

Between Revolutionary
Rupture and
Historical Inhibition:
The Novels of
Katharine Susannah Prichard

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



To My Parents
Adrienne and Christopher Ellis

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Abstract

This thesis provides a long overdue Marxist analysis of the novels of Katharine Susannah Prichard. I argue that an acknowledgement of overdetermined social/political activity, as described and defined by Louis Althusser in his explanation of Marxist dialectics, is crucial to an understanding of the discrepancy between Prichard's stated intentions for her novels and their actual impact. Tracing the "trajectory" of Prichard's novel canon along a "continuum" between *revolutionary rupture* and *historical inhibition*, I examine each novel according to its political potency and aesthetic power.

Prichard's early novels, although not designed to deliver a specific or defined political message, accommodate an overdetermined dialectical discourse which ensures their political potency. In the later novels, her efforts to conform to the demands of Socialist Realism (a theory of production which was impossible to fulfil in a pre-revolutionary society) interrupt the dialectical process and displace the energy of her previous writing. As a result, these later novels are rendered politically impotent and aesthetically weak.