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Spring, 1970

LOWRY'S READING

Articles

BY W. H. NEW, GEOFFREY DURRANT, DAVID BENHAM, PAUL G. TIESSEN,
PERLE EPSTEIN

Letters

BY MALCOLM LOWRY

Review Articles and Reviews

BY JULIAN SYMONS, GEORGE WOODCOCK, W. H. NEW, JOHN REID,
MARGARET HOWARD BLOM, FRASER SUTHERLAND, LEN GASPARINI,
A. W. PURDY, FRED COGSWELL, RONALD SUTHERLAND,
H. J. ROSENGARTEN, FRANK DAVEY, V. SHARMAN, DOUGLAS BARBOUR,
FRANCES FRAZER

Annual Supplement

CANADIAN LITERATURE CHECKLIST, 1969

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ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT

- CANADIAN LITERATURE 1969
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U.B.C. MEDAL FOR POPULAR BIOGRAPHY

TWO PUBLISHING HOUSES have created an important direction for Canadian biographies in 1969. One is the *Canadian Biography Studies* published by the University of Toronto Press, a project allied with the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. They deal with secondary figures in Canadian history, and will augment the reading public's understanding and appreciation of Canada's immediate past. The other series that will concern some Canadians is Faber and Faber's *Great Travellers*. When this series deals with Canadian subjects, it goes back to our earliest times and the books on our explorers will be valuable not only to historians but also to geographers and students of literature. Though both of these series fall into the general biographical tradition, rarely can they be called true biographies. For they deal frequently with the social and economic history of the time and rely to a great extent on direct quotations from the journals of the travellers involved.

Two other biographies were particularly attractive to the Selections Committee. One was Clara Thomas' *Ryerson of Upper Canada* which is most gracefully written; presumably because of her work on Mrs. Jameson, Mrs. Thomas provides her readers with the life of Upper Canada in addition to the life of Ryerson, and the reader certainly sees a man clearly in his setting. The other book, the winner of the University of British Columbia Medal for Popular Biography, is William Rodney's *Kootenai Brown* published by Gray's Publishing Limited of Sidney, British Columbia. The book rests on exhaustive research, but is still a "popular biography". 'Definitive' is a difficult word to use in describing works of biography, but it can be used for *Kootenai Brown*. Professor Rodney has buried the myths about Brown, without interring the man!

D.S.

THE ABSORPTION OF ECHOES

ALL WRITERS are derivative; all good writers plagiarize; theft is a literary virtue. So, with minimal exaggeration, one might characterize the fundamentals of a modern critical attitude which — more than half a century after Eliot, Pound, Joyce and Proust established in practice the artistic validity of derivation — has at last replaced the romantic and pernicious fiction that complete originality was a possible or even a desirable goal. Every artist, indeed, has a new way of looking at the world, because every personality is in some degree unique, but the world that he as an artist will see (and in his work present) inevitably includes (even if in negative) the perceptions of all those artists who have preceded him and of whose work he may be directly or indirectly unaware. When an artist is such a voracious consumer of the work of other artists as Malcolm Lowry, whose interests spilled exuberantly from literature (considered in its widest and wildest sense) into the visual (the cinema) and the aural (jazz), and all is blended with a sharply direct response to the physical environment (exemplified especially in his skill as a swimmer), then the web of influences and derivations becomes as dense and complicated as it was in the case of either Joyce or — that most haunting *semblable* — Proust.

In this issue we explore, in a series of essays by Canadian, English and American critics, and in a pair of interesting and hitherto unpublished letters by the author, this aspect of Lowry's work. The exercise may be regarded also as a probing into the whole general question of the boundaries between the derived and the original, and the extent to which an artist's success depends on his blend-

ing all that he has borrowed into a work that is self-consistent and self-subsistent, that lives within its own world and its own existence.

In this context it is perhaps significant that, while all the critics who write in this issue are quite evidently agreed in accepting *Under the Volcano* as Lowry's best work, the only one that touches on perfection, a great deal of attention is in fact paid to his lesser works: to the various versions of the novella that was eventually published in a compilation of other hands as *Lunar Caustic*, and to that curious travel story, "Through the Panama". This, I suggest, is appropriate, for, when we proceed from the contemplation of an artist's works as icons, standing in their ownness and completeness, to examining the sources of his creativity, it is inevitable that we should find them most clearly revealed in his imperfect and — in a writer who found finality as elusive as Lowry did — in his uncompleted works. These are the works in which, to borrow a word used by Lowry in the letter to Albert Erskine published in this issue, the echoes have not been "absorbed". For *absorption* surely is the key word when we consider the difference between a superbly complex and complete work like *Under the Volcano*, and an unresolved mass of writing like *Dark as the Grave wherein my Friend is Laid*.

I leave it to W. H. New, in his essay "Lowry's Reading", to carry further the introduction of the various essays and the tracing of their relationships. But, before ending, I must thank Margerie Lowry for her great helpfulness in providing the two letters by Malcolm Lowry which we publish, and also in giving generous permission for the use in some of the essays of quotations from his unpublished writings.

G.W

LOWRY'S READING

An Introductory Essay

W. H. New

IN TWO LARGE BOXES at the University of British Columbia are the remnants of Malcolm Lowry's library, a motley collection of works that ranges from Emily Brontë and Olive Schreiner to Djuna Barnes and Virginia Woolf, from the *Kenyon*, *Partisan*, and *Sewanee Reviews* to *A Pocketful of Canada*, from *Latin Prose Composition* to the *Metropolitan Opera Guide*, and from Elizabethan plays to Kafka and Keats. Little escaped his attention, in other words, and even such a partial list as this one indicates his eclectic and energetic insatiability for books. That he was also an inveterate film-goer and jazz enthusiast, and that he absorbed and remembered everything he experienced, makes any effort to separate out the individual influences on his work an invidious one; rather like chasing a rabbit through Ali Baba's caves, the activity seems incommensurate with its surroundings. But on frequent occasions an appreciation of the scope of his references or the source of a single allusion will take us closer to Lowry's tone and method.

Richard Hauer Costa, for example, writing in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* in 1967, points out that "unacknowledged literary kinship" between *Under the Volcano*, Aiken's *Blue Voyage*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*: the central use of the quest theme, the burgeoning sense of remorse, the "impatience" of the author with usual narrative methods, and so on. The Consul's "garden scene" in Chapter Five thus becomes an analogue to Joyce's Nighttown episode, and Lowry's dislocation of time, his recognition of what Costa elsewhere calls the "weight of the past", relates to Joyce's and Proust's. Such parallels have their value. It is by comparison that we learn our way into a new novel, and only after this process has taken place that we come to understand the individuality (if it exists) of the novel's own world.

Lowry acknowledges the comparative approach when in 1951 he finds in the work of Hermann Hesse the closest spirit to his own. And Clifford Leech uses comparison as a technical method in *Imagined Worlds* (1968) when, to investigate the "free manipulation of event" that characterizes the structure of Conrad's *Nostromo*, he brings in an analysis of *Under the Volcano* to illuminate his discussion. In both books the simultaneity of present and past, achieved by allowing an equivocal double viewpoint of character and narrator, affects our understanding of the situations and the ideas. As Leech puts it: "to have lived and to be the subject of anguish in recollection is in some sense to be living still." This has one meaning with reference to the Consul and Laruelle, another with reference to Lowry. On a still larger scale the statement could apply as one of the aims of criticism, or one of the accomplishments of art — to recreate the moment (of anguish, terror, hope, or whatever) that the author wished to convey, or to continue to engender that experience as the moment (and so the reader) alters; but these are aspects of the same problem of freedom and fate, essentially metaphysical in nature, which all of Lowry's work continually explores.

Lowry envisioned the universe as a series of Chinese boxes, with man in one of them, controlling some and controlled by others. The scheme is not quite so simple, of course, for the boxes (both external and internal) can be "factual" in any number of epistemological systems. And the whole prospect is further complicated by matters of fate and free will. Man can either control the worlds inside his mind or himself be governed, be in harmony with the sensory worlds outside him or be terrified and dislocated — and about such abstract possibilities as Destiny and Judgment (however tangible their effects in his life) he can only suppose. The scene in "Through the Panama", where Wilderness (aboard a ship in the Canal Zone) has relinquished control to the Captain, the Canal operator, and the Canal Zone Authority, is apropos. The overt image of multiple containment is obvious; embodied in it is a metaphor about the sensibility of an artist — not only to the materials that can be rendered into art but also to his own engagement with the task. The artist, that is, pursues control over a body of knowledge until it catches him and takes him over. Such knowledge is the "strange comfort" that the profession provides — whether it be the S.S. *Diderot's* captain's extra ability and hence extra grounds for fear in the face of a strong storm, or Keats' medical knowledge disabusing his mind of any hope of recovery from his tuberculosis, or Sigbjorn Wilderness-cum-Malcolm Lowry's absorption in the present-ness of the past. The past cannot be escaped nor its reality (as preserved in memory, or in Wilderness's notebook, or in Lowry's novel) denied. Herein

lies the thematic basis for both *Hear Us O Lord* and *Dark as the Grave*, and a further indication of the author's structural method.

In Lowry's letters we find other ramifications of this question of control. In 1951 he acknowledges Jung's concept of "man in search of a soul" as important to his work; in 1950 and again in 1953 Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* suggests a "not dissimilar theme", which he relates to Existentialism and to Ortega's philosophy of history. Wilderness he identifies as "Ortega's fellow, making up his life as he goes along, and trying to find his vocation". "According to Ortega," moreover, "the best image for man himself is a novelist," being written by his books as much as writing them. In Lowry's case, any perception of events-in-time is complicated by his literary experience, so that Faust and the Castle of Udolpho and Dante *in purgatorio* start to have *in him* a reality equally as forceful as the "actual" direct influence of, say, Aiken and Dollarton and Nordahl Grieg. The references multiply: Poe's maelstrom can be stepped into, O'Neill's long day's journey can be followed into night, Fitzgerald's crack-up can be experienced again in "Through the Panama", though it can end this time not in fission but in healing. Again the topics are pursued till they become his own: they cease to be *objects read* and become part of the subjectivity with which he renders experience.

AS DAVID BENHAM shows in his essay on *Lunar Caustic*, the presence of Herman Melville in Lowry's work provides another plane on which to approach questions of good and evil and the reality of the perceptions of the human mind. God and the devil—if not carrying all their Methodist connotations—do exert themselves in Lowry's world; heaven and hell exist. That one must descend to "hell" before locating "heaven" is a Jungian, Romantic concept he accepts completely—with the added implication that *in the Inferno is Paradise*, if we can see it. For Heriot in *Ultramarine*, Plantagenet in *Lunar Caustic*, and Wilderness in *Hear Us O Lord*, this is worked out in separate metaphors of voyage and discovery; for the consul it is tied up with his alcoholic descent into a Mexico that is both a landscape of fact and a state of mind. To be drunk is to be *in extremis* as far as the rational world is concerned, yet for the Consul it is paradoxically also a way of most vividly perceiving his own relationship with others. Seeing things clearly, still differs from acting on the basis of that perception. In her recent book, *The Private Labyrinth of Mal-*

colm Lowry (1969), for example, Perle Epstein has pointed out how the Consul's vision, for all its profundity and accuracy, is a sterile one because his talents are never exercised in an effort to grasp the harmony, the heaven, that (as for "successful" characters like Cosnahan or Wilderness) lay in his path.

The problem of harmonizing the mind with the outside environment is, of course, a central one in works like Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", which Lowry absorbed so thoroughly as to bind it integrally into the structure and effect of "Through the Panama". From Coleridge, Lowry also accepted many of his ideas about the fluidity of time — a more direct borrowing, in fact, than anything from Joyce or Proust. Yet Coleridge himself absorbed so much — from the occult sciences and elsewhere — and influenced so many, that the question of primary and secondary routes of influence seems a tangle too dense to uncoil. Much came via Nordahl Grieg, for example, whom Lowry met in 1930; much came via J. W. Dunne's *An Experiment with Time* (1927), a book examining the proposition that the future can be objectively experienced in the past. Though it had a strong following during the decade or so after its publication, it has also been attacked — for "spatializing" a non-spatial concept, for identifying the problems of time passing with those of time passed, and for interpreting time as itself a process in time — but such objections did not particularly disturb Lowry. Paul Tiessen shows how Lowry's "cinematic" technique in works like *Under the Volcano*, for example, is adapted to presenting temporal flux in spatial terms. *Dark as the Grave* extends the method and most clearly demonstrates Dunne's idea.

Whereas Dunne may prove finally unacceptable to philosophical theoreticians, Lowry perceived the applicability of the theory to the process by which an artist attaches himself to his work and then is separated from it. His novel *Dark as the Grave*, that is, concerns his character Wilderness (another novelist) discovering the separation between himself and his own character Trumbaugh — in a linear sequence that opens up Dunne's notion of "regress": events in time past, relived in the memory, occur simultaneously in time present, which epitomizes in its way the process of "re-creation" that reading a novel involves readers in. But further: Wilderness, returning to his own and his novel's Mexican past, is still moving through time into the future. Out of his memory of the past he anticipates events in the future, which possess a vivid and objective reality for him and do "happen." On the basis of this "dream" experience, however, the will may exert itself and thus alter the nature of the "actual" experience that subsequently occurs. To Lowry this process was extremely important. Certain as he

was that there existed a unity between life and death, body and soul, reality and unreality, he found here a key to the metaphysics that joined them.

His search in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was for answers to one of the dilemmas he found himself in, and his passion for fateful coincidences led him into the works of P. D. Ouspensky (*A New Model of the Universe*, 1931) and Charles Fort (particularly *Lo!*, 1931; *Wild Talents*, 1932; and *The Book of the Damned*, 1919). He travelled to Haiti (in 1947) to discover something about Voodoo, and became interested there in the work of a young Haitian writer named Philippe Thoby-Marcelin. He found occult signs in the natural world about him, and in order to interpret them, as Geoffrey Durrant suggests, he seems to have absorbed many of the ideas of Neoplatonism that developed from the school of Porphyry. Even his interest in the Greek Classics stems from this search for omens and explanations; throughout *Ultramarine* the Eumenides sound their voices, for example, till Hilliot hears. And in the later work — particularly the manuscript pages of *October Ferry to Gabriola* and *La Mordida* — fragments from Ouspensky, Tourneur, Plato, Fort, and the *I Ching* are gathered together to influence and explain the fate of Ethan and Jacqueline Llewelyn and of Sigbjorn and Primrose Wilderness.

But if Lowry sympathized with the pursuits of Ouspensky and Fort, it is in the work of a Vancouver cabbalist named Charles Robert Stansfeld-Jones ("Frater Achad") — an acquaintance of the better known English mystic Aleister Crowley — that he found much of the occult *system* on which some of his later writing hangs. Jones's work — particularly *Q.B.L., or the Bride's Reception* and *The Anatomy of the Body of God*, privately published during the 1920's — explores the theory that the universe is constantly expanding yet constantly ordered. In his terms, the expansion can be seen in the psychic progress of adepts within it; the order is described by the principles and symbols of Cabbala, which will allow to an adept the knowledge that can lead to hell or to heaven, to the barranca or the garden, to torment or to peace. Thus numbers, colours, animals, and all the symbols of the Tarot pack acquire a meaning that is significant not only within the framework of an individual story but also within the constructs of occult philosophy.

Lowry's unpublished fragment *The Ordeal of Sigbjorn Wilderness* (like *Lunar Caustic* set in a hospital) makes the metaphysical intent of human "ordeal" quite explicit; an authorial note quotes from the Anglo-Irish theosophist Annie Besant to explain the several kinds of spiritual truth in religion:

- (1) One eternal infinite incognizable real Existence.
- (2) From THAT the manifested God, unfolding from unity to duality, from duality to trinity.
- (3) From the manifested Trinity many spiritual intelligences, guiding the Kosmic order.
- (4) Man a reflection of the manifested God and therefore a trinity fundamentally, his inner and real self being eternal, one with the Self of the universe.
- (5) His evolution by repeated incarnations, into which he is drawn by desire, and from which he is set free by knowledge and sacrifice, becoming divine in potency as he had ever been divine in latency.

The passage explains much of what Lowry intended by the multiple identities that Wilderness possesses and much of the thematic unity that he hoped to develop by joining all his works into a single cycle to be called *The Voyage that Never Ends*. In that context the fiction repudiates the more obvious platitudes about character and plot analysis, and transcends even the basic structure Lowry admits to deriving from the *Divine Comedy*, in order to try to render all human experience and all its paradoxes of time, place, and perception, in something more emotionally overwhelming than abstract terms. Possibly for that reason the task was not completed; because of Lowry's own developing understanding, it never could be.

NOT ALL OF THE INFLUENCES that impinged on Lowry's consciousness can be as precisely dated as that of Charles Jones, who arrived in Lowry's life as a census enumerator in 1941. He was frequently provided with cogent subplots and evocative images, for example — as can be seen in *Under the Volcano*, or the published chapter from *October Ferry*, or the manuscript pages of a story like "Ghostkeeper" — by reading such ephemeral material as neighbourhood newspapers. His knowledge of the Greek and Roman Classics, Shakespeare, and Dante, however, presumably dates from his English public school education; Aiken, Grieg, and jazz were undergraduate enthusiasms; John Davenport was a school acquaintance, and James Stern a friend from his Paris days in the early 1930's. But Lowry's casual references to Donne, Dostoevsky, Chatterton, Crabbe, Roethke, Chekhov, Faulkner, Farrell, Dylan Thomas, Ellison, Yeats and a host of others are dropped like handkerchiefs through his letters. They have their pertinence and their own claims to recognition, but if

we stop to pick them all up we run the danger of being lured into aimless alleys.

Certainly many of the references to Canadian writing fall into this "blind" category. Lowry knew the work of Ralph Gustafson and Al Purdy and a proletarian poet of the early 1950's named Curt Lang — but not well, and not to the point of its affecting his own work in any observable way. Even the adaptations of *Maria Chapdelaine* and "The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias" that he wrote for the CBC are geared to the CBC's own programme formulae. Though *October Ferry* makes passing reference to both Hémon's work and Leacock's, it was really landscape more than culture that influenced him in Canada. One particularly pointed passage in *October Ferry* makes this clear: if Canada has any originality at all it lies in its uncontrolled wilderness. To be taming it is one thing; to have it tamed is another — a dead situation that demands undoing in order to begin afresh. So the physical environment furnished him once again with a metaphor for the artist's predicament: to be taming the wilderness of language and ideas is more exhilarating than to have accomplished the task. To know that and yet still to be spurred into writing created an ironic dilemma that was Lowry's own.

He did know some writers in Canada, like Dorothy Livesay and Earle Birney, better than Gustafson and Lang, and in *Turvey* he found an ironic sensibility towards society to match his own. It is an important point, for it forces us to recognize the neglected but obvious truth that Lowry's work is genuinely comic. In all his grim systematizing there is room for laughter, and his observation of "Joyce's complaint re *Ulysses*: 'They might at least have said it was damned funny'", has a kind of reflexive barb attached to it. Perhaps this is simply another way of showing how heaven is linked with hell — or how, as in "Elephant and Colosseum", man's reaching for harmony is linked with his perception of "God's joke": the elephant. For the joke has its serious side; the elephant is named Rosemary, and "remembrance" (as *October Ferry* and *Dark as the Grave* remind us) can work both as escape from the present and as conscience to remind us of the "normality" of guilt — another example of the "strange comfort" that the fact of being human affords to an individual man.

Such a process of "taming" his own landscapes led to his constant revision of his work, his constant search for knowledge, his continual urge to read more and to begin writing again. Early in 1949 (while *Turvey* was being written), Lowry wrote to Birney to express his delight in the book. After discovering its seriousness as well as its comedy, and likening it to *The Good Soldier Schweik* and *Dangling Man* and *Dead Souls*, he adds a significant note on Gogol:

The swing between farce and the purely lyrical might be of value technically. And the almost Moussorgsky-like sadness and longing he is able to distil simply by describing some crummy little hotel.

The range and apparent casualness of the references is typical; the fragmentariness of the observation suggests a characteristic process of authorial note-taking, both for Wilderness and himself. Like other references to his reading, it shows not only the importance he attached to the things he encountered, but also the metamorphosis they underwent in his mind. At the same time, it offers us a glimpse of his ideas in the process of being born.

DEATH IN LIFE

Neo-Platonic Elements in “Through the Panama”

Geoffrey Durrant

THE EXPLORATION of Malcolm Lowry's symbolism will no doubt occupy scholars for many years; in this field at least we are offered “God's plenty”. What I suggest in this article is meant as a mere foot-note to such studies as Perle Epstein's of the influence of the caballa, and as a suggestion for possible further investigations.¹

To a reader who is familiar with the literature of neo-Platonism it seems likely that at times Malcolm Lowry is drawing on a system of symbols derived not only from general Cabbalistic lore, but from more particular sources in the neo-Platonic tradition. In this tradition, as it is represented by the work of such writers as Proclus, Porphyry, Apuleius and Claudianus, the Platonic view of the world as a cave of darkness is united with the Greek and Roman pantheons, and with Homer, to create a philosophical mythology — a mythology in which the fate of Psyche, of Persephone, of Narcissus and of Ulysses is understood as an allegory of the descent of the soul into the world of the senses — the dark wood or the dark sea of matter. The principal English source for this material is to be found in the writings of Thomas Taylor the Platonist; this is in part now made widely accessible through the publication of a selection of his writings by Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper.²

Before proceeding to an examination of one of Malcolm Lowry's stories to illustrate this suggestion, it is necessary to point out that in the neo-Platonic

system of myths the soul has its true home in the heavens; through an error it falls in love with its own generated image, and proceeds into generation. That is to say, it is born into this world of darkness, where its task is to purify itself of the material grossness which encloses it, and to ascend through the elements to the heavenly region of the stars — the true home from which it has been exiled. The journey of the soul is variously represented as the flight of a bird, a voyage over the dark sea of matter, or a fall into dark waters. The life of the senses is represented as *entrapment* in a web, a dark wood, or a cave. The stars are a constant reminder of the life that has been lost through generation, or birth, since the stars to which we look up are souls that enjoy the divine life of the heavens. We yearn, like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, "towards the journeying Moon and the stars"; the Moon is regarded in this philosophy as the sphere of judgment, the staging post between the divine and the fallen worlds, since the sphere of the moon marks the limits of the world of generation.

Malcolm Lowry's story "Through the Panama"³ evidently has an eschatological significance, and a gloss from "The Ancient Mariner" is there used as a comment on this statement:

... And later, the stars: but now Martin saw the fixity of the closed order of their system: death in short. The thought comes from Keyserling. (They are *not dead* when I look at them with Primrose.) Wonderful truth in Lawrence about this. "Somehow my life draws (he writes) strength from the depths of the universe, from the depths among the stars, from the great world!"

The gloss from Coleridge is as follows:

In his loneliness and fixedness the Ancient Mariner yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest and their native country and their own natural home, which they enter unannounced, as words that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

As we shall see, the journey to the south and again to the north is itself a representation, in the neo-Platonic system, of the myth of a fall by generation, or birth, into the world of the senses, and of the long voyage home to the native land, the paternal port of the soul. The inclusion of this gloss in an evidently eschatological account of a voyage suggests strongly that Lowry understood "The Ancient Mariner" as drawing upon a related eschatology — a view which, given Coleridge's early interest in the neo-Platonists and in the work of Thomas Taylor, is by no means to be dismissed as absurd.

In the neo-Platonic interpretation of the voyage of Ulysses, the life of man on earth is represented as the voyage of the intellect over the dark sea of matter; the ship represents the body, the sailors the human faculties, and Ulysses the intellect.⁴ Exiled from his true home, or natal port, Ulysses is assailed by many temptations, and finally returns to his paternal home, where he is united with Penelope, the true wisdom, and is once more at peace.⁵ Closely associated with this myth, in Thomas Taylor's account, is that of the Cave of the Nymphs, for which the chief source is also in Porphyry. Here the cave represents the world of the senses; it has two gates, one towards the north and the other to the south. It is through the northern gate or 'port' that souls descend into the cave, and through the southern that they ascend to heaven:

From among the number of these [signs] the theologists consider Cancer and Capricorn as two ports; Plato calls them two gates. Of these, they affirm that Cancer is the gate through which souls descend, but Capricorn that through which they ascend, and exchange a material for a divine condition of being. Cancer, indeed, is northern and adapted to descent: but Capricorn is southern, and accommodated to ascent.⁶

These two accounts are not fused into one by Porphyry, or by Taylor, though Taylor originally published his version of Porphyry's *Voyage of Ulysses* as a footnote of great length to his translation of *Concerning the Cave of the Nymphs*; this footnote refers immediately to the following sentence in that work:

Indeed it appears to me that it was not without foundation that Numenius thought that the person of Ulysses in the Odyssey represented to us a man who passes in a regular manner over the dark and stormy sea of generation.⁷

When these two closely related interpretations of Homer are taken together, they produce a myth in which the human spirit embarks through a port or gate on a southerly voyage on the dark sea of matter, descends to imprisonment in the Hades of the senses in the extreme south, and then proceeds northwards to the port or gate of the north, where it may hope to escape from its long and stormy exile. There are I believe strong indications that "Through the Panama" is deliberately coloured with suggestions of this myth, and moreover that Lowry interpreted "The Ancient Mariner" as an expression of the same myth.

In "Through the Panama" the port of departure is Vancouver; in the neo-Platonic myth it is the port or gate of birth, through which the soul enters the dark sea of matter. The ship is the *Diderot* — a vessel of "enlightenment"; its engines sing "Frère Jacques" to awaken the intellect. (There is a paradox here

only on the surface, for it is only through the life of the intellect that the ship may hope to arrive at its true destination.) The birth imagery is unobtrusive; midnight and mud are traditional symbols of generation:

Leaving Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, midnight, November 7th, 1947,
S.S. *Diderot*, for Rotterdam.

Rain, rain and dark skies all day.

We arrive at dusk, in a drizzle. Everything wet, dark, slippery . . .

(This morning, walking through the forest, a moment of intense emotion: the path sodden, a morass of mud, the sad dripping trees and ochereous fallen leaves; here it all is. I cannot believe I won't be walking down the path tomorrow.)

The use of Stanley Park and Dollarton as versions of Paradise is evident enough in two other stories in this volume — "The Bravest Boat" and "The Forest Path to the Spring"; here the paradise is lost as the voyager prepares to set out on his journey.

The journey to the south begins:

. . . The black cloudy sky was breaking and stars were brilliant overhead. The Northern Cross. November 8th. High salt wind, clear blue sky, hellishly rough sea (zig-zagged with a lashing rip tide) through the Juan de Fuca Strait. — Whale geometry of Cape Flattery: finny phallic furious face of Flattery.

The generation theme is evident here, not only in the obvious phallicism, but also in the strong wind and the "hellishly rough sea" under the sign of the North. Porphyry, in Taylor's version of *The Cave of the Nymphs*, writes:

Indeed, Boreas (the North wind) is proper to souls passing into generation: for the northern blasts recreate those who are on the verge of death . . . For the north, from its superior coldness, collects into one, detains and strengthens the soul in the most moist and frigid embraces of terrene generation. . . .⁸

(Here it may be noted that the Ancient Mariner is blown southward by the northern storm-blast, which is "tyrannous and strong". The similarity here and elsewhere suggests that there is a close relationship between Lowry's story and Coleridge's poem.) That the sea is "hellishly rough" is only the first example of Lowry's use, in an apparently offhand way, of conversational expressions that are meant to carry a considerable weight of significance. Since, in the neo-Platonic philosophy, this world is Hades or Hell, the sea that represents the world of the senses is indeed "hellish".

The condition of the exiled soul is that of alienation:

This desolate sense of alienation possibly universal sense of dispossession. The cramped cabin one's obvious place on earth.

At Los Angeles another passenger is taken on: "His name? Charon. Naturally." The voyage to the south continues, and the hellish desolation increases:

Strange islands, barren as icebergs, and nearly as white. Rocks! — The Lower California Coast, giant pinnacles, images of barrenness and desolation, on which the heart is thrown and impaled eternally.

In "The Ancient Mariner" the journey to the south brings the Mariner to the desolation of a world of ice. Lowry cannot directly use this in a voyage to the Panama Canal; but he can see the likeness of guano-covered islands to icebergs, and so continue the relationship with Coleridge that is made explicit first in the stories of the attempt to shoot an albatross and the saving of a man's life by an albatross. In the increasing desolation of the southward voyage, the song of the *Diderot's* engines, which awakened the mind to consciousness and adventure, now turns to a lament. The voyage has led this Ulysses into the shadow of spiritual death; the albatross of salvation is replaced by the digarilla, "a bird of ill omen". As rational consciousness awakens, man becomes imprisoned in his world:

Man not enmeshed by, but *killed* by his own book and the malign forces it arouses. Wonderful theme. Buy planchette for necessary dictation.

— Death takes a holiday. On a Liberty ship.

— Or does he? All day I hear him "cackling like a pirate."

The voyage of enlightenment and liberty, with the S.S. *Diderot* headed for the south — the world of material things — is a journey to spiritual death; the soul has been entrapped:

... I am a voice, yet with physical feelings, I enter what can only be described — I won't describe it — with teeth, that snap tight behind me: at the same time, in an inexplicable way, this is like going through the Panama Canal, and what closes behind me is, as it were, a lock: in a sense I am now a ship, but I am also a voice and also Martin Trumbaugh, and now I am, or he is, in the realm of death. ... Death himself is a hideous looking red-faced keeper of a prison. ...

The world of 'reality' as a trap, a death-in-life, a prison; this is centrally in the neo-Platonic tradition. That the human being is "a ship" is also, as we have seen, one of the traditional myths of the neo-Platonists.

IN THIS WORLD, consciousness, as for the Ancient Mariner, is a hellish condition, since the love of life is lost. Here Lowry's gloss from "The Ancient Mariner" indicates a death-in-life: "And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead." However, the ordeals that Ulysses undergoes are preparations and testings of the soul, and Lowry sees even this state of alienation and grief as an ordeal that can be miraculously overcome:

Sigbjørn Wilderness (pity my name is such a good one because I can't use it) could only pray for a miracle, that miraculously some love of life would come back.

It has: apparently this retracing of a course was part of the main ordeal; and even at this time Martin knew it to be no dream, but some strange symbolism of the future.

The crew of this ship will not mutiny, because "(a) this is a happy ship" and "(b) they want to be home for Christmas." The symbolism here is accompanied by praise of the French and is followed by the Captain's refusal to shoot the albatross that appears "crucified on the cross-trees". The *Diderot*, it seems, represents the kind of enlightenment that is not necessarily or permanently at war with the human senses and faculties, but gives them happiness in the prospect of "home". At the same time the Captain has reverence for life and for the principle of salvation represented by the Albatross-Christ. There is, it may be, a suggestion of brotherhood in liberty in the repeated use of "Frère Jacques" in this story; certainly at the end it appears as an expression of the enlightenment of love.

The Panama Canal itself is presented, through the device of a historical gloss in the margins, as the achievement of a "great new era of enlightenment" and as a technological realization of the modern spirit. In the traveller's personal experience, however, the Canal is the most hellish part of the journey:

Blackest history of canal's horror, failure, collapse, murder, suicide, fever, at Calabra Cut. . . . Hot here as a Turkish bath in hell. Jungle has to be chopped back every day.

The *Diderot* is travelling to the eastern world (in Porphyry the abode of gods) while the *Manatee*, from London, is going to the western world (the abode, in Porphyry, of demons):⁹

Another ship from London, all going the other way steaming very swiftly as with the current. (Bergson.)

The British ship, as opposed to the French, is travelling with the current of history, and, as the gloss suggests, learning nothing of the madness of the westward journey to demonic mechanical achievement:

... You would scarcely credit that so many people for so many years during this long era of enlightenment could be so goddamned stupid, could be so ferociously ignorant, could have learned so little, that they went on doing precisely this same sort of bloody thing.

The emergence of the *Diderot* from the last lock of the Canal offers an end to the fear of separation, or alienation, from Primrose:

And ourselves, watching, happy, happy at the news we won't be separated after all.

As I shall show, this apparently casual comment conveys, or attempts to convey, the happiness of the watchful and awakened mind at the knowledge of its union with the soul.

The journey to the north-east is still perilous, but Charon has been dropped, and the wine (pinard) and the cake indicate the sacramental hope that at the same time demands a sacrifice, and is therefore threatening:

But what is that cake going to demand of the Trumbaughs? The cake itself seems a nightmare. In spite of stars, wind, and sun, Martin had almost foundered in some complicated and absurd abyss of self, could only pray for another miracle to get out of it.

In the late classical eschatology, the journey of the soul to its heavenly home is achieved through a process of purgation, in which it is washed by rain, blown by the wind, and tormented by lightning, so that it is purified by the elements of water, air, and fire.¹⁰ Lowry duly brings this in:

Two squalls; cobalt thunderstorms. Wind catches spray and blows it across the sea like rain, a tiny squall of rain.

Martin was gloomy and savage, lying all day in his bunk predicting death and disaster.

During these last days, since going through the Anageda Passage, have been through some important spiritual passage too — what does it mean?

“What it means” is that the soul is being cured of its attachment to material things, and is passing through its purgatorial ordeal.

Terrific squall towards sunset. Thunder. Cobalt lightnings reveal a sizzling sea . . . *vision of creation.*

— Am glad to be welcomed by skipper again — really believe I have now gone through some spiritual ordeal . . . though a little hard to see what.

The voyage into the Atlantic takes the ship into a "godawful storm"; the term is not to be taken lightly, for the wind that blows from the south is the terrible wind of God that blows souls out of generation into the true life after death, the equivalent of the "good south wind" that blows the Ancient Mariner northwards. The fear of death is evoked by Lowry in the passages for translation into French where "the man was not dead but his wife told him he had died two days ago"; and "she dressed herself as the Goddess of Death." This is the "King Storm whose sheen is Fearful". The terror of death is further heightened by the Conradian description of the storm, where the gloss from Coleridge adds the suggestion of a metaphysical terror:

He heareth sounds, and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the elements.

The religious dread is continued in the Rilke quotation from the Blessed Angela:

... "Si [Dieu] . . . ne me changeait pas moi-même, s'il ne commençait au fond de moi une nouvelle operation, au lieu de me faire du bien, les sages, les saints et Dieu exaspéraient au delà de toute expression mon desespoir, ma fureur, ma tristesse, ma douleur, et mon aveuglement!"

The meaning of the wind that blows the soul northward with a terrible speed into the new birth of death is to be found in the classical eschatology:

... The southern gales dissolve life. . . the south (wind) is more vehement towards the end.¹¹

Cicero records the speed of the soul as it leaves its corporeal nature:

Add that the soul comes to make its escape all the more readily from our air . . . because there is nothing swifter than the speed of the soul; there is no sort of speed which can match the speed of the soul.¹²

In Lowry, the gale gets steadily worse; and the climax is reached off the Azores; here Lowry uses Coleridge's gloss:

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure.

In spite of the realistic trappings, and the apparently leisurely discussion of literature and life, the intention is evidently to represent the terror of death. Lowry here permits himself a little joke:

We have had to change our course, the skipper says, and are going by dead reckoning.

The storm at sea is paralleled by the storm in Martin's soul; on the northward and eastward voyage he searches his conscience, and undergoes a kind of purification:

Now you see how easy it is to be carried away by an impulse of hatred! There is some truth in what I say (that is, it is certainly true that I hate these people) but what of the whole thing, read aright? What a testimony to my inadequacy, my selfishness, my complete confusion indeed!

The self-examination and the moral anguish in Martin's experience provide the natural counter-part of the elemental purging by wind, rain, and lightning. Doubt and fear assail the soul; the story about being thought to be the author of *The Trial*, and the claim to have recognized Kierkegaard before he was well known, are not mere anecdotes:

The author . . . feels himself to be some sort of unrecognized pioneer, who maybe even lives himself in a state of Fear and Trembling, perhaps even in undergoing some sort of Trial at the moment.

In this situation Martin somewhat surprisingly turns not to beatific visions or a sense of sin, but to well-established Pythagorean and neo-Platonic virtues:

Equilibrium, sobriety, moderation, wisdom: these unpopular and unpleasant virtues, without which meditation and even goodness are impossible, must somehow, because they are so unpleasant, be recommended as states of being to be embraced with a kind of passion.

These virtues are those recommended by the neo-Platonists, as a preparation for vision of the beautiful:

Indeed, as the ancient oracle declares, temperance and fortitude, prudence and every virtue are certain purgatives of the soul.¹³

It is not surprising, then, to find Lowry ending this passage with a Pythagorean insistence on the unity of being, and the need for love, not only of men, but "of all God's creatures, human and animal".

The promise of reconciliation and release is offered in the memory of a French movie of *The Fall of the House of Usher*:

. . . The unspeakably happy ending of the film, by the way, Martin thought, under the stars, with Orion suddenly turned into the cross, and Usher reconciled

with his wife in this life yet on another plane, was a stroke of genius perhaps beyond Poe himself.

The significance given here to the appearance of Orion as the cross reflects the use of pagan myth mixed with Christian doctrine. The theme of union and separation is important in the story, and seems to reflect a modification of the attainment by Ulysses, in the myth, of union with his Penelope, the true wisdom of the soul. Of this Porphyry, in Taylor's account, tells us:

... Ulysses will not always wish in vain for a passage over the dark ocean of a corporeal life, but by the assistance of Mercury, who may be considered as the emblem of reason, he will at length be enabled to quit the magic embraces of Calypso, the goddess of Sense, and to return again into the arms of Penelope, or Philosophy, the long lost and proper object of his love.¹⁴

Martin's voyage, unlike that of Ulysses, begins in union with his true love, and only the entry into the Panama Canal — the hell of a rational and mechanical "enlightenment" — threatens him with separation from her: "Primrose and myself are the sole passengers aboard the freighter." The home they have left is, it seems, the true home of Primrose, who may be disquieted on the voyage if she is reminded of it:

"Keep quiet about house or will spoil voyage for Primrose."

Martin and Primrose are happy in their union within the ship:

Nov. 9. Primrose and Sigbjørn Wilderness are happy in their cramped Chief Gunner's cabin.

Primrose is the very source of living vision to Martin; "the stars are only *not dead* when I look at them with Primrose". Primrose is shown as characteristically responding to beauty and life:

A flying fish skidding over the sapphire sea toward an albatross floating to meet it: ecstasy. Primrose in seventh Heaven.

(This is clearly a symbolical passage, the flying-fish of the soul aspiring to the albatross of salvation.) It is only with the arrival at the Panama Canal that a separation is threatened:

Bad news: due to the unexpected arrival of more passengers in Cristobal, perhaps Primrose and I are to be separated, into different cabins.

However, even the Canal does not separate them, so that it seems that Lowry is claiming a unity through the darkest part of his journey with his Primrose or

true wisdom of the soul. It is she who explains to him the significance of the locks:

Significance of *locks*: in each one you are locked, Primrose says, as it were, in an experience.

The separation seems not to take place, though this is perhaps designedly not made quite clear in the story. After the voyage through the Canal the fear of separation is removed. It is Primrose who suggests the buying of wine. Primrose is "afraid of this boat, thrown together in wartime by makers of washing machines," a significant passage, since the soul is unhappy in the ship of the body, which is to undergo its purgation. Primrose is the principle to which Martin wishes to be true:

Above all things perhaps he wanted to be loyal to Primrose in life. He wanted to be loyal to her beyond life, and in whatever life there might be beyond. He wanted to be loyal to her beyond death. In short, at the bottom of his chaos of a nature, he worshiped the virtues that the world seems long since to have dismissed as dull or simply good business or as not pertaining to reality at all. So that, as in his lower, so in his higher nature too, he felt himself to be non-human.

In this way Primrose is given the character of Martin's true soul, or wisdom. The saving of Primrose is, it seems, the concern of the ship's crew: "All night we have been saving your life Madame."

The presence of Martin's Primrose throughout the journey thus imposes an important modification of the Ulysses theme; but it does not represent a weakening of the neo-Platonic content. For to those familiar with the tradition in which Lowry is writing, Primrose is early in the story identified with Psyche, exiled from her starry home and threatened with separation from Cupid, her rational nature. In this way two different but related myths are interwoven in Lowry's story.

Of the myth of Psyche Taylor writes:

Venus is represented desiring Mercury to proclaim Psyche through all lands, as one of her female slaves that has fled from her service.¹⁵

As the ship leaves Vancouver, the first mention of Primrose reveals her "wearing all her Mexican silver bracelets, calmly tense, electrically beautiful and excited". This is a slight but distinct hint of enslavement. When Primrose is next mentioned, Martin says he must "keep quiet about house or will spoil voyage for Primrose". The true home of Psyche or the soul is in Heaven, as Taylor records:

[The descent of Psyche] signifies the descent of the soul from the intelligible world into a mundane condition of being, but without abandoning its establishment in the Heavens.¹⁶

This may be taken with the following passage in Taylor:

The gems, too, on which Psyche is said to have trod in every part of the Palace [Heaven], are evidently symbolical of the stars.¹⁷

As the ship leaves Vancouver, the stars as jewels — the floor of Heaven — shine over the lovers as they set out on their southward journey:

Leaving at night the jeweled city. Baguette of diamonds on black velvet, says Primrose: ruby and emerald harbor lights. Topaz and gold lights on two bridges. Primrose is very happy. We embrace in the dark, on deck.

And later: "Our house. Incredible jewel-like days in December, sometimes."

The embrace "in the dark" evokes the love of Psyche for her Cupid, whom she was not allowed to see, and whom she loved in the dark. That she is "happy" is a reflection of the heavenly joy from which she is now departing on her exile, with its threat of separation. Psyche, according to Taylor, is tempted into the world of material things by her sisters, "imagination and nature", at the behest of Venus.¹⁸ Throughout the story, Primrose is shown taking an eager interest and delight in nature, and an imaginative response to its life. Further, in the same passage, Taylor informs us that Psyche, after her descent, is "represented as having a stumbling and reeling gait," since "Plato, in the *Phaedo*, says, that the soul is drawn into the body with a staggering motion."¹⁹ This is humorously touched on when Primrose, in the storm, "comes staggering in every so often to reassure me". Lowry is at times over-ingenious in the use of his myth. He represents his Martin as "heroically" reading "a few pages of William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* each night before going to sleep, just to keep his hand in, as it were, and to keep up with the times. . . ." So he is capable of representing the "defiling" or staining of the bodily vesture of the soul, and its consequent anguish, in the following terms:

Crash! Coffee, milk, etc. falls into Primrose's lap and on the floor. I fear she will be scalded (she was too) but she is wailing because her pretty new red corduroy slacks are stained.

The sleep into which Psyche falls in the myth is interpreted by Taylor as representing the Platonic sleep of the soul, which, if not made vigilant and alert

by the intellect, will "descend to Hades, and be overwhelmed with a sleep perfectly profound."²⁰

The death of the soul is, while merged, or baptized, as it were, in the present body, to descend into matter, and be filled with impurity . . . For to be plunged into matter is to descend into Hades, and fall asleep.²¹

This helps to explain the insistent use of "Frère Jacques", repeated *seven times* in the story, which moreover both begins and ends with this song. What it asks is "Brother, are you asleep?" It also calls for the ringing of the matin bells (of spiritual awakening); and it announces in turn both doom and salvation. It may therefore be taken that one of the major themes of the story is the importance of intellect in rousing the soul from its lethargy and fear. The tradition within which Lowry was working was centrally intellectualist; the soul, or affective principle in man, was saved not by love alone, but by love under the guidance of intellect, the divine principle in man. In spite of its fearful voyage, the S.S. *Diderot* is travelling eastward to the realm of light and of the gods, and it bears a name that does homage to the enlightenment of the mind.

The story ends with the awakening of the passengers to arrival at the harbour, signalled as in "The Ancient Mariner" by the lighthouse ("Bishop light") and with the engines ringing the matins of a new dawn ("Sonnez les matines!"). That this is the dawn of love is made plain by the gloss from Coleridge:

And to teach by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth.

Finally, lest it be thought that Lowry unfairly left his readers without a warning of the kind of attention he was hoping for, we must note a hint given early in the story:

Brilliant comment of a person to whom I once lent *Ulysses* on returning it the next day: "Thanks awfully. Very good." (Lawrence also said: "The whole is a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another.")

This is a clear enough warning to the reader not to suppose that "Through the Panama" is itself a "strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts", a series of heavily annotated travel notes, and nothing more. Lowry, it seemed, hoped that he would find readers who would have more to say about his story than: "Thanks awfully. Very good." The choice of *Ulysses* as an illustration of philistine inattentiveness is perhaps not as helpful as it was intended to be; one of the problems for an esoteric writer is to judge with any accuracy what degree of

knowledge he may expect his readers to supply. It does however suggest that the use made of the sea-voyage is not simply derived from "The Ancient Mariner", but that Lowry recognized, or thought he recognized, the presence of the Ulysses myth in Coleridge's poem.

"Through the Panama" is scarcely so successful a story as others in this volume in which myth and reality are more subtly mixed. Its interest lies in the open exposure of the method, and of its relationship to classical eschatology; and this in turn suggests that we might do well to turn to "The Ancient Mariner" once again, with the help of Lowry's insights into that poem and into its relationship to the tradition.

If there is indeed a deliberate use of the neo-Platonic tradition in this story, it seems fruitless to ask where Lowry might have come across it. Interest in neo-Platonism and the publishing of Taylor's works flourished in America until 1890, as Professor Harper records.²² It is possible that Lowry came across Taylor either directly or through conversation in the course of his research into the esoteric. During the past eighty years the tradition has almost entirely vanished from sight. Those of us with a predominantly academic education are only now beginning to realize its earlier importance; but an adventurous and voracious reader, seeking for what might feed rather than deaden the imagination, might well, like Yeats, have turned to the neo-Platonic tradition as a source of new significance and vitality.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Perle Epstein, *The Private Labyrinth of Malcolm Lowry—Under the Volcano and the Caballa*, New York, 1969.

² Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper, *Thomas Taylor the Platonist*, Princeton, 1969. (Referred to hereafter as *Taylor*).

³ Malcolm Lowry, *Hear Us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place*, Philadelphia and New York, 1961.

⁴ "Ulyxem existimamus esse intellectum animae ducem; socios, mentis agitationes et congenitas vires atque facultates." *De Ulixis Erroribus ethice explicatae*, tr. Johannes Columbus, Stockholm, 1678, p. 23.

⁵ "But our true country, like that of Ulysses, is from whence we came, and where our father lives." Plotinus, *On the Beautiful*, quoted in Thomas Taylor, *Porphyrius, Select Works*, London, 1823, p. 271.

⁶ Thomas Taylor, *The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus*, 2 vols., London, 1792, II, p. 287. (Hereafter referred to as *Proclus*.)

⁷ *Proclus*, II, p. 294.

⁸ *Proclus*, II, p. 289.

⁹ *Proclus*, II, p. 292.

- ¹⁰ Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, tr. J. B. Baker, London, 1912, p. 105. See also Dupuis, *Origines de tous les Cultes*, 10 vols., Paris, 1834, VI, p. 108.
- ¹¹ *Proclus*, II, p. 289.
- ¹² *Taylor*, pp. 313-4.
- ¹³ Cicero, *Disputations*, I, xix, 43, in *Tusculan Disputations*, ed. J. E. King, London, 1927.
- ¹⁴ *Taylor*, p. 156 (from Porphyry.)
- ¹⁵ Thomas Taylor, *The Fable of Cupid and Psyche*, London, 1795, p. ix.
- ¹⁶ *Cupid and Psyche*, p. vi.
- ¹⁷ *Cupid and Psyche*, p. vi.
- ¹⁸ *Cupid and Psyche*, p. vii.
- ¹⁹ *Cupid and Psyche*, pp. viii - ix.
- ²⁰ *Cupid and Psyche*, p. xiv.
- ²¹ *Cupid and Psyche*, p. xv.
- ²² *Taylor*, pp. 49-102.

LOWRY'S PURGATORY

Versions of "Lunar Caustic"

David Benham

I N 1934 MALCOLM LOWRY spent a few days in New York's Bellevue Mental Hospital. Horrified by what he saw there, he wrote a story, now lost, about a journalist, who, through a misunderstanding, is detained at the hospital. Two years later Lowry recast the story as a novella, called *The Last Address*; and in 1940 he produced yet another version, titled *Swinging the Maelstrom*. At his death he was working on a melding of these two versions, to be called *Lunar Caustic*. Lowry himself was not to complete the melding,¹ but typescripts of the two versions are extant; we find in them not two successive states of a single work so much as two distinct works which differ considerably in method and intention.

In Lowry's original conception of *The Voyage That Never Ends* as "a Dantesque trilogy", *Lunar Caustic* was to play the Purgatorio to *Under the Volcano's* Inferno. This provides a useful hint, because Purgatory is a kind of median between Heaven and Hell, a place of transition where opposites meet. Here evil is cauterized from the soul — lunar caustic itself is the painful but medically effective silver nitrate — and knowing this, the soul is ecstatic in its agony; and, although the process is a kind of death, this death is the prelude to rebirth. But modern man cannot commit himself to such a Dantesque conception of Purgatory, even as a metaphor; his faith in salvation is not strong enough. The hospital's patients, like Purgatory's sinners, are allowed no rest; but the patients' painful shuffling around the ward is no more than a mindless "marathon of the dead." The world of *Lunar Caustic* is deeply ambiguous, and is closer to hell than to heaven.

Ambiguity runs through the descriptions both of New York and the hospital itself. The city we see in the story is one in which the transitory is most in evidence. Its factories wave a farewell to life; the ships which come and go bring sometimes a suggestion of hope, but more often of hopelessness. The cry of the hospital patients is described as

... partly a cheer and partly a wailing shriek, like some cry of the imprisoned spirit of New York itself, that spirit haunting the abyss between Europe and America and which broods like futurity over the Western Ocean.

Encompassing the polarity between joy and despair, placed uneasily between the New World and the Old, New York personifies a kind of insecurity. It is a city perched on the edge of a chasm.

The hospital, which is at once a prison and an asylum, lies on the East River in the centre of this city of shifting meanings. In the two wharves before the observation ward, we are presented again with the juxtaposition of life and death, of hope and despair; on the one is the powerhouse and the hanging noose, while moored at the other are the white and blue boats "which seemed to tell as they nudged and nibbled ceaselessly at the suicidal blackness of the water, of white and blue girls in summer". Between the wharves is the wrecked barge on which, momentarily, the protagonist sees the crumpled body of a sailor; this barge, to which the boy Garry will return again and again in his stories, is the external emblem of the world of decay in which the patients live. Throughout the description of the setting, opposites coexist, but the negative elements predominate; we are made more aware of death than of life, of decay more than of any possible regeneration.

The ambivalence of the outside world is reflected in the patients and staff of the hospital. Garry, for example, is an entertaining innocent, but one who has committed a horrible crime. He is a moral paradox personified; neither guilty nor guiltless, in him the cycle of innocence — guilt — repentance — redemption is broken. He is creative, but this creativity can be seen both as an attempt to formulate a vision of reality and as an attempt to avoid coming to terms with reality. Again, we can see in Claggart a conscientious doctor who is doing his best in an almost impossible situation, and an insensitive bully who cares little for his patients.

In this world where orientation is impossible, Sigbjorn Lawhill, the protagonist of *The Last Address*, is utterly alone; his father and his son are dead, his wife has left him. As a sailor, he is related to no particular place. There is nothing,

either in terms of awareness of the past or relationships in the present, by which his personality might be defined; he is a man in a vacuum, a man without identity. *The Last Address* is an account of his attempt to find himself in relation to others; for only by caring for and helping others can he escape the limitations of his own mind. This theme is adumbrated in his cryptic shout as he enters the hospital:

"Veut-on que je disparaisse, que je plonge, à la recherche de l'anneau . . . I am sent to save my father, to find my son, to heal the eternal horror of three, to resolve the immedicable horror of opposites."

Yet Lawhill is attracted by the isolation he has to escape from; like Geoffrey Firmin, he is drawn to extinguish the self in alcoholic oblivion. The dichotomy within his own mind parallels those in the outside world.

The only way Lawhill can structure his world at the beginning of the story is through his "hysterical identification" with Melville; he integrates his experiences in the hospital by relating them to the patterns of experience which Melville works out in *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*. He associates, for example, the boy Garry with Melville's Pip, who, by losing his sanity, saw into a deeper reality; and while watching the groping hand during the puppet-show, he murmurs to himself "Leviathan". The identification with Melville serves not only as an indication of Lawhill's neurotic perception of the world, but also forms a major structural element in the story. Lawhill is associated both with the doomed Pequod and the alienated Ahab; the first quotation from *Moby Dick* which is applied to him suggests some impending disaster — "feeling that he encompassed in his stare oceans from which might be revealed that phantom destroyer of himself". Like Ahab, he has to risk destruction in order to test reality, and the destruction might be total annihilation — insanity or some irrevocable psychic death — or the necessary prelude to regeneration.

The first people Lawhill sees on waking up in the hospital are Garry and Horowitz, the spiritual father and son for whom he has been searching. They are ostensibly in the hospital because their insanity is dangerous — Garry has killed a young girl and Horowitz has threatened to kill his brother-in-law's family; nevertheless Lawhill cannot accept that they are, in any significant sense of the word, insane. He feels that Garry is a kind of unlettered Rimbaud, a boy whose obsession with the decay which permeates the world reveals a perceptive intuition which is fundamentally artistic; the stories which Claggart dismisses as normally abnormal fantasies are, to Lawhill, frightening and valid visions of

chaos. Similarly he sees Horowitz as the Wandering Jew, a man who epitomizes in himself suffering mankind, and is sympathetic to his claim that he has been institutionalized because of his Communist views.

With the companionship of these two people, Lawhill begins to take an interest in those around him. He is quickly sickened by the degradation and casual cruelty which seem an accepted part of the hospital life, and, realizing his own relative health, comes to feel that he has a responsibility to draw attention to the patients' situation. Yet at the same time, in watching the derelicts trapped in the hospital, he becomes increasingly aware of the ambiguities of existence; when he sees the old men eating, he "gradually thought he understood the meaning of death, not as a sudden dispatch of violence, but as a function of life". There can be no unity within life itself, for the unity is composed of both life and death; terror is inescapable. Opposites collapse into one another: "even Nature herself is shot through with jitteriness".

For Lawhill, insanity is often an understandable response to an insane world; the job of the physician is not to teach his patients to adapt to this world, but to give them a new awareness of themselves. With his new-found concern for others, he tries to explain to Claggart that many of the patients are being brought to a debased and servile acceptance of themselves and of the world. "Many," he argues, "who are supposed to be mad here . . . are simply people who perhaps once saw, however confusedly, the necessity for change in themselves, for *rebirth*". But Claggart, while admitting that the hospital is less than perfect, has no difficulty in discrediting Lawhill's central arguments. He sees Lawhill's complaints about the inhumanity of the hospital are merely reflecting his refusal to accept authority, and his perception of the patients' need for rebirth as no more than a projection of his own neurosis. He never admits that Lawhill's ideas have any kind of objectivity; they arise only from "his own state." When apparently talking about other patients, he is really talking about himself; in describing Garry as an unformed Rimbaud, he is merely playing out his own desire to write.

In this clash between Lawhill and Claggart, it is difficult to say that either is right or wrong. While Claggart's name, the parallels with Melville,² and the extreme distrust which leads the doctor to dismiss *Billy Budd* itself as a fabrication on Lawhill's part all suggest that truth, or at least goodness, lies with Lawhill in the shifting ambiguities set up in the episode, both are, in their own terms, men of goodwill. They simply cannot communicate; there is no way for Lawhill to express his ideas within Claggart's terms of reference, and therefore he cannot persuade him to change the situation. Under this trial he begins to validate

Claggart's analysis; he is reduced to bitter and insulting sarcasm, to fantasizing on his experience, and to challenging the doctor to a test of strength.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH Claggart represents the farthest extension of Lawhill's attempt to live in the outside world and to help those around him, and with his failure he begins to slide back into the abyss of his own self-absorption. Looking out at the city from the annexe to Claggart's office, he sees that a storm is gathering; symbolically it is the storm which threatens to engulf humanity as well as his own mind, but only the patients in the hospital, rejected by the "sane" world, are aware of its approach. As the storm breaks Lawhill feels for a moment a sense of release, of "being already outside, free to run with the wind if he wished". But the hope that regeneration will come with the storm is raised only to be immediately extinguished, for he realizes that the bars on the windows are only the external counterparts of the spiritual bars which are fixed in his own mind. This recognition of the fundamental identity between the inner world and the outer is, for Lawhill, the last twist of the knife; he is trapped not merely in the hospital or in the world, but within his own psyche, and he is himself a product of the decay which he finds at the centre of the world. Man's state is hopeless; unable to reach outside himself, he can never become complete. In despair, Lawhill sums up the immense agony of the story in a passage which draws together the East River, the grotesque ships which pass on it, and the equally grotesque minds which brood over it:

This world of the river was one where everything was uncompleted while functioning in degeneration, from which as from Garry's barge, the image of their own shattered or unformed souls was cast back at them. Yes, it was as if all complementary factors had been withdrawn from this world! Its half-darkness quivered with the anguish of separation from the real light; just as in his nightmare, the tortoise crawled in agony looking for its shell, and nails hammered held nothing together, or one-winged birds dropped exhausted across a maniacal, sunless moon.

The forces working to destroy Lawhill begin to close in. The appearance of the *Martha's Vineyard* reminds him of the trip he took with his wife to New Bedford — the place from which Melville started his whaling voyage; and he begins to see a recurring pattern emerging in the chaos of the storm. His own quest for truth or destruction began at the same place as Melville's; and now,

in the hospital, he is within sight of "the last address" at which Melville finished *Moby Dick*. Lawhill remembers that the ship which had brought him to New Bedford was, appropriately, the *Providence*; and this ship, at the height of the storm, sails past the hospital. Yet though the name of this ship, and its reappearance at this crucial moment, reinforce the idea that a pattern underlies the world's chaos, the pattern remains one of anguish. The patients, seeing the *Providence* pass, rush to the window and begin to scream, and their scream is associated with the "mechanic calamity of the rocking city".

Lawhill learns that his friendship with Garry is to be broken; he is returned to the isolation in which he began. At this moment a seaplane appears — as a roar associated with a seaplane had accompanied the groping, menacing white hand during the puppet-show — which becomes, in a terrifying fantasy, the *Moby Dick* which is to destroy him. The destruction comes in a flash of lightning, but it proves to be neither total extinction nor the shattering of the old self which is the necessary prelude to rebirth; instead he suffers a spiritual annihilation which presages his physical death. As Garry tells Claggart, "It only looks like spring." The regeneration which Lawhill had hoped for cannot come about in the world in which he finds himself; he is condemned to the life-in-death of perpetual incompleteness.

He is little changed by his stay in the hospital. When he leaves he immediately starts to drink again; and he still searches for human contact, imagining passers-by to be his relatives, or patients he had met in the hospital. As he throws his empty bottle at an obscene sketch on a lavatory wall which symbolizes for him all the obscenity in the world at large, he remembers how Garry had described the murder of the girl: "It was only a little scratch." The two acts of violence link Lawhill and Garry together, and he is forced to recognize the paradoxical duality of human nature — the coexistence of innocence with guilt, of compassion with a frightening capacity for violence — as operating within himself. Man's nature is such that he is inevitably condemned to suffer; and if patterns underlie chaos, the patterns themselves have no meaning and imply no value. Lawhill's only escape lies in embracing his isolation. At the end of the story he returns to the presexual state which Garry had never left, finding security and oblivion in retiring "to the obscurest corner of the bar, where, curled up like an embryo . . . Sigbjorn Lawhill could not be seen at all".

The Last Address is an often terrifying account of a man trying to raise himself out of the pit of self-absorption, but it is a work which leaves the reader dissatisfied. One of the reasons, I think, is that the onus of blame for Lawhill's

failure is placed largely on the world outside him. His rejection by a man as unsympathetic as Claggart constitutes an evasion of a central problem — the extent to which Lawhill is able to bring himself to accept responsibility for others. Consequently the questions we want to ask — to what extent he has chosen isolation in the past, and to what extent he is continuing to choose it in the present — can never be answered. And because we cannot determine the validity of his observations of the world around him, we can attach no value to his final non-solution.

Swinging the Maelstrom is a reworking of the situation and setting of *The Last Address*, but two crucial changes — the protagonist's failure as a jazz musician, and his relationship with the doctor — lead toward a resolution of these problems. Bill Plantagenet's failure as a musician is used in part to emphasize the fact that his isolation is the product of an inadequacy in himself; it is both a symptom of and a metaphor for his total spiritual failure. This point is made when he tries to persuade Philip, the doctor, that he is not a good piano player because his hands cannot stretch an octave. Philip replies, apparently irrelevantly, "You didn't leave Ruth because your hands couldn't stretch an octave," but he later adds, "Perhaps it was your heart you couldn't make stretch an octave".

The fact that Bill and Philip are cousins gives Bill a position of responsibility among the patients. As he develops a friendship with the boy and the old man (who is called Kalowsky in this version), he comes to feel, like Lawhill, that the hospital cannot help them. He determines to discuss their cases with Philip, and they accept him as a potential saviour. But Bill's job is harder than Lawhill's, for his cousin, unlike Claggart, is a humane and perceptive man. Philip works as well as he can in a situation which he cannot entirely control; during the puppet-show it seems to Bill that the drama

... was being diverted from its course by some sinister disposition of the puppeteer's; he sensed ... the doctor's increasing discomfort, as of a god, he thought, who discovers all over again that man is not long to be trusted with the strings of his destiny.

However, the most striking aspect of Philip's character, as contrasted with Claggart's, is his experience of horror. When Bill begins to suggest that the doctor does not understand suffering, Philip reveals a knowledge far deeper than his own; deeper because, while Bill has inflicted suffering on himself, Philip has to live with the responsibility of inflicting it on others.

In their relationship as cousins, their detachment from the patients, their joint responsibility for Garry and Kalowsky, and their knowledge of horror, Philip and Bill form a two-man community within the hospital. Despite the slight ambiguity in their relationship, marked by the "certain rebelliousness" which Philip rouses in Bill, and the long silences which occasionally punctuate their conversations, they can like and understand one another. Nevertheless, Philip is the greater person; his knowledge is wider, his insight, suffering, and humanity deeper. As a result, Bill finds himself unable to press his arguments for Garry and Kalowsky; instead he comes to accept the necessity for the apparently inhuman institution of which Philip is a part. Lawhill failed in his plea to Claggart because they could not communicate; Bill fails precisely because he can sympathize with Philip's point of view so readily.

In becoming, in effect, part of the system which is crushing the patients, Bill fails to live up to the spirit of his promise to Garry and Kalowsky. He is unable to tell them that he has implicitly condoned their treatment in the hospital, and so for the first time a false note enters into their friendship; he says little to them on returning from Philip's office, and refuses to meet Garry's eyes. As a result of his community with his cousin, he is driven to isolate himself once more. This isolation, however, is not quite what Lawhill reverts to at the end of *The Last Address*, for while Lawhill has looked at the world and decided, in effect, that nothing could be done, Bill realizes the necessity of doing something; his guilty participation in the system which has produced Garry forces him to recognize his responsibility to combat the evil around him. His phone call to a relative of one of the patients suggests his need to cast himself, in some sense, in the role of a doctor.

His release comes after he has momentarily actualized the violence within himself by throwing his bottle at the obscene sketch. In conversation with a friendly stranger, to whom he introduces himself as "Herman Melville", he mistakes the name of a passing ship; the name he hears is the *Acushnet* — the ship on which Melville made his whaling voyage. The ship turns out to be a Spanish Loyalist, engaged in conflict with the White Whale of Fascism, and although there is danger in joining her, she offers an escape from the paralyzed self-absorption which is Lawhill's only response to a world of irresolvable ambiguity. Bill is able to accept the implication that he, like Melville, must voyage, must be prepared to risk total annihilation. He is still isolated, since he has lost contact with Philip, Garry, and Kalowsky, but he has broken out of the self-destructive circuit which had trapped Lawhill, and is ready to renew his spiritual quest.

AS STUDIES IN ALIENATION, *The Last Address* and *Swinging the Maelstrom* are less compelling than Lowry's major works; they reveal neither the appalling insight into man's potential for self-destruction which we find in *Under the Volcano* and the later Mexican novels, nor the awareness of man's need to relate himself to his total environment which is a central theme in *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place*. But though imperfect, they are deeply moving, and they enable us to draw some tentative conclusions about *The Voyage That Never Ends*, which was to have been composed, as Lowry first conceived it, of the trilogy: *Under the Volcano*; *Lunar Caustic*; *In Ballast to the White Sea*.

The basic pattern of the trilogy was, as Lowry called it, "withdrawal and return". The withdrawal is from the community of mankind into a kind of hell — the hell of alcoholism, of utter isolation, of self-absorption; and this self-absorption is also self-abnegation, a complete loss of the individual sense of identity. This descent into hell is an integral part of the process of regeneration, a recognition of the powers of darkness which operate in the human psyche; but it must be followed by a re-entry into the world. The protagonist begins to relate to and identify with others, and with this identification comes the realization that he has to act. The final step is his complete involvement in the world; with action, his human potentialities, his ability to love and to create, become actual.

In *Under the Volcano*, Geoffrey Firmin has gone so far in his self-absorption that he cannot make the re-entry. We learn from the letter which Laruelle reads in the first chapter the desperation with which the Consul yearns for Yvonne's return, but when she actually appears he is utterly incapable of responding to her, either verbally or sexually. As the day wears on, he is drawn increasingly to Parian and the Farolito; when, with the discovery of the dying peasant, he is faced with the human necessity for action, he is not even tempted to play the Good Samaritan. Finally he chooses his isolation. "I love hell," he tells Hugh and Yvonne; "I can't wait to get back there." Yet in fact he has no choice, for, like Milton's Satan, he has become his own hell; his self-absorption has been carried to such an extent that his entire spiritual energy is channeled towards his own destruction.

The Last Address is an account of an attempt to make the return, but the attempt fails because the only relationships which the protagonist can enter into cannot, by their nature, survive. Bill Plantagenet, on the other hand, motivated by his kinship with his cousin and his sense of guilt toward Garry, is ultimately

able to act; he begins at last to orient himself in the outside world.

Lowry's account of *In Ballast to the White Sea* (in a letter to David Markson dated August 25, 1951) indicates that the novel reworked and extended the themes of *Lunar Caustic*. The protagonist (called A in the letter), like Lawhill and Plantagenet, is trapped in a circuit of inaction; he drinks heavily, is unable to relate in any significant way to others, and can only identify with a writer, X, who is personally unknown to him. A's identification with X does not serve to structure reality for him; it is so strong that it becomes a threat to his own identity. Obsessed by the idea that he has in some sense been written by X, A is paralyzed by his inability to find any source of value in the world.

Like Plantagenet, he is eventually able to break out of his inaction; after a period of hesitation he undertakes his voyage to the ambiguous White Sea, with the intention of trying to find X. The journey also turns into a pilgrimage to the past, for A, after being paid off from his ship, finds himself close to his mother's grave. In the churchyard he meets a girl with whom he falls in love — the setting clearly indicates the idea of rebirth — and in doing so he re-establishes contact with others. Finally the series of coincidences which leads him to X, and the correspondences between them, suggest some design in the chaos which both perceive; and this experience renews each man's faith in his creativity. The search for value is over; it is found to lie not in the individual self, but in fulfilling the self through interaction with others.

FOOTNOTES

¹ An edition of *Lunar Caustic* by Earle Birney and Margerie Lowry which combines the two earlier versions has been published in *Paris Review* 29, and by Jonathan Cape (London, 1968). Lowry's typescripts are held by the Special Collections Division of the U.B.C. Library, and are catalogued under the title *Lunar Caustic*. The latest complete text of *The Last Address* is ts. 4, while ts. 8 is the best copy of *Swinging the Maelstrom*. My quotations are taken from the Cape edition.

² Claggart is the false accuser in *Billy Budd*. The episode parallels Chapter 20 of Melville's novel: in each case the innocent and honest (Billy Budd, Lawhill, and, by extension, Garry) is accused by duplicity (the two Claggarts); the innocent is left literally or figuratively speechless, and can only express himself in violence.

MALCOLM LOWRY AND THE CINEMA

Paul G. Tiessen

LOWRY'S THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE and appreciation of cinematic technique came from his sustained, intense interest in the world of the film, a world in which he participated as viewer, critic and writer. His own words express best his ardent enthusiasm as a viewer, even while he was living outside the urban area of Vancouver:

I think I have seen nearly all the great German films, since the days of *Caligari*, some of them many times, risking my neck even when at school (where movies were forbidden) to see . . . Conrad Veidt in *The Student of Prague*, and Murnau's wonderful things, all the films of the great Ufa days, and other later masterpieces. . . and it is an enthusiasm that has not deserted me, for only recently we [Lowry and his wife Margerie] have trekked through the snow, (still risking our neck — physically on these occasions because of the ice) just to keep up with the times, to see Murnau's *Last Laugh*, Fritz Lang's *Destiny* (a pioneer piece if there ever was one) and other contemporary films and Klangfilms at the local Vancouver Film Society.¹

This exuberant reaction to the great German films had already been expressed in Chapter One of *Under the Volcano*, where M. Laruelle, a former film director, nostalgically recalling his past, reflects Lowry's personal interest in

the old days of the cinema. . . his own delayed student days, the days of the *Student of Prague*, and Wiene and Werner Krauss and Karl Gruene, the Ufa days when a defeated Germany was winning the respect of the cultured world by the pictures she was making.

The life-long relationship between Lowry and the cinema reveals itself everywhere in his work. Lowry himself was not unaware of the pervasive influence of the cinema, particularly that of Germany, upon his own work:

Nor has anything I have read influenced my own writing personally more than the first twenty minutes of Murnau's *Sonnenaufgang* or the first and the last shots of Karl Gruene's *The Street*.²

As film-writer, Lowry first spent an unhappy period of time working in Hollywood, shortly before beginning his original short-story version of *Under the Volcano* in 1936:

He worked on several movie scripts, with John [Davenport], a friend from Cambridge days and others. He was always interested in the cinema . . . but he was unhappy in Hollywood; he didn't like their methods of working, or much of their results, and he found it difficult to work in tandem with several other writers on the same script. So as soon as possible he left Hollywood and went to Mexico.³

In a comment referring to *Las Manos de Orlac*, the film which is of symbolic significance in his novel, *Under the Volcano*, Lowry's mock-praise of Hollywood's version of that movie — "a remake . . . of truly awe-inspiring badness"⁴ — wryly records his reaction to the American movie factory. However, the Hollywood experience did provide Lowry with the opportunity of becoming directly involved in the practical application of cinema technique. Later, his work — particularly his two unpublished screen scripts and his main novel — was to provide evidence of his interests in and experience with the cinema.

One of the two unpublished film scripts, "The Bravest Boat", is a delicate screen adaption of his own beautifully and sensitively woven short-story of the same title. However, his much more significant contribution to film art — "by no means an ordinary kind of script"⁵ — is his "Tender is the Night", a 455-page movie version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel. Lowry worked on this great cinema-piece in 1949 and 1950 in collaboration with his wife Margerie. Frank Taylor's assessment of the work is certainly valid. In a letter to Lowry he observed:

I have read many scripts and seen many pictures, but never before have I seen writing so purely cinematic. The impact of your work was much, much greater than that of the novel. It goes devastatingly deep, and its direct filmic evocation of life's complexities is magic and miraculous.⁶

In his arrangement of concrete visual images chosen specifically for the camera-eye, Lowry employs many devices analogous to those which he uses in his novel,

Under the Volcano. Thus, the critical commentary which Lowry interspersed throughout the massive manuscript expands the reader's understanding of Lowry's techniques not only in the film-script but also in his novel.

A few years after the publication of *Under the Volcano*, Lowry considered the possibility of doing a screen adaptation of the novel. His insistence that it be done in Germany was his greatest personal compliment to the film art of that country:

Nothing could make us happier — happy is not the word, in fact — and what an opportunity it is! — than for a film to be made of the *Volcano* in Germany, providing it were done in the best tradition of your great films.⁷

In typically buoyant letter-writing style, Lowry modestly recommends himself and his wife as writers who might be exceptionally eligible for such an undertaking:

I would myself very much wish to make a treatment of the *Volcano* for the film, and I would be very anxious to work on that and the scenario with my wife, who not only was a movie actress for years, but has collaborated on one film with me . . . and who . . . knows the *Volcano* backwards . . . : so, incidentally do I, though I say it myself, and we are a first class team, the like of which is scarcely to be found, I dare say, even in Germany or anywhere else. . . .⁸

Even though Lowry did not write the projected scenario, the cinematic idiom which he had already used in the novel would have made the problem of transposition relatively simple.

I N ANY CINEMATIC SCRIPT the role played by the concrete pictorial images is of primary concern. The camera itself is used to write the visual poetry. Other elements take their cue from the visual image. In *Under the Volcano*, to make the reader consciously aware of the primary role of visual idiom in the work, Lowry intermittently draws attention by implication or direct reference to the nature of the camera itself as a medium of perception.

During the bus-ride of Chapter Eight, for example, the bus's windows mechanically define the margins of the scene outside the bus, as if the "movement" of the countryside and the volcano is being held within the margins of a rectangular movie screen. A quick visual rhythm is created by the ominous recurrence of the changing shapes of the volcano. Long-shots alternate with close-ups:

as, descending, they circled round and round, Popocatepetl slid in and out of view continually, never appearing the same twice, now far away, then vastly near at hand, incalculably distant at one moment, at the next looming round the corner. . . .

The circular movement of the bus imitates the panning motion of a mobilized motion picture camera. The successively alternating views of the central space-object, the volcano, provides an effect analogous to that produced by film montage, in which "discontinuous" visual fragments of spatial reality are edited and juxtaposed.

As the novel proceeds and the Consul literally moves closer and closer to the threatening form of the volcano and to death, a much heavier visual rhythm is established by the insistently regular, temporal reappearance of Popocatepetl, of whose nearing presence the reader is constantly kept aware. First the volcano is reflected within the frame of Yvonne's mirror which, again mimicking movie-making apparatus, mechanically manipulates her view so that she sees only the one volcano. Popocatepetl now was "nearer, looking over her shoulder. . . . [But] however she moved the mirror she couldn't get poor Ixta in." Thus, mechanical devices preclude the visual reunion of the legendary lovers, Ixta and Popocatepetl. Some time later, as the Consul cries, "I love hell," and (rejecting life with Yvonne) flees toward death in the *barranca*, it seems as if a camera is shooting a close-up to emphasize the fact that his destruction is already upon him:

Before him the volcanoes, precipitous, seemed to have drawn nearer. They towered up over the jungle, into the lowering sky — massive interests moving up in the background.

The seething rhythm, beating out the rushing approach of inevitable death, does not cease; and several pages later another, closer shot, taken at a sharp angle, imposes itself upon the eye of the reader's imagination:

. . . the whole precipitous bulk of Popocatepetl seemed to be coming towards them . . . leaning forward over the valley.

Finally the intense visual rhythm stops. It strikes its final resounding note above the head of the Consul, who is being meagrely sustained in the end by nothing but two death-laden mescals:

Popocatepetl towered through the window, its immense flanks partly hidden by rolling thunderheads; its peak blocking the sky, it appeared almost right overhead, [the Consul] directly beneath it. Under the volcano!

The immense mass of the volcano spreads across the screen, which is here defined by the window of the bar. That a static landscape has been imbued with a sense of flux in which temporal form is given to the visual death-rhythm of the volcano is essentially cinematic. "In the cinema," it has been said, "space loses its static quality and acquires a time-charged dynamic quality. Parts of space are arranged in a temporal order and become part of a temporal structure with a temporal rhythm."⁹

The first four paragraphs of *Under the Volcano* demonstrate a method of introduction which also is analogous to a traditionally conventional camera technique in the film medium itself: the camera varies its range from long-shots to close-ups, from the universal to the intimate. Indeed, this is the method which Lowry uses in his two film scripts as well. To introduce "Tender is the Night":

The picture opens in dead silence with a tremendous shot of the night sky, the stars blazing. . . .

The camera seems to be bearing down upon us, so that the sensation we have is of receding downwards from the sky and the moon, and from this rhythm, to the earth.

The next instant the clouds become smoke coming out of a tunnel from which we see a train emerging into morning sunlight; the next we are in this train . . . with Rosemary Hoyt and her mother, watching the landscape of the French Riviera out of the window. Immediately we draw almost to a stop before a sign standing in a field. . . .

Meantime, as the camera comes closer, we see as much as is necessary . . . of the sign itself. . . :

Touriste Americaine! Vous vous approchez maintenant de la ville ancienne d'ANTIBES. . . . Everything for the American tourist at popular prices!

The cheap commercial seediness here emphasized by the final close-up contrasts with an overwhelming sense of awe inspired by the initial long-shot.

In Lowry's first paragraph of the film script, "The Bravest Boat," the relationship between the camera movement there — from long-shot to close-up — and that of *Under the Volcano* is at once self-evident:

In long shot we see the rip-teeth of the winter-white mountains across the bay; closer in, the combers riding in toward shore; and close-up, what was there all along: the single flare of a rain-drenched blossom on a flowering tree. . . .

In *Under the Volcano*, first Mexico — associated by latitude with Hawaii and India — is the subject for the camera's bird's-eye view; for in Mexico Lowry has found a visual image for the expression of universal truth. Then the camera

seems to zero in first on the whole town, Quauhnhuac, and then on the Hotel Casino de la Selva. Finally, a close-up of two men in white flannels introduces the reader particularly to M. Laruelle, the former film-producer, who will present to the reader a "re-run" of the story of death which took place one year before.

Another cinematic technique, one which the cinema may, in fact, have borrowed from literary art, is the mechanical use of typographical details which function with the same visual directness whether caught by a movie camera and reflected on a screen or whether figuratively caught by a camera and typographically reproduced on the pages of the novel. For example, the reader's visual sense is literally stimulated near the end of Chapter Eleven by the pictorial reproduction of the black hand, ominously confirming the direction of the Consul's plunge toward death. An extension of such visual, typographical detail is Lowry's use of foreign phrases or the words from posters, advertisements, post cards and newspaper headlines — always ironically informative, never thematically incongruous or artistically irritating. Speaking critically of a similar use of "signs, words, advertisements" in "Tender is the Night," Lowry says:

... all contributes to what one might call the subconscious life of the movie itself, thereby rendering it the more organic. More than that, such attention to detail, philosophically speaking, gives the film a sort of solipsistic world of its own which, if expressed in accordance with strict realism that in turn is in accordance with the actual historical facts, will inevitably increase our response to it by appealing to facets of the consciousness not usually called into play. . . . And since, finally, there have to be some signs, etc., why not, without overdoing it, some (as there are in life) significant ones?

In *Under the Volcano*, the choice of signs by the camera-eye, as it were, also provides visual landmarks which recurrently draw attention to the deep, spiritual currents of the novel.

Finally, concrete, visual images are used to create montage. Because the novel moves across a landscape of pictorial imagery which is depictable in terms of camera-perception, Lowry is provided with material to follow, at least in the figurative sense, Eisenstein's dictum: "Cinematography is, first and foremost, montage. . . . By the combination of two 'depictables' is achieved the representation of something that is graphically undepictable."¹⁰ Throughout *Under the Volcano*, Lowry's subtle combination of a multiplicity of visual images creates a complexity of montage "explosions". Because visual details which are repeatedly associated with particular characters or occurrences in the novel are

frequently juxtaposed by Lowry's camera-eye, the montage, by translating the themes of the novel into cinematic idiom, contributes to the tightly integrated structure of the novel. Deriving visual, emotional and conceptual depth from all aspects of the novel with which the visual images or image-clusters are associated, the montage in turn dynamically confers dimensions of increased significance to those parts. Frequently, for example, the conjunction of visual images exposes the tension of the emotional undercurrents which prevent real union and fellowship among the characters of the novel. The montage, in such instances, is an instrument of irony. The juxtaposed images are brought into contrast with the hypocritical, surface-dialogue which attempts to realize at least an illusion of propriety and brotherhood. For example, in Chapter Four, while the Consul sleeps, Hugh, his half-brother, who has already once betrayed the Consul by seducing Yvonne, persuades Yvonne to ride with him on horseback. As they move along, Lowry's camera-eye, selecting minute visual detail, informs the reader that "a lizard vanished into the bougainvillea growing along the road-bank, wild bougainvillea now, an overflux, followed by a second lizard." No explanation is required by the narrator. Nothing is spoken by Yvonne and Hugh. The "camera" alone, in its creation of montage while exploring the landscape, has graphically symbolized the passions beneath the decorous surface, as thoughts of adultery with Yvonne (bougainvillea) again creep into the mind of Hugh (lizard; reptile). Hugh's pictorial association with symbols of temptation and betrayal, with the "future-corruptive serpent," is graphically reinforced for the reader as "Hugh actually did ride over a garter snake." In Chapter Five, upon waking, the Consul sees his wife and Hugh standing together, and he realizes that they have met once again while he was sleeping. "Yvonne's arms were full of bougainvillea. . . ;" and the Consul shouts to her companion, "Hi there, Hugh, you old snake in the grass!" Vivid images of Yvonne, bougainvillea, Hugh and the serpent merge and explode to underline the unspoken fears and tensions lying beneath the surface of the dialogue.

Thus, Lowry selects, as the film-maker would, external objects which add dimension to the dialogue of his novel. Through the juxtapositioning of pictorial objects which, outside the context of his novel, would be emotionally "neutral," Lowry achieves a subtle means for expressing deepfelt, complex emotions. Indeed, in many instances, a rapid succession of externally depictable images provides Lowry with the best means for the surrealistic expression of the tormented inner world of the alcoholic. A vivid example of the combining of images to reveal the hallucinatory phantasmagoria of the inner world of the Consul also

affects the reader's visual imagination: "the thin shadows of isolated nails, the stains of murdered mosquitoes, the very scars and cracks of the wall, had begun to swarm, so that, wherever he looked, another insect was born, wriggling instantly toward his heart."

IN *Under the Volcano*, man has relegated the control of his own fate to the arbitrary relentlessness of inhuman forces. These forces, whether within man or external to man but created by him, come together in the image of the *máquina infernal*, the Infernal Machine. It is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Lowry's preoccupation with film technique that he uses images from the cinematic process itself — particularly the image of the motion picture reel, with its fragmented rendering of reality — to establish metaphors which will express the mechanized certainty of man's spiritual death.

The identification of the image of the motion picture reel with the image of other revolving wheels, particularly those of the Ferris wheel and the carrousel, is explicitly evident at several points in the novel. At the close of Chapter One, for example, a movie reel in a forebodingly darkened room seems to transport the reader to a passage of time which has already begun and ended exactly one year before, and of which the ending is known to be death: "in the dark tempestuous night, backwards revolved the luminous wheel." Chapters Two to Twelve, unrolling like a strip of celluloid mechanically fixed with its immutable sequence of images, mercilessly record that death. Like the frequent use of flash-backs in the novel, these eleven chapters emphasize Lowry's anxious concern with time past. Thus, like the image of the motion picture reel, the form of the novel itself is circular, Chapter One being both prologue and epilogue. Form merges with theme, then, as the pattern of inevitable death becomes tightly locked into the novel's spiral descent of soulless rotation. The mechanical circularity seems to preclude the admittance of love, trust, life. That the present cannot escape the past, that the impotence of man's present merges with the guilt of his past, is symbolically best expressed in a cinematic style where the circularity of the form, imitating the circular motion of the reel, can manipulate the overlapping and merging of time. Thus, while the novel, in Lowry's own words, must be accepted as "a prophecy, a political warning, a cryptogram, a crazy film, . . . [it also] can be thought of as a kind of machine."¹¹ The novel's rush downhill toward death unrolls with macabre and machine-like efficiency. Damnation is

the only end. The blind, brutal wheel/reel of fortune, of fate, of time catches man on its circumference merely to crush him; just as the series of images on the celluloid strip permanently determines the course of the actor's — man's, Mexico's — jerky attempts to mimic life. Quite conscious of his own destruction, but too impotent to prevent it, man feels caught in "the spoked shadow of [a] wheel, enormous, insolent. . . ."

Lowry's graphic description of another attraction found at the midway further emphasizes his central preoccupation with the mechanized, circular image of the movie reel:

The huge carrousel . . . was thronged by peculiar long-nosed wooden horses mounted on whorled pipes, dipping majestically as they revolved with a slow piston-like circulation. . . . Jacques was pointing to the pictures on the panels running entirely around the inner wheel that was set horizontally and attached to the top of the central revolving pillar.

The construction and movement of this machine are remarkably similar to those of the innumerable forerunners of the modern movie reel itself. One such machine, for example, was simply a toy,

. . . consisting of a peculiar circular receptacle on a wooden stand. . . . You could tuck inside the rim [of the receptacle] . . . a series of small pictures depicting such images as a rider and horse jumping a fence. . . . In the centre of the receptacle was a [revolving] polygon of mirror faces. . . . If you kept your eyes fixed on only one of the faces of the mirror polygon, the riders appeared to jump.¹²

This toy, called a Praxinoscope, and many similar toys depending on the rotating circle for the effect of continuous movement and flux, inflexibly reiterated a mechanically predetermined illusion of life held within the futility of circular motion.

In Chapter Seven, still a third mechanical analogue to the movie reel provides Lowry with an image for the fullest and most vivid expression of a theme which involves the tyranny of the soulless machine. Here the Consul, who is now drunk and is trying hard to avoid involvement with the begging children who surround him, escapes confrontation with reality and life by merging himself literally with the blind reeling motion of the Infernal Machine. The Consul, who has lost all inner spirit of his own, crawls into the machine and, passively gives himself up to this "huge evil spirit, screaming in its lonely hell, its limbs writhing." Crowds watch passively too: it seems as if "no one could stop the machine, . . . the monster," which has taken control of the hapless man.

Thus, "trembling in every limb under [the] weight of the past," destitute, guilty man has acquiesced to the mechanized heartlessness of the machine, the wheel, the reel; and he has the feeling of being on the edge of a "drunken madly revolving world." But even the circular image of the motion picture reel — the novel's visual point of thematic reference — is but a parody of the organic unity and perfection usually associated with the circle. For while the celluloid, looping through the projector from the reel of the motion picture apparatus, attempts to affirm organic life and movement and flux, its unrolling can portray only a succession or series of static, inanimate, inorganic, fragmented still shots or frames. Each frame is separated by a dark temporal gap, a void, an abyss, a *barranca* — a "frightful cleft," where it is "too dark to see the bottom. . . . finality indeed, and cleavage!" As the *barranca*, or ravine, rending the Mexican landscape provides a concrete, visual image of the fragmentation of the community of man, so the separation between the frames provides a metaphor for disunity within mankind. Because this metaphor is also associated with the image of the motion picture reel, it reinforces the warning already implied by that image. The isolated, static frames of the mechanized monster, which man has set in motion and to which he has acquiesced, can provide only a lifeless travesty of real life; and in such a grip, man can "wait only for the ratification of death." He can wait only for the darkness, for the *barranca* between the frames, to swallow him up when his jerky movement ceases.

Just as Lowry draws attention to the image of the motion picture reel, he emphasizes the fragmentary quality of the film's attempts to reconstruct life. He stresses particularly the darkness of the temporal gap which precludes the possibility of organic life in the film. For example, the "illuminated news aloft travelling around the Times Building, . . . snapped off into darkness, into the end of a world. . . . And everywhere, that darkness, the darkness of a world without meaning, a world without aim." In another instance, the mutual isolation of each panel in the "procession of queer pictures" which circles the great carousel emphasizes a mechanical fragmentation which apes life. Similarly, in his descriptions of a number of murals in *Under the Volcano*, Lowry stresses the disjointedness of each consecutive panel of the different murals. While the visual content of each mural brings into focus the themes of the novel, the medium itself suggests static fragmentation rather than organic life. In the *cantina* El Bosque, for example, a series of identical pictures illustrates a pack of wolves pursuing a sleigh "at intervals right round the room, though neither sleigh nor wolves budged an inch in the process." Here, not only the discontinuity between

the pictures, but also the pictures themselves provide only static illusion of movement and life. Several such murals suggest the false impression of organic movement in film, where continuity is really being disintegrated by the darkness which interrupts the illusory persistence of light. Thus the machine which controls man is merely mimicing life while driving man toward death. Mechanically reiterated flashes of light, representing only superficial efforts to achieve organic unity, parallel man's superficial efforts to maintain the forms of brotherhood without love. The montage in the following example merges the theme, the technique and the controlling metaphor of the novel: "the lights of Quauhnahuac's one cinema . . . suddenly came on, flicked off, came on again. '*No se puede vivir sin amar*'."

Unable to love, unable to accept love in a world full of social deception and mechanical guise, the Consul, in his drunken stupor, experiences more fully than all the other characters the finality and darkness and horrors of the *barranca* which keeps man lonely and alone. The metaphor of the *barranca*, while providing an analogue for the Consul's fragmented, uncontrolled perception, also points to the technique which Lowry uses. The flashback, with its dislocation of chronological time, and the camera-eye's juxtapositioning of disparate external objects to create montage, provide mechanical or stylistic parallels for the kind of incongruities which attract the Consul's attention. It seems as if a *barranca* slashes across his sense of sight to disintegrate its continuity into a "continual twitching and hopping within his field of vision," just as moments of darkness create the ultimate fragmentation of the motion picture.

Under the Volcano, then, is a coherent and integrated artistic expression of an incoherent and fragmented world. The images of the *barranca* and the wheel are of central importance. Both point to the synthesis of form and content at which Lowry arrives in the novel. There is a fusion of visual metaphor, theme, characterization and technique. The visual metaphors — wheels and *barranca* — draw much of their strength from their association with the cinematic process, in which mechanical fragmentation underlies the apparent continuity of the motion picture. In cinema technique, Lowry finds not only a method but also a metaphor to express the tormented, surrealistic world of his characters.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Malcolm Lowry, unpublished letter, October 31, 1951; addressed to Herr Clenens ten Holder, German translator of *Under the Volcano*.
- ² *Ibid.*
- ³ Margerie Lowry, "Malcolm Lowry's Life," unpublished biographical sketch.
- ⁴ Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*. Edited by Harvey Breit and Margerie Lowry (Philadelphia, 1965), 251.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 309.
- ⁶ Frank Taylor, *Selected Letters*, 441.
- ⁷ Malcolm Lowry, unpublished letters, October 31, 1951.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ Ralph Stephenson and J. R. Debrix, *The Cinema as Art* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 133.
- ¹⁰ Sergei Eisenstein. *Film Form*, in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory and The Film Sense*. Edited and translated by Jay Leyda (Cleveland and New York, 1967), 28, 30.
- ¹¹ Malcolm Lowry, "Preface to a Novel," translated from French to English by George Woodcock. *Canadian Literature*, IX (Summer, 1961). Clarisse Francillon's original French version, published in 1948, was based on a conversation with Lowry.
- ¹² Ivor Montagu. *Film World* (Harmondsworth, 1964), 18.

TWO LETTERS

Malcolm Lowry

TO ALBERT ERSKINE

DOLLARTON (1946)

Dear Mr. Erskine:

Well, every man his own Laocoon!

Concerning a letter forwarded me yesterday by Hal Matson, about your having postponed the VOLCANO I wrote you one asking you if it was still not too late to change your mind without doubtless taking fully into account that it was the amount of research I seemed calmly suggesting you do, quite apart from the number of corrections I was making myself, not to say insertions, many of which may have appeared to you quite negligible, that had been responsible for the postponement.

On top of these items I perceive clearly the paradox of Cape tying up the Canadian rights with the obligation if you bring the book out this year while your author meantime makes it quietly and maddeningly impossible for you to do this.

I did not of course make any such suggestion to Cape myself, but so far as that goes I'm writing him anyhow on the subject and I'm sure he'll waive the stipulation. I have no British agent at the present. I should have had Hal's representative act for me over there, but the insane coincidence of getting the news of the book's acceptance on the same day in two countries at once was enough to ravel any author into knots.

For myself the delay has been caused by the arrival of the MSS from Mexico, as well as by second thoughts due to my recent visit there, the awful difficulty

of getting books here, the non-existence of our own owing to the fire, and numerous other difficulties I won't go into, but which, all piling up at once at this point, make me believe in Cocteau's remark, "Truly, our books hate us."

For the rest, while I am proud of having written **UNDER THE VOLCANO**, I must confess to being slightly tremulous of it. I have not been fortunate, to say the least, in my work so far and it would distress me to think you were losing interest in it so soon after you had seemed to have such high hopes for it.

There are really no echoes etc. that I do not myself really consider to be absolutely justifiable and assimilated, *absorbed*, and I have mentioned them to you partly for my own psychological benefit and partly in case you might, somehow, disagree.

I will not now make these the subject of a separate appendix to my notes but when I come to any either coincidental or otherwise will simply mention it and the page in question, since I feel you should know of their existence.

Enclosed are notes to IV. There is nothing in V to speak of save the Jardin problem, already solved, nothing in VI I can see now save the German to be verified, nothing in VII save a little Spanish and the garden again, in VIII little, IX nothing at all unless you consider something, in X I'll try to cut somewhat, and nothing to speak of in XI or XII.

This may still, I am aware, leave too much for you to do to get it out by October, but I hate to let you down, if that is what I seem to be doing, and am willing and ready to cooperate wherever and however I can. In either case, would you give me a deadline? I seem to remember there is one on the contract but I have no copy of it.

Chapter V

p. 128. Significance of "interlube" has passed from my mind. But it might have something to do with the London Daily Herald or the United Press, if that matters. Cable is based on real one and used by permission of the reporter who sent it I having sat in at the concoction thereof. Cable was, until lately, in my possession.

p. 129. For Bill H — substitute Bill Hod.

p. 130. in brackets "for he was secretly enormously etc." please cut the for.

p. 134. After sentence beginning: Unconsciously he had been watching her, please place comma after "arms", cut "against" and place another comma after "slacks."

p. 137. typographical error: emanate.

p. 138. Man with a dog named Harpo, is partly old pal of mine, John "Volun-

teer in Spain" Summerfield, who survived after all. De Quincey incident mentioned in *Volunteer in Spain*, likewise in letter to me at that time. I don't see how anyone could be hurt, least of all John, who painted a wild portrait of me in his novel, *The Last Week End* (not to be confused with *Lost*) published in London. De Quincey comes in also because of Mr. Quincey and the knocking at the gate bit in V.

p. 140. In the middle I would have cut Yvonne's dialogue at "saying that you wanted —" and have Hugh interrupt at that point without any "Hugh answered" It remains as it is as a concession to the reader.

p. 143. "You've got your cattle again I see," Yvonne said in a bracket. It is a technical echo of something in Faulkner's *Wild Palms*, I think in a similar bracket, "There's your horse again," she said, or something. The trouble about acknowledging such a thing, it embarrasses the embarrassee yet somewhere else.

p. 144. top. In Yvonne's dialogue, please insert the word "together" between ridden and before.

p. 145. Please verify Spanish at top. I think it's O.K.

ibid. At the end of the first long paragraph, after shadow his brother everywhere, please cut dots.

147. Ejido. Please verify. I'm pretty certain it's right.

p. 150. Las Manos de Orlac.

p. 152. This Judas passage was written before I had read Dorothy Wellesley's poem in Yeats Oxford book of Modern Verse, where she likewise speaks of Judas having a hangover. Any resemblance is purely coincidental.

p.154. In bottom paragraph semicolon after machinery was intentional but if you changed it to a comma that's O.K. by me.

p. 163. *Buy* one, please give this a question mark

p. 164. Please change Bab-el-Mandeb to Arabian Sea.

p. 171. ditto.

(UNSIGNED)¹

TO DAVID MARKSON

DOLLARTON, BRITISH COLUMBIA

CANADA, JUNE 20, 1951.

(OWING TO MORE "AUXILIARY CIRCUMSTANCES")

Dear David Markson:

I thank you sincerely for your letter, the remarks therein, and the honour you do me.

As I said the least I can do is to see if I can lighten at all such a formidable chore for you in a hot summer, especially since my name means "servant of Colomb" and we have two Columbias in the address² not to mention a selva, if not oscura, while we literally do live in a forest, or rather at the edge of one.

Moreover just as I received your letter I too seemed to have been reading a bit of Faulkner hotly pursued by Djuna Barnes, Dante, Joyce, etc., and feeling frightened by *my* limitations — incidentally, if I may say so in a tone of complete joviality and politeness you made a wonderful type error, unless it was done on purpose at this point: you said "frightened." Now I only remark this because having begun this letter in pencil I went on to use it to introduce my apology, viz, that our typewriter was then lying at a garage having its inner workings cleansed by an aeolian instrument for blowing up tires: so, writing as I do now in pencil I did not lay myself open to such type-errors — if I do now, all I can say is, may they be as good as that one of yours! For you said a mouthful. If your vocation is to be a novelist you certainly couldn't do better — in my sincere if by no means new opinion — than to be "frightened" rather than "frightened" by the said limitations: one should (upon the "frighter" or life) take them to Palembang with one and deliver them in good order as may be — after all they can be among the most valuable cargo one has, those limitations! Though I don't mean quite to say as Melville somewhere marvellously puts it — one should "never wait for fair weather, which never was on land or sea, but dash with all one's derangements at one's object, leaving the rest to fortune." Not quite; very unsound advice: though it may be very necessary at times.

But this is not answering any of your questions. Re those, I think the most helpful thing I can do at the moment is to send you — it will go off by the same post as this letter — a copy of the French translation of *Under the Volcano* which contains a preface written by myself, as also a postface written by someone else, so many faces indeed that instead of being much help they probably

serve to the contrary as so many masks over the material. This preface was written in Haiti — or going there — and was originally intended for the British edition.³ (You will note that I received news of the acceptance of the *Volcano* from England and America, upon the same day, delivered by a *character* in the *Volcano*, and in a house that figures in the *Volcano*, in Mexico itself, where ten years after I'd begun the book we went back on a short visit — the original of Laurelle's house I'd never set foot in before, was now turned into apartments: the very tower described in the *Volcano* was the only place we could find to live — this sort of thing — a sort of Under Under the *Volcano* or fantasia of the Law of Series or the History of Peter Rabbit's imagination — E. M. Forster says someone should write the history of someone's imagination — is roughly the theme of what I'm working on now and one day hope to complete — I had some setbacks as you will see — who doesn't?)

In this preface also I go on about the Kabbala in a way that is — in this case — quite misleading and probably not a little juvenile, and which was no doubt suggested by the magnificently abyssal and heavenly motions of one of your bauxite freighters on which the preface was written, rather than in strict fact. Moreover we had probably been drinking rum with the skipper, not to say listening to the voodoo drums battering and tambouring and otherwise generkrupaering along that inlet when you begin to sail into that Heart of Lightness and Tightness and Barbancourt and Cinc Etoiles. It is true that the Kabbala played a part, though scarcely anterior to the fact of writing the book; I mean I didn't group it *consciously* around any of the correspondences within that un-resting and dynamic filing cabinet-cum-tree of knowledge. But that I ran into a Kaballist at a critical and coincidental moment in the writing of the book: that is true, right in this forest also. But apart from that my remarks here — though not the other remarks I have cited — can be taken about on a par with Sgnanarelle's Latin:

Sgnanarelle (assuming various comic attitudes) Cabricias arcu thuram, catalamus, singulariter, nominativo, haec musa, the muse, bonus bona bonum Deus sanctus, este oratio latinas? Etiam, Yes. Quare? Why.

Geronte: Ah! Why did I not study?

Jacqueline: What a clever man!

It might have been more honestly to the point if I'd mentioned the influence of Bismarck — to wit Bix Beiderbecke — especially a break in Singing the Blues in an old Frankie Trumbauer record, in that preface — but it appears I like to be thought erudite: the truth is other; I have the kind of mind that is some-

times politely called archaic, it is true, but not in the sense that it is on really fraternal terms with the scholastics and mediaeval philosophy.

Subjective, stream of consciousness, multi-leveled and symbolic. Yes indeed, but this is too symbolic, multi-leveled, conscious and subjective a matter for me to speak about in a short letter in a way which would be much use to you.

Joyce, Dante, Djuna Barnes, Faulkner. Of these I'm not really qualified to speak either, though I'll try and reply to anything, should you ask me any specific questions. I think there are certain writers who in youth tend to react against anything like a ready-made tradition, or the suspicion that teachers or another poet taught may be foisting a tradition upon one for reasons of their own; thereafter they approach these recommended writers tentatively, preferably when they have fallen into more disrepute. Meantime the writers the writer feels *he* has discovered for himself remain the more valuable. I know that's more or less true of me.

Re Joyce and Djuna Barnes I find myself ungratefully inclining a bit to Leavis' distaff view on *The Great Tradition* (even though he is trying to impose a tradition and is dealing with the English tradition of novelists. But this is a valuable book if only it encourages you to read George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.) I've never grappled with the whole plan of Faulkner yet, though I mean to. I didn't realise for myself what a tremendous writer he was at his best until fairly recently. (Dante's still a bit too famous for me, though you caught me reading him on the sly, when your letter arrived.)

Ultramarine is very fortunately out of print (was never really printed as it was meant to be) and is an absolute flop and abortion and of no interest to you unless you want to hurt my feelings. As my brother said to me recently when I mildly suggested to him that the British Government owed me some cash — "Don't even speak of it to me!" However I mean to rewrite it — or rather to write it — one day. A later work, *Lunar Caustic* — not published yet in America because I wanted to rewrite it but I believe to be published in France as it stands — is maybe of more interest; anyway I think it's good. Unfortunately I haven't got a spare copy to send you, but maybe I can tell you what you want to know about it. You'll find some mention of the general plan in the French preface which fundamentally has not been abandoned.

My wife — who is American — wrote a grand book called *Horse in the Sky* which was very unfairly neglected and should cognately interest you — we swop horses and archtypes with each other all the time. She has just finished another much better book even than this, which I certainly feel you will hear of.

TWO LETTERS

I also have had the great privilege of being one of Conrad Aiken's oldest friends. Him I have known since my teens and the good old days of bathtub gin and the best and most helpful of fellows he is.

I am reading at the moment *The Road to Damascus* by Strindberg . . . By the well a large tortoise. On right, entrance below to a wine cellar. An icechest and dust bin. The doctor enters from the verandah with a telegram playing a long range ukulele, etc. . . .

We live an extremely sunfilled and seay life between the beach — and I mean the beach — and the forest here and if you're ever in these parts I hope you'll look us up and have a drink and some sun with us.

With kindest regards and the best of luck,

MALCOLM LOWRY

P.S. Of course send along any of your MSS you wish to and I'll make any helpful comments I can.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Margerie Lowry comments: "I can only suppose that since he went directly from the letter into the notes and comments he must have thought he'd signed the letter and he didn't. I can't think of any other reason."

² At this time David Markson was attending Columbia University.

³ There is a mystery here. No English version by Lowry of this preface appears to have survived, and in 1960, when *Canadian Literature* approached the French translator of *Under the Volcano*, Clarisse Françillon, she stated that she had not prepared the French version from a written English text by Lowry, but had written it directly in French after he had told her orally what he wanted to be said. The only known English version of the preface is in fact the translation by George Woodcock from Clarisse Françillon's French version which appeared in *Canadian Literature* No. 9.

SWINGING THE MAELSTROM

Malcolm Lowry and Jazz

Perle Epstein

WHEN DURING THE COURSE of treatment a psychiatrist asked Malcolm Lowry to free associate “anything that comes into your head that begin with *B*”, Lowry instantly replied, “Bix Beiderbecke.” For some reason the psychiatrist would not accept this answer; if he had, he would have learned a great deal about his patient in a short time. Had the therapist been a jazz fan himself, he would have known that Beiderbecke, one of Lowry’s lifetime idols, played a brilliant trumpet and died an alcoholic at age twenty-eight. One short step, and he would have understood that in many ways Bix was to jazz what Lowry was to literature: an American counterpart, in fact, only a year older (Bix was born in 1903, Lowry in 1904), a restless student with a middle-class upbringing, an alcoholic, a rebellious adolescent who left home to pursue an unconventional career, a musician/nomad who was forever dissatisfied with his work. Both young men had a propensity for seeking out father figures in their respective fields: Bix found his mentor in Frank Trumbauer, a saxophone player who took the young trumpeter under his wing, developed the young man’s talent, and improved his technique; Lowry’s “literary father” was Conrad Aiken, who — as it is by now well known — sheltered, fed, and unstintingly assisted the budding novelist.

Beiderbecke, the archetype for *Young Man With a Horn*, was an extremely intelligent musician, a man familiar with literature who, after dipping into a musical career at about the same age Lowry set out to sea, attempted to return to college, but whose restless inability to cope with regulations and routine, drove

him away eighteen days after enrolling; here the young English amateur jazz musician fared better (even during the darkest hours of his life, Lowry somehow managed to draw Herculean draughts of discipline from some underground source) for he emerged from an unhappy stay at Cambridge with his classical tripos, armed and ready to write. Like Lowry too, it was at this age that Bix took up the drinking that was eventually to kill him.

Had the psychiatrist allowed his patient to free associate further, he might have learned that Lowry was an avid jazz fan as a youth at Cambridge, that he played the ukelele — or, as he called it, “taropatch” — described by Margerie Lowry as: “a long-range uke with more strings and frets, and that’s what he played in later years though he started with a regular small ukelele”, that he composed songs and worshipped Eddie Lang, a virtuoso jazz guitarist who, with his lifelong friend, violinist Joe Venuti, played with Beiderbecke and Trumbauer in the late twenties and early thirties. Lowry loved this essentially “white” sound of the classically trained jazzmen of the period — the controlled, formal tone of Bix Beiderbecke and the brilliant, driving rhythm of Lang. During the last few years of his life, however, Lowry’s love for jazz abated; he decided to “leave it to the young” and turned his interest to classical music instead. But music, and especially jazz music, the psychiatrist would have learned had he proceeded further, had been one of the great loves of Lowry’s life. A friend during the Cambridge days, Dr. Ralph Case, recalls:

His sense of rhythm and phrasing was impeccable — he had that subtle something which every true jazz fan instantly recognizes. . . . Where jazz was concerned, his taste was, in my view, impeccable. . . . I would say that Bix was Malcolm’s chief love among jazz musicians of the time . . . Closely linked with Bix, of course, was Frankie Trumbauer . . . ‘Clarinet Marmalade’, ‘Singin’ the Blues’, ‘Ostrich Walk’, ‘Way Down Yonder in New Orleans’, ‘River Boat Shuffle’, . . . all of these were like manna from heaven to Malcolm . . .

Lowry also favoured another all-white jazz group, The Memphis Five (active between 1923 and 1928) in their recordings of “Lovey Lee”, “How Come You Do Me Like You Do?”, “Beale Street Blues”; and later, a group of Toscanini’s symphony musicians who called themselves The New Friends of Rhythm, and their recording of “Bach Bay Blues.”

Dr. Case continues:

. . . his [taste] was unerring in picking out the gold from the dross — he had no time for corny or pretentious numbers . . .

And Gerald Noxon, writing in the Lowry issue of *Prairie Schooner*, says:

[Lowry] was passionately fond of jazz...I had a phonograph; a small but respectable collection of jazz records...mostly blues, for which Malcolm and I shared a particular fondness.

According to prominent jazz critic Marshall Stearns, jazz is associated with protest and rebellion and identification with the underdog. Bix and his fellow white, Midwestern musicians "...sacrificed ease and relaxation for tension and drive.... They had read some of the literature of the twenties...and their revolt against their own middle-class background tended to be conscious." Across the Atlantic, the young Lowry, engaged in similar turmoil, set to writing as Bix had turned to his music. *Ultramarine*, what later became *Lunar Caustic*, *Under the Volcano*, "Elephant and Colosseum", all feature the protagonist's identification with the dispossessed, the "philosophers", the "poor in spirit," the gentle animals, the *borrachos*, and the peons who bear the entire burden of civilization on their backs. Love of jazz was really another facet of Lowry's romanticism which extended later to his fondness for the simple lives of the Manx fishermen, their unsentimental faith, and their hymns. "But I was attached romantically to those days," says the musician-hero, recalling "Prohibition" and the "Jazz Age", in "The Forest Path to the Spring." For the older man jazz came to represent youth itself. So much for the psychological value of free association.

AS A WRITER, Lowry often attempted to put prose to work as music. In fact, he compared his novel to "a kind of symphony... a kind of opera... hot music... a song", and referred continuously to "chords being resolved", "contrapuntal dialogue", and the like. One chapter, he says, "closes with a dying fall, like the end of some guitar piece of Ed Lang's..." And, "the best kind of novel" — he confides to friend James Stern — is that which is "bald and winnowed, like Sibelius, and that makes an odd but splendid din, like Bix Beiderbecke." So that when he told his wife that "the early records had tremendous influence on his style of writing," he apparently knew what he was about. Only the slightest familiarity with music is necessary to see that his works are shot through with such purely musical techniques as reiterated refrain, aria, and the particular influence of Debussy on the alliterative, rhythmic, and onomopoeic effects used to describe nature, the sea, wilderness. From the earliest

writing on there is a consistent identification between music, sound, and word. In *Ultramarine*, for example, "...down in the engine room three submarine notes floated up and were followed by the jangling of the telegraph, while the engine changed key." Bells on a ship's bridge — "*tin-tin: tin-tin*" — recall the memory of goat bells, "tinkle tonkle tankle tunk", and pure young love, which is soon to be pitted against the lure of sin at a port whose name itself is musically related to the young hero's thoughts: "Tsang-Tsang." Memory, love, fear — all are associated with sounds, the creaking music of the ship's winches, the bells, the engines, a violin's notes blown in the wind from another ship docked nearby. And since Lowry's writing was all so closely autobiographical, the young sailor hero of *Ultramarine*, not surprisingly, plays the "taropatch".

Music has its demonic aspects: the young boy's first encounter with a prostitute is accompanied by a jazz number ironically entitled "Dead Man Blues", for Dana Hilliot/Malcolm Lowry was then virtually obsessed with the fear of death by venereal disease.

Over and over again we find countless references to jazz — even tiny "inside" favours to jazz fans are interspersed throughout; tidbits like "Trumbaugh: named after Trumbauer — Frankie. Beiderbecke, et al." in "Through the Panama," or the nickname for his hero's wife in "Elephant and Colosseum": "Lovey (her nickname came from Lovey Lee, an old recording by the Memphis Five)", or in "The Forest Path to the Spring": "One evening on the way back from the spring for some reason I suddenly thought of a break by Bix in Frankie Trumbauer's record of Singin' the Blues that had always seemed to me to express a moment of the most pure spontaneous happiness . . ."¹

And so it goes in story after story, novels, manuscripts for future stories and novels — innumerable allusions to jazz which finally culminate in a discernible pattern wherein the chaos and despair in the minds of Lowry's protagonists suddenly merge into order during a brief moment of illumination and joy. Like the pattern of Dixieland music itself, each story in *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* begins slowly, almost mournfully, and builds in its sorrow until it seems almost too much to bear — then just as suddenly, it explodes in a climax of joy and hopefulness. This stylistic signature is best illustrated in its earliest and therefore its crudest form at the end of *Ultramarine*, Lowry's first novel:

And all at once the maelstrom of noise, of tangled motion, of shining steel in his mind was succeeded by a clear perception of the meaning of the pitiless regularity of those moving bars; the jiggering levers began to keep time to a queer

tune Hilliot had unconsciously fitted to their chanting, and he saw that at last the interdependence of rod grasping rod, of shooting straight line seizing curved arms . . . had become related to his own meaning and his own struggles. At last there dawned upon him a reason for his voyage . . .

Here in the young boy's soliloquy of reconciliation to the sea is the embryo of the dying Consul's — albeit illusory — "vision" of the perfect pattern of existence at the close of *Under the Volcano*, also rendered largely in musical terms.

Mozart was it? The Siciliana . . . No, it was something funereal, of Gluck's perhaps, from *Alceste*. Yet there was a Bach-like quality to it. Bach? A clavichord, heard from far away, in England in the seventeenth century. England. The chords of a guitar too, half lost, mingled with the distant clamour of a waterfall and what sounded like the cries of love.

Lowry peppered his works with references to Beiderbecke, Lang, Venuti and others, utilizing his expert knowledge of their musician's style to create metaphors, moods, even at times structuring his own stories within their formal influence. If the reader happened to be unfamiliar with analogies comparing a beautiful day to a Joe Venuti record (*Under the Volcano*) or a newsboy's cry to a piece of jazz mounting towards a break ("The Bravest Boat") so much the worse for that reader. This was part of Lowry's vocabulary (as were many other far more esoteric subjects like occultism, Indian legend, and the Blakean excesses of drink) so that "... to anyone who knew Malcolm intimately, it was inevitable that jazz should be tied with, indeed a part of his literary output" (Dr. Case).

Three of Lowry's literary hero-mouthpieces are in fact jazz musicians: the nameless narrator of "Forest Path", Bill Plantagenet of *Lunar Caustic*, and the Consul's half brother/alter ego, Hugh in *Under the Volcano*. Inevitably, some working knowledge of Lowry's jazz background is necessary in order to understand these characters, the conflicts presented and, in the case of *Under the Volcano*, the structure of the plot itself. "The Forest Path to the Spring" concerns a jazz musician who has given up the debilitating night life of the clubs for the wholesome life in nature — in other words, has exchanged death for life.

Before I had married, and after I left the sea, I had been a jazz musician, but my health had been ruined by late hours and one-night stands all over the hemisphere. Now I had given up this life for the sake of our marriage and was making a new one — a hard thing for a jazz musician when he loves jazz as much as I.

With the help of his old colleagues, the narrator obtains a piano and is thus able to earn a small living by composing and titling jazz tunes. Things go well for a time; the narrator learns how to cope with the rough ways of the wilderness — specifically, the fetching of water for the cottage from the source of a spring, which requires a rather long walk through the forest. Like other Lowry heroes, the narrator falls gradually into a state of despair, undergoes a dark night of the soul (embodied in the absolute loathing he conceives for his water-carrying task) and is very suddenly bolted by a recollection of a Bix Beiderbecke solo into a “moment of the most pure spontaneous happiness” and the desire “to do something good.” Goodness is synonymous with creation and the very Protestant emphasis on work, as evil is associated with torpor and neglect; so that our jazzman determines now to write “a symphony in which I would incorporate among other things . . . the true feeling and rhythm of jazz. . . . The theme was suggested probably by my thoughts of *cleansing* and *purgation* and *renewal*.” (*Italics mine*). Here the power of music assumes religious overtones, when the very core of suffering (in this case the initial abandonment of the so-called “jazz life”, and its resumption under entirely new circumstances) becomes a force for regeneration. Lowry was constantly placing his characters in hell so that they might reach heaven: compare Bix himself and countless other jazz musicians who were both exalted and destroyed by their work.

The hero of *Lunar Caustic* is not only a jazz musician but an alcoholic as well. As if things weren’t bad enough, Bill Plantagenet is unemployed, an alien adrift in New York, and hallucinating. The breakup of his band in England is consonant symbolically with the breakup of his marriage and of his total personality. The inability to play, that is to work as a musician, is tantamount to disintegration.

“Bill Plantagenet and his Seven Hot Cantabs . . .” he introduces himself to the psychiatrist at Bellevue, where he has voluntarily committed himself, “We went a treat in Cambridge . . . we were all right with our first records, too, we took that seriously. . . . You know you people get sentimental over England from time to time. . . . Well, this was the other way round. Only it was Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti and the death of Bix . . .” that presumably brought this Englishman to America in the hope of patching up the pieces of his own life. But even here in the madhouse he is rejected by the only people who can understand his music: a Negro patient named Battle is infuriated when Bill sits down to play the piano. “Something in the rhythm of his [Battle’s] blood, it seemed, did not like Bill’s music; not because it was alien music, it was precisely because it

sounded too cognate that he would not conform to it." Bill's one attempt to communicate results in what was known in jazz parlance as a *cutting contest*, where two musicians "battle it out" for first place. Bill plays "In a Mist" and "Singin' the Blues." "He played Frankie Trumbauer's old version fast." The tension builds as the appropriately named Battle sets up a counter song about the sinking of the *Titanic*, and a discussion about black versus white whales ensues among the patients.

"Glancing at Battle for approval", Bill launches into "Clarinet Marmalade" — only to be eyed "stonily" by the Negro. " 'Say listen,' Battle demanded, 'let's have some truckin' — don't you know any truckin' . . . ' " (i.e. backing up a soloist on the piano.) Suddenly Bill is pushed from the piano by a "mental defective" who somehow manages to bring all the patients, even the truculent Battle, together in a symphony of discord. Symbolically defeated, the lonely alcoholic Englishman is soon after dismissed from the hospital as an alien. His moment of self recognition comes when, once again down and out on the street, it suddenly becomes clear that two pathetic creatures left behind, a senile old man and an angel-faced schizophrenic boy, are his only friends in the world. His music rejected even by the insane, Plantagenet stumbles out drunk and ironically "free," into the streets of the city.

In contrast to "The Forest Path to the Spring", jazz in this novella is used to depict the lonely distintegration of an unsuccessful artist and — by extension — the isolation of all men. *Lunar Caustic* is perhaps the closest Lowry came to presenting a written tribute to the tragedy of Bix Beiderbecke's life and his own.

IT IS GENERALLY AGREED that Hugh and the Consul are fictionalized versions of the young and older Malcolm Lowry. In fact Hugh's musical shenanigans, the Bolowski music publishing fiasco, and the songwriting, are thinly veiled autobiography stemming from a period during his Cambridge career when, according to Dr. Case, Lowry and a friend named Ronnie Hill "wrote a number called 'I've Said Good-bye to Shanghai' which was actually printed but was never sold. . . . I think, though I am not sure, that Malcolm and Ronnie did pay for the printing or 'publishing'."

Biographically interesting details such as these can only furnish half the story behind so brilliant a novel as *Under the Volcano*. Still more fascinating, however, is the way in which such a complex novel was put together. Each time I

read it I found some new skein to trace. In my book on Lowry and the Cabbala I pointed out that the construction of *Volcano* with its twelve chapters is based to some extent on the Zohar with its emphasis on the mystical number twelve. Here I would like to note that the blues form in jazz is also based on a twelve-bar construction. Being a connoisseur of blues and an amateur song writer himself, Lowry could really have meant it when he referred to his book as a jazz tune. Introduced in the slow blues manner, the first chapter of the novel is devoted to a lament for the dead — the Mexican souls abroad on the Day of the Dead, and more specifically, a lament for the dead Consul. To remind us in the old manner of the Negro mourners in New Orleans, Lowry has Laruelle hear “a despondent American tune, the ‘St. Louis Blues,’ or some such . . .” This first chapter states the “blues” or tragic theme of the novel as the Dixieland musicians playing a mournful tune on their way to a funeral state the theme of death. Dr. Vigil and Laruelle provide the chorus (they are choral in the classical Greek sense, too) and the rest of the novel unfolds as a series of variations and explanations of their commentary.

Geoffrey's, Yvonne's, and Hugh's individual “stories”, their points of view, might be compared with the improvisations of soloists, but the theme is resolved, in the final chapter, on the same note that ends the first chapter: *dolente, dolore* — the ringing of the bell for the souls of the dead.

Under the Volcano is in many ways a catalogue of human suffering, much as the blues are. The harmony in the novel is provided, however, not by the crude stringing of guitars (although fictional guitar stringing occurs consistently throughout) but by stream of consciousness techniques and by the imposed contingencies of the outer world on the mind: Peter Lorre cinema posters, overheard snatches of conversation in a bar, recurring advertisements for sporting events, etc. The final chapter of the novel is the closest possible literary version of a complicated harmonic piece of jazz music (Malcolm used to play one of his songs on the piano in “the advanced and improbable key of six flats!”, says Dr. Case) that drives to a terrifically charged “hot” finish. Lowry also had the musician's knack for establishing a theme — for example, the bull throwing at Tomalin — very early through Geoffrey's eyes, say, and then picking it up again from Yvonne's point of view. This is similar also to the jazz soloist's variation on a melody; with the Consul playing lead trumpet throughout, Hugh, Yvonne, and Laruelle function as “sidemen” who act and react to his signals.

The older jazz form concentrates on statement of the chorus, solo improvisation, and often a kind of counterpoint that occurs between two instruments, the

clarinet and trumpet perhaps; these instruments will "talk" to each other or sometimes against each other after the solos, building up toward the final chorus when all the musicians play ensemble. This is neatly accomplished by Lowry in chapters ten, eleven, and twelve, which culminate in the frenetic climax of the novel. In chapter ten the competing "instruments" are Hugh and Geoffrey locked in an argument ostensibly about Communism. Hugh is trying to explain why he believes in it while Geoffrey tries to describe his own drunkard's plight.

"See here, Geoffrey —"

"See here, old bean . . . to have against you Franco, or Hitler is one thing, but to have Actinium, Argon, Beryllium, Dysprosium" etc., etc.

"Look here, Geoff —"

"Ruthenium, Samarium, Silicon," etc., etc.

"See here —" etc., etc.

The musical nature of this "cutting contest" strikes one immediately with Hugh's "Look here" and "See here" punctuating in short blasts Geoffrey's long, rhythmic enumeration of the elements. The Consul is "playing" hot and fast; even Cervantes, the cafe owner, joins in with the traditional pattern of *call and response* that underlies all jazz forms.

"Cervantes . . . you are Oaxaqueñan?"

"No, señor . . . I am Tlaxcalan, Tlaxcala?"

"You are . . . Well, hombre, and are there not stricken in years trees in Tlaxcala?"

"Sí, sí, hombre. Stricken in years trees. Many trees."

Suddenly a man with a guitar appears and begins to play. Geoffrey, who has not finished his solo, says: "Tell him to go away . . ." And then, as if to confirm the underlying musical foundation of the scene, the Consul actually "sees" his performance in terms of:

. . . a piece on the piano, it was like that little bit in seven flats on the black keys . . . like that little piece one had learned, so laboriously, years ago, only to forget whenever one particularly wanted to play it, until one day one got drunk in such a way that one's fingers themselves recalled the combination and, miraculously, perfectly, unlocked the wealth of melody . . .

The theme of the final chapter opens on discord: a mixture of "*I'm just a country b-boy*", drunken references to Mozart, the imagined plaintive cries of Yvonne through her letters, a fiddler playing "The Star Spangled Banner", "It's a Long Way to Tipperary", builds to a simulated resolution in order when the Consul "hears" Bach as his life ebbs away, and finally ends in a very literal dying fall (cf. Ed. Lang's guitar) as Geoffrey is flung down into the ravine.

Corroborating these musical intentions in his *Letters*, Lowry sums up by saying: "Is it too much to say that all these chords, struck and resolved, while no reader can possibly apprehend them on first or even fourth reading consciously, nevertheless vastly contribute *unconsciously* to the final weight of the book?"

Since jazz is not at all intended to be "weighty", yet is nonetheless both gay and tragic at once, and since the same can be said of Malcolm Lowry, I will close with a humorous musical anecdote. It was a warm summer night in Dollarton. Malcolm and Margerie Lowry were seated on the platform of their shack that led to the water; they were feeling fine after a few drinks, and were enjoying the lovely night. Malcolm began to play hot jazz on his taropatch, then he started dancing to his own music, which grew hotter and hotter, until he "finally danced right bang off the end of the pier and into the water, uke and all."³

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ "In fact this solo is usually considered one of the three most celebrated solos in jazz history. . . . It is a solo of intense, brooding beauty, carefully built up to a typical tumbling break in the middle with a surprise explosion after it. There was hardly a contemporary white musician of jazz pretensions who didn't learn it by heart." George Avakian, Liner Notes on *Bix Beiderbecke Story*, Vol. II, Columbia Records.
- ² "He said many many years ago . . . that Bach was the background for all classical jazz." (Margerie Lowry)
- ³ I am indebted for this anecdote to my friend Margerie Lowry, to whom I express my general gratitude for her help in gathering information for this article; I express my gratitude also to Dr. Ralph Case of London for his full and generously transmitted recollections of Malcolm Lowry's "jazz days".

LITERARY WORLDS AND THEIR DENIZENS

George Woodcock

JOHN GLASSCO, *Memoirs of Montparnasse*. Oxford, \$6.50.

LOVAT DICKSON, *H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times*. Macmillan, \$10.00.

LEON EDEL, *Henry James. The Treacherous Years: 1895-1901*. Lippincott, \$10.00.

D. E. S. MAXWELL, *Poets of the Thirties*. General Publishing, \$9.00.

Fin de Siècle. Edited by C. J. Dixon. Clarke Irwin. \$6.00.

MOST LITERARY WORLDS are small places, rather as classic Athens was, however grand they may seem in history. It is not really surprising that Leon Edel, the author of one of the books I am reviewing, should write the introduction to another of them, by John Glassco, and should be extensively mentioned in a third, by Lovat Dickson. Of course, we are dealing with the Canadian literary world which, despite its vast distances, is probably smaller and closer than most, but John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, the story of a young man's brief interlude in the Paris of the Twenties (when it was a real *ville lumière*) reminds one within what limited circles of shared interests even English and American writers have always moved.

Memoirs of Montparnasse is a strange projection out of time, an event in kind rather like the long-delayed publication by Robert Bridges of the poems of Hopkins, except that in this case the discoverer who reveals this long concealed

work to the world is the author himself, grown thirty-five years older than the youth who actually wrote it, mostly when he was sitting in a hospital bed and half-expecting an early death in the early Thirties. "This young man is no longer myself; I hardly recognize him..."

In 1928, eighteen years old, John Glassco set off with his friend Graeme Taylor to find the earthly paradise of Montparnasse. Whether it was the precocity of his own talent, or the peculiar intensity of the life that he, like so many others, lived at that time and in that place, John Glassco wrote then and has resurrected now a remarkably appealing account of what it was to be young in that magical and departed Paris of the Third Republic, the Paris which was — until the internal combustion engine and puritans like Madame Richard destroyed it — still recognizably the city of Verlaine and Baudelaire; in parts, even, the city of Balzac.

It was not merely a setting of inexpen-

sive romance that Paris gave to John Glassco and others like him. It was the sense of a living literary world, and the opportunity to meet — gathered as they have never gathered since — so many of the great writers and the great failures of the early twentieth century. Wilde once said to boasting Frank Harris (who incidentally makes a faltering and aged appearance in these pages), "My dear Frank, we know you have been in all the best houses of London — once." One could also say that John Glassco met all the grand figures of that time — once. But once can be enough if the eye is sharp and the memory clear, and the encounters which decorate *Memoirs of Montparnasse* — encounters with George Moore and James Joyce and Hemingway ("his eyes were curiously small, shrewd and reticent, like a politician's"), with Gertrude Stein ("a rhomboidal woman") and Ford Madox Ford and André Breton and . . . and . . . — are described not only with a real visual evocativeness, but also with a twist to the visual that opens windows for deep looks into characters. Not a little of the emperor without his clothes in all this, the intellectual urchin's eye!

But the best thing of all about *Memoirs of Montparnasse* is their sheer contemporaneity, their glittering freshness. Some chapters were written there and then, in Paris when it was all going on, and the last were written in 1933 in a hospital in Montreal, so that, unlike Callaghan's memoirs of the same era in Paris, which are excellent as long-term recollections, Glassco's are nearer to the time than almost any book written on the great days of Montparnasse. Is it only to those of us who knew the last glimmerings of that extraordinary furnace of creativity

and Bohemian daring which was Paris a generation ago that this will seem a golden book? I do not think so. Anyone concerned with the ambiances of literary creation will, I am sure, be indebted to the John Glassco who wrote this book and to his other self who excavated it from the past.

With the other books I am reviewing we recede steadily from the writer as a directly apprehended human being. Lovat Dickson at least knew slightly the subject of his *H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times*. Leon Edel, despite the cosy intimacy of his writing, came along too late to have any personal contact with Henry James, of whom he writes his fourth volume in *The Treacherous Years, 1895-1901*. Edel is still abundantly biographical, so that at least the illusion of a human contact with the Master is at times attained. D. E. S. Maxwell in *Poets of the Thirties* and C. J. Dixon in his critically introduced anthology, *Fin de Siècle*, are getting away from the biographical, into textual analysis on the one hand and intellectual history on the other. In other words, in these five books by Canadians on literary worlds and literary men outside Canada, we have almost every gradation from the autobiographical proximity of the participant to the austere distance of the literary historian.

Months ago, on the night men first walked on the moon, I thought a great deal about H. G. Wells, but I noticed that his name rarely appeared in public comments on that event he had so imaginatively and so long ago projected in fiction. I remembered how, in my teens, far off in the Twenties, Wells and Shaw had seemed mental liberators on a much grander and more iconoclastic scale than

the Germanic academics and hysterical Latin American slogan-mongers who aspire to that role today. Wells and Shaw offered us new mental worlds and new minds' eyes to see them, and if they have gone largely out of fashion (Wells more than Shaw), it may be unjust, but it is a tribute to their influence and their foresight; they have ceased to be interesting because so much they stood for when it seemed revolutionary and novel has become part of the commonplace fabric of our lives.

I am sure some feeling of this kind prompted Lovat Dickson to write the strange book which he calls a "biography" of H. G. Wells. In fact, it is so incomplete as biography that it sweeps the whole of Wells' life after 1918 under the carpet in thirty hurried pages, and I suspect that a further reason for writing it was the fact that Dickson has been able to use the Wells correspondence which he discovered in 1943 in the archives of the publishing house of Macmillan. The letters between Wells and Frederick Macmillan peter out towards the end of World War I, and it is obviously not accidental that Dickson chose this as the point at which to close his book in a hurry.

Yet there is a justice in all this. As a literary artist of distinction Wells did not survive beyond 1910; his unfortunate association with the Fabians had set in motion a process by which the teacher within him came uppermost, but the teacher had said everything novel and influential that he was to say by 1918. The vast compilations like the *Outline of History*, and the bland empty novels that followed it were the works of a great popularizer, not of a major artist — as the Wells of half a dozen early books

Butterfly on Rock

A STUDY OF
THEMES AND IMAGES IN
CANADIAN LITERATURE

D. G. JONES

This fresh and unconventional discussion, based on the author's wide knowledge of the original works, makes Canadian literature (primarily that written in English) intelligible in terms of its imaginative patterns and inner concerns. The approach is cultural and psychological rather than purely aesthetic or literary. The book considers some of the themes and images that have taken root in Canadian poetry and fiction during the past three generations, and by isolating these themes it defines more clearly some of the features that recur in the mind, the mirror of our imaginative life.

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undoubtedly was — or of a seminal teacher, as the Edwardian Wells had been.

Dickson writes with a great urbanity of manner and with considerable wisdom, very sensibly disentangling the teacher from the artist in Wells' important works, and linking both to the peculiarities of personality that made Wells at once so amiable and so detestable a human being, so admirable and so despicable. The criticism is not in detail or in much depth, and the biography lays no claim to scholarly rigour, but within its modest field of intention this is a good and sympathetic book coming at a time when Wells is excessively neglected.

I suppose Leon Edel's large five-volume biography of James has to be considered as some kind of monument, and I wish I could feel more warmly towards a book that shows so much evidence of industry, so much obvious effort to understand. But it remains for me a curiously sleek and impervious work, and this volume seems hardly an improvement on its predecessors. There are many things that disturb me about *The Treacherous Years*; here are the most disturbing.

An air of gossip hangs like a cloud of sparrows, twittering over the narrative. Gossip, of course, is an important source of raw material for the biographer, but it has to be refined, assimilated, whereas here the very tone of the book is often that of rambling scholarly tittle-tattle in which even documentary sources are absorbed into the pattern of breathless bavardage.

This is linked to my second ground of disturbance, which is the author's failure to discipline the temptation to digress. A character is introduced into the story, and we must pause for two or three or

four pages while he is explained and backgrounded before we can return to the main stream of James and his life. At the beginning of *The Treacherous Years* there is an interlude six pages long describing the career of the actress Elizabeth Robins, in which James is not mentioned once, and while this is interesting stuff in its own way, it is out of place there. Edel's taste for such divagations largely explains why his biography of James has become so unconscionably long. It could, one realizes at this point, all have been done quite adequately in two large volumes.

Finally, I find extremely disturbing the almost compulsive inclination Edel shows to explain everything that James wrote in terms of actual and usually early events in his life, a heritage of the obsolescent school of psychologically oriented criticism, according to whose tenets Freud's theory that all our mental troubles have their source in our childhood had to be transferred to the consideration of literature, which thus became a process of exorcism. This inclination reaches a point of absurdity when Edel deals with *The Spoils of Poynton* and finds its sources not in the author's creating imagination but, because Mrs. Gereth refers to the loss of her beloved antiques as an "amputation", in his father's long decayed wooden leg and — even more incongruously — in the more recent personal disaster of the destruction of *Guy Domville* by a hostile audience. I am no fanatic for the kind of close textual criticism that ignores the biographical element in all works of art, but I feel Mr. Edel carries on his work as a literary detective with a zeal that destroys his sense of the works as achieved objects, and even at times mars his view of James as a complete

person. He has got so close to the detail of the Master's life that he can rarely generalize interestingly about him, and often the most significant remarks on his pages are those he quotes, like Jane Emmet's: "He hangs poised for the right word while the wheels of life go round." Edel rarely says anything so good, so concisely.

In a different way *Poets of the Thirties* is also a very limited study of its period. While Mr. Maxwell does provide an introduction which considers the kind of intellectual background to the time suggested by the works of Graham Greene and Eric Ambler — seedy and violent — he also reflects an obstinate misconception of the Thirties by concentrating on the famous four, Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, MacNeice, with some reference to Charles Madge and to those Communist martyr-poets, Christopher Caudwell and John Cornford, assured immortality by death in the Spanish Civil War. He fails completely to recognize that there were two groups of significant poets in the later Thirties who also expressed in different ways the preoccupations of the decade: the *Twentieth Century Verse* group, centred around Julian Symons, to which I adhered and of whom Roy Fuller has survived to become England's most interesting elder poet of the 1970's; and the irrationalists, led by Dylan Thomas, George Barker, David Gascoyne, Philip O'Connor and the English surrealists. Maxwell makes glancing mention of some of these, but discusses none of them as poets, and he omits any reference at all to Kathleen Raine who, in the Thirties, was a Marxist poet married to Charles Madge. In other words, this is a very incomplete view even of the new and "revolutionary" poetry of the Thir-

ties, reflecting the myths which Geoffrey Grigson zealously fostered by using *New Verse* as the special organ of a limited group of poets.

Apart from all this, I find Maxwell's writing dull, and his analyses pedestrian. One of his difficulties undoubtedly is that, once one has mastered the clique imagery, the poems of the major Thirties writers are transparently obvious in their intent. What is there to explicate when all is so plainly said? Of course, there is one exception to that rule: Auden, the sole poet of major stature that the decade produced. Maxwell recognizes the special quality of Auden's work, but why it is special he cannot explain.

Finally, Maxwell's knowledge of his background is not always thorough. For example, he twice takes John Cornford to task for the empty rhetoric of two lines in one of his poems.

Raise the red flag triumphantly
For Communism and for liberty.

What he does not know is that Cornford is *quoting*. The lines are a translation of the refrain of the Italian Communist song (sometimes pirated by the Anarchists), "Avanti popolo". There are other errors of this kind which no man who had been at the heart of the English Thirties would commit.

Fin de Siècle is an anthology that belies its title, since it is really a brief collection accompanied by a long introduction, of poems from the last *two-thirds* of the Victorian era, starting in 1860. It is true that a spiritual malaise was spreading in the Victorian world about 1860, but Arnold had already caught it beforehand, and it is definitely not what we mean when we talk of the real *fin de siècle*, which by definition was the *end* of the

century, the Nineties — age of the Decadents, with Swinburne and Pater as its prophets. Really, there is no deep common element in the poems Dixon has brought together, varying from Kipling to Dowson and from Hardy to Wilde, while he has left out many of the real and very interesting *fin de siècle* poets. Nothing on the period has recently been done

as good as the anthology of Nineties verse which A. J. A. Symons compiled in the Thirties, and this is perhaps because Symons was temperamentally sympathetic to the real *fin de siècle* spirit, and Dixon is not, which is why he failed to recognize the essential difference between the Nineties and the other late Victorian decades.

SCRUTINEERING ORWELL

Julian Symons

KEITH ALLDRITT, *The Making of George Orwell*. Macmillan, \$6.95.

THE BASIC IDEA of Mr. Alldritt's study is that George Orwell's work is interesting "not as social commentary or as political thought" but as a continually developing exercise in self-knowledge "distinguished by its directness, its lively movement and its assimilation of some of the idiom and the raciness of common speech." So far so good, except that an either/or is postulated which doesn't seem quite genuine. Granted that Orwell approached most problems from a highly personal attitude, isn't this the very quality that makes his work particularly valuable as social commentary? The merits of the book rest in some of the glancing observations made in it, rather than in its general theory.

Given his prime assumption, it follows that Mr. Alldritt is particularly concerned with what he calls the "autobiographical" works from *Down and Out in Paris and London* onwards. In the course of examining Orwell's attempt to "resolve the ambivalences in his own mind"

he makes some points more sharply than other critics have done. He is very good on the importance to Orwell of poverty as a subject, his awareness that a man without money, or even shabbily dressed, was regarded by many people as absolutely inferior to somebody wearing the proper middle or upper class gear. He has an enlightening comparison of Orwell's attitude in the Thirties with that of two other autobiographers of the period, Christopher Isherwood and J. B. Priestley, pointing out that where Isherwood retreats into "anecdotal trivia and rueful self-depreciation" and Priestley always comments upon what he calls "the working folk" from a distance, Orwell's involvement is profound, agonised, and above all personal.

He is right too, of course, in saying that "the lack of felt experience" of just this kind is the crucial defect of the novels. He spends perhaps rather too much time in demonstrating that Orwell lacked much awareness of other people

or much interest in their characters. Nobody thinks now that Orwell was a very good novelist, and Orwell himself came to that conclusion. (See the *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, which perhaps came too late for Mr. Alldritt's use, although he mentions them in a couple of footnotes.) In general it seems to me that he does not distinguish enough between the often valuable but sometimes foolish and erratic work that Orwell produced up to the beginning of the 1939 War and the consistently important writings of his last ten years. By cutting himself off almost completely from any consideration of the part Orwell played in the political life of his time, first in opposing Stalinism and then in supporting the Labour Party, Mr. Alldritt commits himself to some imperceptive attitudes, in particular about the essays.

Orwell's increased self-knowledge was valuable not as a thing in itself, but in the ability it gave him to comment upon the social events around him with greater depth and honesty than was shown by anybody else at the time. When Mr. Alldritt says that there are "no claims" to be made for Orwell as a literary critic on the ground that he did not adhere to the "methods and criteria for making value judgements" proposed in *Scrutiny*, one has to say first that no such methods and criteria exist (the value judgements come down in the end, as Dr. Leavis himself has said, to the impact of a particular work of art upon a particular sensibility), and then that the purely literary approach of many Scrutineers would have seemed to Orwell simply inadequate. The essays on Dickens and on crime fiction, for instance, interweave social and literary criticism. To deny their existence as literary criticism be-

cause Orwell's prime concern is to place art in a social context, is also to deny that the Edmund Wilson who wrote *The Wound and the Bow* was a literary critic. Perhaps Mr. Alldritt would do just that.

To understand Orwell's virtues it is necessary first of all to consider his work in relation to his own life and to the society in which he lived. The almost continuous autobiography of his writings has its full impact only if we think about the semi-ostracism he endured before the war and his unpopularity with many "Left-wingers" during his whole writing life. There is much in the *Essays, Journalism and Letters*—and a good deal that was easily accessible before their publication in book form—that contradicts Mr. Alldritt's views. A single example: he makes a lot of play with Orwell's favourable view of *Tropic of Cancer* in 1939 and suggests that part of Orwell continued to be drawn towards "the passive non-cooperative attitude implied in Miller's work". But to assess the article on Miller properly we should have to take into account the fact that it was written before the war, at a time when Orwell was most deeply disillusioned about Left-wing intellectuals, and to consider also the scathing attack he made on Miller as a political reactionary a few years later. His sympathy for Miller's "quietism", as distinct from an admiration of his energetic prose, didn't last long.

I don't want to be unfair to Mr. Alldritt's book. A lot of the things he says are suggestive and valuable. But the book we need about Orwell is one which places him in social and personal contexts, and not in relation to an arbitrary standard of scrutineering excellence. Such a book Mr. Alldritt is not equipped by talent or sympathy to write.

INDEPENDENT CRITICISM

W. H. New

HALLVARD DAHLIE, *Brian Moore*. Copp Clark (SCL 2), \$1.95.

DOUGLAS O. SPETTIGUE, *Frederick Philip Grove*. Copp Clark (SCL 3), \$1.95.

VICTOR HOAR, *Morley Callaghan*. Copp Clark (SCL 4), \$1.95.

THE FIRST TWO things to say about the recent additions to Copp Clark's Studies in Canadian Literature series both involve compliments to the publishers. One: the books are handsomely designed, colourfully jacketed, and clearly printed. And two: the format of each study varies with the author and subject, a welcome departure in a conforming age. Though uniformity of approach may be a boon to publishers, it is a sign of critical malaise, threatening the artist with a mechanical set of interpretive judgments and turning the critic into a talking doll. The ghost of Sarah Binks walks through all those studies that arbitrarily concoct early, middle, and late periods for tedious analysis. Fortunately in *Morley Callaghan* by Victor Hoar, *Brian Moore* by Hallvard Dahlie, and *Frederick Philip Grove* by Douglas O. Spettigue, Sarah's ghost nowhere lurks.

Not all the success of the series obviously goes to Copp Clark. The cover designs are Alan K. Daniel's, and the contents of each book testifies to the independence of the respective critic. The most traditional approach is Hallvard Dahlie's, whose studies of Brian Moore have been earlier published in *Critique* and elsewhere. In a series of well-made essays, he examines each of Moore's novels in chronological order, exploring the recurrent themes of isolation, artistry,

Catholicism, and despair. He shows how from *Judith Hearne* to *Mary Dunne* there is a "progressive emancipation of [Moore's] characters" as they escape suffocation in Belfast, discover flux in the New World, and finally emerge triumphant.

It is character, therefore, that most attracts Dahlie's attention, and because of that his approach to Moore can be interestingly compared with Victor Hoar's response to Morley Callaghan. Hoar divides his work into two long chapters: "The Technique" and "The Themes", and for a change it is the section on Callaghan's usually reviled technique that comes off the better. The technique, he insists, is *not* slapdash or ill-mannered, but stems consciously and directly from Callaghan's contact with Imagism — his "ambition to refrain from any overt value judgments and simply to strive to see the thing as it is, for the act of clear perception was itself moral". Thus characters themselves become *things* to be perceived, the pawns of social forces who may yet (like the characters in *Now That April's Here*) learn a "new vision of themselves and of the world around them" and be left "enriched and excited".

Such a conflict between the objective observation of the *thing* and the admission that the "thing" can itself have a

subjective response *could* create a highly dramatic tension in Callaghan's work — of the sort that *Such is My Beloved* or the short stories possibly reveal. At its worst it leads to the passionless "passion" of *A Passion in Rome*, observed with unflagging distance and careful flatness that fails to involve either the reader or the characters in the lives they lead. Thus Victor Hoar can be found saying the following:

He *wrote* the way he *saw* and if we want to fault the way he wrote and has continued to write, then we have to fault his particular vision, his way of seeing things.

And a page later:

Paradoxically, if the subject matter of *A Passion in Rome* is memorable, the form by which it is conveyed is not.

All his analysis of the author's irony and candid realism and conscious use of simple idiom (in order to highlight the flat observation of madness or anger or violence when it occurs) does not resolve this basic paradox. Which returns us to Moore, for it is the kind of paradox which Hallvard Dahlie never really has to contend with. Moore's characters are affirmatively *subjects* — "I Am Mary Dunne" shouts one of his titles — and Judith Hearne's "lonely passion" is one in which she and all readers acutely participate. It is the *plight* of Callaghan's characters that stirs his readers, not the characters themselves; with Moore the two are less separable. And as with Callaghan such a "stir" is likely to be intellectual, so with Moore it has emotional impact. Both routes can illuminate the reader's world for him, if the author has any talent, but each artistic method will dictate, as here, a quite different approach to the critic who wishes to understand it.

Douglas Spettigue's method in *Frederick Philip Grove* is necessarily different again, for he finds in Grove the Man a more complex character than any of Grove's creations. Such a generalization may seem hardly startling, yet Spettigue constructs out of it a fascinating adventure in research and a genuinely new contribution to Canadian studies. Dissatisfied with the known inconsistencies in Grove's biography — many of them spawned by Grove's own *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself* — he went himself in search of objective facts. What he found is still a shadowy background for the Manitoba novelist, but accompanying the dead ends are a string of questions that pulsate like the close of a soap opera. Grove was of German rather than of Swedish origin, that much now seems clear, and quite certainly he was married and had a family and taught and owned a farm in Kentucky before coming to Canada. Questions: when was he really born? are the Frederick Grove and Philip Grove families now in Louisiana related to him? was he the son rather than the husband of the Minna Grove who sailed with him from Hamburg to New York on the *Fürst Bismarck* in 1892? (or was he — most mysterious possibility of all — someone else entirely, who met Minna and Friedrich aboard the ship and absorbed their history, abandoning his own?)

After the excitement of the chase, it comes as something of an anticlimax to return to the Grove canon, but even here Spettigue displays the critical acumen that makes this a fine book. By refusing to find in Grove's novels what is *not* there, he perceives the virtue of what *is*, and thus restores to them the historical importance they have in the development

of realism in Canadian fiction. Complemented by an excellent bibliography, this book — like the others in the series — is

both well-documented and lucidly written. It sets a fine standard for further critical writing on Canadian literature.

TURNING FICTION INTO FICTION

John Reid

J. MICHAEL YATES, *Man In The Glass Octopus*. Sono Nis Pres, \$5.00.

RAY SMITH, *Cape Breton is the Thought Control Center of Canada*. House of Anansi, \$2.50 paper.

BARRY CHARLES, *You Used To Like My Pies*. House of Anansi, \$1.95 paper.

OF THESE THREE BOOKS, *Man In The Glass Octopus* is worth reading and was therefore worth publishing.

It is a collection of related short stories that can be compared to *Travels Into Several Remote Regions of the World* (which is reputedly by one who was "first a Surgeon, and then a CAPTAIN of several ships", and who announced that his name was Lemuel Gulliver, although there was no such person.) Neither is there such a person as Sono Nis, who is the narrator and/or subject of J. Michael Yates's tales. Both authors, over two hundred years apart, present a world that men are turning into fiction.

Gulliver was created by Swift out of an amalgam of observations of Empirical Man, a fiction created in turn by John Locke who was bent on providing a counter-fiction to Cartesian Man. Gulliver, the empirical observer, notes without comprehension, but with the need (being an empirical observer) to record each thing as it happens, in the order in which it occurs. And Gulliver describing how he discovered, in Lilliput, that during his sleep he has been bound to the earth by

minute men, is doing what Mr. Yates is doing, through his narrator, on the first page of his first story.

I awoke that morning to the sound of colossal movement in the street outside. Perhaps a parade. But neither shouts nor music rose to my second-storey. The sound was rather of running than marching feet. And there were no shots.

Observation and interpretation of phenomena: there was no war for there were no shots. By consciously limiting himself in this story ("The Passage of Sono Nis") to the empirically *given*, by dogged adherence to the procedures, Mr. Yates reveals its nature. It is, said Locke, all that can be. "The mind has no other immediate object than its own ideas." As to what the substance of external reality is, Locke only knows that it is something, "we know not what".

This also is the world of Sono Nis. The street is full of running men. Sono Nis is safe inside; but he will, he reasons, eventually starve. He believes he can escape through the crowd; he becomes part of it. There is only one thing to do: record it: that is all the meaning it can have. And the reader finds, as he frequently

does in fiction, that he is reading something that the narrator could never have written; Sono Nis claims to have shouted it in the street, to preoccupy himself while running towards no known destination, to "you who hear nothing and know as much and as little as I."

The narrator's name translates as *I Am Is Not*. He is Mr. Yates's invention; he is also the child of Mr. Yates's meditation on the situation of man today. In another story of a disc-jockey who calls himself Tim Hawker, but insists that that is not his name, not only is *The Man Who Is Not*, but makes it his occupation to subsume others into his non-existence. "The miserable vestigial business of taking people instead of the rhythm for the central thing. Who they were was nothing. Who I was was nothing." We have moved beyond Swift's miming of the declarative sentence. Speech comes from a man; the declarative sentence, in print, seems creator of itself. At last, there is no distinction between speaker and listener, in a "sheer dream-stream of syllables", for, by a chilling logic of Hegelian destruction, both are reduced to the scientific formula "Every organism is a process. Thus the organism is not other than its actions."

This is the theme of many of Mr. Yates's stories; it is also the stuff of which our times are made — as though the dream-world of nineteenth century poetry had become actualized in our midst. Consciousness has usurped primacy from the thing of which we are conscious. We may believe we believe in Evolution; in reality we have become prisoners inside the mind of Leibniz.

"God of the World" is a story of how non-entity must triumph in a world where metaphor has become the ground

of being. If it is an account of an impersonal hubris that reveals the vacuity of our chosen goals, the final and longest story makes clear what this and all the other stories are about.

"An Inquest into the Disappearance and Possible Death of (the late) Sono Nis, Photographer" is a complex metaphor of a consciousness chiefly aware of its own consciousness; all objects, all others, become mirrors for its own state of being. If consciousness is a mirror of reality, then in a story such as this mirrors are apposite images of the story's theme.

And here, for the first time, Mr. Yates is deceived by his theme. The original mirror in "An Inquest" is one — or rather two, face to face — in a barber shop. Beside the child Sono Nis sits "the expert" who "wonders why, in a heterosexual society, the sensuous hands of the barber moving over neck, head, and ears aren't looked on with suspicion." The trouble is that we, and Mr. Yates, do not look on the expert with suspicion. For when a barber cuts hair he touches neck, head, and ears: otherwise he cannot cut hair.

Throughout the story reality is sought in the image. Sono Nis begins with the family photograph albums; he photographs these, then photographs the photographs. And he photographs himself, using x-ray and infra-red film. In the end, he sets up "hundreds" of motion picture cameras in his house, all operating simultaneously. The punishment for self-preoccupation is to become as unsubstantial as the innumerable, obsessive images of oneself.

Metaphor, where one thing "images" another, can become a technique, then, of destroying entities. We see it in: "The impressions we take away from the mir-

ror are so cursory. We memorize a construct of data about ourselves as we memorize data from a primer of photography . . ." This ignores the difference between looking at a person and studying a formula. But when a measurement from arch to armpit, which in itself is supposed to have some significance as self-knowledge, is described as "following the contours of the body as the eye follows swells of the sea which is all the death, the terminus of all rivers, all labyrinths of blood, and beach is the boundary between land and water, not land and not water, the changing ribbon between life and death — nothing grows in this saline sterility" — then we recognize that we have encountered a person who is not interested in reality, but is trying to create a state of being where the mind becomes a substitute for the existent.

The sea, as in much romantic poetry, is also an image that can be manipulated. "The reporter would recognize the sensation of him covering her anywhere. He breaks between her knees and sweeps over her like a magnificent breaker." This implies that reporters recognize sensations, including the sensation of Sono Nis, disguised as Poseidon, covering any part of the girl. Copulation becomes a natural, lonely force, rather than the expression of communion between two persons.

In a photograph of his grandparents, "behind them, at a distance, sea-spray covering sea-rocks the way a man covers a woman — a swell on the horizon arriving, arriving, towering towards the coast, then impact, mist, thinness, thinness, receding until the rocks re-emerge to wait." All that action — in a photograph! In reality, no rocks "wait", but some men

believe that women, slightly more sentient, do.

This prison of mirrors Sono Nis believes, mistakenly, is the inevitable by-product of writing poetry and fiction. So, at one point he revolts, and in place of art (or its abuse) offers "drinking together and dancing, to the magnificent drugs which burst all the old horizons of consciousness." Again, Mr. Yates has lost touch: April, 1938, is described as "towards the end" of Sono Nis's life: psychedelic drugs were not in those days popular.

But Mr. Yates is right, at this point, in permitting Sono Nis to become an ineffectual Nietzschean who comes (he says) "like the dark god from Asia, like Dionysus . . . that mammoth energy, that

ALPHABET 18 will centre around the Hieroglyph, features poem drawings by JUDITH COPITHORNE, an original song by Vancouver Island's LYLE CROSBIE. JANE SHEN is assisting with the planning of this issue, one of the most striking and original to come from Alphabet Press. Out by June, 1970.

ALPHABET 19 — Horoscope Astrologica in the painting of Hieronymus Bosch viewed by JETSKE SYBESMA. "2001: a Space *Commedia*?" by JAMES POLK. "Solar Flares" a poem by PHYLLIS GOTLIEB. Various astrologers are at work. September 1970.

\$1.00 at most bookstores or order direct from English Department/University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. A Subscription is \$2.00 per year for two issues. Please make cheques payable to Alphabet.

chaos, that drunken holy destruction . . .” As part of his doctrine of destruction Sono Nis advocates disregarding “the distinctions of gender, the distinctions of color, and all other distinctions. Discrimination is a matter of mind, of form, not of body.”

All this leads to the inevitable: a suicide note: “Not words. An act. I’m going to the darkroom.” Inevitable, because all Sono Nis’s activities have been a slow motion suicide, a destructive duet with his own image, as though he had married his own mind.

When one turns from this book to the two from the House of Anansi, the first thing one is aware of is how well Mr.

Yates writes. Also, how well he reads his proofs. For in *Cape Breton is the Thought Control Center of Canada* there are innumerable errors. The House of Anansi should be supported; but its editor should forbid expressions such as “for e.g.” If Ray Smith wishes to state that he learned his technique from Ezra Pound, he must expect those who know Pound’s work and principles to pass only one judgement on him: incompetent.

Barry Charles (*You Used To Like My Pies*) is a teen-ager; so was Rimbaud, when he wrote the poems of which these are, intentionally or not, a dull pastiche. But perhaps Barry Charles should keep it up: look where it got Leonard Cohen.

THE CHARM OF THE PAST

New Canadian Writing, 1969; Stories by John Metcalf, D. O. Spettigue and C. J. Newman. Clarke, Irwin, \$2.95.

THE TWELVE SHORT STORIES in this collection may be recent, but they are not new in any qualitative sense. While the three authors represented demonstrate competence which at times verges on slickness, their stories are not memorable; in fact, one feels one has read them many times before — in the 1950's. The material is dated.

John Metcalf, represented by five stories, seems unwilling or unable to present complex characters and problems; he chooses instead to work with stereotypes, easy generalizations, or obvious, but ineffective irony. "The Estuary" describes a sensitive young man's rejection of the unfeeling, unreasonable world, but since the boy's sensitivity is limited to an ability to observe such details as the "raw" hands of the girl next to him in the bus queue, and his only specific indictment of his environment consists of a dislike of the library check-out rules, the story is an exercise in presenting a non-answer to a non-problem. "The Children Green and Golden" and "Robert, Standing" comment on the inability of religious belief to cure all human suffering, but surely the Church is not, as Metcalf implies, oblivious of this limitation: indeed, traditional Christian teaching trains man to expect release from pain only in

the life to come. Thus when Robert denies the Mormon missionary's exhortation to become a saint by submitting "to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict," and instead screams from his wheel chair, "If I was standing up, . . . I'd be six foot three," we are not convinced, as Metcalf seems to believe we should be, that religion is either ridiculous or useless. That Robert cannot accept the *spiritual* consolation, which is all the missionaries are trying to offer him, is believable, but since the missionaries are not hypocrites preaching a magic cure for physical ills, we are left with a fact but not an idea. Looked at from any other point of view, the story is equally meaningless. Its painstaking description of the morning bath of a man confined to a wheel chair gives the reader a sense that he is spying through a keyhole, only to discover the surely obvious knowledge that for the handicapped, life is difficult, frustrating and sometimes degrading.

D. O. Spettigue's four stories gain by being seen in relation to one another since each presents characters whose ideal vision of themselves is at variance with the roles they actually play. "The Haying" and "Spring Song" are the most successful, for in both, Spettigue's ability to create atmosphere contributes to the effectiveness of his thematic statement. The shift in "The Haying" from the sun-drenched, sleepy, rich landscape that surrounds the boy when he is unaware of the human potential for pain, to the rain-sodden vista he surveys when he has achieved tragic knowledge is obvious but well done. In "Spring Song," the delivery boy's clumsiness, which in itself unfits him for achieving his dream of becoming a pharmacist, becomes more apparent as he ineffectually attempts to keep labels

dry in the driving rain, and his blighted dream finds its correlative in the wet, cold world to which spring will seemingly never return. Moreover, this character goes beyond stereotype. The ineffectual bumbler is a familiar comic figure, but the narrator of this story is not laughable in his struggles to deal with the recalcitrant material objects of his world.

The two most successful of the three stories by C. J. Newman deal, as does his novel, *We Always Take Care of Our Own*, with the problem of what it means to be a Jew in a gentile world — a well-worked theme in American fiction of the 1950's. In both "Yenteh" and "An Arab Up North," this question is not merely discussed in itself, but is used as a means of probing the complexities of human response. Determined that his family shall become "the ideal North American family my father so plainly wanted us to be," the boy in "Yenteh" sees his mother's friendship with their vulgar neighbour as a betrayal of the family goal and as a danger to herself, in that it suggests a latent similarity between the two women. Thus Newman clearly reveals that the boy's attack on his mother's friend is the result of his ambivalent desire to both hurt and protect his mother. In "An Arab Up North," a Jew and an Arab define themselves in terms of the love-hate relationship which is their common heritage.

These twelve stories display no real inventiveness of style or theme; what charm they have, alas, is the charm of the past, but they may be worth reading for that charm alone.

MARGARET HOWARD BLOM

THE FIXED LANDSCAPE

ANDY WAINWRIGHT, *Notes for a Native Land*. Oberon, \$2.95.

THE LANDSCAPE by which Canadians know their country has become firmly fixed. The writers of *Notes for a Native Land* present this landscape without the passion found in *The New Romans*, an earlier and better anthology, but with more consistency. Most of the writers agree on the look and feel of their country, though not on where it should lead them.

The editor, Andy Wainwright, wisely asked a spectrum of Canadians for their thoughts on Canada and the poets, painters, film-makers, story tellers, teachers and newspapermen checked off the things that make Canada what it is, canoe-trips included. "It's almost true to say that I have had my strongest spiritual sensations in a canoe, watching the Northern Lights," Graham Fraser says. The remark comes after some Hamlet-like brooding: "... I sat down two or three times and started typing; to my dismay, I never seemed to get farther than all the old chestnuts and clichés: elaborating on 'Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver', the nearness of 'the cleansing wild'; what Fernand Dumont called the 'quality of small nations'..." Though he may worry about sounding trite, Fraser's instincts are sure. He looks at the Northern Lights and comes face to face with his land.

In his rambling letter to Wainwright, Fraser also dwells on the French/English split that is part of Canada. But it is Hugh Hood, Montrealer and Expos base-

ball fan, who is most forceful on this point. "*Indépendance? Blague!*" says Hood, and backs up his stand with quotations from his plumber, M. Leopold Husereau, who sees no chance of it. Then too, there are all those *Québécois* baseball players selling tickets to Expos games. "You'd be surprised how much baseball is played in the province," Hood says. If two solitudes cannot, in Rilke's phrase, meet and greet and embrace each other, they can at least play baseball.

At the end of his note, Hood becomes sombre. "If Quebec were alone, there would be no Quebec as we have known it, but you won't get rid of Quebec by wishing, fearing, hoping, suspecting, picking at sores. Quebec is our conscience."

Compared to most countries, Canada's conscience is clear, James Bacque says. "The failure of Europe and America has been that men have turned politics into war." Because Canada is not hamstrung by the sense of divine purpose that great states possess, Bacque believes it is the one nation which can safely lead.

The success of Canada has been that we turned war into politics. The war of the French and English, of the Americans and Canadians, of the Indians and the whites, have all been converted into issues, elections, debates and solutions.

The refugees are pouring in from the USA already. Soon the world will look to us and wonder. We must be ready.

Lionel Rubinoff, in his bookish way, agrees with Bacque on what are the Canadian virtues. But he rejects the idea of mission. "May heaven protect us, then, from intellectuals in search of their Canadian identity and from philosophers of history in search of a Canadian destiny." Mission leads to politics and politics as a complete goal is fatal, Rubinoff says.

In one of the weakest pieces in the book, Northrop Frye comments that "Our political independence, such as it is, is the chance that enables us to make common cause with the genuine American that Thoreau and Jefferson and even Ezra Pound were talking about." Frye admits this is "very vague," though a "statement of belief." We are to trust in America's goodness and wisdom.

The answer to Frye's drivel is in a poem by Walter Bauer, translated from the German by Henry Beissel. In "Canada", Bauer says, "Here you receive another kind of wisdom,/ Bitter and icy and not to everybody's taste." Bauer concludes that "The arctic expresses the sum total of all wisdom:/ Silence. Nothing but silence. The end of time." Here is strong and vibrant poetry rooted in the Canadian landscape. From this secure ground, it projects universal feeling.

Margaret Atwood knows the landscape and the dangers that beset it. In "Thoughts from Underground" (a bad title) she says:

due to natural resources, native industry,
superior penitentiaries
we will all be rich and powerful

flat as highway billboards

who can doubt it, look how
fast Belleville is growing

Unlike Miss Atwood, most of the writers in *Notes for a Native Land* write badly.

There are the cheap, fat, hollow words, like Lister Sinclair's: "Instead of threatening to secede, I wish Quebec nationalists would infect the rest of the country with their exaggerated patriotism. We need it badly." There is the fumbling caress of Wainwright's introduction: "I suppose I am concerned that this country

does not exist. I have tried, at different times in my life, to be its child, its student and its poet. These stages have come together in my present role of lover. (Are you listening Canada?)” As for Dennis Duffy, he seems to think that his reader is a heckler: “Take the Toronto anti-war-in-Vietnam demonstration of 26 October, 1968. The cops, having trained a ‘tactical’ (i.e. riot control) force in imitation of the fashionable U.S. cops, tried out their shiny new toy in a situation that had no need for such technological professionalism (yes, cops on horseback in formation can be as valid a reflection of our technology-fixated society as urban freeways.)” Duffy cannot get through a page of prose without at least two such asides.

As a book, *Notes for a Native Land* is also flawed by a badly-designed cover and no table of contents. To find Christopher Chapman’s poem, for instance, one has to blunder through two-thirds of the book. For its simple, almost naïve charm, the poem deserves to be found more easily:

I have felt forest and prairie sky,
Mountain and rocky lake,
Hot and frozen space — and all of us.
A youthful stumbling country that is me.

Notes for a Native Land shows how others react to the youthful stumbling country we’ve known all along.

FRASER SUTHERLAND

PERIPATETIC POETS

Thumbprints: An Anthology of Hitchhiking Poems. Edited by Doug Fetherling. Peter Martin Associates. \$2.50.

JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT I retraced my former peripatetic steps, brandished a

big thumb and hitchhiked on impulse over a hundred miles a few days after receiving this book. In his Introduction, Fetherling postulates the mystique of hitchhiking: “Understand that the reasoning behind this kind of life is even less explicable than the way in which it is lived.” Consequently my jaunt was justifiable.

There are twenty-five poets in this anthology; more than half of them have contributed one poem only, which is sensible enough — considering the thematic uniformity. John Newlove, a veritable highway saint, has ten. I particularly appreciated “The Hitchhiker” and “By the Church Wall.” They both evoke a kinetic landscape of human isolation enhanced by the sounds of wind, rain, cars and loons. “I have travelled this road many times,” Newlove says, “though not in this place —” One can visualize his figure receding in a rear-view mirror. And his perspectives, like hypnosis, leave a haunting, indelible impression on the mind.

Most of the other poems are anecdotal, spur-of-the-moment things which lack coherence and poetic structure. They seem to have been written on the run, left on paper napkins in roadside diners, etc. David McFadden’s “In Praise of Older Women” is an exception. This poem details the events leading up to the last two lines; the interplay of characterization is superb. I really laughed reading this one. It tells the truth. Fetherling comes on rather ebulliently, but I wish he’d drop the hippie-drag pose and the typographical symbolism. There is still too much of the Whitmanesque in his style; the stance is lean, and the follow-through resembles a vaudeville skit. This type of Vachel Lindsay troubadour died after the

Depression, it was exhumed by the post-war Beats—and now wears long hair like the Beatles. I wouldn't think of picking up some shabby young itinerant who is too lazy or beatific to wash his socks. All of them are defeating their own purpose, in poetry and prose. Why don't they do it another way; camouflage their intent, beat the bourgeois enemy at their own game? Layton suggested this years ago.

Fetherling claims that this is "probably the first *how-to* poetry volume ever published in Canada." Man, he's dead wrong! I admire his coffee-house propaganda, but only those of his ilk are going to buy it. Human nature remains the same—and sometimes poets can be the greatest hypocrites. This anthology undoubtedly adheres to the tradition of socio-realism, and the main critical issue raised by it is that of *expression* and *communication*. The bringing together of these two terms is today an especially important problem for the critic who believes in objective aesthetic values. But even the discussion of the problem (not to mention its solution) involves ideas of dramatic inclusiveness and artistic detachment which lie far beyond the range-finding sensitivity of the propagandist programs. In other words, you need one school to *misunderstand* the other—in order for art to exist. We can't all be Platos or Ortega y Gassets.

Getting back to the book: I found the work of W. W. P. Burns quite frank and joyful; at least he doesn't juggle self-conscious motives. It was just like that, he says. Finally, the anthology closes with seven Burma-Shave jingles (Art and the Masses?) collected by John R. Colombo. I, for one, felt sentimental recalling these signs that I used to see along the high-

ways. Perhaps poetry should be compared to the sensation you felt when you ran away from home for the first time—a sensation filled with *dangerous wonder*. This *hitchhiking* anthology succeeds a little in offering that particular parallel.

LEN GASPARINI

BETRAYED BY THE EVENING STAR

PHYLLIS GOTLIEB, *Why Should I Have All the Grief?* Macmillan. \$4.95.

MORDECAI RICHLER, *The Street*. McClelland & Stewart. \$4.95.

FROM THE STYLISTIC POINT OF VIEW only, Phyllis Gotlieb and Mordecai Richler make an interesting contrast. Mrs. Gotlieb's dialogue is more discursive; her humour is apt to be self-lacerating; she aims directly and seriously at the target-meaning; there is nothing oblique about her. Richler uses short snappy sentences, more in the tough Hemingway manner, I suppose; his humour is wicked, sometimes obscene, sometimes wryly aimed at himself. Above all, the point he has to make is something the reader must figure out for himself or herself. Mrs. Gotlieb advances her values—which in this novel are generally one variety of love or another—like an artillery general moving up his big guns to batter the target-reader. Richler's values are generally the opposite things to those he attacks: unlike Mrs. Gotlieb, he is not greatly concerned with making a moral point of any kind, only with looking at the world the way he sees the world: and considering all his books, he sees the world as a sea of chaos and cruelty, having a few rare islands of calm and gentleness.

Mrs. Gotlieb's novel is about Heinz Dorfman, a German-Jew refugee in Canada, survivor of the Nazi ovens at Auschwitz. Dorfman's father, who died at Auschwitz, seems almost to have been a Jewish Marquis de Sade. He treated Heinz like property, owned, bullied, pushed around. His other son, Gershon, apparently survived the ordeal of having such a father with less serious psychic scars.

Heinz Dorfman in Canada, as a married man, is little different from the cringing child he was in Germany under his father's tyranny. His wife, Sara, has grown frantic and discouraged, living with a man who cannot open up into any kind of generosity or love. When the novel opens, Zalman Dorfman (an uncle), has just died, and Heinz is dragooned by one Birenbaum, to take part in the Jewish death-ceremonies at a small town outside Toronto. For three days Heinz's emotions are pummeled, jabbed and variously assaulted by the old tailor, Birenbaum. At the end he is beginning to come alive, able to feel something for other people; his wife experiences "the beginnings of hope".

After reading fifty pages of this novel I still wasn't much interested, in fact I

would have abandoned it, except that this review had to be written. I dislike being bludgeoned with the necessity to love, whether personally or in a moralistic novel. And I'm profoundly uninterested in the details of Jewish ritual and custom — except as they touch on something more universal and human. I don't like moral tracts under the guise of novels.

However, Mrs. Gotlieb writes pretty good prose despite the terrible handicap of being a poet. And eventually the reader who has survived her beginning learns that Heinz's hang-up is really that his father deliberately took the elder son (Heinz himself) along to the Nazi death-camp to die with him, whereas he helped the younger to escape. Mrs. Gotlieb has a broody-hen sort of earnestness that makes this denouement expected. Perhaps the derivation is Old Testament, with a strong undertone of hysteria. The central idea of the novel, this "choosing of the slain" business, was also used by Yael Dayan in a novel called *Death Had Two Sons*.

Mordecai Richler's *The Street* is hard to classify, consisting of personal memoirs, short stories, essays, etc; a pot-pourri and a grab-bag, even using three

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or four paragraphs from his contribution to a book I edited. But essentially it is a close-up view of Jewish life in Montreal for a few years before, during, and after the Hitler war.

Whatever else Richler is, he's not a preacher. If you want meaning and moral truth from his writing you'll have to find it by indirection, in what he doesn't say, in the obvious alternatives to the things he attacks. And he attacks most of the time. No tame non-offensive academic toasting marshmallows for *any* establishment, nor (alternatively) a picker of hippie buttercups, is Richler.

In an article in *Weekend Magazine* (July 5, 1969) the interviewer says to Richler: "If you're anti-just-about-everything, what are you pro?" Richler: "I'm pro-good-taste and . . . gentle people." One feels this is rather inadequate, but it's all the answer we're going to get, for Richler is no apologist for himself and doesn't really explain anything: he supposes the reader has enough intelligence to figure things out himself. But many of his readers don't or can't.

I think *The Street* is a minor effort by Richler, minor in comparison with his full-scale novels. But stand the book beside the work of any Canadian writer but one, and it towers high. My own fault-finding consists mainly in thinking that the parts which compose the book remain parts, refuse to cohere as a complete entity. The segments remain segmented. Just the same, Richler's wit and the cutting edge of his tongue hurt where they're meant to hurt. I'm sure the verisimilitude of Jewish Montreal during the Hitler-war is close to exact; the sentiment is non-sentimental. The book is finally unclassifiable, inimitable and — excellent.

Reverting to Mrs. Gotlieb's novel — this too is a fine book. But for me, it is flawed by so many people living at such a high pitch of intensity, maybe like a well-written soap opera. Flawed also by its very openness to understanding, for the writer does most of the reader's thinking: and many will think this is a virtue. My thoughts about the book converge particularly around a sentence near the end, when everything is expected to work out and all concerned may live happily ever after: "A window where the evening star might be seen." Mrs. Gotlieb was betrayed in her age by that evening star.

A. W. PURDY

LONELY RUNNERS

RONA MURRAY, *The Power of the Dog*. Morriss Printing Company, Victoria. Hardbound \$6.50, paperbound \$3.25.

ELIZABETH GOURLAY, *Motions Dreams & Aberrations*. Sono Nis Press. \$3.25.

Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to
men,
Or with nails he'll dig it up again.

SO CONCLUDED John Webster's "Dirge" in *The White Devil*. In de Gubernatis' *Zoological Mythology*, we learn that the mythical dog of India stood as watcher at the gate of both morning and evening. In the latter capacity, he presided over death, night, and the moon. The Egyptian dog-god Anubis presided over the entrance to the land of the dead and the weighing of the souls after death. The power of dog, then, is the sinister aspect of change in the universe — change that culminates in death.

In the first section of her title poem, "To Angels", Rona Murray tries to "keep the Dog far hence"; she does not wish to summon to her aid angels — she has offended them and before their honest strength her nakedness would perish. The defences she has built against death and change are all, despite her pretences, vulnerable. Although the angels exact a price she does not wish to pay — the terrible "steel of the knives in their wings" — reality — nevertheless she will pray to them, not for her self, but:

Keep my darling from the power of the dog.

In section II, "Prayer Against Accidie", the dog himself is directly exhorted to depart:

take
your shadow from my dark
your claw
from the left white breast
of my darling

What emerges from the sequence of fifteen sections that make up the title poem — each one as taut and fleshless as a skeleton — is an urgency of will so centred on love that it defies the logic of reality. Each part, as it were, is an incantation to keep the dog at bay — shoring up against the possibility of ruin allusions to the hanged man of Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Roualt's "Old King". In the other poems of the volume, Rona Murray displays a wider range of theme and sensibility, praising life as well as dreading death:

Walk across the bridge of your arm
(feet find the road)
enter the tunnel of your ear
(way was made a fly blown day),

remember
lark, dandelion, clover.

Elizabeth Gourlay's poetry on the surface is less philosophically powerful and

unified and more directly influenced by creative writing classes. This initial appearance is, however, deceptive. She has learned the lessons of imagism extremely well and can convey mood or idea by the juxtaposition without comment of seemingly unconnected snapshots — a cinema technique here well adapted to poetry. A good example is "Picture", which begins tamely and harmlessly, but ends in a landscape where a dog, obviously identical to Rona Murray's is about to find its prey:

I

Like some exotic bird
the fuchsia droops its fall of crimson
petals, —
the Pekingese too has feathered foliage,
gold with black edges.

II

In the azure space
beside the clematis
the poet floats
no butterflies
only
a rosy octopus
small in size
the mind too
has tiny feet
tentacles of a kind.

III

Between the barbed wire fence
the distant black mountains
a field of tall hay
with streamers of sunshine.

IV

All summer long
only
the whispers of swallows
the cooing of wood doves
now
in this dawning
the scream of the jay
sharp as the north wind
ragged as icicles.

V

Long shadows in the sun
the woman guides the puppy
on a leash
not noticing

the grizzled dog
who limps persistently
behind.

It is idle to compare these two books. Poetry is essentially a lonely race that the poet runs against himself. Both poets have run their races well. Their books — attractive in format, unified, and of high quality — deserve a place in any library in Canada where depth and sensitivity of human perception and honesty of expression are valued.

FRED COGSWELL

CROSSING THE THIN LINE

ROCH CARRIER, *Floralie, où es-tu?* Editions du Jour. \$2.50.

ROCH CARRIER has wasted no time bringing out the second volume of his proposed trilogy on the "Middle Ages" of French Canada. The first novel, *La Guerre, yes sir*, was published only a year ago and is already, with good reason, taking on the appearance of a minor classic. There is serious talk of its being made into a movie.

Floralie, où es-tu, filled with boisterous, ribald humour and stylistic fireworks, is another impressive accomplishment — a genuine relief from the agonized, novel-escaped - from - the - confessional - booth trend in contemporary French-Canadian writing. In more ways than one, however, *Floralie* is a step backward. *La Guerre, yes sir* centres around the return of the body of a soldier killed in the war to his native village in rural Quebec. *Floralie* moves even farther into the past and describes the wedding night of the soldier's parents, Anthyme and Floralie

Corriveau. But this chronological retrogression is attended by a curious retrogression in narrative technique. The book incorporates much of the paraphernalia of mediaeval literature, including dream allegory, monologue debate, sorcerer of a sort, enchanted forest and the seven deadly sins. Carrier seems to have taken the "Middle Ages" motif quite seriously.

Between fantastical realism and real fantasy, however, there is a very thin line. And it seems to me that the difference between Carrier's *La Guerre* and his *Floralie*, the difference which makes the former a more powerful and meaningful novel, is that *Floralie* crosses the thin line into fantasy. If the first book can be described as Faulknerian realism in its method of probing the motivating forces and special genius of a society through exploration of the more grotesque and bizarre means by which that society reveals itself, the same cannot be said of the second book. *Floralie* is funny, often hilariously funny, and Carrier's gift for engaging narrative and brilliant colloquial diction stands him in good stead. But the novel offers few insights into what makes Quebec tick, and that, for better or worse, is what I suspect many readers of *La Guerre, yes sir* may have come to expect of Carrier.

On the other hand, *Floralie* does have something to say about what makes people tick, and about the mental peregrinations which can occur when they are not ticking the way they should. Anthyme and Floralie, of course, live at a time before the coming of the Pill, civil marriage and divorce courts to the Province of Quebec. They are even before the time when the charitable practice began in some hospitals to renovate ruptured hymens with a stitch or two, and after

reading Carrier's *Floralie* one can well understand how this practice, regarded by some to be rather hypocritical and to smack more of the methods of the used-car dealer than of modern medicine, gained a certain popularity. The reason for the anxieties of both Anthyme and Floralie on their wedding night, anxieties which resolve into quarrels, agitated soul-searching and troubled dreams, is that the young bride, having once rolled in a field of oats with an itinerant Italian railroad worker who played sweetly on the harmonica, does not come to the union complete with maidenhead. Anthyme is not an experienced lover and he is not sure what to think, but he does have the idea fixed in his head that somewhere along the line there ought to have been a little "mur" or "au moins un rideau à déchirer." And if there was one field of oats in Floralie's past, perhaps there were several fields of oats, and of hay and barley and wheat besides.

Floralie, où es-tu, like Carrier's first novel, is rich in amusing dialogue and incident. It is entertainment of a high order. There can be no doubt that here is a major talent, temporarily marking time in terms of psychological and social insight perhaps, but capable of producing a great deal more and very likely to do so.

RONALD SUTHERLAND

FITFUL SUNLIGHT

DAVID HELWIG, *THE STREETS OF SUMMER*.
Oberon Press, \$4.95.

THE SHORT STORY is a flourishing species in Canada; and some of our best writers — Callaghan, Richler, Laurence, Nowlan, for example — have produced some

of their best work in this form. David Helwig's stories are a welcome contribution to this developing tradition; and his importance has been acknowledged by the inclusion of one of his stories in Robert Weaver's *Canadian Short Stories* (second series).

This is not to say that there is anything particularly Canadian about the fourteen stories that make up *The Streets of Summer*. The locales are frequently in Toronto, but they might just as well be in London or New York. Helwig's characters are not afflicted by an acute sense of national consciousness, or confronted by issues of cultural conflict. Age, loneliness, the search for love or the attempt to regain it: these are Helwig's subjects, and he treats them with pathos but without sentimentality. His people are trapped in drab, undistinguished lives into which the summer sun shines only fitfully and with an illusory warmth. When they ask for more than their share, or attempt to break out of the bounds of convention, the world responds with distrust, contempt or outright rejection. The quality of such an existence is conveyed in the first sentence of "The Winter of the Daffodils": "She had lived a life of continued disappointment, and now she was about to die." An air of quiet pessimism pervades the atmosphere of most of Helwig's stories, and is certainly a dominant element of "The Streets of Summer", the longest story in the collection. Matt Barker, a highly-strung and semi-alcoholic actor, lives in defiance of conventional values, and mocks his rival in love, John Morris, who is a dull and rather prim young graduate student. "...to you it's all an illusion," he tells John, who disapproves of his drinking, "the Boy Scouts would never believe that I

drink to let out the joy inside me. They'd say it's a lie. Maybe so, but it's a beautiful lie." Matt's defiant behaviour is irritating rather than heroic to a world controlled by Boy Scouts, and the futility of such passionate gestures is underlined by his suicide. At the end of the story, John, who has been momentarily drawn towards the actor's rebellious spirit, puts aside the girl they have both loved, and returns with relief to the frugal and disciplined life of a student, where the "sense of emptiness at the centre of his life" will not disturb him.

There are other aliens in Helwig's stories, other misfits, like the proud old tramp in a striking story called "In Exile", or the young deaf-mute girl in "Something For Olivia's Scrapbook I Guess", who is wanted for brutally murdering her mother. Not all of Helwig's characters are such complete failures or outcasts, however; some have had their moment of triumph or happiness in the past, remaining clear in their memory as a constant reproach to the dreary hopelessness of the present. In "The Colonel", Helwig presents the loneliness and frustration of a retired army colonel who sees the world changing round him, and whose work in civil defence is little compensation for past glories. He tries to maintain the principle of order and self-discipline in his life as he grows older, keeping his few books in line on the shelf, laying out his studs and brushes on the dresser. "Yet he had the feeling that somewhere close behind all this lay chaos." Finally, as if to assure himself of his own existence, "he took down from the shelf the official army history of the war. He read several times the only page where he was mentioned." Helwig often relates the past and the present in this

way; his people look back to events in the past, often in their youth, which might somehow redeem the dry monotony, the hardening of emotional arteries, the deadness of spirit in adult urban life. Happiness is a brief interlude before the prison doors shut completely; it is fleeting and elusive, like the butterfly which perches momentarily on a woman's breast, and years later haunts the memory of her deserted husband, in "A Hundred Things Forgotten."

The butterfly image is perhaps rather too self-conscious and "clever"; but such ponderous symbolism is rare in Helwig's writing. His style is usually plain, but not flat; he knows how to introduce a brief phrase, to change the rhythm or emphasis within a sentence, in order to convey the consciousness of the character around whom the story is built. Unobtrusively but convincingly he can create the sensation of suppressed panic in the aging soldier of "The Colonel", or the agonizing self-awareness of the middle-aged spinster in the company of her fiancé, in "One Evening". Some of the stories are clearly experiments in technique, and not always successful. "A Note From Jimmy" tries to create the consciousness of an uneducated young convict, who is writing a touching "confession" while he waits to kill himself; but primitive punctuation and phonetic spelling is too obvious a device to conceal the contrived quality of the situation. "Among The Trees of the Park" has several shifts in points of view and tense in its description of a rather shabby rendezvous between adulterous lovers; but here the brevity of the form and the triteness of the situation make the tricks of technique seem strained and cumbersome. However, such faults are relatively minor; the abiding

impression left by these stories is that David Helwig is a writer with a keen sense of human frailty, and with the capacity to make us respond sympathetically to his characters' weakness or failure.

H. J. ROSENGARTEN

THE LIMITATIONS OF WIT

LIONEL KEARNS, *By the Light of the Silvery McLune*. Vancouver: Daylight Press and Talon Books. 78 pp. n.p.

"MEDIA PARABLES, Poems, Signs, Gestures, and Other Assaults on the Interface" reads the subtitle of this new collection by Lionel Kearns. One gathers from this classification that Kearns does not feel all these "assaults" to be poems, and in some cases one can see why. The book contains three excellent concrete poems (probably "signs"), four verse parables, and many shorter poems all of which appear to be more than "gestures". Some of these latter possess that unique combination of music and insight that one associates with Kearns' work ("Environment," "Expression," "Medium," "Personality," "Content"), but too many others reflect only a competence at the bitter humour of activist light verse. For example, "Tradition":

Eat with your right hand
Wipe your ass with your left
And if it happens
that you're left-handed
Man, you're in trouble

The four parables form about one-third of the book and are probably its most controversial pieces — though more for artistic than for ideological reasons.

These four vary considerably in style and subject. "Telephone" is a humorously surrealistic tale of a man permanently trapped in a glass telephone booth. Like the surrealistic "fictions" of J. Michael Yates, this tale presents its theme of man's alienation from society in an original but artistically simplistic manner. Here Kearns manages to deal only superficially with his subject because he substitutes wit for the more credible art of accurate perception. "Ventilation" is a similarly fanciful tale which tells how a narcotics detective apprehends a shy marijuana smoker by entering his bathroom through its ventilator. Here the humour is richer than in "Telephone" because the ridiculous is now frighteningly close to the actual, although once again the tale as poetry is texturally shallow, relying chiefly on wit for its effect. And once again it is based on a simplistic and superficial view of its subject: narcotics detectives are not only underhanded but masochistically self-deceiving about marijuana's pleasures, while marijuana smokers are retiring and unjustly persecuted hobbits. Surely more can be said than this.

"Transport" is the most entertaining work in the collection. This story of one man's rise from amateur pimp to operator of a "come as you go" limousine/brothel service and finally to Minister of Transport is a rollicking indictment of the cynical commercialism which so often elevates our governors to power. This is hyperbolic satire rather than surrealism, but again, of course, it is art based on oversimplification. It is a good-humoured parody of a way of life, but is literally neither true nor false. The fourth parable, "The Seventh Seal," is an intolerably clumsy and naive story of how Eskimo-

exploiting "Wolves" (white men) are converted by their children's marijuana to magnanimity and love, so that all, in the unforgettable words of the work's conclusion,

settled down to love one another and rejoice
in the warmth and dignity
of their own humanity . . .

This is scarcely worthy of a junior secondary newspaper.

I must stress, however, that this book, with the exception of "The Seventh Seal", is exceedingly well-crafted within the limitations that Kearns accepts for himself. It is the wisdom of these limitations which I question, particularly the limitations of artistic precision which Kearns incurs by working from general to particular, from ideology and idea to person and story, and of literary resource which he incurs when employing wit and irony to the exclusion of other effects. These limitations are serious, for they cause him to distort reality and, as a consequence, to offer his readers oversimplifications so gross that they are at best irrelevancies, at worst, lies. Kearns has written a limited book well, but one wishes he had set higher standards for himself.

FRANK DAVEY

A JUNKED-UP LANDSCAPE

PETER SUCH, *Fallout*. Anansi, \$1.95.

PERHAPS THE CHIEF characteristic of Peter Such's novel *Fallout* is that its attempted complexities do not come off. The plot is framed by an author-character's comments as he re-visits the Elliot

Lake-Blind River setting of the novel, manuscript in hand. These comments form a kind of epilogue and prologue that are intended to help elucidate the meaning of the past, when the boom went out of Elliott Lake — the plot of the novel, which doesn't need it. Chapters (or episodes) within the frame are so arranged that they give the sense of fragmentation that is only partly successful. There is also a complexity of sentence structure and of metaphor that often causes confusion and pretension. In short, the attempted complexities do not create ironies; instead they tend to inflate and obscure. The difficulty seems to be, in part anyway, the old one of the author's unsureness of his own position in relation to what he is writing (something that the epilogue-prologue characterizations might be trying to help solve).

Beneath the stylistic surfaces of *Fallout* lie the characters Robert, Johnny, and Doris, who are Indians seeking meaning to life, the lesbians Jill and Frieda, and the white men Paul, George, and Mr. Mochar, the manager of the uranium workings. He and his wife, a cantankerous female, spend much of their domestic time trying to keep their teen-age daughter Marian on the white-narrow path of virtue, while her desire (once she is beyond the Walter Scott novels she reputedly reads) is to flee with the Indian, Robert (a life-force figure), on his ark (boat), the two of them, to an Eden-life of Indian fish- and deer-gods. The novel concludes with her leaping out of a tornado-shattered window in her parents' home, going to find Robert: "She landed on the rock neatly and loped quickly down the rock-trail to the highway. They would find her in a day or two . . . But for now — the hell with it."

Such coyness is not uncommon in *Fallout*.

Disintegration and alienation: the Elliott Lake boom is bust. The characters all move out, to new mine projects, to Montreal offices, and to the Caughnawaga Reserve, which Johnny and Doris see as their promised land. In Elliott Lake, nature will take over again, just as Robert allows the nature-gods of his ancestors to dominate his mind over the teachings of white missionaries. Here lies true happiness: transcendence all that industry and money have done to junk up Nature, by believing in Nature as the universal power, or in Art, which can use the debris of civilization as its raw material: the sculptor welds together old industrial parts into an ironic structure, the top piece of which is "recognizable as an old Ford thunderbird, black with a red grille".

The characters of *Fallout* are not developed with much depth; nothing that happens to them, then, can have much significance. The plot is oversimplified — things merely happen, and then other things happen, and most of it happens at the same high pitch, achieved by stylistics or events, or both. Conversely, effective episodes (such as Robert's pushing his car) are simply and straightforwardly told, without attempts to heighten them with strained diction (*squeezed water*, *dynamite thunder*), extreme metaphor (*his tongue was in her mind*), and involuted syntax.

The strength of *Fallout* is in its images of the junked up countryside that man inflicts on nature: the mines, the refineries, the cars, boats, towns, shack towns, and graveyards. The detailed images of such things are the most effective in *Fallout* because they come closest to

achieving their own integrity, that is to say, plastic flowers in the Indian graveyard, or steel cable at the refinery are more real than any of the characters or their actions. It is the stuff of pollution that is the success of *Fallout*, the artifacts that "pile up the world over like ancient fallout from warm seas", whether piles of sulphur, record players, metal identification discs, or the piles of junk to which the refinery is reduced by the tornado:

There were piles of things all over the camp waiting to be trucked out. Reinforcement rods, netting, gutter pipes, sand piles, gypsum sidings. . . . The huts began splintering. . . . Big kites of plywood. . . . The tower had fallen. From inside it the stored ore poured out, roared out. Lord what a mess.

Fallout, especially the epilogue "Fall Out", leaves the impression that Mr. Such might have written some very elegant essays on nature long suffering under man's ineptitude and greed; as it is, however, *Fallout* is much more a presentation of the difficulties inherent in writing a novel than it is a successful novel. *Fallout* is one of Anansi's new Spiderline editions, "a series of first novels by the most exciting writers we've found," their advertising says.

V. SHARMAN

LOW KEY

JOAN FINNIGAN, *Entrance to the Greenhouse*. Ryerson. \$2.95.

Entrance to the Greenhouse is a single long poem sequence, and is surely Joan Finnigan's best work to date. Miss Finnigan has created in her poem a single long meditation for her persona, a loving woman. This meditation is tied to the change of the seasons.

Joan Finnigan is a very emotional poet, and her central concern is love and communication among individuals. This concern has often betrayed her into a kind of strident sermonizing which has ruined more than one good poem. *Entrance to the Greenhouse* represents a real victory of the artist's discipline. There is no needless repetition, no preaching or exhortation at all. The poetry, its images and symbols, its tone, carry all the meaning and all the energy, as they should, and the result is a poem of richness and delight. Her persona moves through the garden of the year, gathering strength for love, to make up for all the losses flesh is heir to. The natural is noted in the inner eye, and is finally seen as the grace sought all unknowingly by the speaker and by us all.

The separate sections of the work are deceptively simple; but slowly the poem as a whole gathers a rich complexity of meaning and emotion unto itself. Early in the book, for example, she says:

Light in the arms
of the pear tree
its blossoms lie

like love
in its beginnings

Later:

Wherever you leave me

the last leaf
of the catalpa

closing

shuddering down

Connections are continually realized between the speaker and the world she moves through:

"To live is to go forward
and forget"

and I protect my torn parts

move on to the grandeur
of the dying

elm

It is the growing web of these connections that holds the whole book together, an organic unity of certain beauty.

It would be very easy to dismiss this book as lightweight woman's verse, as I have seen one reviewer do, but to do so is to miss the point. Certainly it is not a major work of art (how few of those is one generation granted!). But, as a low-keyed yet truly felt effort, it is a real beginning, a kind of prolegomena to further work and life. The last two sections indicate this:

Love is a greenhouse

Here is the entrance

DOUGLAS BARBOUR

BOOKS FOR CHIC PARENTS

ELIZABETH CLEAVER AND WILLIAM TOYE, *How Summer Came to Canada*. Toronto, Oxford University Press, \$3.95.

ELIZABETH CLEAVER AND WILLIAM TOYE, *The Mountain Goats of Temlaham*. Toronto, Oxford University Press, \$3.95.

WHEN HE WAS a toddler, my brother discovered that on a farm milk is not obtained from bottles as it is in the city. He immediately passed this news on to the rest of us. Asked to enlarge on it, he said with impressive exactitude, "It come out of a cow. Underneath the cow—in the middle—near the back—hanging down—there are a thing." Thereafter he was contemptuous of any representation of a cow that arbitrarily omitted the important "thing".

Though less science-minded than my brother, I share his old-fashioned concern for fundamental verisimilitude, at least on the near side of that broad grey area between representational and non-representational art. I am troubled by a Glooskap with one half-formed shoulder, one impossibly double-jointed one, reversible feet, and watercress in his hair instead of the moss proclaimed in the bookjacket blurb of *How Summer Came to Canada*, an Indian legend sparsely retold by William Toye and lavishly illustrated by Elizabeth Cleaver. But the colours of Miss Cleaver's neo-primitive pictures are certainly exuberant and often magnificent. And the eleven-year-old I asked for an artistic opinion gasped happily at them and accepted crassly improbable figures without a quibble. She particularly liked the hot violent colours of the summer pictures that strike me as garish and feverishly busy, whereas I like the frosted mauves, purples and blues of the winter ones.

Our reactions may constitute sketchy evidence that *How Summer Came to Canada* contains appeals to a range of tastes not significantly linked to age. They may even cast doubt on my long-held

belief that although children are indulgent toward the crudities of their own artistic productions, they are uncomprehending and critical of the sophisticated crudities perpetrated and approved by adults. But lacking firm evidence I prefer to believe that Miss Cleaver's mosaics of myriad colours and tones are so variously pleasing as patterns that the often static and deformed human (and demi-god) figures involved in them are forgivable to young eyes rather than interesting or admirable.

My consultant gave only cursory attention to the story of *How Summer Came*. This was not surprising, since it is one of the least plotted and most arbitrary of the Glooskap tales. It concerns the settlement of the giant Winter in eastern Canada, Glooskap's first effort to dislodge him, the giant's imposition of an icy spell upon Glooskap, Glooskap's importation of Queen Summer from the south, and the treaty between the two visitors that determined the climate of the Maritimes from that day forward. Why didn't Winter's spell upon Glooskap hold him indefinitely? Why does Queen Summer perennially need a moosehide cord, like Theseus's twine for labyrinth, to reach us

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and find her way home, when Winter can navigate unaided? Mr. Toye is as enigmatic as the Indians. In fact he has no room to speculate in the two or three lines of text allowed him on most pages.

The illustrations only add to the number of puzzlers. Glooskap apparently stood on the whale's back (on those reversible feet, at that) all the way to Summer's southern realm. And Summer took peculiar advantage of the sleigh Glooskap provided for her journey into Wintry Canada: barely touching it with her rather flat feet, she leaned backwards forty-five degrees and travelled in defiance of gravity. Still more eccentric after her visit, she floated away along her cord like a hovercraft, horizontal but debonair.

A companion volume to *How Summer Came*, *The Mountain Goats of Temlaham*, contains a better story. William Toye's version of a B.C. Indian legend is similarly spare and subordinate to Elizabeth Cleaver's illustrations, but in this tale there are legitimate mysteries and some suspense as well. The story of the goat people's vengeance upon an Indian village for the wilful maltreatment of a kid, and the ordeal of the kindly boy they spared at a cost to his nerves, has some of the weird power of a nightmare. And this time some of Elizabeth Cleaver's pictures contain animate figures as well as hand-somely-designed feasts of colour. Those that don't are stylized "stills" of violence, as static yet suggestive of ferocious natural life as a totem pole. Cleaver too is Miss Cleaver's technique of building a picture vertically with layers edged in irregular shaded white — torn-paper edges to create effects of depth, sharp contrasts, and special kinds of design.

The words "clever" and "stylized" are perhaps keys to my misgivings about both

books as books for children. Undoubtedly an adult may appreciate the representation of Glooskap's drowsy surrender to cold as the experience of enchantment and of spring thaw as the tears of Winter. An adult may take an anthropologist's interest in the Indian concept of shape-shifting as touched on in Glooskap's six-month hibernation and explicitly treated in the mountain goats' adoption of human form. Similarly, adults may find associative pleasures in the pictorial evocations of ancient arts — wall paintings, totem poles, ancient mosaics. But will a child see much more than a fairly vivid and unlikely story in *How Summer Came to Canada*, a somewhat more satisfactory one in *The Mountain Goats of Temlaham*, and bonanzas of colour punctuated by perfunctory human and animal forms in both? I suspect not. Granted that the pictures are streets ahead of the stereotyped chocolate-box and colouring-book illustrations of drugstore children's books. But maybe they are too far ahead — or off in the wrong direction. They have a faintly improving air. Subject to the corrections of numerous readers under twelve, I predict that these books will land on the coffee tables of chic parents rather than in the hands of book-lovers among their offspring.

FRANCES FRAZER

ON THE VERGE

***** GUY FREGAULT. *Canada: the War of Conquest*. Translated by Margaret M. Cameron. Oxford, \$9.50. At last one of the important works of Canadian history has become available, in impeccable translation, for those who have not read it in the original. It is not, in the strict sense, a military history; rather, the total history of a war, shown in the lives of the societies involved as well as in

the campaigns waged between them, and illuminated above all by the constant play of opinion derived from the author's exhaustive reading of the political writings of the time in England, France and North America. Basically, the thesis is that two imperial systems — far closer to each other because of common economic and territorial aims and circumstances than most historians have understood — were struggling for the hegemony of North America. One had to win, for the land could not contain both, and whichever did win, the other, by the rules of the game, would be crushed. Mr. Frégault is refreshingly free of the nationalist moralism of many French Canadian historians; he writes with exemplary objectivity, and though he sees mordantly the tragedy in the fact that the destruction of its imperial function meant the destruction of the original Canadian community, he grants that the alternative would have been a similar destruction of the British American communities. This view leads him to deflate some old heroes, particularly Montcalm, and to rehabilitate some old villains, particularly Vaudreuil, who emerges from the book convincingly larger than his traditional image. First-rate, fascinating, sane history.

***** CARL BERGER. *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*. Toronto, \$10.95. With the publication of this book, Carl Berger reveals himself one of Canada's most interesting and eloquent younger historians. *The Sense of Power* is not merely a treatise in nineteenth century politics. It is also a most competent study of the development of Canadians' views of themselves as a group and of their role in the world; agonizing about the Canadian identity is nothing new. The nineteenth century imperialists in this country were most definitely not colonialists. They saw in imperialism a compact of equality, a guarantee of dignity and independence. Today, when Canadian nationalism is again to the fore, and we are reassessing, with some anxiety, our relationship with the United States, Professor Berger's essays on various facets of the imperialist frame of mind are particularly topical. But this is a book that does not depend on any immediate appeal. It is a well-based work of history that will have a permanent relevance, and as writing it is far better than we have been accustomed to expect from our historians, at least when they originate their works in the English language.

**** FRASER SYMINGTON. *The Canadian Indian: The Illustrated History of the Great Tribes of Canada*. McClelland & Stewart,

\$20.00. Our coffee tables are, by now, breaking down under the vast weight of massive picture books on Canada — great tomes that have been descending on us since Centennial Year, mainly from the presses of McClelland & Stewart and largely owing to the editorial activity of Pierre Berton. Had this been merely another Pierre Berton visual treasure, our inclination would have been to place it low on any critical list, just because surfeit makes sated. But it is more. The illustrations are excellent, often quite unfamiliar, and, where rather well-known artists like Catlin and Kane and Bodmer are necessarily resurrected, they are examples that, however western their style, convey the intensity of direct observation. The captions are not always exact, and here we gather the author of the book is not responsible, though many readers will assume that he is, which is unfortunate, for his narrative, substantial and wide-ranging as it is, does recreate very sensitively the panorama of the Indian past, its nobility and its depths, and poignantly evokes the tragedy of its ending as well as the peculiar tenacity of the Indian nature that has produced renewal out of apparent death. It makes one, as a Canadian, proud of one's predecessors and coevals in the land.

**** WALTER D. YOUNG. *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-61*. Toronto, \$8.50. This is an exemplary instance of partisan objectivity. Dr. Young is an active member of the CCF, not without ambition to serve it in political office, but in his history-cum-analytical study of the movement he has treated it in such a manner that his evident sympathy has not prevented a thorough examination of faults as well as virtues, of the political disadvantages which the CCF incurred through being a movement of social change, and of the dilution of idealism that inevitably took place when it began to change from a movement into a party that aimed at the gaining and holding of power. The anarchists would say that the aims of parties and movements are incompatible and irreconcilable, and Dr. Young's analysis appears to show that in this dichotomy is rooted the perennial status of the CCF (and the NDP) as a minority party. He is frank about the tactical errors of CCF propaganda, and about the oligarchical nature of the party structure, which he considers an inevitable if paradoxical feature of democratic politics. A little more care for literary style, a greater concern for the drama of personal relationships which was undoubtedly a part of CCF history, might have made

this a more interesting book, a less flawed piece of literary craftsmanship than it is; they could hardly have made it a truer book, for what stays with one to the end is the sense of complete candour, a quality most partisans avoid.

G.W.

NEW NOVELS

*** ROBERT KROETSCH. *The Studhorse Man*. Macmillan, \$4.50. Robert Kroetsch's earlier novel, *The Words of My Roaring*, promised a great deal; the author showed a fine sense of timing, a gift for comedy, and enough knowledge of myth to mock it sympathetically. *The Studhorse Man* adds to this reputation. Full of bizarre incidents, roiling puns, and absurd parallels, it operates (like Birney's *Turvey*) on at least three levels: narrative epic, national burlesque, and literary parody. The central story concerns Hazard Lepage's quest in vain across Alberta, with his virgin stallion Poseidon, in search of an available mare that will allow his horse's bloodline to continue, and a farmer willing to pay for the deed. Hazard, who spends much of his time with his horse, spends much of the rest of it either urinating or climbing in and out of ladies' beds, avoiding lifesize wax figures, jails, and judges whenever possible. Unfortunately, in a rather gory climax, he finds he can't avoid the horse, and his quite literal downfall destroys him. The myth of opportunity that surrounds the frontier is thus successfully debunked, but beneath this lies the literary parody, for Hazard can't get out of the way of his unfaithful Sancho Panza Boswellian biographer either. The epic catalogues are pedigree lists; the epic battles are verbal contests in which truck drivers and others heatedly hurl about the terms that ten-year-olds use for their naming of parts. The Penelope-figure is Martha Proudfoot of Coulee Hill, thirteen years abandoned by Hazard but not exactly languishing; and the pompous stiff biographer/bard is her first cousin, Demeter. Kroetsch's style controls Demeter's, however, and his deliberate use of understatement and anti-climax contributes happily to the success of his witty and entertaining book.

** SEYMOUR BLICKER. *Blues Chased a Rabbit*. Chateau Books Ltd., \$6.95. Sex, sadism, murder, drugs, and race prejudice characterize the world of this unattractively-printed but

emotionally committed first novel by a young Montrealer. Set in the increasingly less private world of a Mississippi hamlet, it explores the inhumane attitudes and aberrant actions with which a young black man must contend. As his manhood and existence are challenged, he is forced pathetically into violent action. Many of the scenes are repulsively and gratuitously grotesque, but there is a talent here that may develop.

* BILL T. O'BRIEN. *Summer of the Black Sun*. Prism International Press in association with November House, \$4.95. A black comedy of Billy Louper, incarcerated because insane, recalling vigorously the madnesses of the sane world that got him where he is today. The inversion is deliberate; the beginning and end of the book toy with the likeness between killing and being killed. Compared with the mad world of a novelist like Janet Frame, however, the madness here seems contrived, and the incidents on which the comedy hangs seem accordingly self-indulgent.

* WILL R. BIRD. *An Earl Must Have a Wife*. Clarke Irwin, \$5.95. Admirers of Bird's earlier works will find this character narrative—a fictional biography of J. F. W. Des Barres (P.E.I.'s Lieutenant-Governor, 1804-12)—equally interesting. Traditional in construction and "light" in intent, the novel traces Des Barres' transAtlantic *affaires* with dispassionate wit. The stiff dialogue and sonorous expositions seem curiously out-of-date in 1970—not bad in themselves, but reminders of an Edwardian time when prose fiction moved at a more leisurely pace.

JOHN LATIMER. *The King's Rock*. General Publishing, \$4.95. A Roman adventure in Egypt, by Edward Bulwer-Lytton out of Franklin W. Dixon—a sort of Hardy Boys Visit to Pharaoh's Tomb. The author has trouble starting, but as his style calms down, his story gains pace. Yet the characters are never rounded out (as in Mary Renault, for example), nor is the Age of Domitian revived.

HILDA SHUBERT. *They Came from Kernitza*. Chateau Books Ltd., \$6.50. Here, there are three stories about Jewish immigrants to Canada. So, they seek after the ambivalent tones of which Sholom Aleichem was a master. However, they fall short—largely because of the enervating preponderance of Introductory Adverbial Constructions.

W.H.N.

CANADIAN LITERATURE-1969



A CHECKLIST EDITED BY RITA BUTTERFIELD

ENGLISH-CANADIAN

LITERATURE

Compiled by Rita Butterfield

FICTION

- AKULA, KASTUS. *Tomorrow is yesterday*. Toronto, New York, Pahonia Pub., 1968. 225 p.
- ATWOOD, MARGARET. *The edible woman*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 281 p.
- BACQUE, JAMES. *The lonely ones*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969.
- BASSETT, DAVID. *Tresilian, a novel*. Montreal, Canadian British Pub., 1968. 408 p.
- BURKE, JAMES. *The firefly hunt*. Toronto, Collins, 1969.
- CASTLE, JOHN (pseud.) & Arthur Hailey. *Runway zero-eight*. Toronto, Bantam Books, 1969. 168 p. (First published in 1958 as "Flight into danger").
- CLUTESI, GEORGE. *Potlatch*. Sidney, B.C. Gray's Pub., 1969. 188 p.
- COHEN, MATT. *Korsoniloff*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 106 p.
- CORNISH, JOHN. *A world turned turtle*. Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1969.
- DE MILLE, JAMES. *A strange manuscript found in a copper cylinder*. Introduction by R. Watters. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 255 p. (New Canadian Library no. 68. (First published 1888.))
- DESBARATS, PETER, editor. *What they used to tell about, Indian legends from Labrador*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 92 p.
- EARL, LAWRENCE. *Risk, a novel of suspense*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 192 p.
- ENGEL, MARIAN. *No clouds of glory*. Toronto, Longmans, Canada, 1968. 181 p.
- EUSTACE, C. J. *A spring in the desert*. Garden City, Doubleday, 1969. 288 p.
- FINDLEY, TIMOTHY. *The butterfly plague*. New York, Viking Press, 1969. 376 p.
- FOXELL, NIGEL. *Carnival*. Ottawa, Oberon Press, 1968. 139 p.
- GARBER, LAWRENCE. *Garber's tales from the quarter*. Toronto, P. Martin, 1969. 396 p.
- GIBSON, GRAEME. *Five legs*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 194 p.
- GOTTLIEB, PHYLLIS. *Why should I have all the grief?* Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1969. 149 p.
- HARRIS, CHRISTIE. *Let X be excitement*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 236 p. Also: New York, Atheneum, 1969.
- HELWIG, DAVID. *The streets of summer*. Ottawa, Oberon Press, 1969. 188 p.
- HOLDEN, HELENE. *The chain, a novel*. Don Mills, Longmans Canada, 1969.
- IRWIN, GRACE. *Contend with horses*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 284 p.
- JANES, PERCY. *House of hate*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969.
- KIRBY, WILLIAM. *The golden dog (Le chien d'or), a romance of Old Quebec*. Abridged edition. Introduction by Derek Crawley. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 321 p. (New Canadian Library no. 65.) (First published 1877.)
- KOCH, ERIC. *The French kiss*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 223 p.
- KROETSCH, ROBERT. *The studhorse man*. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1969. 168 p.
- LAURENCE, MARGARET. *The fire-dwellers*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 308 p. Also: New York, Knopf, 1969.
- LAURENCE, MARGARET. *Now I lay me down*. London, Panther Books, 1968. 188 p.

- LOWRY, MALCOLM. *Lunar caustic*. Edited by Earle Birney and Margerie Lowry. London, J. Cape, 1968. 78 p. (First published 1963).
- MACKENZIE, DONALD. *Dead straight*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1969. 209 p.
- MCLEISH, DOUGAL (pseud.). *The Valentine victim* [by D. J. Goodspeed]. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1969. 201 p.
- MAROIS, RUSSELL. *The telephone pole*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 143 p.
- MONTROSE, DAVID. *Gambling with life*. Toronto Longmans Canada, 1969. 192 p.
- New Canadian writing, 1969*. Stories by John Metcalf, D. O. Spettigue and C. J. Newman. Toronto, Clarke, Irwin, 1969.
- NEWTON, NORMAN. *The big stuffed hand of friendship*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 203 p.
- NICHOL, B. P. *Andy/For Jesus sunatick*. Toronto, Coach House Press, 1969. Unpaged.
- O'BRIEN, BILL T. *Summer of the black sun*. Vancouver, Prism International Press in association with November House, 1969. 162 p.
- PARKER, WILLIAM W. M. *Belle Anne of Pine Point*. Edmonton, 1969. 100 p.
- PETER JOHN. *Runaway*. Garden City. Doubleday, 1969. 300 p.
- RICHLER, MORDECAI. *The apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Introduction by A. R. Bevan. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 319 p. (New Canadian Library no. 66). (First published 1959).
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Airport nurse* by Rose Williams (pseud.) New York, Arcadia House, 1968. 192 p.
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Barnabas Collins*, by Marilyn Ross (pseud.). New York, Paperback Library, 1968. 157 p.
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Behind locked shutters*. New York, Arcadia House, 1968. 192 p.
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Dark of the moon*. New York, Arcadia House, 1968. 192 p.
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Girl in love*. New York, T. Bouregy, 1968. 192 p. Also: Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1968.
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Let your heart answer*. New York, T. Bouregy, 1968. 190 p. Also: London, B. Hale, 1968.
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Network nurse* by Rose Dana (pseud.) New York, Arcadian House, 1968. 192 p.
- ROSS, WILLIAM E. D. *Whitebridge nurse* by Rose Dana (pseud.). New York, Arcadia House, 1968. 192 p.
- SANDMAN, JOHN. *Eating out*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 94 p.
- SHAFFER, IVAN. *The Midas compulsion*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 365 p.
- SHUBERT, HILDA. *They came from Kernitza*. Montreal, Chateau Books, 1969. 245 p.
- SMITH, FRANK. *Corpse in handcuffs*. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1969. 176 p.
- SMITH, RAY. *Cape Breton is the thought control centre of Canada*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 135 p.
- SPENCE, RAYMOND. *Nothing black but a Cadillac*. Don Mills, Longmans Canada, 1969.
- SPENCER, ELIZABETH. *Ship Island, and other stories*. Toronto, McGraw-Hill, 1968. 175 p.
- VERMANDEL, JANET GREGORY. *Murder most fair*. London, H. Jenkins, 1968. 168 p.
- VERMANDEL, JANET GREGORY. *Scratch a lover*. New York, Dodd, Mead, 1969. 184 p.
- WILLIAMS, GERSHOM. *The native strength*. Toronto, Century Press, c1968. 102 p.
- WOODS, SARA (pseud.). *Knives have edges*. London, published for the Crime Club by Collins, 1968. 254 p.
- WOODS, SARA (pseud.). *Past praying for*. New York, Harper & Row, 1968. 230 p.
- WOODS, SARA (pseud.). *Tarry and be hanged*. London, Collins, 1969.

POETRY

- ACORN, MILTON. *I've tasted my blood, poems 1956-1968*. Selected by Al Purdy. Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1969. 136 p.
- Alberta poetry yearbook, 1968*. Edmonton, Edmonton Branch, Canadian Authors Association, 1969. 78 p.
- ANSON, PETER, editor. *Canada first*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 111 p.
- ANSTEY, EDYTHE. *Rainbow collection, a book of poems*. Vancouver, 1968. 20 p.
- BAGLEY, RAY. *Those other days*. n.p., R. Bagley, 1969. 102 p.
- BALL, NELSON. *Water-pipes and moonlight*. Toronto, Weed/flower Press, 1969. 12 p. (150 copies).

- BAUER, WALTER. *The price of morning*. Preface by Henry Beissel. Vancouver, Prism International Press, 1968. 147 p.
- BAUER, WILLIAM A. *Cornet music for Plumpy Shute*. Fredericton, University of New Brunswick, 1968. 26 p. (New Brunswick poetry chapbook).
- BIRNEY, EARLE. *The poems of Earle Birney*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 64 p. (New Canadian Library, 6.)
- BISSETT, BILL. *Awake in the red desert*. Vancouver, Talonbooks and See/Hear Productions, 1968. 63 p. & a 12-inch LP recording.
- BISSETT, BILL. *Lost angel mining company*. Vancouver, Blew Ointment Press, 1969. Unpaged.
- BISSETT, BILL. *Sunday work?* Vancouver, Blew Ointment Press, 1969. Unpaged.
- BOWERING, GEORGE. *The gangs of Kosmos*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 64 p.
- BOWERING, GEORGE. *Rocky Mountain foot: a lyric, a memoir*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1968. 127 p.
- BOWERING, GEORGE. *Two police poems*. Vancouver, Talonbooks, 1969. 23 p.
- BRAIDWOOD, TOM. *The journey of Terion Cariate Guilda*. Vancouver, Lighthouse Press, 1968. 18 p.
- BREWSTER, ELIZABETH. *Passage of summer, selected poems*. Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1969. 129 p.
- CARMAN, BLISS. *A vision of Sappho*. Toronto, Canadiana House, 1968. 7 p. (Reprint of New York 1903 ed.).
- CHARLES, BARRY. *You used to like my pies*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 48 p.
- COGSWELL, FRED. *Immortal plowman*. Fredericton, N.B., Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1969. 38 p.
- COLOMBO, JOHN. *John Toronto, new poems by Dr. Strachan* [Edited] by John Colombo. Ottawa, Oberon Press, 1969. 94 p.
- COOPERMAN, STANLEY. *The day of the parrot, and other poems*. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1968. 86 p.
- CORMIER, LOUIS. *The silent cowboys of the East*. Fredericton, N.B., Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1969. 28 p.
- DAY, STACEY B. *Poems and études*. Montreal, Cultural and Educational Productions, 1968. 110 p.
- DIXON, LANGFORD. *When laughter put to sea*. Toronto, Langmar Studios, 1968. 52 p.
- ESHLEMAN, CLAYTON. *The house of Okumura*. Toronto, Weed/flower Press, 1969. 37 p.
- EVERSON, RONALD G. *Dark is not so dark*. Montreal, Delta Canada, 1969.
- FERRARI, LEO. *The worm's revenge*. Foreword by Al Pittman. Fredericton, Mortuary Press, 1968. 56 p.
- FETHERLING, DOUG, editor. *Thumbprints*. Toronto, P. Martin, 1969. 70 p.
- FETHERLING, DOUG. *The United States of Heaven, Gwendolyn Papers. That chain-letter hiway*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1968. 77 p.
- FLEET, BRENDA. *Catching the sun's fire*. Fredericton, Fiddlehead Books, 1969. Unpaged.
- FORD, R. A. D. *The solitary city, poems and translations*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 94 p.
- FRASER, RAYMOND. *I've laughed and sung through the whole night long, seen the summer sun rise in the morning*. Montreal, Delta Canada, 1969. 59 p.
- GERVAIS, C. H. *Something*. Toronto, Bandit Press, 1969. 8 p.
- GILBERT, GERRY. *Phone book*. Toronto, Gargalia Press & Weed/flower Press, 1969. 49 p. (*Gronk*, ser. 3, no. 3, June 1969.)
- GNAROWSKI, MICHAEL. *The gentlemen are also lexicographers*. Montreal, Delta Canada, 1969 [1968]. 25 p.
- GOTLIEB, PHYLLIS. *Ordinary, moving*. Don Mills, Oxford University Press, 1969. 96 p.
- GOURLAY, ELIZABETH. *Motions, dreams & aberrations*. Victoria, B.C., Morriss Printing, 1969. 68 p.
- GROVES, EDYTHE M. *Funnybones: Comic verse*. Strathmore, Alta., 1969. 68 p.
- GUSTAFSON, RALPH. *Ixion's wheel*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 128 p.
- HELWIG, DAVID. *Sign of the gunman*. Ottawa, Oberon Press, 1969.
- HINE, DARYL. *Minutes; poems*. New York, Atheneum, 1968. 53 p.
- HOWE, THOMAS CORNELL. *There is the sunshine*. Vancouver, Lighthouse Press, 1969.
- JOHNSON, E. PAULINE. *Flint and feather; the complete poems of E. Pauline Johnson*. With an introduction by Theodore Watts-Dunton. Toronto, Hodder & Stoughton, 1969. 170 p. (First published 1912).

- KEARNS, LIONEL. *By the light of the silvery Mclune; media parables poems signs gestures and other assaults on the interface*. Vancouver, Daylight Press, 1969. 80 p.
- KEEFE, GEORGE. *Sounding off*. Montreal West, Ink/Inc., 1969. 20 p.
- KNIGHT, DAVID. *The army does not go away*. Toronto, House of Anansi, 1969. 42 p.
- KOBLE, SANDRA. *All there is of love*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 100 p.
- LAYTON, IRVING. *Selected poems*. Edited by Wynne Francis. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 139 p.
- LAYTON, IRVING. *The whole bloody bird; obs, aphs & pomes*. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1969. 155 p.
- LOCHHEAD, DOUGLAS. *A & B & C & ; an alphabet*. Toronto, Fathom Press, 1969. 30 p. (60 copies).
- MACEWEN, GWENDOLYN. *The shadow-maker*. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1969. 93 p.
- MCNAIR, MARGUERITE. *Lilacs; and other poems*. Fredericton, N.B., Printed by Unipress, 1968. 24 p.
- MARLATT, DAPHNE. *Leaf leaf's*. Los Angeles, Black Sparrow Press, 1969. 53 p.
- MARSHALL, TOM. *The silences of fire*. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1969. 70 p.
- MAYNE, SEYMOUR. *Anewd*. Vancouver, Very Stone House, 1969. 13 p.
- MAYNE, SEYMOUR. *Manimals*. Vancouver, Very Stone House, 1969. 38 p.
- MAYNE, SEYMOUR. *Mutetations*. Vancouver, Very Stone House, 1969. 8 p.
- MURRAY, RONA. *The power of the dog & other poems*. Victoria, Morriss Printing, 1968. 59 p.
- NOWLAN, ALDEN. *The mysterious naked man*. Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1969. 93 p.
- OLIPHANT, ROBERT G. *Five and three; a small collection of my poetry*. Victoria, B.C., 1968.
- ONDAATJE, MICHAEL. *The man with seven toes*. Toronto, Coach House Press, 1969. Unpaged.
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