where Are Our Intellectuals," <u>The Freeman</u> , II (Sept. 29, 1920), 53-54.
Budenz, Louis,	"For an American Revolutionary Approach," <u>MM</u> , IX (March, 1935), 14-18.
"Constructive Class	- Consciousness," editorial, <u>NR</u> , LII (Nov. 9, 1927), 300-302.
Cowley, Malcolm,	"Leftbound Local," <u>NR</u> , LXXII (Aug. 17, 1932), 6-7.
_____	"War In Bohemia," <u>Scribner's Magazine</u> , XCIII (Jan., 1933), 56-59.
_____	"Moscow Trial," <u>NR</u> , LXXXV (May, 18, 1938), 50-51; (May 25, 1938), 79-80.
_____	"The 1930's Were an Age of Faith," <u>The New York Times</u> , Dec. 13, 1964.
Darmstadt, John,	"The Sexual Revolution," <u>MQ</u> , IV (June-Sept. 1927), 137-147.
Dell, Floyd,	"Shell-Shock and the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers," <u>MQ</u> , III (Oct., Dec. 1926), 268-273.
_____	"A Literary Self Analysis," <u>MQ</u> , IV (June-Sept. 1927), 148-152.

- Dos-Passos, John, "The New Masses I'd Like," NM, I (June, 1926), 20.
- Eastman, Max, "Artists in Uniform," MM, VII (Aug., 1933), 347-404.
- _____ "Stalin's Literary Inquisition," MM, VII (Nov., 1933), 623-631.
- Field, B. J., "The Crisis In Communism: A Viewpoint of the Left Opposition," MM, VII (June, 1933), 279-283.
- Fischer, Louis, "Whiter Trotsky," MQ, V (Fall, 1928), 53-60.
- "For A United Front to Fight Fascism," DW, March 25, 1933.
- Freeman, Joseph, "The Wilsonian Era in American Literature," MQ, IV (June-Sept. 1927), 130-137.
- _____ "Notes on American Literature," The Communist, VII (Sept. 1928), 570-578.
- _____ "Social Trends in American Literature," The Communist, IX (July, 1930), 641-651.
- _____ "Ivory Towers, White and Red," NM, XII (Sept. 11, 1934), 20-24.
- Gitlow, Ben, "A Labor Party For America," MM, VII (Sept., 1933), 491-495, 501.
- Gold, Michael, "May Days and Revolutionary Art," MQ, III (Jan., 1926), 161-164.
- _____ "Let it be Really New," NM, I (June, 1926), 20-26.
- _____ "We Need the Intellectuals," NM, V (Aug. 1930), 5.
- _____ "Wilder: Prophet of the Genteel Christ," NR, LXIV (Oct. 22, 1930), 266-267.
- Harrison, Charles Yale, "An Excommunicant Replies," MM, VII (June, 1933), 313.
- Hazlitt, Henry, "Communist Criticism," N, CXXXI (Sept. 26, 1930), 583-584.
- _____ "Literature and the 'Class War,' " N, CXXXV (Oct. 19, 1932), 361-363.
- _____ "Art and Social Change: The Eclectic Approach," MQ, (Winter, 1932), 10-15.

- Herberg, Will, "The Crisis in Communism; A Viewpoint of the International Communist Opposition," MM, VII (June, 1933), 283-288.
- Hicks, Granville, "Communism and the American Intellectuals," in Whose Revolution: A Study of the Future Cause of Liberalism in the United States. Ed. by Irving De Witt Talmadge. (New York: Howell, Soskin, 1941), pp. 78-115.
- Hook, Sidney, "Why I am a Communist: Communism Without Dogmas," MM, VIII (April, 1934), 143-165.
- _____, "The Fallacy of the Theory of Social Fascism," MM, VIII (July, 1934), 342-353.
- _____, "Manners and Morals of Apache-Radicalism," MM, IX (June, 1935), 215-221.
- _____, "Corliss Lamont: 'Friend of the G.P.U.'," MM, X (March, 1938), 5-8.
- Jolas, Eugene, "The Necessity for the New Word," MQ, V (Fall, 1929), 273-275.
- Kantorovitch, Haim, "The Rise and Decline of Neo-Communism," MQ, I (Spring, 1924), 21-43.
- Kaun, Alexander, "The Role of the Intellectuals," The Freeman, V (March 29, 1922), 57-58.
- Kunitz, Joshua, "Choose Your Uniform," NM, VIII (Aug., 1933), 14-15.
- League of Professional Groups for Foster and Fond
Culture and Crisis: An Open Letter to the Writers, Artists, Teachers, Physicians, Engineers and other Professional Workers of America, 1932.
- Liggett, Walter W., "Third Parties for Sale," MM, VIII (Feb., 1935), 721-725.
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