THE POST-MORTEM POINT OF VIEW IN MALCOLM LOWRY'S "UNDER THE VOLCANO"

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MACHADO DE ASSIS, the nineteenth-century Brazilian novelist, begins his *Epitaph of a Small Winner* with the words: "The Death of the Author: I hesitated some time, not knowing whether to open these memoirs at the beginning or the end. . . . I am a deceased writer not in the sense of one who has written and is now deceased, but in the sense of one who has died and is now writing. . . . "[1] The mechanics of his ghostly narrative, he goes on to say, would require a book in itself to relate. But, unfortunately, Machado himself has not mastered them: he proceeds to write a straightforward novel-length memoir, only referring from time to time to "the great and useful idea" that was the cause of his death — "a great cure, an anti-melancholy plaster, designed to relieve the despondency of mankind."[2]

In the same year (1879) that Machado was writing his *Epitaph*, Sir Sandford Fleming, engineer in chief of surveys for the Canadian Pacific Railways, conceived the idea of standardized time-zones. It was immediately adopted by North American railroads and then by rail systems around the world. Sir Sandford Fleming had inadvertently posed one solution to the problem of breakdown of auctorial authority, which authors as diverse as Proust and Gide, Broch and Mann, Joyce and Woolf, would employ in their works to achieve an effect of simultaneity — the representation, by contrasting public with private time, of single moments in temporal succession which nevertheless gives the impression of instantaneity. Machado had proposed a different solution. But whereas Sir Sandford Fleming's concept of synchronized time was immediately adopted by public transit systems (the CPR in 1879), and assimilated before the turn of the century by philosophers (e.g., Bergson) and artists (e.g., Proust), Machado's post-mortem narrator remained a disembodied idea. It was not until 1927 that Heidegger elaborated the time-consciousness required by such a concept; not until 1947 was it assimilated into fiction by Malcolm Lowry in *Under the Volcano*, and by Samuel Becket in *Molloy* in 1951.

THE TENDENCY AWAY from an omniscient author, and the introduction of relativity and uncertainty into the twentieth-century novel stimulated a generation of writers to experiment with a host of conventions — auctorial personae, unreliable narrators, central intelligences, reportorial sprechers — all with a view to compensating for the lack of narrative authority which accompanied the loss of auctorial omniscience. The omniscience of the author was, and still is, the primary assumption of the reader. With this compact broken, the sense of reliability was threatened, although reader and author both stood to gain, by dint of hard work on both sides, a greater sense of authenticity. The reader was forced to look to the "varying focus, fractured surface, over-determinations, displacements"[3] of the modern novel for a worthwhile vantage; and, faced with the amorphous material which cried out for order and shape, the author was forced to smuggle his distinctive presence into the narrative somehow. He could either fracture the narrative surface and torture the syntax beyond any hope of coherence, as William Burroughs and eventually Joyce would do, or move one of the characters, or the narrative voice, ahead in time beyond the time scheme of the novel — into what Beckett would call "the mythological present."[4] Those novelists whose craft would develop in the direction of the post-mortem viewpoint elected the latter alternative.

"But it is only since I have ceased to live that I think of these things and the other things. It is in the tranquillity of decomposition that I remember the long confused emotion which was my life, and that I judge it, as it is said that God will judge me, and with no less impertinence" (*Tril.*, 25), writes Samuel Beckett in the opening pages of *Molloy*, the first of his trilogy of novels composed between September 1947 and June 1950 in "the siege in the room" at 6 rue des Favorites, Paris.[5] The post-mortem voice employed by Beckett, which becomes by the end of the trilogy no longer a voice but a word, and then not even that ("no voice left, nothing but the core of murmurs, distant cries . . . silence" [*Tril.*, 413-14]), gives the effect of omniscience, yet without standing above or outside the novel: "I speak in the present tense, it is so easy to speak in the present tense, when speaking of the past. It is the mythological present, don't mind it" (*Tril.*, 26). The mythological present of the post-mortem narrator is an existential past tense, but fully capable of being embedded within the unfolding of the dramatic "now" of the novel. As such it represents a point of view at once capable of dramatization (in a character, or narrative voice), phenomenologically reliable even though epistemologically uncertain (it is as much as the author, or anyone, can know), and existentially credible (the narrator has *not* survived the experience related — it is that critical, it was that traumatic, to him[6] — but he has somehow contrived to relate it). The mechanics of his contrivance are no more

in evidence in Beckett's novels than they were in Machado's memoir, but "the great and useful idea" of a post-mortem narrator — one "powerless to act, or perhaps strong enough at last to act no more" (*Tril.*, 161) — is dramatically realized in a credible point of view which gives the effect, though it lacks the pretense, of omniscience.

IT WOULD NOT BE FAIR to say that Lowry stumbled on this device as a fully developed "design-governing posture."[7] Neither could it be said that he approached the writing of *Under the Volcano* with the intention of using a post-mortem narrator. Rather, as a comparison of the 1940 manuscript version with the 1947 published text shows, Lowry progressively fragmented and refined the narrative voice employed in *Under the Volcano* in order to meet the demands of his own evolving creation; he "discovered" for himself and adapted to his own needs the post-mortem point of view. This adaptation was an organic, and not a technical, process. Even after his novel had been accepted and was in process of being published, Lowry was unclear about who, precisely, was telling the story and about how pervasive the post-mortem point of view had become in *Under the Volcano*. Was it integral only to Chapter I? Was it a frame device informing the first and last chapters? Or did it pervade the whole novel? In his letter to Jonathan Cape he defends in detail Laruelle's expository function in Chapter I, then says "if we like, we can look at the rest of the book through Laruelle's eyes, as if it were his creation."[8] This condition-contrary-to-fact clause is a concession to the publisher's reader. Were *Under the Volcano* to be read thus, it could be interpreted much as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is interpreted: with the narrator Marlow/Laruelle as raisonneur surviving the journey he narrates, while penetrating the darkness of a doomed protagonist Kurtz/Firmin who does not survive. But Laruelle's voice does not frame *Under the Volcano* for the reader, nor interpret the Consul to the reader. Lowry's Laruelle is more akin to Conrad's "the Russian in motley" than to Marlow, and his ghostlike presence in Chapters I, VI, and VII, not to mention his "ghost" in Chapter XII, establish him as one of the Consul's *Doppelgängers*, though not the primary one. Notwithstanding the important expository function performed by Laruelle in Chapter I, his primary function is to establish, with Mexico as its objective correlative, an infernal topos viewed from a post-mortem vantage. In this purpose he fully succeeds, but as a character he emerges curiously wraithlike and crepuscular, as merely one of the "aspects of the same man, or of the human spirit . . . [as] two of them, Hugh and the Consul, more obviously are" (*Letters*, 60). Lowry's concession to the publisher's reader proves untenable for a number of reasons, but chiefly because the post-mortem narrative voice which he employs is incommen-

surable with distinct and discrete characterization. Its characteristics are more like those of *film noir* than the drama of character: with vague and fluctuating outlines, mistaken identities, uncertain encounters, and missed appointments predominating. While Lowry was writing and refining over a decade his own masterpiece, there was a novel with which he was familiar that embodied all of these traits. It is to the obscure British novel *Julian Grant Loses His Way* that the critic must turn for the book that most directly influenced Lowry's first chapter.[9]

"It is the history of a man who commits emotional suicide," Virginia Woolf said in her anonymous review of this 1933 novel by Claude Houghton.[10] The author's eleventh novel, *Julian Grant Loses His Way* exemplifies from its opening sentence the varying focus, fractured surface, over-determinations, and displacements that critic Frank Kermode contends constitute "a perpetual invitation to all inquirers after latent sense."[11] And latent sense there is in abundance in *Julian Grant Loses His Way*, for the novel is a *tour de force* of Machado's great idea, except that Julian Grant does not realize he is dead until late in the novel, where latent sense becomes explicit in the following exchange:

> 'You don't really mean to say that you haven't guessed yet?'
> 'Guessed?'
> 'Yes — guessed!' the artist repeated, with tremendous emphasis. 'How much more evidence do you want? God! It's unbelievable! Surely there's only one explanation of all that's happened to you. Anyone overhearing our conversations would have guessed long ago.'
> 'I don't know what you're — '
> 'You're dead. I'm dead. Now, do you understand?'
> '*Dead*?' (*JG*, 345)

The novel is divided into three sections — "Adventure in Picadilly," "Retrospect in a Café," and "Adventure Beyond Picadilly." The first and final parts are composed in the post-mortem mode, and frame the long middle part which is conventionally written — so conventionally that Graham Greene complained of "a yawning gap between the intelligence of the method and the conventionality of the story . . . the framework might have been an afterthought designed to lend significance to an otherwise conventional story."[12] Only the framing device of Houghton's novel is of enduring interest, and it alone proved useful to Lowry. In an unpublished letter to his editor Albert Erskine, Lowry acknowledges his debt to Claude Houghton in the following terms: "There are many influences here [in Chapter XII of *UTV*] . . . Ouspensky . . . Spengler . . . Claude Houghton plays some part here . . . See *Julian Grant Loses His Way*, yet another novel about hell, where the author's method is just to throw in Swedenborg by the bushelful and leave it at that."[13] But it was in his long and important opening chapter that Lowry borrowed most heavily from Houghton, though the debt has

gone unacknowledged. In order to appreciate how Lowry used Houghton's first chapter as virtually a blueprint for his own, some sense of the general texture of *Julian Grant Loses His Way* may prove helpful, before specific borrowings are cited.

The opening sentence of *Julian Grant Loses His Way* reads: "He stopped and turned sharply, as if someone had called him, then looked round in order to discover his whereabouts." Within two pages all the ideas that inform the book have been established, and until the long and conventional "Retrospect in a Café" section commences eighteen pages later, the "quality of confusion and unreality"[14] is sustained while the reader experiences with the protagonist the pressure of a vague but impending appointment, surprise encounters with figures from the past, and the sense of temporal and spatial dislocation. All these motifs — predominant among them the sense of "the past more actual than the present" (*JG*, 3) — are held suspended in a murk of broken prose. Houghton does not resort to tortured syntax or stream of consciousness techniques; all his effects flow from a faithful and restrained rendering of the post-mortem point of view as applied to a character who does not know he is dead. Things familiar are rendered strange, and familiar things perceived strangely assume a symbolic significance which is grasped as if for the first time. The protagonist's name, for example: "Julian *Valentine* Grant. It was odd that he had used his second name a moment ago, for it did not belong to him now — it belonged to his youth, from which he seemed to be separated by several lives. . . . Valentine! it was the name of a Christian martyr in the reign of the Emperor Claudius. What link had Julian Grant with a fanatic of the third century?" (*JG*, 5-6). With this passage one might compare Laruelle's "obscure desire on his last night to bid farewell to the ruin of Maximilian's Palace," his recollection of overhearing the lovers' blamecasting and passionate weeping, and then his mental superimposition of the ghostly Emperor and Carlotta upon the image of the equally ghostly Consul and Yvonne.[15] It is not only that formally the techniques used here are identical, for a similar mythical method is very differently employed by Yeats in his verse drama *Deirdre*; it is the way in which Lowry and Houghton incorporate this mythical dimension into their already uncertain and dislocated dimension that is noteworthy and deserving of acknowledgement, as is the device by which Lowry positions Laruelle in the cinema for what, in the 1940 manuscript version, would be a massive retrospective similar to the "Retrospect in a Café" witnessed by Julian Grant.

The way Lowry handles this transition to a conventional narrative in the 1940 manuscript version of *Under the Volcano*, and the way Houghton does the same thing in his 1933 *Julian Grant Loses His Way*, is strikingly similar. The urgent sense of a message to be delivered is Laruelle's counterpart to Julian Grant's urgent need to keep an appointment. Laruelle does not know what the message

is, and he never delivers it; Julian Grant does not know where or with whom his appointment is, and he ends up not keeping it. Essential to these leitmotifs is the sense of destination. Both Laruelle and Julian Grant, while not knowing what their destinations are, nevertheless arrive at their predestined stations. They arrive in spite of, or perhaps because of, the circuitous routes they take: "At this rate he [Laruelle] could go on travelling in an eccentric orbit round his house forever" (*UTV*, 29), Lowry says almost apologetically in the published text; while Grant zig-zags by starts and fits in an effort, first to keep his appointment, then to avoid an encounter. Their arrivals at their respective destinations, the cantina and the café, are the result of a journey.[18]

The journey is a standard narrative device in naturalistic fiction: like Zola in *Germinal* and Frank Norris in *The Octopus*, both Lowry and Houghton commence with a section in which their outsider character covers much of the geographical and social range of the novel to follow. More than naturalistic exposition is involved here, however. Lowry in his letter to Jonathan Cape says of Laruelle's walk: "A second reading will show you what thematic problems we are also solving on the way — not to say what hams, that have to be there, are being hung in the window" (*Letters*, 68). It becomes clear to the reader before he is very far into the landscape that both Laruelle and Julian Grant are introducing him to an infernal topos. The sites (Maximilian's Palace, the beach at Cornwall) are Dantesque stations on the way to Dis (the cantina, the café). The sense of time is uncertain and shifting, the scene changes illogical and strangely obsessive. In *Julian Grant Loses His Way* the scene shifts are managed by a character's exertion of will. So long as Julian holds a scene in mind, it manifests itself; but as soon as he forgets it, the scene disappears.[17] This device is used once by Lowry where Laruelle, overcome in his dream-trance by passionate desire for Priscilla,[18] wants to embrace her; but as soon as he moves to embrace her, his desire passes and she disappears. In Houghton's more mechanistic version of hell the characters gradually lose motivation to maintain remembered scenes; their passion and power of mind dissipates until finally they accept their fate — a bleak *Gleichschaltung*. Dilthey (1833-1911), who posited the concept of *Vorverständnis* (pre-understanding) so essential to the post-mortem point of view, also held that the real gets experienced in impulse and will, and that reality is resistance, or, more precisely, the act of resisting. This theory of reality provides an adequate basis for Houghton's depiction of hell. Lowry, while he flirted with this metaphysic (which he attributed to Swedenborg), finally rejected it in favour of a more complicated and integrated one.

In his 1940 version, Lowry uses the trance, or dream motif — probably borrowed from Shelley's *Alastor*. By his final version he has dropped this device for managing scene-shifts and relies entirely on mood (the Day of the Dead, Quauhnahuac) and time-structure (the Ferris wheel, the film reel). All these devices,

techniques, motifs have to do with place as a projection of an interior state of mind — in a single word, allegory. Regarding the state of mind itself and the mood being projected, *Julian Grant Loses His Way* is obsessive, *Under the Volcano* oppressive. Both Laruelle and Julian Grant experience ridicule: Laruelle in Maximilian's Palace,[19] Julian Grant in the café. Both are outside, yet seeking to penetrate, the phenomena which pass before them. Both function as flesh and blood characters to introduce the reader to ghosts and phantoms. But, in fact, the reverse is the case: it is the phantoms who are the more real.

"Everything that is actually Real becomes a mere phantom when one considers it as a 'Thing in itself' — when it does not get Experienced," wrote Count Yorck to Dilthey in 1894.[20] The difficulty that Lowry faced in successive honings of his first chapter was that of defining the horizon, or context, of his whole novel. His chosen agent for this task was Laruelle: a minor character, an aspect of his major character, an imperfect ego, and little better than a phantom himself. But Laruelle was present in Quauhnahuac in November 1939; the Consul and Yvonne were dead, and Hugh had vanished and perhaps was dead also. Lowry's dilemma involved infusing Laruelle with enough life so that he, and through him the reader, could evoke and experience the absent characters, who were more vivid. They were not palpable, but they were present, having died or disappeared before mass death overtook the world, when tragedy was still possible. In this post-mortem world Jacques Laruelle lives on "like a wanderer on another planet" (*UTV*, 15), a "six foot three or four" husk of his former self, the Consul (*UTV*, 213). Laruelle also "had acquired a certain identity with Hugh. Like Hugh he was going to Vera Cruz; and like Hugh too, he did not know if his ship would ever reach port" (*UTV*, 15). Andrew Lytle, writing on *Under the Volcano*, says: "The stream of consciousness when used by this imperfect Ego, masquerading as a point of view, makes the action more imperfect by the intensity this use of consciousness gives to the action. There must be some hone, some point of objective reference, some measure for this interior flow; usually this is the secular world. But it need not be just this. Without objectivity the consciousness reveals itself as too private."[21] Lowry, having tried and rejected Dilthey's resistance theory and possibly Shelley's dream device, solved the difficulty inherent in his first chapter by making the objective referent Death. Death, or the deadweight of the past, is oppressively present throughout Laruelle's overhearing of ghosts at Maximilian's Palace, his finding and reading the Consul's lost letter while in the cantina, and finaly in his act of burning the letter as a bell tolls "*dolente . . . dolore*!"[22]

Heidegger has defined Death as "the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing . . . the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence."[23] It is this sense of Death that confronts Laruelle as it does Julian Grant and that serves to define them.

Predominant in both opening chapters is a sense of "the past more actual than the present" (*JG*, 3), or, as Lowry simply puts it, "the weight of the past" (*Letters*, 66). The oppressive landscape with its claustral familiarity, the haunted figure in transit across it (Julian Grant is always walking "swiftly" or "slowly," but the reader perceives him in paranoid flight; Laruelle "climbs" or "orbits," but the reader senses his guilty avoidance of something or someone) are reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's Molloy crawling crutchless across a dead landscape toward his mother. Lowry's Laruelle, who, to some degree, is a ghostly travesty of the Consul (*UTV*, 213-14), is as dead in spirit as Julian Grant is in body. He does not grow in conception or change his function between the 1940 manuscript version and the 1947 published text. The objective referent which sets him off undergoes refinement of technique and increases its dramatic impact, but he remains a light *ficelle*. Perhaps that is why so many potential readers of *Under the Volcano* have not persevered past the first chapter: the prospect of looking at the rest of the book through Laruelle's eyes has proved too much for them.

CHAPTER I IN THE PUBLISHED TEXT of *Under the Volcano* is a chapter set apart from the rest of the novel — in time structure, in dramatic techniques, and in the ways in which it affects the reader. The foregoing comparison between opening chapters of the 1940 version of Lowry's novel and the 1933 novel it was modelled on indicates that the post-mortem point of view, while implicit in *Under the Volcano*, is explicit in *Julian Grant Loses His Way*; indeed, the latter novel's "interest," as Graham Greene says, is "that of a technical trick."[24] Such blatant exploitation of the post-mortem narrative voice is not evident in *Under the Volcano*: even in the early version it is mitigated through Lowry's use of the dream motif, and by the final version it has been further refined and disguised in the pervasively oppressive tone and allegorical topos. Lowry has used the weight of the past and "the slow melancholy tragic rhythm of Mexico itself — its sadness" (*Letters*, 58) to define the wraith Laruelle, through whom the reader gets his first view of the Consul (curiously like Julian Valentine Grant) as a doomed lover and one "who suffers dreadfully from the mania of persecution" (*Letters*, 70). This depiction of the Consul as paranoid was intentional and part of Lowry's post-mortem apparatus. Remarking on the reader's sense throughout the book that the Consul (suspected by Sr. Bustamente and others of being a spy) is being followed, and the Consul's apparent obliviousness, Lowry says: "For lack of an object therefore it was the writer's reasonable hope that this first sense of the Consul's being followed might settle on the reader and haunt him instead" (*Letters*, 70).

Here, then, is the second way of looking at the entire novel as a post-mortem narrative. The first was Lowry's concession to the publisher's reader, to "look at the rest of the book through Laruelle's eyes, as if it were his creation" (*Letters*, 71). In that case, Chapters II-XII, which depict the last day of an individual's life, constitute a lengthy remembrance: "it seemed one was still permitted to remember the days when an individual life held some value and was not a mere misprint in a communiqué" (*UTV*, 11), Laruelle muses as he contrasts the tragedy of the Consul's death a year earlier with a world at war in 1939. In this way of viewing the novel, the remembrancer would be Laruelle; the life remembered would be the Consul's. In the second way, however, it is the Consul who acts out his own life in a mythological present. Integral to this second way of regarding the entire novel as a post-mortem narrative is the reader's conviction that Geoffrey Firmin is already dead and, possibly, in hell when Chapter II commences — to be precise at 7 a.m. on November 2, 1938. The remainder of the book — comprising the events of the next twelve hours, to 7 p.m. on November 2, 1938 — can only be read in the post-mortem mode if we locate time present in a past event, such as the Consul's "sin" of incinerating the German officers in the *Samaritan*'s furnace during World War One,[25] or the traumatic event of Yvonne's separation from the Consul in December of 1937. If the Consul can be said to have "died" at either of these critical points, then the narrative of his life since is post-mortem. To the extent that he is, or feels himself to be, in hell, his own existence is spurious and his relations with the other characters more apparent than real. In this reading, the Consul is never authentically present throughout the novel: he is enslaved to alcohol, entrapped in the past, and emotionally and morally dead. These are the logical consequences of the view Andrew Lytle takes when he says: "Lowry renders hell in the mind of one man, the Consul . . . whose aloneness is the result of and the punishment for a mortal crime; it is Satan's condition when he was cast forth from the mind of God, that is from love, to the isolation of his own thoughts, which is hell."[26] And, again, "he is already dead when the representative of law and order, now a murderer and outlaw, shoots him down with malice. His death repeats in parody his own act with the German prisoners."[27] But such a reading is forced, if not patently false. Whether or not the Consul committed a "sin" years ago, he is on November 2, 1938, only imperfectly and self-indulgently in a hell of his own making. He still has, and can exercise, freedom of choice — as evidenced by his choice of paths at the close of Chapter X. The allurements of Yvonne (her dream of Canada, and the Consul's response to it), and the actions of Hugh (his bringing the Consul and Yvonne together when he leaps in the arena with the bull), point up the hastiness of Lytle's interpretation — an interpretation the Consul himself would like to hold, but cannot. He has not yet suffered enough, he is still subject to temptation, and he still possesses free will. He may

be said, metaphorically, to be "already dead" when he is killed in Chapter XII, and he may experience horrific glimpses of hell (both in Laruelle's house, and in the toilet of the Salón Ofélia), but he is not there yet. Not until he and Yvonne are actually dead is all hope gone.

Under the Volcano, then, due to its trochal design, may be said to comprise a post-mortem narrative throughout only on second reading, or if it is read, as Lowry conceded it might be, through Laruelle's eyes. Such a reading, however, does not correspond to the literal sense of the text; the novel to follow after the Ferris wheel turns, though a retrospective of sorts, does not read like one. Lowry was able with justification to say in 1946 of the post-mortem device, which he lifted from *Julian Grant Loses His Way* and planted in the first version of his own novel then subsequently refined, that "these influences are assimilated here so far as this author is concerned,"[28] but it is with reference only to Chapter I that this claim can be made. The first chapter influences the rest of the book by establishing a lugubrious, reflexive mood in the so-called present (actually mythological present) tense, which plunges the reader into the past, whose present becomes the book. Aside from the flashbacks, especially Hugh's in Chapter VI, and Yvonne's in IX, the events depicted in Chapters II-XII occur in present time. The Consul's plunge into the barranca in XII, and Yvonne's apotheoses in XI, are the simultaneous climaxes of what presents itself to the reader as a strangely convoluted, but nevertheless linear, novel. The post-mortem point of view, which Lowry borrowed from Houghton and used in his melancholy first chapter as a prop for his character Laruelle, was not a subtle enough device to sustain his main character, the Consul, through a narrative nearly ten times as long. For that *tour de force* he would resort to other, less terminal, devices, including a complicated scheme of temporal manipulations more related to Sir Sandford Fleming's time-zones than to Machado's "great cure."[29]

NOTES

[1] Joaquim Maria Machado De Assis, *Epitaph of a Small Winner*, trans. William L. Grossman (New York: Noonday, 1952), p. 19.

[2] *Epitaph*, p. 21.

[3] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass., & London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 15.

[4] *Three Novels by Samuel Beckett: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, trans. Patrick Bowles and Samuel Beckett (New York: Grove, 1955), p. 26. Further references will be cited *Tril.*

[5] Samuel Beckett, as quoted in Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett* (New York & London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 346.

[6] Beckett, before he embraced the post-mortem point of view in his post-World War Two fiction, employed the Jungian idea of a narrator who was not yet, or not properly, born. See *Murphy* (1938; rpt. New York: Grove, 1977), p. 78. In

Molloy he uses the two ideas interchangeably, only the post-mortem view in *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, and neither in *Watt*.

[7] The phrase is Van Gogh's. Lowry's application of it to his own technique is discussed by Malcolm Bradbury, "Malcolm Lowry as Modernist," in *Possibilities* (London: Oxford, 1973), p. 182.

[8] This remarkable thirty-one page letter, begun by Lowry on January 2, 1946, and mailed on January 15 to Cape, was in response to the reader's report which he had received from Cape the previous November. Lowry's letter in its entirety and an abridgement of the letter from Cape may be found in *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, ed. Harvey Breit and Margerie Bonner Lowry (Philadelphia & New York: Lippincott, 1965), pp. 57-88, 424. Hereinafter cited as *Letters*.

[9] Claude Houghton [Oldfield], *Julian Grant Loses His Way* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1933). Hereinafter cited as *JG*. This obscure British novel has received passing reference in the literature on Lowry at least three times: in Tony Kilgallin's *Lowry* (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcépic, 1973), p. 173, where the statement is made that "Geoffrey echoes the belief of the hero in Claude Houghton's novel"; in Andrew Pottinger's 1978 dissertation, "The Revising of *Under the Volcano*," as a marginal note in the appendix; and in Sherrill E. Grace's 1974 dissertation, "The Voyage that Never Ends," p. 45, where the novel is characterized as "an extremely heavy-handed portrayal of a dead man in Hell who relives his past," and is cited as one of "several minor works which influenced his [Lowry's] masterpiece."

[10] *Times Literary Supplement* (20 April 1933), p. 274. *Cf.* Houghton, p. 326.

[11] *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p. 15.

[12] *Spectator* (21 April 1933), p. 250.

[13] *Lowry* (22 June 1946), as cited in Sherrill E. Grace, *The Voyage That Never Ends: Malcolm Lowry's Fiction* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1982), p. 129, n. 5.

[14] Graham Greene, *Spectator* (21 April 1933), p. 250.

[15] Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (1947; rpt. Harmondsworth & New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 1963), pp. 18-21. Further references will be cited *UTV*.

[16] The cantina abutting on the cinema, where Laruelle reads the Consul's letter and dreams, or thinks, his retrospective, is as far as his journey carries him in either the 1940 manuscript or the published version of the novel. In the published version, although Laruelle has a good view of the interior of the cinema, he decides he doesn't want to see the film; whereas in the manuscript version he actually watches the film *Las Manos de Orlac*, falls asleep and dreams his retrospective, and wakes up in the theatre. How he got into the theatre is not accounted for.

[17] See, for example, Houghton, pp. 303-04, where Julian in conversation with the artist says: " 'I can't stand the knowledge that you can see my thoughts — that you can read my memories like a book. It's damnable! I can't see your thoughts, or penetrate to your memories.' " The artist, a veteran of hell, replies: " 'That's only because you're such a damned egotist. You will — when you get sick of yourself. And one does get very sick of oneself in this dream-world, where everything is only a projection of oneself. . . . My God! that confounded river's gone! Quick! Concentrate! or the damned lot will go! That's better. I say, you really have a first-class imagination.' "

[18] In the 1940 version Priscilla is the Consul's wife, Yvonne is his daughter.

[19] Following Laruelle's attempt to take Priscilla in his arms in the 1940 manuscript version, the ruined palace collapses around him "and he had the notion that the walls were shaking with laughter at him."

[20] *Briefwechsel zwischen Wilhelm Dilthey und dem Grafen Paul Yorck von Wartenburg 1877-1897* (Halle-an-der-Saale, 1923), p. 61.

[21] *The Hero with the Private Parts: Essays* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 58-59.

[22] The burning of the letter at the close of Chapter I is "poetically balanced by the flight of vultures 'like burnt papers floating from a fire') at the end of III, (*Letters*, 70). In the 1940 version Chapter I ends with an evocation of vultures.

[23] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 307.

[24] *Spectator* (21 April 1933), p. 250.

[25] The internal evidence against this episode having actually occurred is massive. Both Hugh (*UTV*, 188) and Laruelle (*UTV*, 38) discount the Consul's version of his "sin." Further doubt is cast by the chronological fact that, if the Consul was fifteen years old in 1911 (*UTV*, 22), the likelihood of his having commanded a submarine-chaser in World War One would be remote, though not, apparently, impossible. In the last months of the war public school boys were getting "battlefield" promotions and being forced to take over units whose commanders had been killed.

[26] *The Hero with the Private Parts*, p. 54.

[27] Lytle, p. 58.

[28] Lowry (22 June 1946), as cited in Grace, "The Voyage that Never Ends: Time and Space in the Fiction of Malcolm Lowry," Diss. McGill, 1974, p. 22.

[29] See "Manipulated Time" and "Ecstatic Time" in my "*Under the Volcano*: The Novel as Psychodrama," Diss. Tulane University of New Orleans, 1982.

BLIND MAN

Eva Tihanyi

Since the eclipse, the earth
speaks to him in braille
and his hands listen,
his life syncopated
by the beat of a cane
tapping out anger, jazz, lust,
the rhythm of his breathing