Time and Space in the Fiction of Malcolm Lowry

THE VOYAGE THAT NEVER ENDS

Time and Space in the Fiction of Malcolm Lowry

by
Sherrill E. Grace

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Abstract

This study of Malcolm Lowry's fiction explores his art in terms of his philosophical and aesthetic beliefs. The chief premise of the thesis is that Lowry's individual works are best understood as members of his unfinished masterwork The Voyage That Never Ends. Lowry's letters, reading, and manuscripts are examined in order to clarify the attitudes toward time and space which led to his concept of the never-ending voyage. Detailed analysis of the fiction follows. Lowry believed that time must flow if life and art are to continue, and each of the novels expresses a protagonist's repeated efforts to overcome the stasis of distorted perception. Through narrative technique, image, symbol, and style, Lowry creates a narrative structure that embodies his concept of man's never-ending struggle to free himself from the past in order to live in the present and create the future.

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Résumé

Cette étude de la fiction chez Malcolm Lowry traite sur son art de la perspective de ses croyances philosophiques et esthetiques. Le point saillant de cette thèse est que chacun des écrits de Lowry peut être mieux compris s'il est consideré comme une partie de son oeuvre globale inachevée, The Voyage That Never Ends. La correspondence de Lowry, ses lectures et ses manuscrits ont été analysés dans le but de comprendre plus clairement ses idées concernant le temps et l'espace qui l'ont mené a sa conception du voyage sans fin. Une analyse detaillée de la fiction est ensuite entreprise. Lowry croyait que le temps devait passer pour que la vie et l'art puissent se perpétuer, et chacun de ses romans décrit les efforts soustenus d'un protagoniste cherchant a surmonter l'immobilité d'une perception deformée. Par la technique narrative, par les images, les symboles et le style, Lowry crée une structure narrative qui incorpore ses idées sur la lutte incessante de l'homme qui cherche à se libérer du passé afin de vivre dans le présent et de créer l'avenir.

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Those stones are yours, those noises are your mind,
The forging thunderous trams and streets that bind
You to the dreamed-of bar where sits despair
Are trams and streets: poetry is otherwhere.
The cinema fronts and shops once left behind
And mourned, are mourned no more. Strangely unkind
Seem all new landmarks of the now and here.

But move you toward New Zealand or the Pole,
Those stones will blossom and the noises sing,
And trams will wheedle to the sleeping child
That never rests, whose ship will always roll,
That never can come home, but yet must bring
Strange trophies back to Illium, and wild!

Malcolm Lowry

". . . the attempt has been made to relate these typical dreams, or vicarious adventures, not discretely, but in flux."

Conrad Aiken

". . . every being feels as space that which . . . he is able to represent to himself in form, outside of himself; and that which he is not able thus to represent he feels as time, eternally moving, impermanent . . . ."

P. D. Ouspensky

". . . serialism in Time is almost bound to signify serialism in other matters . . . .we shall find that it involves a serial obsever."

J.W. Dunne

"Set ye out upon that 'Never-ending journey, each step of which is an unutterable reward' . . . ."

Frater Achad

". . . to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."

Henri Bergson

"The time has come for the seed sown by Heraclitus to bring forth its mighty harvest."

Ortega y Gasset

Preface

A study of time and space in literature rests upon the assumption that in some sense temporal and spatial dimensions pertain to poetry and fiction. Certainly the number of studies during the last thirty years, especially on time but more recently on space, by such critics as Joseph Frank, A.A. Mendilow, Leonard Meyer, Hans Meyerhoff, Cary Nelson, Georges Poulet, and Sharon Spencer, reinforce the belief that a novelist or a poet, through his manipulation of language and technique, is able to create the illusion of time and space in his art. In his Laocoön, Lessing categorized literature as a temporal art which requires a unilinear passage of time to be apprehended. The plastic arts, on the other hand, were described as space arts because they are ideally capable of being perceived instantaneously. From Lessing on, discussion of time and space in art has been a discussion of the perception of temporal and spatial dimensions in the art object or a study of the interaction of perception and the art medium.

'Time' in fiction usually means continuity, irreversibility, and sequence inherent in the syntactical structure of language and embodied in the story element of a work. Mendilow, one of the first critics of time in the novel, has pointed out that there are several time levels in fiction: there is the time required to write and to read the work; there is the fictional time in which the story is set; finally there is the narrator's time, usually a present viewpoint looking back upon the past of the story. The past, present, and future of the characters exist within the fictional time, while the subtle relationship of fictional time to narrator's time or the reader's time creates many interesting temporal relations. It is well recognized that a writer has always been able to slow down or speed up his narrative in order to manipulate the reader's expectations of temporal flow; Sterne was the first novelist to explode narrative sequence. Finally, what we call 'time' in literature is experiential and subjective as opposed to the

objective time that is measured in science; in the words of Thomas Mann, "time is the medium of narration, as it is the medium of life."

Critics, however, are no longer willing to describe literature as a solely temporal art; this even applies to the novel which is traditionally considered the most temporal of literary forms. The writing of Proust, Eliot, Pound, Joyce and others necessitated a critical revaluation of Lessing's categories. One of the first modern attempts to restate the time-space problem, and still one of the best, is Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature." Using Lessing as his starting point, Frank argues that modern writers "ideally intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence." Units of meaning, from passages of exposition and character description to symbols, images, key words and phrases, are presented disjointedly in juxtaposed fragments, instead of consecutively, so that their ultimate significance does not depend upon a temporal sequence; therefore, such works must be read reflexively. More recently, Cary Nelson, in The Incarnate Word: Literature as Verbal Space, has argued that poetry and fiction comprise a world or space which we inhabit when we read, or conversely that "to read is to fold the world into the body's house." Nelson, applying a structuralist methodology (and assumptions) to the intensely immediate experience of reading, believes that space is "inherent to literary form" as well as a mode of perception.

The "world" of a novel, "this pattern or structure or organism, which includes plot, characters, setting, world-view, 'tone'," is as Wellek and Warren point out in Theory of Literature, a "space term." The novel, then, is a structure which the reader is imaginatively able to inhabit. Simultaneously, the novel is a time art; it is a narrative form of fiction and tells a story in temporal sequence. Modes of time and space are as inextricably involved in the perception of a novel as in life.

The significance of time and space in narrative fiction is a function of structure. Throughout the present study, the term structure is used to refer to the aesthetically directed formal elements of fiction which are constitutive of narrative art. By narrative is meant a literary work that contains a story-teller and a story; the

formal elements, plot, technique, symbol and image, and style, are the means by which the writer creates the narrative structure. Only in the manipulation of these formal elements is the novelist able to create a structure that can suggest temporal and spatial dimensions. In fact, in the case of much modern fiction, writers appear to be especially interested in exploiting the tensions arising from the temporally and spatially directed elements of structure.

Malcolm Lowry was fascinated by questions of time and space and his work is extremely well suited to close textual analysis. In this study of Lowry, two problems are discussed: first, the structure of each of his books is examined in order to explore Lowry's handling of time and space; second, and most important for an appreciation of Lowry, the reasons for his particular handling of time and space are clarified. Too often modern critics (Meyer and Spencer, for example) assume that, because contemporary writers exploit spatial dimensions in literature as opposed to the traditional temporal dimension, they are for various reasons antipathetic to time and seeking to overcome, through "spatial form" or stasis, temporal flow and the phenomenon of change; this is certainly not the case with Lowry.

Questions of time and space in Lowry's fiction form the essential core to his understanding of art and reality. Lowry was a romantic (terms like visionary, Dionysiac, or possessed, also come to mind) and he was a highly intellectual, philosophically oriented writer in that he strove to embody in his fiction a complex and passionately lived metaphysic. By examining his ideas on aesthetics and metaphysics and carefully exploring the structure of each of his books, one may acquire a better understanding of Lowry's unique genius as well as of his position in modern literature.

Chapter I of this study comprises both introduction to and summary of Lowry's work. Without some prior knowledge of Lowry's concept of the never-ending voyage, it is not easy to appreciate the novels and stories. Chapter II is devoted to a study of Lowry's philosophy and aesthetics. Chapters III to VII are detailed textual analyses of Lowry's prose work that explore the function and significance of time and space in the structure of his art.

One of the essential aims of this study, growing as it does out of

my great admiration for Lowry, is to bring as much material as possible to bear upon a comprehensive analysis of his work. The material discussed is not limited to the published novels and letters but, where helpful, information from the manuscripts, notebooks, unpublished letters, and Lowry's 1951 statement about his Work in Progress has also been included. Lowry's manuscripts are of particular value to the critic of his work, not only because so much manuscript material exists, but because three of his books, Dark as the Grave, October Ferry to Gabriola, and Hear us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place were published posthumously with differing degrees of editing. Consultation of the manuscripts facilitates ultimate evaluation and, at times, understanding of the text.

This study of Malcolm Lowry owes much to previous work on the man and his art; the long bibliography of critical studies reflects the extent of this debt. Two books, however, have been of particular value - William New's short but thorough and sensitive Malcolm Lowry and Douglas Day's recent biography. I wish to express my appreciation to Jay Martin for his help with Aiken, and to Albert Erskine and Margerie Lowry for their help with details concerning Lowry's work. Anne Yandle, Head of the Special Collections Library at the University of British Columbia, has been exceptionally kind in allowing me to study the Lowry papers. I would like to thank several members of the McGill English Faculty who have assisted me in the preparation of the thesis: in particular, Peter Buitenhuis, my supervisor, and the other members of my Ph.D. Committee, Abbott Conway and Louis Dudek. I am also indebted to Alec Lucas, Peter Ohlin, Max Dorsinville, and David Williams. Above all, I wish to thank my husband who, though not a Lowry afficionado, has encouraged and advised me throughout the research and writing of this thesis. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to the Canada Council for the Doctoral Fellowship that enabled me to pursue my Lowry studies and the Canada Council and McGill Graduate Faculty for grants that allowed me to study the Lowry papers in Vancouver.

CHAPTER I

THE VOYAGE THAT NEVER ENDS

The Voyage That Never Ends was Lowry's title for an interconnected group of novels of which only a few were in any sense completed. This huge and fascinating project evolved slowly in his mind. Sometime during 1940, Lowry conceived of a Dantean trilogy to follow on from Under the Volcano, and in 1946 he described his plan to the publisher Jonathan Cape:

> [I] conceived the idea of a trilogy entitled The Voyage That Never Ends for your firm (nothing less than a trilogy would do) with the Volcano as the first, infernal part, a much amplified Lunar Caustic as the second, purgatorial part, and an enormous novel I was also working on called In Ballast to the White Sea...as the paradisal third part, the whole to concern the battering the human spirit takes...in its ascent towards its true purpose.[1]

In Ballast to the White Sea, totally destroyed by fire in 1944, was to have been the story of a young man's salvation from inertia through the coincidental meeting with an older writer for whom he has mysterious "transcendental" feelings of affinity (Selected Letters, 263). Lowry's plans for the novel were fascinating and its destruction is a sad loss.

Although In Ballast to the White Sea was destroyed, Lowry's plans for a major opus grew. Very likely the Dantean parallel, although always loose, became too restrictive for Lowry; certainly Dante's hierarchical, Platonic structure was uncongenial. It was characteristic of Lowry's creative methods and philosophical beliefs that his plan would expand in the effort to include everything. By the fall of 1951 he had reconstituted his literary continuum and he wrote to his agent Harold Matson that it would include,

> five, perhaps six interrelated novels, of which the Volcano would be one, though not the best one by any means, the novel you suggested I should write some years back, a sort of Under Under the Volcano, should be ten times more terrible (tentatively it's called Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend Is Laid) and the last one La Mordida that throws the whole thing into reverse and issues in triumph. (The Consul is brought to life again, that is the real Consul; Under the Volcano

itself functions as a sort of battery in the middle but only as a work of the imagination by the protagonist.) Better still: some years back I was not equipped to tackle a task of this nature: now, it seems to me, I've gone through the necessary spiritual ordeals that have permitted me to see the truth of what I'm getting at and to see the whole business clearly: . . .

(Selected Letters, 267)

Lowry sent a detailed fifty-page statement of this ambitious project entitled Work in Progress to Matson on November 22, 1951. Matson then sent Work in Progress to Robert Giroux of Harcourt-Brace who wrote back to say that "THE VOYAGE THAT NEVER ENDS, promises what might be the most important literary project of the decade" (Selected Letters, 445). The new plan for his novels was as follows:

THE VOYAGE THAT NEVER ENDS

The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness, I
Untitled Sea Novel
Lunar Caustic
Under the Volcano: The Centre
Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid
Eridanus
La Mordida
The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness, II[2]

The Untitled Sea Novel is, of course, Ultramarine which Lowry felt needed considerable re-writing. Lunar Caustic, instead of functioning as a "purgatorio" as in the earlier trilogy plan, now falls before Under the Volcano which holds a focal position mid-way in the Voyage. Lowry thought of Dark as the Grave, Eridanus, and La Mordida as a "trilogy" within the Voyage and he worked on them concurrently. According to Work in Progress, Eridanus was to consist of the stories in Hear us O Lord, the poems in his unfinished collection The Lighthouse Invites the Storm, and a play. October Ferry to Gabriola, originally intended as a story for Hear us O Lord, grew into a full-scale novel absorbing most of the material for Eridanus.

Despite this impressive outline, Lowry died in 1957 with very little of The Voyage That Never Ends in its final form. Dark as the Grave, October Ferry, and Hear us O Lord, were all published posthumously and, with the exception of Hear us O Lord, involved major editing. La Mordida, Eridanus, and The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness, parts I and II, comprise hundreds of pages of manuscript and typescript housed

in the Lowry Collection at the University of British Columbia. The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness, judging by the Voyage plan the most crucial of these manuscripts, is a sprawling collection of prose passages interspersed with notes from Arthur Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being and Annie Besant's The Ancient Wisdom. Briefly, the protagonist called Martin, lying in hospital, overhears a conversation about himself and experiences a vision in which a friend who committed suicide during his university days returns to converse with him. Little more of shape or purpose can be gleaned from the typescript.

Given the fragmentary state of Lowry's The Voyage That Never Ends, the question naturally arises as to how and why the Voyage can be used as the base for a discussion of Lowry's work. In the first place, enough of the Voyage exists to make Lowry's intentions clear; the fact that some of the novels are "corrupt texts" (unfinished by the author), may lessen the power of individual novels, but does not reduce the significance of the Voyage continuum. In the second place, as well as being the informing idea and the title of the collection, the concept of the never-ending voyage is integral to the individual texts; each novel and story can only be fully appreciated in terms of "the voyage that never ends."

The significance of "the voyage that never ends" is two-fold; the voyage is a search that is never finished. In other words, the voyage is a quest without a final goal except the knowledge that the voyaging must continue. Through this concept of the voyage Lowry attempts to give artistic shape to his vision of reality; the voyage is not purposeless wandering, but a multi-levelled movement through time and space in search of wisdom, balance, and 'life'. This movement provides the plot in each of the novels. Underlying the social, psychological, and religious levels of his writing are the metaphysical and epistemological quests, the journey in search of reality and the search for methods of knowing that reality. In a profound sense that will become clear in examining the texts, the constant journeying is the epistemological answer to metaphysical and aesthetic questions.

Lowry's acceptance of a dynamic relationship between his life and art, far from being mere solipsism, springs from his belief that one can create one's life and self continually in art. The voyage, then,

is also a search for identity, not a pre-existent identity like Proust's which can be found in the past, but an identity that must be created in the present and in the future if it is to exist at all. In this process of self-creation, the writer or man (following Ortega y Gasset, Lowry felt that man was a type of novelist) continually creates new masks or aspects of personality which, only when taken as a whole, comprise a balanced person. The many Lowryean protagonists, although they do capture a certain sense of spatial multiplicity by representing various points of view, are all similar. His emphasis is not so much upon wide point of view as on the fact of continual creation; each new protagonist represents, as it were, a discharge of creative energy, an activity that must be maintained if life forces are not to atrophy.

This need for constant creative activity is manifest in the "never ending" aspect of the Lowry voyage. Lowry believed that in no positive sense could the voyage end; the only 'ends' in Lowry's work are dead-ends, abysses, hells of despair, hatred, and distorted perception. Within the Lowry world there is no place for fixed, final goals either in individual lives or in the cosmos. Life <u>is</u> repeated effort, constant motion, withdrawal and return, a journey ever "beginning again" and always "outward bound." Each novel marks a "punctum indifferens"* in the voyage. In each of the books the protagonist repeats the journey through time and space and, at best, reaches a temporary point of rest and happiness before beginning again. George Santayana, whose <u>Three Philosophical Poets</u> he knew well (see Chapter VI, page 140 and Appendix II, page 170), speaks for Lowry as much as for Goethe when he writes that "to be unfinished is essential to the romantic life."[3]

A consideration of Lowry's <u>Voyage</u>, either the literary continuum

*The original title for Lowry's early story "Seductio Ad Absurdum" was the punning Latin-Norwegian phrase "Punctum Indifferens Skibet Gaar Videre" (Pointless Point The Ship Sails On). The point is pointless because individual existence and reality are never still but always moving on into the future; temporal flow cannot be broken down into static points of past, present, and future.

or the concept, leads directly to questions of time and space. Just as Lowry cannot be fully appreciated without prior knowledge of his voyage theories, those theories cannot be understood without an awareness of Lowry's reverence for time and fear of space. Over and over again, in published works, manuscripts, and notes, Lowry equates time with flow, motion, and a positive Bergsonian sense of duration. Space, isolated from time, he repeatedly views negatively as timelessness or stasis; stasis becomes hell or death, a condition of spatial enclosure, suffocation, and entrapment. The thrust of Lowry's art is to overcome space as stasis and to live within the flow of time. His writing, from the early stories until his death, expresses his need for time and his terror of space which, when perceived as cut off from temporal flow, threatens to enclose and destroy. If the voyage were to end, it would necessitate - in terms of Lowry's polarities - the end of time and the victory of space.

The striking feature of this attitude towards time and space is its difference from the main body of Western religious and philosophical belief. Traditionally, Western man has been what might be called "space-ist"; Cronos, the devourer, the God of death and mutability is to be mourned, dreaded, and if possible overcome with an eternal, timeless heaven, Platonic forms, or the grecian urn of poetry - each of these responses to mortality recalling space. Alternatively, and to a much lesser degree, Western man in the Heraclitean tradition has sought to embrace flux. The chief modern exponent of time and the temporal flux of becoming is Bergson; from his point of view, space, often identified with reductive reason, is described as death or stasis. Interestingly enough, Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson observe in The Modern Tradition that the traditional Western spatial bias favouring timeless essences has shifted:

> The traditional assumption that permanence is better than change, Being superior to Becoming, eternity more real than time, is often set aside, questioned, or even reversed in modern thought.[4]

Lowry belongs to the line of thinkers from Heraclitus to Bergson who believe that reality is ceaseless flux and that the flow of time is life - Bergson's "élan vital." In the Voyage as a whole and in the individual novels, Lowry was attempting to capture nothing less than

reality itself; his art represents the effort to incarnate, without destroying, the eternal flow of time and to reveal the beauty and magic power of this flow by juxtaposing time with space, flow with stasis. Lowry's art arises from the dynamic tension between time and space dramatized in the endless voyage of withdrawal and return:

> Voyage, the homeward-outward-bound voyage; everybody was on such a voyage [...] even the light, the sea outside, now due to an accident of sun and dislimning cloud looking like a luminosity between two darknesses, a space between two immensities, was on such a voyage, to the junction of the two infinities, where it would set out on its way again, had already set out, toward the infinitely small, itself already expanding before you had thought of it, to replenish the limitless light of chaos - [5]

It is possible to argue that, by setting up a circular structure like the continuum of his Voyage in which the individual novels repeat over and over the fundamental process of withdrawal and return, Lowry defeated his most cherished purpose. Cycles of recurrence can be viewed as expressions of timeless laws or as manifestations, for example in the myth of eternal return, of the desire to escape the burden of linear, historical progress.[6] From this point of view, then, Lowry would appear to be working at cross purposes in his attempt to shape Bergsonian flow around a principle resembling eternal return. That there is an element of tragic inconsistency, indeed impossibility, in the philosophical ramifications of Lowry's masterplan is certainly true, but it is characteristic of his thought - in this sense mystical - to create a vehicle for the union of opposites; Lowry believed that the way up and the way down were one and that heaven and hell were the same place. Apparently, he was not particularly disconcerted by the implicit timeless law of his 'system'; as is implied in "The Forest Path to the Spring," he drew comfort from the unchanging law of change, "of nature's intolerance of inertia." Basically he despised systems, religious or otherwise, and he emphasized the constant motion, the all-inclusiveness, the flexibility and the creative power of his voyage concept.

Lowry's belief in the unity of opposites can be traced at all levels of his thought. For example, the circle, because of its ambiguity and comprehensiveness, is the single most important symbol in Lowry's work - more important even than the sea which is a pervasive

Lowryean symbol of life and motion. He used the circle deliberately, as temporal cycle, as circular structure, as globe, wheel, or enclosure, delighting in the rich ambivalence of its symbolism. Lowryean circles can symbolize destructive, static, enclosing space, the most powerful example being the infernal "trochal" structure of Under the Volcano or conversely, as Lowry's "symbol of tenuous order," the circle can flow and move to symbolize the interpenetration of time and space.

In the Metamorphoses of the Circle, Georges Poulet writes that the circle is the most recurrent of forms in all beliefs and "a structural principle for all types of consciousness."[7] Speaking of Rilke, who in this sense is similar to Lowry, Poulet writes:

> Space is therefore a sheet of still water, on which, in circles, is written the undulatory and eccentric progress of all things. All irradiates from it, all grows from it. It is the hollow which will overflow, the nothingness which will be filled, the absence which will become presence . . . . it is the field of becoming.[8]

Despite his horror of stasis - space disjunct, isolated from time and therefore motionless - Lowry does not attempt to negate space altogether or to deny the physical reality of space. As with time, or life in general, Lowry's attitude towards space depends upon perception. His positive circle symbol is more accurately that of the thyrsus, a "symbol of the centre and the circle both moving"[9]; in the thrysus, space and temporal flow may be perceived in symbiosis. It is chiefly in terms of the circle as Voyage cycle with a protagonist's sphere of consciousness at the centre that Lowry fills space with time creating in time what Poulet calls a "field of becoming"; in The Voyage That Never Ends, he sought to capture the eternal Tao-like flow of reality and to continuously create himself.

Two features of Lowry's writing - his obsession with form or structure which he constantly speaks of in spatial terms, and his compression of time - are of particular interest. In exploring these two aspects of his art one is able to touch the springs of his creative process and to reveal the relationship between Lowry's philosophy of time and space and his use of temporal and spatial dimensions in his novels. Under the Volcano, he felt, was like a churrigueresque cathedral while literature in general, as Wilderness says in Dark as the Grave, is like a house with braces, beams, and two-by-fours.

His manuscripts corroborate the view that he thought of his prose in terms of blocks to be weighed and balanced one against the other.

Spatial concerns are both evoked by Lowry's terminology and inherent in his creative method. Why, given his belief in temporal flow, did he have this need to think in terms of space? Perhaps this spatial terminology arises from basic spatial modes of human perception. Perhaps his concern with space in works of art that were intended to embody ceaseless motion is an indication of the tormenting impossibility of his task. In a sense, Lowry was destroyed by his desire to include everything in his works, to account for everything, to keep everything moving and alive; even Under the Volcano was, to Lowry, unfinished! It is, of course, as impossible to create perfect time in art as it is to create timeless perfection. On the one hand, due to his fear of reductive, fixed systems, Lowry was drawn to a philosophy of change, while on the other hand, he was unable - as who could? - to cope with universal motion: "human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality."[10]

It is easier to account for Lowry's specific uses of "spatial form" in the individual novels. Invariably, he spatializes the temporal flow of his narrative in order to create the stasis resulting from a protagonist's distorted perception. Most frequently, spatialization occurs during memories of the past due to the tendency of a mind plagued by guilt, fear, and hatred, to become stuck in the past. Spatial form in Lowry's hands creates a narrative stasis that suggests the claustrophobia of a mind unable to transcend the past. Images of Ixion or the Karmic wheel, representing infernal circles cut off from the flow of time into the present and future, reinforce the static qualities of Lowry's spatial form.

The compression of time is the second obvious feature in Lowry's fiction. In each of the novels, as well as the stories, fictional time generally spans only a few hours, at most a few days. Within this brief time-span, the characters relive their pasts in dreams and visions, or simply in the limbo-like state induced by travel on the ubiquitous buses, boats, trains, and planes which fill Lowry's works. At first glance it seems odd that Lowry, concerned to capture temporal flow, would condense time instead of following the chronicle methods of

Galsworthy or Mann, each of whom captures the passing of time.

The reason for time compression is two-fold and, in keeping with the Lowryean union of opposites, positive and negative. In the negative sense, time compression functions as the perfect analogue for the mind stuck in the past - "the mind jammed in reverse." Lowry is not Proust; the Lowry protagonist is not in search of a self that exists in timeless essences from the past recaptured through the operation of memory. For Lowry, the sensation of being trapped in the past was a too personally real, a too constant and horrible dilemma. Becoming paralysed in the past (for Lowry, the past has a degree of reality distinct from present memories) is hell because temporal flow into present and future is annihilated. For example, in Under the Volcano, the most infernal of his books, the main narrative occurs in the fictional past; Geoffrey is already dead and can never escape the past. October Ferry, by way of contrast, portrays a sharp break between time past and time present leading into the future. Through the concentration of time into a few hours, the twelve hours of Volcano or the approximately four hours of remembering in October Ferry, Lowry is able to convey the hellish sensation of timelessness; all time is co-existent in this past world of the protagonist's mind.

More positively, this compression of time which gathers up the past into a few hours, presents the protagonist with the crucial opportunity to order and understand his experience. The re-living of the past offers hellish stasis, but also an opportunity for renewed motion depending upon the ability of the protagonist to change. Before time can flow into the future, the past must be acknowledged, understood, and incorporated constructively into the present. Nowhere has Lowry more dramatically portrayed the struggle of imaginative perception to resolve the conflict between space and time, stasis and motion, past and future, than in his poem "The Flowering Past":

> There is no poetry when you live there.
> Those stones are yours, those noises are your mind,
> The forging thunderous trams and streets that bind
> You to the dreamed-of bar where sits despair
> Are trams and streets: poetry is otherwhere.
> The cinema shops and fronts once left behind
> And mourned, are mourned no more. Strangely unkind
> Seem all new landmarks of the now and here.

> But move you toward New Zealand or the Pole,
> Those stones will blossom and the noises sing,
> And trams will wheedle to the sleeping child
> That never rests, whose ship will always roll,
> That never can come home, but yet must bring
> Strange trophies back to Ilium, and wild![11]

This is the theme of October Ferry; you must move on and as soon as you move the streets and trams of the past can no longer "bind/ You to the dreamed-of bar where sits despair." Time, life, and with them poetry exist in motion "That never rests." The poem ends in a typical Lowry paradox—although the ship may return to its point of departure, it can never come "home" to stay.

It is necessary to turn from Lowry's art to a more general view of his place in modern literature. Only through comparison with other writers is it possible to assess his achievement. What was Lowry writing and who is he like? Where does he belong in Western narrative traditions and how does he differ from or resemble other writers of his generation? Lowry spoke of himself as writing novels, but novels "revolutionary and reactionary at once" (Selected Letters, 68). Clearly, he was using the term novel loosely, but critics have taken his word at face value and applied Procrustean standards, consequently underestimating or misunderstanding his work.[12] Lowry's "novels" will always be found wanting if judged by theories of realism or naturalism—themes of dipsomania and sea voyages notwithstanding. More sophisticated critical and descriptive tools are needed. Lowry's writing can be described in terms of Northrop Frye's four continuous forms of fiction or the generic theory of narrative outlined by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg.[13] Although it is considerably beyond the scope of this study to examine critical theories and methods, it is useful—and apparently necessary when one considers mis-readings of Lowry's "novels"—to briefly examine Lowry's art in more general terms. Both Frye, and Scholes and Kellogg, provide valuable frameworks.

According to Frye, works of prose fiction combine two or more of the four continuous forms of fiction, the novel, the romance, the confession, and the anatomy. The novel deals with the experiential world, the romance with the ideal, the confession with autobiography, and the anatomy with the realm of ideas. Lowry's fiction, in Frye's terms, is a mixed form; in Under the Volcano novel vies with

anatomy and romance while confession is less obvious; in "Forest Path" the novel form gives precedence to the confession and the anatomy.

Scholes and Kellogg divide narratives unconcerned with mythos (stories with a "traditional plot") into two types, "empirical" and "fictional." Each type is in turn subdivided into two more types. What would customarily be called a novel represents a reunion of the two antithetical types of narrative, empirical and fictional, with their four component types. Furthermore, the novel is "poised between the direct speaker or singer of lyric and the direct presentation of action in drama."[14] Lowry is writing novels, then, in the sense of narrative literature (with story and story teller) composed of the four narrative types, but tending towards the lyric mode. The narrative balance of the novel, always unstable according to Scholes and Kellogg, is particularly so in Lowry where it manifests signs of a return to mythos.[15] Malcolm Lowry was gradually moving away from the novel, either in Frye's terms or in the broad terms of narrative synthesis, and closer to the telling and re-telling of a 'traditional' story. In his case, the mythos, while incorporating many elements from Greek, Christian, Mexican, Voodoo, Chinese and Indian myths, is largely of his own making.* It is the myth of withdrawal and return, a combination of quest and eternal return myths, told over and over in The Voyage That Never Ends.

Despite the varied cultural influences upon Lowry's myth of withdrawal and return, his obsession with the past, his passion to maintain movement into present and future, and his terror of becoming immobilized, destructive, and useless can be most clearly understood when viewed against Lowry's religious background. Lowry was born into a strict Methodist family of the British upper middle

*Lowry received additional support for his myth from George Groddeck's Exploring the Unconscious (London, 1933). Groddeck, writing of the basic family unit of three, claims that, "In unending circles...this trinity, eternal male, eternal female, eternal child, sweeps through the measurelss infinite, a symbol of God in man, of man in God." p. 127. Lowry's most obvious attempt to use this family unit occurs in October Ferry but triangular relationships are fundamental to Volcano and Lunar Caustic.

class.* His father was a successful cotton broker, an athlete, and a vital force in Lowry's life. Even as late as his son's thirtieth year Lowry senior wrote to Malcolm lecturing him on his failure in life and quoting the parable of the prodigal son for his benefit; Lowry responded with repentance and humility.** Lowry, apparently, was terrified of his father but, at the same time, respected his judgement and social and material success. Throughout his life Lowry accepted his father's evaluation that he was a failure and was, consequently, plagued by feelings of worthlessness, guilt, remorse, and self-denigration.

Douglas Day points out that Lowry's "religious sense was strong"[16]; the voyage is a quest for faith and meaning, and Under the Volcano, October Ferry, and Hear us O Lord are profoundly religious books. Although the Calvinistic traditions of his early home never attracted Lowry, their influence upon his subsequent life is, I believe, crucial. From the time of the Reformation, Protestant theology is characterized by the idea that man must strive constantly to overcome the temporal abyss of this life.[17] Phenomenal time, a shadow of eternity, consists of a series of disconnected moments during which man is devoured by the anxiety that at any moment he may fall into hell. Only by constant faith and unceasing effort can man hope to overcome his isolation in the moment and achieve grace. It seems more than likely that Lowry's passionate efforts to keep time from stopping, his many fears, and his strong sense of personal guilt and failure, stem from the religious principles inculcated in the parental home. Throughout his life Lowry hated and

*In his biography, Douglas Day refers loosely to Lowry senior's "brand of methodism" without further clarification. Whatever special emphases were made in the Lowry household, Methodism is strongly Calvinist and its doctrine of Perfectionism stresses the individual's need to strive constantly to improve himself with the knowledge that at any moment he may fall again. Protestantism, ed. J. Leslie Dunstan (New York, 1962), p. 97.

**Arthur Lowry's letter and Lowry's reply are unpublished letters held at the University of British Columbia. For a detailed discussion of Lowry's early life and relationship with his father, see Chapter II of Day's Malcolm Lowry.

feared authority--father-figures, police; the vengeful Protestant God--but he simultaneously accepted the judgements and values of his Protestant heritage. Unable to embrace the God of his father, he was equally unable to reject Him; the tension resulting from this ambivalent attitude gives rise to his artistic vision.

While rejecting the existence of a hierarchical timeless heaven, Lowry accepted the Calvinist attitude toward phenomenal time and the personal need for grace. His philosophy and art are directed towards a salvation that exists solely in the never-ending redemption of the static moment. If time flows into the future, then there is hope--hope that one can order the past, hope that one can create something of value, hope simply that one can be a better man. Lowry himself acknowledged the religious springs of his life and art in the prefacing quote to Under the Volcano: "Whoever unceasingly strives upward...him can we save. (Goethe)" Lowry, of course, erected an elaborate and eclectic structure out of his ideas on time and space, a structure which embraces as many myths, cultures, symbols, and mystical theories as possible (his aim was to include, never to occlude), but the foundation stone of his "churriqueresque cathedral"* of belief is the need to keep time flowing, to save time, and with it the mind or soul, from a static abyss.

It is Lowry's attitudes toward time and space that distinguish him from many other twentieth century writers with whom he is often linked. T.S. Eliot while portraying a vision of modern society similar to Lowry's, for example, sought the static and eternal in human experience through religion. Although Lowry can, with more justification, be described as maintaining, along with Gide and Proust, that the proper study of the writer is the writer's mind, to do so distorts Lowry's most fundamental purpose.[18] Certainly, such a comparison with Proust is misleading for Proust was concerned with problems of personal continuity and he believed that creative memory could establish identity by recovering essences of reality from the past. Proust's world is an anachronistic world aimed at overcoming

*Lowry uses this term to describe Under the Volcano, but it is an equally apt description of his reading and philosophy. See Selected Letters, 88.

the constant temporal and spatial flux of life by creating a timeless monument to the timeless essence of self.[19] Even Virginia Woolf who, of modern writers, seems most devoted to capturing the flow of temporal reality provides an inappropriate comparison with Lowry, for Woolf, again like Proust, is concerned with personal perception while Lowry is attempting to make a larger eschatological statement.

Yeats and Joyce seem to be the most obvious parallels. In fact, Lowry has frequently, and to his detriment, been compared with Joyce.[20] For many reasons, the comparison is uncomfortable, but in terms of time and space it is decidedly incorrect. Joyce's use of archetypes and Viconian cycles, even the early idea of epiphany, support his belief in an ultimately impersonal and timeless ideal; Joyce wished to incorporate the present and individual into a larger historical and finally cosmic order. Lowry never aims at absorbing the personal in the cosmic but strives to embody cosmic forces in the individual.[21] Lowry knew Yeats' work, including A Vision, better than he knew Joyce's, but again the parallel is uneasy. Lowry's abhorrence of systems makes it difficult to compare the cycles of The Voyage with A Vision; strictly speaking, Lowry's Voyage is not intended to celebrate "the artifice of eternity" or the "glory of changeless metal."

That side of Lowry's vision of life which sees time-past as infernal stasis, as nightmare and hallucination, is most strongly reminiscent of Poe and Melville (two of Lowry's favourite authors) or perhaps Baudelaire;* it is a daemonic world of distorted perception, cerebral chaos, terror and despair. When Lowry portrays this world of stasis, he follows the pattern of Poe whose works invariably present time as closed with the future unrolling according to the dictates of the past. The essential difference is that the maelstrom,

*Baudelaire's remarks on time could almost be the Consul's (or Lowry's): "One must be drunk. That says it all. There is no other point. In order not to feel the horrible burden of Time that bruises your shoulders...." At another point he writes: "It is not to be forgotten that drunkeness is the negation of time, like every violent state of mind, and that consequently the results of the loss of time must unfold before the eyes of the drunkard, without destroying in him the habit of putting off his conversion till tomorrow, up to the point of complete perversion of all feelings, and final catastrophe." Quoted in Poulet, Studies in Human Time, p. 273.

either Poe's or Melville's, within which "man must go round," represents only one part of Lowry's vision - that of time stopped or stasis. When Lowry portrays the balanced perceptions of a man living in harmony with nature, his portrayal of time and space recalls Whitman's belief that life is multitudinous, pulsing, and held together in a dynamic eternity "throbbing forever the eternal beats, eternal systole and diastole of life in things."[22] The writer whom Lowry most closely resembles, (and this is a debt he always emphasized, is the poet and novelist Conrad Aiken. Aiken's views on time and space, as well as his more general influence on Lowry, are important and are discussed at length in Chapter II. Aiken, influenced in his turn by Whitman, perceived time and space as multilevelled and dynamic, and Lowry, to a great extent, followed in Aiken's footsteps.

Aside from casual comparisons, it is difficult to say who Lowry is like. He stands apart and the more his work is known, the more his unique genius is apparent. Lowry unites many of the characteristics of twentieth century literature; his great masterwork, The Voyage That Never Ends, invites comparison with Proust's A la recherche de temps perdu, his sensitivity to the particularities of perception recalls Woolf, and his technical brilliance is comparable with that of Joyce. These comparisons cease to be helpful, however, in the attempt to isolate the unique qualities of his art which are closer, especially the infernal elements, to nineteenth-century romanticism and the French "poètes maudits." Unlike Joyce and unlike contemporary writers such as Borges or Barth, Lowry's writing is personal and passionate, recalling the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins;* his vision, portrayed in modern narrative techniques, is deeply religious and metaphysical.

The Voyage That Never Ends, both the metaphysical and aesthetic concept as well as the unfinished masterwork, embodies Lowry's

*Lowry recalls Hopkins, not only in his reverence for nature and in his belief, similar to Hopkins' theories of "inscape" and "instress," that this world incarnates and individuates divine life, but in his anguished and tortured voice. For Lowry and the Hopkins of the later sonnets, life is constant striving which must be continually renewed in order to deserve grace; Lowry also knew what it was to be "Time's eunuch." Lowry used passages from "Carrion Comfort" in his Cambridge story "Goya The Obscure."

veneration of nature and his affirmation of human creativity. It is the testimony of a great artist to the mystery, ambiguity, and multiplicity of life. Lowry set out to do the impossible - to capture reality, not once and for all, but in its ceaseless motion of withdrawal and return. Even by his own rigorous standards he achieved considerable success. Perhaps, though we are the poorer for it, it is fitting that he never completed his work for the work could not be completed; the voyage never ends.

NOTES: CHAPTER I

[1] Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry, eds. Harvey Breit and Margerie Lowry (J.B. Lippincott Co., New York, 1965), p. 63. All further references to the Selected Letters are included in the text.

[2] This list from Lowry's 1951 Work in Progress appears in Douglas Day's biography Malcolm Lowry (New York, 1973), p. 426. As yet I have been unable to examine a copy of this statement of which only Professor Day holds copies.

[3] Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe (Cambridge, 1927), p. 198. Santayana emphasizes the point that Faust is a romantic work because it glorifies endless voyaging and pursuit. According to Santayana, Goethe combines the Protestant ethic of perpetual striving (Lowry took his prefacing quote to Under the Volcano from the Faust "Prologue in Heaven") with a romantic belief in the value of endless pursuit. Santayana's theory gave Lowry considerable support in his attempt to unite a strict Protestant heritage with a romantic view of life and art.

[4] Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, The Modern Tradition (Oxford, 1965), p. 453. In his Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard isolates the unavoidable horror of change, becoming, and time: "An existing individual is constantly in process of becoming....Thus constantly to be in process of becoming is the elusiveness that pertains to the infinite in existence. It is enough to bring a sensuous man to despair, for one always feels a need to have something finished and complete;..." Ellmann and Feidelson, p. 748.

[5] October Ferry to Gabriola (New York, 1970), p. 252. In all quotations from Lowry's novels and stories, my ellipses are distinguished from his by the use of brackets.

[6] Mircea Eliade, in The Myth of the Eternal Return (London, 1955), interprets eternal return and myth in general as the articulation of a timeless metaphysical position. In Eliade's view, modern formulations of myth enable man to overcome the acute twentieth century terror of history. See page 145 ff.

[7] Georges Poulet, The Metamorphoses of the Circle, trans. C. Dawson and E. Coleman (Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), vii.

[8] Poulet, p. 336.

[9] Poulet, p. 289. Poulet uses the idea of the thyrsus to describe Baudelaire's attitude towards time and space. There are several parallels between Lowry and Baudelaire with whose work Lowry had some acquaintence. Discussing Baudelaire's belief in the multiplicity and movement of life, Poulet writes that, Baudelaire's "wayfaring man is a moving centre which traverses and links the circumference, incessantly re-begun . . . . "

[10] T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," from Four Quartets. Ironically, Eliot is contemplating the "still centre" of the world when he writes that reality is unbearable. Whether time is to be overcome as for Eliot or to be embraced as with Lowry, the task is beyond "human kind."

[11] Selected Poems of Malcolm Lowry (City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1962), p. 16. I regret that the scope of this study of Lowry has precluded a discussion of his poetry. A pervasive theme in the poems is the horror of becoming trapped in the past with the resultant failure to create the future or experience the present.

[12] For example, George Woodcock's criticisms of plot in Under the Volcano in "Four Facets of Malcolm Lowry," Odysseus Ever Returning (Toronto, 1970), p. 62, and Dale Edmonds who calls the multiple Wilderness protagonist in Hear us O Lord "an indefensible lapse." Just what the Wilderness character is a lapse from is not clear but Edmonds probably has a model of unity of character in mind. See "The Short Fiction of Malcolm Lowry," Tulane Studies in English, XV(1967), p. 71.

[13] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York, 1968), and Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York, 1966). Relevant essays from both books are contained in The Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. R.M. Davis (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969).

[14] Scholes and Kellogg, "The Narrative Tradition," The Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, p. 26.

[15] Scholes and Kellogg define "mythos" as "traditional story" which is re-told or re-created; "A myth, then, is a traditional plot which can be transmitted". "The Narrative Tradition," p. 23. In Mythology in the Modern Novel (Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 8, John White distinguishes between novels that employ "mythological motifs" and the rare works "seeking to create a new myth out of old ones." Finnegans Wake and Under the Volcano, according to White, "have this mythical quality."

[16] Day, p. 68. While agreeing that Lowry's religious training played some part in his later development, Professor Day argues that Lowry is best understood as infantile, narcissistic, and orally fixated, pp. 69 - 72. Lowry's vision of the never-ending voyage is, in my opinion, more usefully explained by reference to his religious upbringing and the consequent tension arising from his inability to accept or totally reject that training. However, whether one explains Lowry's vision, either by recourse to the psychoanalytical theory of orality or by socio-religious forces, the conclusion is the same: Lowry wrote obsessively; he needed to keep words flowing in order not to subside into silence and death. As Day points out, Lowry's besetting sin was acedia.

[17] Georges Poulet, Studies in Human Time, trans. E. Coleman(Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. 11- 12.

[18] George Woodcock, "Under Seymour Mountain" in Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work (Vancouver, 1971), p.40.

[19] Poulet, Studies in Human Time, p. 316.

[20] Richard Hauer Costa, Malcolm Lowry (New York, 1972), pp. 28 - 44, and Perle Epstein, The Private Labyrinth of Malcolm Lowry (New York, 1969), p.4.

[21] Stephen Spender, in his Introduction to the Signet edition of Under the Volcano makes the same point when he writes that "the aims and methods of Lowry are the opposite of those of Joyce and Eliot.... Stephen Dedalus and Bloom tend to disappear into the cosmos. We finish Under the Volcano feeling that the Consul with all his faults is the cosmos...." p. xii.

[22] Quoted in Poulet, Studies in Human Time, p. 344. The words "systole" and "diastole" are favourites of Conrad Aiken, and Lowry uses them to describe Hugh in Under the Volcano. Whitman exerted considerable influence on Aiken who knew his work well, so it is entirely possible that Whitman's brand of transcendental idealism filtered through to Lowry via Aiken. See Jay Martin, Conrad Aiken: A Life of his Art (Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 50 and p. 219.

CHAPTER II

Part I

Dr. Lowry's dialectical-Hegelian-spiritualism-Cabbalistic-Swedenborgian-conservative-Christian-anarchism for ailing paranoiacs*

Sartre, in his study of time in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, maintains that "the critic's task is to bring out the author's metaphysic before evaluating his technique."[1] With Lowry this is not a simple task for his reading and interests were eclectic - so much so that the critic is in danger of becoming an "ailing paranoiac!" Most Lowry critics discuss aspects of his reading and specific influences and allusions in his fiction, but no one, with the exception of William New, has attempted a comprehensive study of philosophical, religious, and aesthetic influences on Lowry.[2] The reason for this arises from the difficulty of gathering the necessary information, and from Lowry's lack of a coherent metaphysical system or a clearly defined aesthetic.

It is difficult to categorize Lowry in strict philosophical terms. To describe his position as solipsism, an extreme form of philosophical idealism, is reductive. Neither is he finally a mystic. In contrast to Eastern mysticism and even traditional Western mysticism, Lowry is not willing to submerge the individual consciousness in a greater, transcendent whole. Furthermore, although Lowry does not deny the reality of the physical world, he repeatedly depicts a world in his fiction which is totally dependent upon the protagonist's mind. This contradiction between elements of philosophical idealism and religious mysticism in his thought and the belief in an autonomous physical reality is never clearly articulated or resolved, and yet he was acutely aware of the dilemma for it underlies the progress of each of his heroes towards his private heaven or hell.

Nevertheless, Lowry's problems, including his attitude towards

*Lowry's amusing description of his own eclectic philosophy. Selected Letters, p. 346.

art, were essentially metaphysical and epistemological: he sought to understand the nature of man, his relation to the universe, and the ultimate meaning and purpose of life through his art. Lowry's response to these eternal dilemmas was religious and romantic. Horrified by modern existence "as sold to you," and profoundly introspective, he sought an order which would preserve the sacred quality of the individual soul within an organic, harmonious universe, without subjecting life to mechanical laws, an authoritarian logos, or a reductive system. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of Lowry's philosophy and aesthetics as they are revealed in his reading and his own comments.

Any study of Lowry's philosophy must respect the breadth and nature of his knowledge. He read and used with an apparently total recall everything to come his way, from the works of great philosophers and poets to little known eccentrics like Charles Fort.[3] While attending Cambridge, Lowry, an inveterate reader even as a boy, discovered Nordahl Grieg's The Ship Sails On which influenced his vision in Ultramarine. Although reading lists from St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, are unavailable for the years when Lowry was preparing the English Tripos(1929 - 1932), he clearly began to develop his knowledge of English, Classical, European (in particular, French, German, and Russian),and American literature at this time. According to Conrad Knickerbocker, T.R. Henn was Lowry's Supervisor so that it is likely that Lowry discovered Yeats' A Vision while at Cambridge.[4] Certainly the atmosphere at Cambridge during the early thirties was conducive to anyone with an interest in the occult, for Aleister Crowley, the infamous Atlantist and black magician, was in great vogue with undergraduates.[5]

In the following discussion of Lowry's philosophy an attempt has been made to sort out key influences on his thought with particular attention to the questions of time and space. Aiken, Ouspensky, Dunne, Charles Stansfeld-Jones, Bergson, and Ortega y Gasset*

*There is no reason for examining these influences in this particular order except that Aiken is undoubtedly the most important while Dunne and Jones, Bergson and Ortega, discuss similar subjects. Ouspensky stands apart. Chronologically speaking, Lowry probably read Aiken, Bergson, Ouspensky and Dunne, Jones, and Ortega, in that order.

have been singled out for special study after an examination of Lowry's letters, published and unpublished, his manuscripts, and his "Notes" for the stories and novels. This selection is further supported by the general growing knowledge of Lowry himself.[6] He had great respect for William James, some knowledge of Eastern and Mexican myth, and, of course, a profound attachment to writers such as Baudelaire, Cocteau, Gogol, Melville, and Poe. The list goes on and on,but a study of philosophical influences, unlike an examination of quotations and allusions in the fiction, is based on the pervasive and profound effect upon Lowry of the writers in question.

The danger of becoming reductive when discussing a work of art is a very real one. It is especially real with Lowry. The "Mene Tekel Peres" for the critic of Lowry's reading is the danger of imposing systems upon Lowry who was never a systematic scholar. His apparent knowledge of Taoism, for example, is more likely attributable to the quotation of individual passages, frequently found in secondary sources or in minor writers. Lowry's own analysis (in an important unpublished letter to Albert Erskine) of the number of influences bearing upon the Consul's anguish in Chapter XII of the Volcano, is sufficient to fill a critic with respect:

> There are many influences here in the Consul's thought, as you doubtless perceive: of contemporary ones Ouspensky is most drawn upon, though I seem to spot even a bit of beastly old Spengler at work in one section....Claude Houghton plays some part here.... See Julian Grant Loses His Way, yet another novel about hell, where the author's method is just to throw in Swedenborg by the bushelful and leave it at that. These influences are assimilated here so far as this author is concerned: but it is a matter of some regret with him that the Consul could not draw upon some clearer deeper springs at his moment of crisis.* [sic]

Rather than search for a comprehensive metaphysical system in Lowry or a handy Viconian superstructure, one must accept the fact that they do not exist. Far from being a fault or a shortcoming, the lack of a system illustrates the immense power of the imagination that could forge the unity and beauty which indisputably exist in Under the Volcano. For Lowry nothing in life was irrelevant; everything could be fitted in somewhere. This syncretism is the key to

*This passage is from notes accompanying a letter which Lowry wrote to his editor, Albert Erskine, on June 22nd, 1946. Only part of this letter appears in Selected Letters, pp. 112-114;and the notes, in which Lowry reveals several of his sources in Under the Volcano, are not published.

both his philosophy and his art. It is the source of his most characteristically brilliant work as well as the cause of his inability to complete anything.

Without a Lowryean capacity for synthesis one must pursue a discussion of the influences on Lowry systematically. Similarities and common concerns, especially that of time and space, are present in most of Lowry's reading despite obvious contradictions among individual thinkers. Even the writing of a very peripheral influence, Hugh I'Anson Fausset, reveals the nucleus in Lowry's thought:

> For we know that we can never part from our past, since we carry it with us however far we may advance into the future. But it is no longer a burden to bear. For it is part of us, it, too, has suffered a change. In it what we were and what we are is miraculously blended. And although, looking back, we cannot but see in it much that was deathly, every death that we died and even every death that we evaded, is known now to have been necessary to the coming of the new life. There is meaning and coherence in it all.*

When Malcolm Lowry discovered Conrad Aiken's "House of Dust" from The Divine Pilgrim in 1928, he was moved to write its author, thereby beginning a long, intimate friendship. Aiken has described the impact of their friendship, and of his novel Blue Voyage, upon the young Lowry:

> Blue Voyage he knew better than I did - he knew it by heart. Its influence on him was profound and permanent, and was evident even in that first title Ultramarine - he was delighted with my suggestion that he might well have taken the next step and called the book Purple Passage. But though the influence was to continue even into the later work, a matter that was frequently and amusedly discussed between us, and was also to comprise a great deal that was said by me in conversation, it was much more complicated than that. The fact is that we were uncannily alike in almost everything, found instantly that we spoke the same language, were astonishingly en rapport . . . .[7]

*A Modern Prelude (London, 1933), p. 12. In Selected Letters, p. 74 (1946), Lowry says, "I wish that Hugh I'Anson Fausset...one of your own writers, one whose writings I very much admire and some of whose writings have had a very formative influence on my own life, could read the Volcano." A Modern Prelude is a spiritual autobiography tracing Fausset's development from a traumatic childhood, during which he lost his Mother and came to dread a puritanical, bitter Father, to his final peace in a mysticism that also celebrates the individual and physical aspects of man.

Whether or not one takes Aiken's remarks at face value - the early poetry and the novel Great Circle, for example, reveal as deep an affinity with Lowry's work as does Blue Voyage - it is clear that the older established writer had a lasting influence on Lowry. Although Lowry's close relationship with Aiken is well known, few critics have discussed the influence of Aiken upon Lowry.[8] Richard Hauer Costa did undertake the task but, in doing so, overemphasized the influence of Joyce on Lowry via Aiken's Blue Voyage. The extent of Joyce's influence on Aiken, not to mention Lowry, is slight; Blue Voyage illustrates a clear development from early work such as The Divine Pilgrim to which Blue Voyage is related.[9] An awareness of Aiken's philosophy and his reading throws considerable light upon Lowry's ideas. Even a brief examination of Aiken's art, in particular The Divine Pilgrim, Blue Voyage, and Great Circle, reveals remarkable similarities between the two writers.

The central aim of Aiken's poetry and fiction is the investigation and development of consciousness - in particular, the self-consciousness of the writer. Speaking of fiction, Aiken writes that the "novel is the novelist's inordinate and copious lyric: he explores himself, and sings while he explores, like the grave-digger."[10] Aiken's art, like Lowry's, is lyrical and solipsistic and a poem like The Divine Pilgrim explores the relationship between the universe and human consciousness in terms of the poet's mind. The world is presented as an inner landscape in elaborate metaphors of a city with its winding streets, houses, stairs, windows and towers; Aiken believed that landscape was a reflection of soul. The projection of evanescent memories and dreams creates an atmosphere of constant flux in which time and space flow, merge, disintegrate, and reform. In his 1916 Preface to part two of The Divine Pilgrim entitled, "The Jig of Forslin," Aiken writes that "the attempt has been made to relate these typical dreams, or vicarious adventures, not discretely, but in flux."[11] What is more, human identity is equally Protean; different aspects of human consciousness are represented by the fragmented identity of the chief dreamer.

To Lowry, who was to spend his life in the exploration of his own mind, the discovery of Aiken's poem was crucial. The central

problem of The Divine Pilgrim - the articulation of reality by an acutely self-conscious, artistic mind - is reworked by Lowry in each of his novels. For Aiken this articulation is of central importance; he came to believe that language had a magic quality because, as Jay Martin expresses it, the "correspondence of language to the world is complete."[12] Lowry, following Aiken, also believed in the magical power of the word to represent the experience it names and his habit of writing at great length and in great energetic rushes reflects his belief that life and the flow of language were one.

Before turning to Aiken's prose, it is important to note that Aiken's poetry is, for the most part, deliberately presented in an inter-related series. In fact, Aiken's work (prose and poetry) was intended to be interconnected and counterpointed much like Lowry's.* The Divine Pilgrim and Preludes for Memnon each consist of several long poems that explore levels of reality and consciousness. Aiken definitely conceived of both reality and consciousness as multilevelled and the evolution of consciousness as a never-ending process**; serial form seemed the most viable for a presentation of these ideas.

Aiken's use of serial form and his concept of the evolution of consciousness are of particular interest vis à vis Lowry. In a late Preface (1965) to Preludes for Memnon which was begun in 1927 after Blue Voyage, Aiken describes his use of "serial form" as "an attempt to find the ground for a new poiesis."[13] This poetic theory based on serialism (both musical and mathematical, according to Aiken), afforded him great flexibility and replaced, to a certain

*The novels Blue Voyage and Ushant, the latter a duplicate of the former, were also intended to complement The Divine Pilgrim and Preludes to Memnon respectively. See Preludes (New York, 1966), page v.

**Jay Martin describes Landscape West of Eden (1934), a continuation of Preludes, as an attempt to create a myth, based upon motion, of the development of consciousness: "In his narrative... [Aiken] continuously shifts from one level of consciousness to another; for at no point can we say: Here we arrive at awareness. Theoretically the poem can have no end, for consciousness has had none." Conrad Aiken: A Life of his Art, p. 141.

extent, the beliefs, the ethics, the gods, destroyed by modern physics (Einstein) and psychoanalysis (Freud). Serial form presented, as well, an excellent vehicle for portraying evolving consciousness. In his Preface to "The House of Dust," the poem that so impressed Lowry in 1928, Aiken makes some fascinating remarks on consciousness which must have greatly appealed to Lowry:

> Implicit in [the poem] ... is the theory that was to underlie much of the later work - namely, that in the evolution of man's consciousness, ever widening and deepening and subtilizing his awareness, and in his dedication of himself to this supreme task, man possesses all that he could possibly require in the way of a religious credo: ...[14]

Lowry's Voyage That Never Ends is a re-statement of this "religious credo."

Aiken's short stories and novels, like the poems, begin and end in the mind of the chief protagonist, usually an erudite, cynical failure - either as a writer or a husband. Broken marriage is a recurrent theme providing the focal issue in Aiken's stories "Round by Round" and "The Fish Supper," as well as in the novel Great Circle (1933).[15] Starting with apparently straightforward domestic conflict, Aiken expands his theme through the protagonist's consciousness until he sounds the depths of the past. The dilemma posed by a traumatic past is central to Great Circle which bears a striking resemblance to the Volcano and Dark As the Grave.

The novel opens with Andrew Gather on a train returning to Boston, ostensibly to surprise his wife whom he suspects of betraying him with his best friend. As the train rushes into the future, Cather's mind becomes increasingly obsessed with his past. Cather's movement in a present charged with dreadful expectations for the immediate future becomes a repetition or a re-living of his childhood horror at finding his Mother drowned with her lover, his Uncle. As Cather staggers from a bar to his home, then out again to drink and finally to the home of a psychoanalyst friend, the point of the book becomes clear - the past must be understood before life can truly begin;* one must complete a great circle through time and

*In The Coming Forth By Day of Osiris Jones, Aiken, using the Osiris myth from The Eygptian Book of the Dead, again explores the concept of re-living the past in order to understand it, for without understanding there can be no forgiveness.

space before moving into the future.

Andrew Cather, the one-eyed University Professor, has a facility for interpreting external reality as symbol and portent. Thus, a coincidence such as the authorities' search for a drowned man just as Cather crosses the river, becomes charged with significance for the hero. The parallel here between Aiken's handling of the perceiving consciousness and Lowry's in the Volcano is obvious. Furthermore, Aiken employs his favourite dream mechanism to re-create the summer during which Cather discovered his Mother's adultery. Interestingly, the effect of the dream here, as in Blue Voyage, is awkward. When he re-wrote Under the Volcano in 1940-41, Lowry dropped his original plan to use Laruelle's dream as a vehicle for recreating the past. Even in Dark as the Grave Lowry's use of the dream is more subtle and sophisticated than Aiken's. Aiken's book is packed, to a fault, with Freudian analysis, and it is a reasonable assumption that he and Lowry discussed Freud during Lowry's many visits to Jeakes House. Lowry, however, in contrast to Aiken, avoids a cumbersome etiology in Under the Volcano and October Ferry.

Blue Voyage, although commonly compared to Ultramarine, is a veritable source book for techniques, images, even words (such as "horripilation" and "tintinabulation") in Under the Volcano. The resemblance between Blue Voyage and Ultramarine is largely one of technique. Lowry's protagonist and his use of the sea voyage owes more to Nordahl Grieg's The Ship Sails On (1927) than to Blue Voyage. Demarest is an older, more sophisticated character than either Lowry's or Grieg's hero, and the nature of the sea voyage, initiatory for Grieg and Lowry, is anachronistic for Aiken.

In Blue Voyage, Aiken explores the consciousness of his chief character, Demarest, through the breakdown of time and space in dream and the projection of personal identity; all the other characters, male and female, old and young, represent aspects of Demarest's psyche. Demarest spends his time composing monologues and never-to-be-sent letters, which are clearly echoed in Ultramarine and the Volcano. When he addresses his lost ideal lover, Cynthia, in his central dream-vision, the voice of Geoffrey Firmin is unmistakably heard:

> I would have given everything to have been able to wipe out my entire past . . . . - and all the countless minor episodes . . . constituted

for me an inferno from which I seemed never destined to escape. Yes. Horrible. To come to the gateway in a rain of fire and looking through it to see the slopes of Purgatory; to guess, beyond, the Paradise; to see you as the gracious wisdom who might guide me thither; and then to know that Law would not permit, and that in the Inferno must be my abode forever! - Do not think this is merely picturesque or eloquent, Cynthia. No. What I am approaching is a profound psychological truth. It is my own nature, my character as patiently wrought by my character, as the snail builds its house, from which I cannot move. Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.

(Three Novels, 83)

It is also probable that Lowry was influenced in a more general way, and at second hand, by Aiken's reading. For example, had he not discovered Jung and Freud before his first meeting with Aiken, then under Aiken's influence he could not have missed them. Aiken knew the theories of Freud and Jung well but, according to Jay Martin, it is impossible to measure their specific influence upon him because he was also familiar with Rank, Adler, and many others.[16] Aiken had read the Interpretation of Dreams in 1915 and his use of dream in his novels is clearly indebted to Freud. At one point in Great Circle, Cather, complaining to his psychoanalyst friend, snaps:

> Now don't tell me what Freud thinks a hat means....If I were a Martian, strayed to earth, long after the death of the last man, I could reconstruct the whole of human civilization from one female hat. Preferably one of those early specimens with a lot of ostrich plumes.
>
> (Three Novels, 228)

Each of Aiken's protagonists, as well as Lowry's, achieves a mental balance by re-living his past, but with Aiken the process is decidedly clinical and therapeutic. Lowry, however, places little emphasis on etiology, and his characters, in addition to achieving psychological equilibrium through an understanding and acceptance of the past, experience moments of vision into the nature of reality; re-living of the past is more than therapy for early trauma. Both Aiken and Lowry employ Oedipal situations but again Lowry places much less emphasis than Aiken upon this Freudian theory, leaving it to suggest itself rather than to occupy a central position in his fiction.

There is clearer evidence of Jung's influence upon Lowry. The importance of the sea throughout Lowry's work is obvious; the protagonist of the Voyage was to be "man's unconscious" (Selected Letters, 331), and in his filmscript of Tender is the Night, Lowry

explicitly relates the sea voyage to Jung.* Jung's concept of synchronicity is especially relevant to Lowry because Jung offers an explanation of coincidence which emphasizes pervasive meaning in the universe as well as the perceptual role of the individual. One of Jung's clearest descriptions of synchronicity is in his Introduction to the 1950 translation of the I Ching:

> [S]ynchronicity takes the coincidence of events in time and space as meaning something more than mere chance, namely, a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers.[17]

Aiken was also deeply impressed by Bergson, in particular Creative Evolution (translated in 1931).[18] Lowry, intrigued as he was by questions of time and consciousness, quickly realized Bergson's relevance to his own work; Bergson is discussed at greater length below. Furthermore, Aiken's knowledge of the Tao and The Eygptian Book of the Dead (on which The Coming Forth By Day of Osiris Jones is structured) and his use of them in handling the voyage of consciousness through time and space, may well be the source of Lowry's interest in Eastern myth.

Aiken's influence on Lowry was profound. They used similar techniques and they shared a similar approach to life and art. For both men the exploration of the self, in all its ramifications, through constantly shifting dimensions of time and space, was the purpose of art. Both men believed that art could at least bridge the abyss between the self and the world. Aiken's lines from "And in the Human Heart" (1940) speak equally well for Lowry:

> Space has no shape, nor will your thinking shape it,
> space has no confines, and no borders time;
> and yet, to think the abyss is to escape it,
> or fix that horror's margin in a rhyme.

*In marginal notes on his impossibly long film script of Tender is the Night Lowry makes several references to Freud and Jung. Freud he criticizes for setting up tyrannous systems but Jung, he feels, is more useful, especially for his myth of the sea voyage.

When writing to his mother-in-law in the spring of 1940 (Selected Letters, 26), Lowry suggested that she read two books by P.D. Ouspensky, Tertium Organum and A New Model of the Universe. The latter he described as "a terrifically exciting book." It is impossible to say when Lowry first read Ouspensky, but the influence of this mystic-cum-occultist was a lasting one; there are references to Ouspensky throughout the manuscripts and letters. In his notes for the film script of Tender is the Night, which Lowry was working on in 1949, he goes as far as to say that Ouspensky "is right, and has found the truth."

Tertium Organum was first published in the West in 1920 and A New Model of the Universe in 1931.[19] Ouspensky spent the years from 1921 to 1940 lecturing in London where he gained considerable popularity. J.B. Priestley, whose plays and essays Lowry knew, was fascinated by Ouspensky's theories of time. In 1940 Ouspensky travelled to the United States and in 1947 (the year in which Volcano was published), shortly after returning to England, Ouspensky died.

The topics discussed by Ouspensky are extremely broad and loosely connected; intermixed with his theories on time and eternal recurrence are elaborate discussions of esotericism, diluvian myths, the Tarot, yoga, dreams, sex and evolution, cosmic consciousness, the occult, and the philosophy of the Vedanta. In fact, Ouspensky was as eclectic a thinker and voracious a reader as Lowry himself: his books contain frequent references to Tolstoy, Plotinus, Kant, Boehme, Nietzsche, and among others, Annie Besant.* Ouspensky influenced Lowry chiefly, however, with his ideas on "The Mystery of Time and Space" and "The Fourth Dimension."

In Tertium Organum, Ouspensky draws up a list of characteristics of the "other world" which are revealed in the fourth dimension.

*Perhaps the reference to Besant's The Ancient Wisdom which Lowry found in Tertium Organum (p. 232) led him to explore Besant's book more closely. In any case, The Ancient Wisdom was intended to play a role in The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness, for Lowry copied several interesting passages from Besant which explain the ultimate nature of reality in terms of repeated incarnations and the Tao: "Great it passes on - in constant flow. Passing on, becomes remote. Having become remote, it returns." See Appendix I for these pages from Lowry's manuscript of The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness.

Time is spatial; everything exists in a "nunc stans" and nothing happens. But neither does space exist and there is no duality; "Everything subjective is objective, and everything objective is subjective. The world is the world of the unity of opposites" (Tertium Organum, 242). Whether or not Lowry seriously believed all of Ouspensky's rhetoric, he was undoubtedly impressed by many of Ouspensky's claims. The table of consciousness at the end of Tertium Organum contains ideas, in particular the concept of levels of consciousness, which would have appealed to Lowry.

In A New Model of the Universe, Ouspensky further develops his theory of levels of consciousness as the means for man's spiritual evolution. There is an important parallel between Ouspensky's levels of consciousness and the stages of drunkenness through which Geoffrey passes on his last day. In describing his experiments in expanding consciousness, Ouspensky pays particular attention to a "second threshold" between the first level of heightened consciousness and the third representing reality:

> In the "transitional state," which, as I learned very soon, was entirely subjective, I usually began almost at once to hear "voices." These "voices" were a characteristic feature of the "transitional state."
>
> The voices spoke to me and often said very strange things which seemed to have a quality of trick in them....Sometimes I heard music which evoked in me very varied and powerful emotions.
>
> But strangely enough I felt from the first day a distrust of these states. They contained too many promises, too many things I wanted to have.
>
> (A New Model, 282-283)

It is while he is on Ouspensky's "second threshold"—not sufficiently drunk—that Geoffrey hears his "familiars." His aim throughout the day is to reach that stage of inebriation where vision and harmony will replace the "demonic orchestras" that torment him. Following on from this "second threshold" Ouspensky describes (in sharp contradiction to his chart in Tertium Organum) the nature of reality as revealed on the highest level of consciousness; it is a world of "infinite variation" where everything moves and changes.

There are many contradictions and inconsistences in Ouspensky's thought but it is unnecessary to subject his books to detailed study. The important point is that his levels of consciousness correspond with

the dimensions of time that he sets out in the title chapter of A New Model of the Universe. Time, he explains, is multidimensional and all actualities exist on other time levels:

> In every moment and at every point of the three dimensional world there are a certain number of possibilities; in "time," that is, in the fourth dimension, one possibility is actualized every moment, and these actualized possibilities are laid out, one beside another, in the fifth dimension. The line of time, repeated infinitely in eternity, leaves at every point unactualized possibilities. But these possibilities, which have not been actualized in one time, are actualized in the sixth dimension, which is an aggregate of "all times."
>
> (A New Model, 377)

If this sounds like a rigid, tightly closed system - to the extent that it can be understood at all! - Ouspensky, in terms reminiscent of Yeats, is quick to point out that there is a way out: "The sixth dimension is the way out of the circle....The line of time becomes a spiral" (A New Model, 377).

The purpose of all these dimensions of time and consciousness, and the point that influenced Lowry's conception of his protagonists, is that man can evolve from one level to another by developing his own consciousness. With each repeated existence, man can learn from his past and direct his energies towards the only true evolution - the evolution of consciousness.* Ouspensky's system is, finally, a moral one in which knowing and striving result in the upward spirals through time of the good man. On the other hand, the bad man, the criminal or drunkard who refrains from effort and refuses to learn, eventually spirals right out of existence.

One further aspect of Ouspensky's theory of time and space warrants attention. In an effort to outdo modern science, Ouspensky

*[E]volution means escaping from the wheel of the fifth dimension and passing into the spiral of the sixth dimension...." A New Model, p. 425. There is a striking similarity between Ouspensky's theory and that expressed by Yeats in A Vision. Both were influenced by the popular theosophy of Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. This idea of the spirals also occurs in a somewhat unexpected place, Nordahl Greig's The Ship Sails On (New York, 1927), where the narrator comments that "Life had played one of its scenes over again, a new spiral had wound its way upward...." p. 167. Lowry, combining two remarks from The Ship Sails On, writes in Selected Letters, p. 264, "Another spiral has wound its way upward. Reason stands still. What do we know?"

claims that his "new model of the universe" explains the nature of the unity of Einstein's space-time:

> In old physics space is always space, and time is always time. In the new physics the two categories make one, space-time. In the new model of the universe the phenomena of one category can pass into the phenomena of the other category, and vice versa....
>
> The six-pointed star which represented the world in ancient symbolism is in reality the representation of space-time or the "period of dimensions," i.e. of the three space-dimensions and the three time-dimensions in their perfect union, where every point of space includes the whole of time and every moment of time includes the whole of space; when everything is everywhere and always.
>
> (A New Model, 390 - 319)

How much of this Lowry understood is not important. The exciting quality for Lowry of Ouspensky's theory is that it discovers the kind of interconnection and repetition in this world which Lowry loved: Einstein's space-time equals the six-point star of the ancient mysteries! Furthermore, it provides Lowry with a rationale for his belief that in any moment of time or in any specific place, one can be in touch with other times and places (especially from the past); the human psyche is not bound by mechanical laws of three-dimensional space and unilinear time. How Lowry reconciled such a view of an already existent future with Bergson and Ortega who both believe in an open future awaiting human creation, is not clear. The status of the future poses a problem in each of Lowry's novels and in the Volcano these conflicting attitudes towards the future are dramatized in Geoffrey and Hugh.

The five manuscript versions of Under the Volcano housed in the Special Collections of the University of British Columbia represent two distinct versions of the novel. In 1940 Lowry's first version was refused by thirteen different publishers. The reasons for this refusal are not known, as all attempts to locate the readers' reports have failed. One criticism of the early Volcano, however, has survived. In an unpublished letter to Lowry from his agent Harold Matson (dated October 7, 1940), some of Martha Foley's remarks are recorded:

It is a very unusual book but one that we feel does not quite emerge from under the burden of the author's preoccupation with what might be described as the Dunn [sic] theory of time.*

During the late twenties and thirties J.W. Dunne's An Experiment With Time was in great vogue.[20] Priestley was fascinated with Dunne's time theories and so was Malcolm Lowry. References to Dunne and the law of series occur repeatedly in his letters, and An Experiment With Time was the third book which, in 1940, he suggested that Mrs. Bonner read.

Dunne's book is an attempt to construct an epistemology based on the theory that time is serial:

> Now, we have seen that if Time passes or grows or accumulates or expends itself or does anything whatsoever except stand rigid and changeless before a Time-fixed observer, there must be another Time which times that activity of, or along, the first Time, and another Time which times that second Time, and so on in an apparent series to infinity.
>
> (Experiment, 133)

This time series gives rise to a universe of Chinese boxes, one contained within the other ad infinitum. Furthermore, the observer of this serial universe is also serial. Far from being a passive receptacle, Dunne's observer is capable of psychic penetration into other time levels or, what amounts to the same thing, of transforming himself from Observer A into Observer B and so on.

The implications for such a serial identity are vast, for if an individual can move from the smallest time level to a greater encompassing one, then he can perceive the past and the future of the first observer as well as of other observers. In this way Dunne believes that he has "scientifically" accounted for the phenomenon of precognition in dreams and time travel. Not to be stopped here, he goes on to suggest that by being able to penetrate other time levels and foresee, so to speak, the future, the observer can interfere in that future. (How one can both foresee and change the future is a mystery!) Even death itself is overcome, for when a person dies he

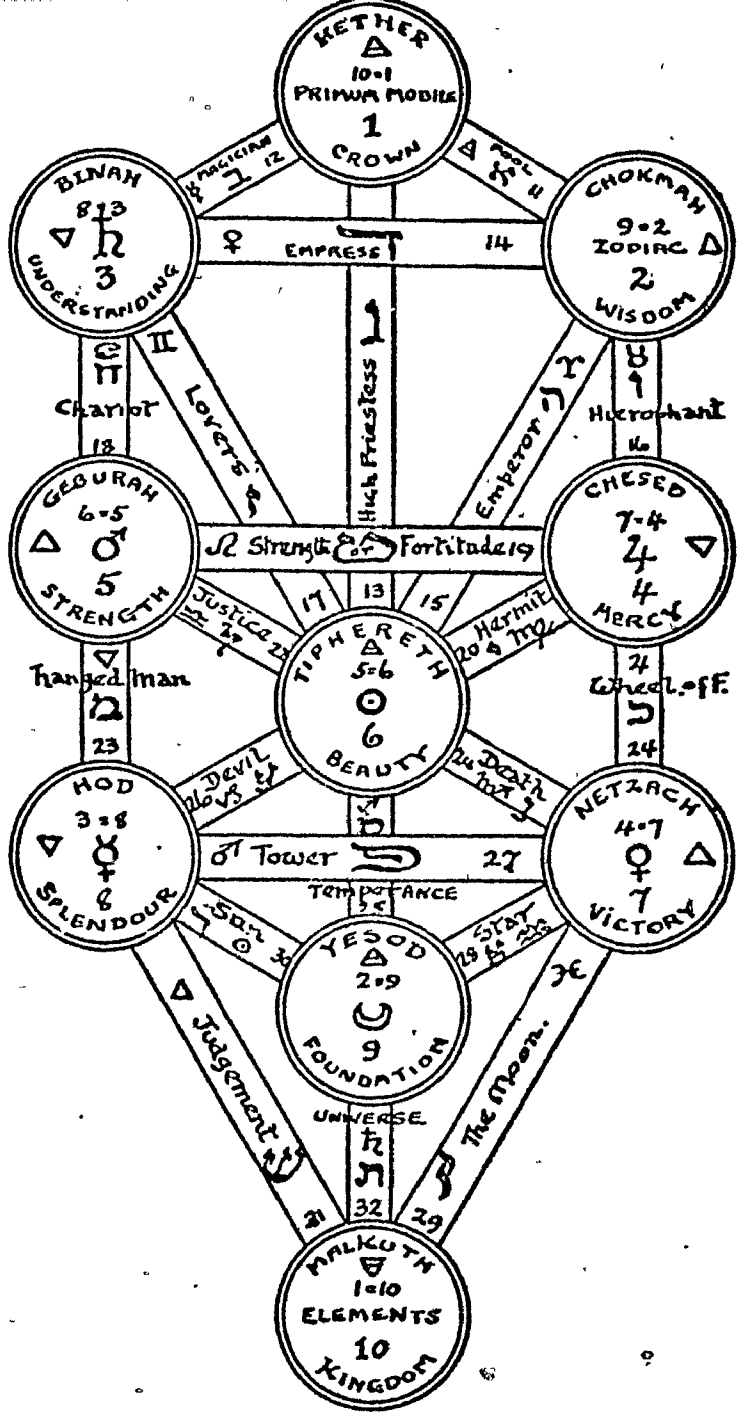
*Martha Foley was a reader for Harcourt-Brace. In Selected Letters, p. 39, Lowry refers to this comment of Foley's passed on to him by Matson: "I think on rereading that Martha Foley's judgement is maybe a just one in part; there is too much preoccupation with time, and the pattern does not emerge properly."

simply ceases to exist on one time level and passes on to another.

Dunne, then, like Ouspensky, postulates an ultimately moral universe in which man is free and capable of intervening to change the course of future events. The Dunne serial universe, far from being a bleak pessimistic progression, enshrines the mystery of the universe and the power of the individual mind within a logical but non-reductive order. Dunne also offers a method for explaining the problems of repetition and coincidence without dismissing them as meaningless; the serial observer in a serial universe is able to perceive intricate connections and inter-relations between people and events on various time levels. For Lowry, with his need for an order which would exalt personal consciousness while supporting an organic view of the world, Dunne's serialism offered many answers. In his notes for the film script of Tender is the Night, Lowry remarks that even though he is "not illustrating a Dunne-like theory of time ... we can grant some such process as part of an accepted truth."

In the spring of 1956, Lowry wrote from England to Harvey Burt, a Dollarton friend and neighbour, asking for "two magical books," the Q.B.L. or The Bride's Reception and The Anatomy of the Body of God.[21] Both books were written by a Vancouver Cabbalist and census enumerator Charles Stansfeld-Jones (Frater Achad) whom Lowry had met in 1941 when Jones called at the Dollarton cabin. This bizarre encounter led to a close friendship. In addition to studying Jones' own books, Lowry was able to read widely in Jones' library of occult and esoteric literature. According to Mrs. Lowry, she and Malcolm also practised the I Ching with Frater Achad.[22] There are difficulties, however, in assessing Jones' influence on Lowry. Although his connection with Jones undoubtedly intensified his cabbalistic interests it is as well to remember that Lowry had some acquaintance with the Cabbala and other ancient myths through his relationship with Aiken years before.

As the early (pre-1941) manuscripts of Under the Volcano illustrate, the book was ready for a final infusion of Cabbalistic symbols and correspondences (drawn in particular from Q.B.L.) when Lowry met Jones.



Tree of Life with Correspondences.

This drawing of the Tree of Life is from the Appendix of Jones' Q.B.L. or The Bride's Reception (New York, 1972), p. 43. The Tree of Life is a "Quabalistic conception of the creative process" which contains three triads or levels of reality. Each level is contained in the others and all three are reflected in Malkuth which hangs suspended from the lowest triad. Jones' book is an explication of the correspondences (with number, the Hebrew alphabet, the Tarot, etc.) illustrated in the drawing. There are also colour correspondences for each sephira which, unfortunately, cannot be reproduced here. The circle (a key symbol in Lowry's work) is an essential component of the tree with each circle representing one sephira. The infamous abyss falls between Chesed (4) and Binah (3) signified by the absence of a direct path connecting the second triad to the third and final triad.

What would finally have happened to the Cabbalistic references surrounding the McCandless in October Ferry is speculative. Lowry had traced out the Tree of Life from the Q.B.L. on a partial draft of a letter to David Markson dated February 5, 1954 and this fact, together with the 1956 request for the two Jones books, indicates his continuing concern with Jones' theories.* Instead of attempting to track down direct references to Cabbalism in Lowry's fiction, it is possible to view the Cabbala, particularly as interpreted by Jones in The Anatomy of the Body of God, as a general philosophical and religious influence upon Lowry's already established concerns.

The chief purpose of The Anatomy of the Body of God was to prove and illustrate the constant movement of the Tree of Life which represents not only the entire universe but the microcosm of the human soul. According to Achad, the Tree of Life is

> not a fixed design but capable of indefinite progression towards the Infinitely Small or the Infinitely Great. For it can be so drawn that it appears with all its details and properties, repeating themselves indefinitely in every direction of Space to Infinity. (Anatomy, 12)

With the aid of elaborate diagrams, Achad goes on to explain the functioning of the Tree in three dimensions and the esoteric consequences of its intricate duplication. For example, in its perpetual proliferations parts of the Tree overlap and contain other parts; this phenomenon leads Achad to the claim that the Abyss within the Tree of Life is duplicated and hidden everywhere. If the Tree were telescoped, Kether (the spiritual world) would coincide with Malkuth (the material world), thereby symbolizing the mystical unity of the two. The doctrine that Heaven and Hell are the same place or that the way up is the way down, ideas that terrified and fascinated

*This tracing of the Tree of Life appears to be from the Q.B.L., p. 43. It is unfinished and with Lowry's habit of using and re-using available pieces of paper, it cannot be said exactly when he made the copy or even if it was necessarily part of the letter to Markson. The letter, postmarked May 10, 1954 and written in St. Paul's Hospital after Lowry had injured himself, makes no reference to the Cabbala or related subjects, though it is a delightful example of Lowry at his symbolic, extravagant best. Selected Letters, 366.

Lowry, are basic to Achad's organic Tree.

Some of Lowry's most striking effects with time and space are attributable to the imaginative stimulus provided by Achad's Tree of Life. The palimpsest quality that Lowry gives to the consciousness of Geoffrey Firmin, Martin Trumbaugh, and Ethan Llewelyn parallels the overlapping and containment of the Tree. Various events in time become superimposed on one another in the protagonist's mind. His thoughts travel up and down a mental ladder with signs, objects, streets, or places acquiring proliferating symbolic dimensions. Thus the barranca becomes a multilevelled and living symbol of historical conquest as well as the ante-diluvian world, the Abyss, the link between Geoffrey's garden and the Farolito, and a gigantic jakes. To the Cabbalist, language itself is magic, with the mystical power to transform consciousness. This belief in the power of the word is fundamental to Lowry, whose art is his attempt to grow and evolve and in evolving to reflect reality.

Similarities exist between Dunne's serial universe and Achad's Tree of Life; both theories offer a vision of a multilevelled, dynamic, yet ordered universe. Where they differ is in a sense of purpose. The paths of the Tree of Life lead to God and the goal of the adept is to reach the Godhead of visionary knowledge by passing successfully through the abyss within the soul as well as within the universe. To do this requires a highly developed consciousness. If Heaven and Hell are the same place and both are within man, success or failure depends on one's ability to control knowledge – on one's state of mind. In Dunne's universe there is no such intense purpose or absolute risk despite his attempt to introduce "a superlative general observer, the fount of all ... self-consciousness, intention, and intervention" towards the end of his Experiment With Time.

Finally, it is highly possible that Lowry acquired the title, as well as philosophical support, for his literary continuum from Frater Achad's Q.B.L. Throughout his book Achad emphasizes – in keeping with the dynamic nature of his Tree – the flux and reflux of his system, the necessity for accepting change, and the correct "Method of Return," embodied in the constant motion of the Cabbalist's Tree of

Life. He closes Q.B.L. with a final reiteration of his message in the words which Lowry adapted to his own purpose:

> Thus, gentle readers, are we shown the Way to the Palace of the Bride.
>
> Set ye out upon that "Never-ending journey, each step of which is an unutterable reward" ....
>
> (Q.B.L., 106)

Although Lowry's knowledge of Bergson is not as well documented as that of the other writers under discussion, it is necessary to consider Bergson as an important influence on Lowry because of his general impact on the early twentieth century and upon Aiken in particular.* According to Jay Martin, Henri Bergson was a crucial influence on Aiken's ideas of time and space, evolution, and individual consciousness.[23] In addition, shortly after writing his final Cambridge exams in 1932, Lowry wrote to Aiken saying that he must read, among others, Dean Inge (Selected Letters, 8). It is impossible to know for certain which of W.R. Inge's many books he actually read, but the Dean's interest in the topical question of time and space was well known and in his God and the Astronomers (1933), Inge analyzes Bergson's philosophy in great detail.**

*One of Lowry's direct references to Bergson occurs in a letter to Derek Pethick (1950) in which he discusses Under the Volcano (Selected Letters, 200). Lowry writes: "Should you hold the Bergsonian idea that the sense of time is merely an inhibition to prevent everything from happening at once - brooding upon which it is pretty difficult to avoid some notion of eternal recurrence - inevitable destruction is thus simply the teleological end to one series of possibilities; everything hopeful is equally possible; the horror would seem to exist in the possibility that this is no longer true on our plane and absolute catastrophe has fallen in line with our will upon so many planes that even the other possibilities are for us gradually ceasing to exist. This, I may say, is not very clear, as I have expressed it, so you better forget it. Anyhow, I don't believe it for a moment." Clear it is not, for Lowry sounds as if he is compounding, if not confusing, Bergson with Dunne and Ouspensky in this remark.

**Interestingly enough, Inge's Christian Mysticism is one of the books to which Lowry had access in Stansfeld-Jones' private library. Another example of the wheels within wheels in Lowry's life. See Kilgallin's Lowry, Appendix A.

Bergson's Creative Evolution, published in 1911 and translated in 1931, had a widespread influence on twentieth century thought and literature, perhaps because it signalled a release of individual freedom and power from nineteenth century determinism. For Bergson, "to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly" (Creative Evolution, 7). Bergson's importance to a writer like Lowry who saw life, art, and the development of consciousness as an endless voyage, is not difficult to appreciate.

In Creative Evolution, Bergson attacks the "cinematographical mechanism of thought" which he finds in Western philosophy, religion, and social structures. According to Bergson, this mode of thought reflects a fear of contingency and becoming. For Bergson, who believed that becoming is life, creativity, freedom, and ultimately the only reality, Platonic absolutes and all traditional concepts of ontology represent stasis or death. The intellect, which is responsible for the creation of static or timeless concepts and structures, is not equipped to comprehend the "élan vital"; only intuition can accomplish that.

In Bergson's concept of creative evolution the future is necessarily unknown and unknowable; there can be no Dunne-like precognition because the future awaits creation. The past, however, is of great significance for evolution, not the least for the danger it presents:

> In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside. (Creative Evolution, 5)

The past is always with us providing our personal duration, but it must not become a ruling force in the progression of life because it represents the "already become"; it is no longer charged with life. According to Bergson, it is a mistake for the individual to become psychically trapped in his past and to be involved, thereby, in recurrence or repetition. Nature or the material world repeats, but human consciousness does not. We must learn to use the past in order to will the future and to create ourselves.

The last of the major influences upon Lowry's thought, especially in his later work, and one which must have synthesized many of his ideas, is that of the Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, whose books Lowry began reading in 1950. Lowry was particularly impressed by Ortega's lecture on Goethe and his book, Towards a Philosophy of History. In an important letter (June 23, 1950) to his Dollarton friend, Downie Kirk, Lowry described the ideas which intrigued him. He was pleased with Ortega's theory that "man is a sort of novelist of himself":

> This probably recommends itself to me partly because if it is true, and man is a sort of novelist of himself, I can see something philosophically valuable in attempting to set down what actually happens in a novelist's mind when he conceives what he conceives to be the fanciful figure of a personage, etc., for this, the part that never gets written ... would be the true drama ....
> (Selected Letters, 210)

The important point about Ortega's theory is that man is the novelist or the maker of his own history and that this history is constantly in the making:

> Existence means, for each of us, the process of realizing, under given conditions, the aspiration we are.
> Body and soul are things; but I am a drama, if anything, an unending struggle to be what I have to be. The aspiration or program I am, impresses its particular profile on the world about me, and that world reacts to this impress, accepting or resisting it.[24]

One of the chief obstacles to the creation of history is, according to Ortega, the Eleatic nature of Western philosophy and religion. Ortega, in terms reminiscent of Bergson, sees Western man's fear of the contingent as a crippling restriction in his search for reality. Before we can know what we are, "we must first elaborate a non-Eleatic concept of being, as others have elaborated a non-Euclidean geometry. The time has come for the seed sown by Heraclitus to bring forth its mighty harvest" (History, 203). Ortega criticizes Bergson's term "se faisant" for implying a passive quality in the agent, almost as if man was being made. He goes on to emphasize his view that man

actively creates, not only himself, but all human history.

The past, for Ortega, is always present in us; it is our right and it is good. He praises England in the most glowing terms for preserving sacred traditions. In what delighted Lowry as "one of the most convincing arguments against communism" (Selected Letters, 212), Ortega declares that to repeat, efface, or otherwise misuse the past is a sin. The idea of spiritual or psychical recurrence is anathema:

> [M]an, thanks to his power of memory accumulates his past; he possesses it and can make use of it. Man is never the first man but begins his life on a certain level of accumulated past....the important part of this treasure [the past] is ...the memory of mistakes, allowing us not to repeat the same ones forever.... Breaking the continuity with the past, wanting to begin again, is a lowering of man and a plagiarism of the orangutan.
>
> (History, 81)

Despite Ortega's strictures on recurrence or repetition within human history, Lowry reconciles Ortega's philosophy of history and self-creation with Ouspensky's adaptations of recurrence from Nietzsche and Eastern Mysticism. When Lowry uses recurrence or repetition of the past, however, it is either to signify the breakdown of an individual's will or to suggest the necessity for understanding and using the past in order to create the future - to create oneself. For Lowry, beginning again does not involve a break in continuity with the past but a further exploration of the past.

Using Lowry's own remarks as a pivotal point it is now possible to summarize the salient features of his philosophy. One of the most important of Lowry's manuscripts, one which clearly illustrates his concerns, is the manuscript of his short story "Ghostkeeper." Interspersed with parts of the story are some of Lowry's observations on life:

> Life is indeed a sort of delirium perhaps that should be contemplated however by a sober "healthy" mind. By sober and healthy I mean of necessity limited. The mind is not equipped to look at the truth.

> Perhaps people get inklings of that truth on the lowest plane when they drink too much or go crazy and become delirious but it can't be stomached, certainly not from that sort of upside-down and reversed position. Not that the truth is 'bad' or 'good': it simply is, is incomprehensible, and though one is part of it, there is too much of it to grasp at once, or it is ungraspable, being perpetually Protean.[25]

Without forcing a systematic metaphysics on a most unsystematic thinker, one can, in view of his reading and his own remarks, acquire a reasonable picture of the Lowryean world. The single most important aspect of this world is its dynamism. For Lowry, the universe was in a constant process of change. His affinity for a world view based upon a belief in perpetual movement and possibility led him to philosophers like Bergson, Ortega, and Dunne, or mystics like Stansfeld-Jones. Even Spengler, of lesser importance to Lowry, saw "world history as a picture of endless formations and transformations, of the marvellous waxing and waning of organic forms."[26] Cycles and recurrences which play such important symbolic and structural roles in Lowry's fiction are subsidiary aspects of reality, the wheels within wheels of an ultimately unending voyage.

At this point, however, a difficulty arises. In addition to his belief in a Heraclitean world, Lowry was also attracted by Ouspensky's view that time and space are, in a sense, fixed or given once and for all; nothing new can be said to come into being, according to Ouspensky, for the future has already been created. The central dilemma in Lowry's fiction is the struggle to use the past to create the future. Even if one accepts Lowry's thesis that this struggle is a voyage that never ends, the reality, in Lowry's fiction, of an open future which the individual can create is at best uncertain; glimpses of such a progression exist in The Forest Path and October Ferry. Was Lowry unaware of the contradiction in his beliefs as they pertain to the future, or, more likely, was he attempting to articulate this paradox in his fiction? Perhaps Douglas Day's theory that Lowry was orally fixated in an infantile state - in other words, in his own past - explains why he had such difficulty moving into a Bergsonian future where "to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly." In any case, this contradiction in Lowry's attitude towards the future is never resolved. The best that can be said is that Lowry's characters behave fatalistically (as if the future

was determined) when they are confused by hellish despair; when perception is balanced, they appear to live in harmony with an ever-evolving universe.

The second outstanding feature of Lowry's world is its signification. Nothing can be explained away as mere accident; everything connects or corresponds to form a highly significant whole. Lowry gives creative form to his sense of temporal and spatial interconnection through the use of journeys and the more obvious metaphors of paths, ladders, wheels, as well as through fresh and intriguing symbols like that of the Panama Canal. No matter how he accounts for it, each of the authors considered in this chapter agrees that the universe is full of meaning. Even in the strange books of Charles Fort, whose data on fires was used in October Ferry, Lowry discovered a fascinating collection of 'facts' to prove that our world contains signs and events which logic cannot explain. His reading in Boehme and Swedenborg reinforced his desire to interpret the natural world.[27]

As early as 1928 when he responded so profoundly to Aiken's "House of Dust" and Blue Voyage, Lowry's concern with individual consciousness and perception was obvious. Like the symbolists he was unwilling to allow mechanistic limitations to the human psyche, and his obsession with the creative and intuitional power of the mind is a symptom of early twentieth century romanticism. The key point is that, for Lowry, the development of consciousness was in principle never complete; his "voyage that never ends" is, on one level, the never-ending effort of the individual to develop consciousness and thereby achieve understanding of a mysterious universe. It is Lowry's belief in the power of the psyche that made Jung's theories of synchronicity and the unconscious congenial.

The fusion of opposites (drawn in particular from Ouspensky and Jones) was a favourite idea of Lowry's and relates his concept of consciousness to his picture of a many levelled, intricately connected world. Just as there are many levels of reality external to man, the human psyche is correspondingly complex. Lowry believed man could penetrate deeper and deeper into the mystery of reality by means of an ever-expanding consciousness. If man were to misuse his powers or cease to evolve, a potentially paradisial existence would quickly become infernal; Lowry saw life in such absolute extremes. Thus the

drama set forth in each of his books, the drama of his own life and the purpose of his art is the dramatization of a quest for a fully evolved consciousness which can transform an alien, fragmented, and mechanized world into a home. The reprieve from eviction which Ethan wins in October Ferry exists within the human mind.

Lowry's philosophy is an eclectic one; he had great synthesizing imaginative powers. Reality, he believed, is in constant motion, "perpetually Protean." A man's task is to live in harmony with this universal motion, to constantly change, develop, and grow. The past, while threatening to enclose and paralyse the movement of the mind, is, at the same time, synonymous with the self created thus far in time; in understanding the past a man understands the self he has created and is made free to continue his growth. For Lowry, the writer's task is to strive constantly to capture in art the protean nature of reality. Not surprisingly then, Lowry's aesthetics develops clearly from his metaphysics.

Part II

Lowry's Magic Realism

An examination of Lowry's aesthetics involves two questions: firstly, his theories of the nature and purpose of art and, secondly, his creative methods. The question of creative methods should be discussed first because it inevitably involves problems of literary influence; Lowry's aesthetic theories cannot be properly appreciated until the chief influences upon his art have been distinguished from peripheral ones.

Various claims have been made for the influence of other writers on Lowry's technique.[28] In his review of Under the Volcano, Jacques Barzun accused Lowry of imitating Joyce, Dos Passos, and Sterne so that the novel becomes "'an anthology held together by earnestness'." Lowry, deeply affronted, wrote to Barzun (May, 1947) defending his

art, and his letter is worth examining. Barzun, he maintains, has been grossly unfair:

> For while few modern writers, myself included, can have altogether escaped the influence, direct or indirect, of Joyce and Hemingway, the "materials" [of Volcano] in the sense you convey are not to be found in either of these books [Ulysses and The Sun Also Rises] ...A young writer will naturally try to benefit and make use of what he has read, as a result of which, especially in technique, what Van Gogh I think calls "design-governing postures" are from time to time inevitable. But where I found another writer in the machinery ...I always did my utmost to sweat him out.
>
> (Selected Letters, 143)

Lowry went on to declare that he had never read Ulysses through and had only read one page of Tristram Shandy. The influences upon Under the Volcano are "other, and for the most part also, I genuinely believe, absorbed."

The tracking down of stylistic influences upon a writer is an invidious task; of course, Lowry was aware of popular techniques. To some extent this awareness came through Conrad Aiken, the one writer whom Lowry claimed as the major influence on his art. At the same time, and perhaps to a greater extent, Lowry was influenced by lesser writers than Joyce, Faulkner, or Dos Passos. In his unpublished letter to Albert Erskine referred to above (p.22), Lowry mentions several minor works which influenced his masterpiece. For example, Ralph Bates' The Fields of Paradise suggested the Spanish-English dialogue and the use of the important word "Campañero," and Houghton's Julian Grant Loses His Way is an extremely heavy-handed portrayal of a dead man in Hell who relives his past; here, Lowry transformed his source. In one sense, the influence of these writers is less exciting than Joycean parallels. On the other hand, these authors were undoubtedly more important to Lowry and this indicates the stature of his individual technical achievement.

The only major writers that a critic is fully entitled to press as influences on Lowry's technique are Conrad Aiken and Henry James. Lowry adopted several of Aiken's techniques—unsent letters, contrapuntal use of dialogue and thought, dreams, and travel in boats or trains, in order to contrast movement through space into the future

with the mental voyage of the protagonist into the past. From both Aiken and James, Lowry learned that the most fascinating material for fiction is the drama of consciousness. Following James' example, he uses an indirect narrator to mediate between the reader and the fictional experience - in the Volcano, at least - with brilliant success. Finally, from James' novels and prefaces, Lowry gained the respect for form which characterizes his own work and raises it above Aiken's Blue Voyage.

It is as well to remember when considering Lowry's poetics that he deeply admired Melville and never rejected the narrative traditions of the nineteenth century. In a reminiscence of Lowry, Gerald Noxon, a Cambridge friend and editor of Experiment, reveals Lowry's aesthetic concerns:

> Basically Malcolm was unwilling to repudiate the legacy which he had found awaiting him in the works of nineteenth century novelists. While discarding the aridity of a purely realistic style, he was unwilling to adopt the kind of personal stenography which made the works of writers like Joyce and Faulkner superficially difficult for the reader but still insisting that his writing must be capable of carrying meaning at many different levels of intellectual and emotional communication which he discerned in Melville, for instance.[29]

Lowry's manuscripts and notes offer considerable insight into the way he wrote and his writing methods reflect, in turn, the core of his aesthetic beliefs. Very rarely did Lowry cut material from his manuscripts without incorporating it, in another form, at some other place in the text. In this way, his work always grew or expanded; his primary concern was to get as much into a book as possible. The extant notes for each of his books indicate that he began with a central episode for the books as well as for each chapter and then built upon this foundation by adding blocks of descriptive and thematic material at either end. Frequently, he would shift the position of whole passages; in Under the Volcano, for example, paragraphs that had first been placed in one chapter were later moved into other chapters.

Lowry never seemed satisfied with the symbolic resonance or, to keep the architectural analogy, with the churrigueresque facade of his work; his imagination continually discovered new connections and unexplored resemblances between words, images, and events. Symbols,

allusions, motifs, are constantly being inserted - almost like mortar - at strategic points in the manuscripts. He wrote at tremendous length; even individual sentences illustrate the way he added phrase after phrase, adjective after adjective to his initial idea as if to probe, develop, and expand every nuance of meaning. The writing was never careless or hurried, however, for he re-wrote sentences and paragraphs many times and marginal notes indicate that he had complicated reasons for every punctuation mark.

Two features of Lowry's creative method stand out as particularly significant: he wrote as if he was constructing a house or a pier; simultaneously, his work never seemed, to his eyes, complete. For Lowry, a work of art was like a building that was constantly being built and, despite the hopelessness of the attempt, the fact that the work could never be finished, could never be held still or made permanent, was its greatest source of value. In Dark as the Grave, Sigbjørn Wilderness explains that the artist must constantly rebuild his ever-changing work of art:

> How hopeless, how inexplicable the effort! For is not the building the work of art in question, long since perfect in the mind, and only rendered a vehicle of destruction by the effort to realize it, to transmute it upon paper? [...]
>
> It would seem this building is a peculiar one, not susceptible to mundane laws [...] for while it continues to go on burning, as if in an external [eternal, in the manuscripts] hellfire, so long as the author continues to exert his efforts, it continues just as fast as the walls are falling down, to be pushed up by him [...] .[30]

The reason for this constant movement and change in the work of art, "not susceptible to mundane laws," is that it reflects the universe. As Sigbjørn explains:

> Part of the artist's despair [...] in the face of his material is perhaps occasioned by the patent fact that the universe itself - as the Rosicrucians also held - is in the process of creation. An organic work of art, having been conceived, must grow in the creator's mind, or proceed to perish.
>
> (Dark as the Grave, 154)

The key to Lowry's art, the unifying idea of his metaphysics and aesthetics, the insight upon which he based his vision of life and The Voyage That Never Ends, is that "an organic work of art [...] must grow in the creator's mind, or proceed to perish." The space of the

building must never become static but must continuously grow in time. Malcolm Lowry believed that stasis would destroy not only the work of art but the artist as well. In his "Working Notes" for October Ferry to Gabriola, Lowry tackles the problem of time and space, motion and stasis in art from a different angle. Quoting Herbert Read, he goes on to apply Read's theories to his beloved pier.* According to Read, in the work of art the artist "has arrested the flux of existence and made a solid and stable object: out of time he has created space." Unhappy with this theory, Lowry comments that his pier is both "geometrical and organic"; although it is solid and stable in one sense, it is full of motion and vitality in another. He calls his pier "a magic work of reason" that by the moon's reflections is "like an amplification of the paths and sephiroths of the QBL itself"[sic].

For Lowry, symbols, images, and words were constantly expanding in much the same way as the Tree of Life. His task was to capture this activity in art. His most revealing reflections upon the absurdity of the attempt are contained in his "Ghostkeeper" manuscript:

> The minute an artist begins to try and shape his material - the more especially if that material is his own life - some sort of magic lever is thrown into gear, setting some celestial machinery in motion producing events or coincidences that show him that this shaping of his is absurd, that nothing is static or can be pinned down, that everything is evolving or developing into other meanings, or cancellations of meanings quite beyond his comprehension. [...] In any case the average short story is probably a very bad image of life, and an absurdity, for the reason that no matter how much action there is in it, it is static, a piece of death, fixed, a sort of butterfly on a pin; [...] But the attempt should be - or should be here - at least to give the illusion of things - appearances,

*Lowry's Dollarton pier was of tremendous symbolic importance to him; he considered it a work of art. After its destruction in the spring of 1956, Lowry wrote that he was "broken hearted"; "that pier, that gave so much happiness to many and us, was us in a sense" (Selected Letters, 388). Douglas Day suggests that the news that the pier was gone hastened Lowry's own death because to Lowry's coincidence and omen-ridden mind, it signaled his destruction. See Malcolm Lowry, pp. 35-36.

possibilities, ideas, even resolutions - in a state of perpetual metamorphosis.*

In Lowry's terms, the realistic work of art is the one that most nearly captures the flow and vitality of metaphysical and natural reality - the withdrawal and return of the universe and of the tides.

Parallelling his philosophical views, Malcolm Lowry's aesthetic is founded upon a belief in the infinite variation and movement of life. Time is not a simple single-dimensioned line of cause and effect nor space an empty receptacle to be filled as time marches on. Just as his universe is an intricately connected, supremely meaningful structure, so his fiction is a multilevelled world in which time and space are, ideally, unlimited. By penetrating the future or reliving the past, by interpreting coincidences and events as signs and portents, by travelling mentally and physically, the Lowry protagonist inhabits and <u>becomes</u> a dynamic, mysterious universe. Finding watches, crossing borders under the watchful eyes of customs officials, riding in buses, ferries, boats and planes, looping the loop, visiting the ruins of Pompeii, even contemplating the stacks of polished glasses in a bar, become, under the spell of Lowry's artistic vision, aspects of a mystical journey, a glimpse into a new world, the capturing of reality.

The only form which Lowry felt could possibly contain his vision was that of the voyage ever-renewed. If we move in circles or repeat our pasts it is only within the larger journey which we never complete. The purpose for this constant movement is the evolution of consciousness and the creation of life. The world for Lowry was ultimately a religious and a moral one. Hell he identified with stasis and the crippling of consciousness; Paradise - Eridanus - is the uninterrupted voyaging and development of the soul.

*This is an invaluable passage for anyone interested in Lowry and it has been surprisingly overlooked. An important part of the "Ghostkeeper" manuscript (one of the short stories intended for <u>Hear us o Lord</u>) appears in Appendix E of Perle Epstein's <u>The Private Labyrinth of Malcolm Lowry</u>. The emphasis is mine. These remarks explain what Lowry meant when, in 1953, he wrote that he was looking for "a new form, a new approach to reality itself" (<u>Selected Letters</u>,330).

NOTES: CHAPTER II

[1] "Time in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury," William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, eds. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (Michigan, 1954), p. 180.

[2] Professor New's article, "Lowry's Reading," in Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work, ed. George Woodcock (Vancouver, 1971), although necessarily brief, is the best general study to date of Lowry's thought. New emphasizes the eclectic nature of Lowry's reading and avoids the distortion which arises in studies that concentrate upon one specific influence. Perle Epstein's The Private Labyrinth (New York, 1969), while providing valuable information on Lowry's Cabbalistic reading, overemphasizes the importance of the Cabbala in an understanding of Under the Volcano. The pre-1941 manuscript versions of the Volcano show that Lowry had already decided upon many of the symbols which are also important to the Cabbala. Two theses which discuss aspects of Lowry's reading and the subsequent influences on his fiction are Keith Harrison, "Under the Volcano and October Ferry to Gabriola: The Weight of the Past," PH.D. McGill, 1972 and R.H. Ramsey, "The Impact of Time and Memory on Malcolm Lowry's Fiction," M.A. British Columbia, 1970. Harrison concentrates upon the influence of Eastern mysticism, in particular Vedanta and the I Ching as well as offering valuable insights into Lowry's use of Greek myths. Ramsey's more limited study deals with Lowry's reading in Dunne and Ortega.

[3] According to his Vancouver lawyer and personal friend William McConnell, Lowry "had that rare (and rather frightening) gift of near total recall." "Recollections of Malcolm Lowry," The Man and his Work, p. 155. It is doubtful that any Lowry bibliography can be exhaustive and one is continually haunted by the fact that certain books or authors are inevitably overlooked. Section II of my bibliography is an attempt to suggest the scope of Lowry's reading. My selection corresponds in most respects with Tony Kilgallin's list of one hundred authors to have influenced Lowry. See Lowry, Appendix B.

[4] "Swinging the Paradise Street Blues: Malcolm Lowry in England," Paris Review, XXXVII(1966), p.18.

[5] Ibid., p. 14.

[6] In addition to the above mentioned studies (no. 3), the work of Richard Hauer Costa, Tony Kilgallin, and Douglas Day has provided invaluable assistance. Tony Kilgallin has privately corroborated my belief that Ouspensky, Dunne, and Bergson are more important to an understanding of Lowry than other writers such as Swedenborg or Boehme, and Day's biography of Lowry, while not discussing Lowry's reading in any detail clarifies the nature of Lowry's metaphysical search.

[7] "Malcolm Lowry: A Note," The Man and his Work, pp. 101-102. For Lowry's response to Aiken, see Selected Letters, pp. 3-10 and pp. 270-279 where he writes that Aiken's "work first slammed down upon my raw psyche like the lightening slamming down on the slew outside at this moment...."

[8] Day gives a good account of the years when Aiken served "in loco parentis" for Lowry, offering many hitherto unknown facts about the Lowry-Aiken symbiosis.

[9] See Costa's articles, "Lowry/Aiken Symbiosis," Nation, June 26, 1967, and "Ulysses, Lowry's Volcano, and the Voyage Between: Study of an Unacknowledged Literary Kinship," University of Toronto Quarterly (July, 1967). According to the Aiken scholar, Professor Jay Martin, Joyce was not an important influence on Aiken. Conrad Aiken: A Life of his Art (Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 94.

[10] Quoted in Martin, p. 76.

[11] The Jig of Forslin: A Symphony (Boston, 1916), p. 8.

[12] Martin, p. 139.

[13] Preludes (New York, 1966), p. vi.

[14] Collected Poems (New York, 1953), p. 869.

[15] The Short Stories of Conrad Aiken (New York, 1950) and Three Novels by Conrad Aiken (London, 1965). Further references to these books are included in the text.

[16] Martin, p. 26.

[17] The I Ching or Book of Changes, vol. I (New York, 1950), p. iv.

[18] I am grateful to a letter from Professor Jay Martin for this information on Bergson.

[19] A New Model of the Universe (New York, 1971) and Tertium Organum: A Key to the Enigmas of the World (New York, 1970). All further references are included in the text.

[20] An Experiment With Time (London, 1969). First published in 1927. All subsequent references are included in the text.

[21] Selected Letters, p. 387. Q.B.L. or The Bride's Reception (Chicago, 1972) and The Anatomy of the Body of God (Chicago, 1925) are two treatises on the Cabbala by the Vancouver Cabbalist Charles Robert Stansfeld-Jones -"Frater Achad." Further references and quotations are included in the text. For a discussion of Lowry's friendship with Jones, see William New's article "Lowry, The Cabbala and Charles Jones," in Articulating West (Toronto, 1972), pp. 190-195.

[22] I am grateful to a letter from Mrs. Lowry for this information. The books in Achad's library to which Lowry had access are listed in Epstein's The Private Labyrinth and Kilgallin's Lowry; each is a selected list and they do not coincide. Both lists include such works as the I Ching, the Egyptian Book of the Dead and The Tibetan Book of the Dead.

[23] Professor Martin confirmed the special importance of Bergson to Aiken in a letter to me, but one should also consult his book Conrad Aiken for a detailed analysis of Aiken's themes. The most important of Bergson's books for Aiken and Lowry is Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York, 1931). All quotations are from this edition and are included in the text.

[24] José Ortega y Gasset, Towards a Philosophy of History (New York, 1941), p. 113. All further references are included in the text. Ortega's essay on Goethe, "In Search of Goethe from Within," is included in The Dehumanization of Art (Princeton, 1968).

[25] This passage comes from the selections made by Epstein for Appendix E of The Private Labyrinth.

[26] Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, vol. I (London, 1926), p. 22. Spengler also sees space as static and time alone as vitally dynamic.

[27] Although it is impossible to say exactly what of Boehme's works Lowry read and when, Boehme's reading of the Samaritan parable bears upon Lowry's use of it in Under the Volcano. Boehme writes that "This is a lively and manifest Representation of the Corruption of Man in Paradise, and also of the Corruption of the Earth in the Curse of God, when Paradise departed from it. Now wilt thou be a Magus? Then thou must become the Samaritan, otherwise thou canst not heal the wounded and decayed; for the Body which thou must heal is half dead, and sorely wounded...." "Signature of all things," The Works of Jacob Boehme, vol. IV(London, 1781), p.43.

[28] See Costa's "Ulysses, Lowry's Volcano, and the Voyage Between." Epstein maintains that the stylistic influence of Joyce on Lowry "is a critical commonplace," The Private Labyrinth, p. 4. Stephen Spriel calls the Volcano "le texte prousto-faulknerio-dos-passosio-joycien." "Le cryptogramme Lowry," Les lettres nouvelles, 5(July-August, 1960), p. 69.

[29] "Malcolm Lowry; 1930," Prairie Schooner, 37, 4(Winter, 1963-64), p. 318. For Lowry's description of the importance of Melville, see Selected Letters, p. 197. While never knowing Melville's fiction particularly well, Lowry was deeply moved by the failure of Melville's life.

[30] Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid (New York, 1969), p. 154. All further references are included in the text.

CHAPTER III

Outward Bound*

The nature and the form of Lowry's metaphysical and experiential quest begins to appear in his early writings.[1] Even in his first stories Lowry discovered that finding is making - the quest is the constant making and re-making of self and reality. The characteristic Lowry method for the fabrication of self and world is already present in this early work as a process of encircling and containing experience. Through constant travelling, through the images of ships, harbours, engine rooms and wheels, external reality is possessed. To put it another way, the self expands in the effort to surround experience. Space and time are internalized in the constant activity of life.

The poetic act itself becomes an imaginative analogue for the encircling of time and space and Lowry, in Ultramarine, if not before, is clearly aware of the structural potential of his art. Lowry's aim, so wonderfully achieved in Under the Volcano and Hear us O Lord, is to surround time and space, to enfold it verbally, and through his art to make the reader repeat the process. Indeed, the full thrust of the circular structure in his best work is towards the continual repetition, through the reader, of the encircling process; for it is just that- a process, an activity, a sacred ritual of life.

*The phrase "outward bound" is one of Lowry's nucleii of meaning. It refers to a ship's voyage from port and, as such, symbolizes the voyage of the soul or consciousness of the individual through life. The phrase plays an important role in Ultramarine where it defines the nature of Dana's quest. It occurs also in October Ferry where, as in the unpublished story "June 30th 1934!" it alludes to Sutton Vane's play Outward Bound (New York, 1924). In the play, all the characters on the boat are dead and outward bound for hell- or heaven: "It's the same place, you see." With this point in mind, Dana's voyage becomes profoundly ambiguous. He could be outward bound for heaven or hell - all depends on his perception. Furthermore, one of the suicides on Vane's unearthly boat cries out in horror that, "There's no time here"; in this limbo-like state neither time nor space exists. See chapter VI for further discussion of the play.

One finds in the early prose Lowry's initial gropings towards the confrontation of reality and the forging of a method for creating or incarnating his vision. Lowry begins with an awareness of restlessness and dissatisfaction, moves to the articulation of his problem, and finally, in Ultramarine which in a sense enfolds all the experience of the stories, creates a carefully unified structure.

Throughout the early work the influence of Aiken, Grieg, Bergson, Dunne and Ouspensky, is obvious. Because he is unable as yet to transform the techniques and ideas of others, Lowry's stories and Ultramarine stagger under the weight of dreams, serialism, precognition, and elaborate metaphors for the expansion of consciousness. These influences, though absorbed more completely in the later work, remain constant, however, for in his article "The Garden of Etla," written many years after these stories, Lowry was to remark that, according to Bergson, "the sense of time is an inhibition to prevent everything from happening at once."[2] If everything happens at once, then there can be no past and, more importantly, no future; the individual becomes trapped in a static moment, a closed infernal circle. The dilemma of temporal and spatial stasis is a constant in Lowry's work, but it is most simply stated in the early manuscript entitled "China."

"China," a gauche story dating from the early thirties, is told by an ex-sailor reminiscing about his voyage to China as fireman aboard the Arcturion. The climax of this mental voyage through time-past is the declaration that China did not and does not exist for the narrator:

> What I want to convey to you is that to me it was not China at all but right here, on this wharf. But that's not quite what I wanted to say. What I mean is what it was not was China: somewhere far away. What it was was here [. . .].
> You see, I had worn myself out behind a barrier of time, so that when I did get ashore, I only knew it was here.

Lowry is experimenting here with the mental voyage into the past in an effort to give artistic form to the sensation of temporal-spatial stasis. For the narrator, time and space have become totally internalized and fixed - there is here, and then is now. Only the perceptual self exists in a solipsistic world without future or possibility. The form of the story conveys the paralysing force of

this dilemma. The narrator, losing all sense of the present moment, discusses his strange experience in the past tense, and then ends his monologue with a direct address to the reader in the present tense which seems to gather up the past and to reinforce its presentness:

> And here's what I want to ask you again. Haven't you felt this too, that you know yourself so well that the ground you tread on is your ground: it is never China or Siberia or England or anywhere else...It is always you. It is always the earth of you, the wood, the iron of you, the asphalt you step on is the asphalt of you whether its on Broadway or the Chien Men.
>
> And you carry your horizon in your pocket wherever you are.

In this remarkable passage, Lowry perfectly describes the typical Lowry sensibility. As yet there is no confrontation with the destructive potential of such a radical lack of differentiation between internal and external reality. The threat is concealed in the story's form which describes a closed circle within which time and space are suspended.

Another of the early stories, "Bulls of the Resurrection" (c. 1933), clearly shows the influence of Dunne and Ouspensky.[3] The significant feature of this story is the precognitive dream shared by the two main characters, undergraduates vacationing in Granada, Spain. Deceived by their girlfriend and another male companion, the two students recount their dreams of the previous night while brooding in a bar. Their dreams, which prefigure future disaster for the girlfriend and her new lover, curiously interlock to form one dream. Lowry has his two young men recount a dream in which the first undergraduate observes the boyfriend arrested and then beheaded for shooting someone. The dreamer sees the murderer re-enacting the shooting several times. The second undergraduate has simultaneously dreamt that he has seen the girl shot, die, then rise to be shot over and over again.

The elements of prefiguration and repetition suggest (with some help from the very verbal and analytic undergraduates themselves) that the two men are "participating" in some kind of ritual. The first dreamer describes his vision in a striking image of perception caught in a nightmare of mechanical repetition:

> - It was like El Greco gone mad. [...] It was as though a moving

picture had been projected onto a Greco instead of onto a screen. There was this fixed, timeless, haunted background, but this was not part of what was going on, this was only the relief against which it could be seen, the means by which it became visible. (8)

The mechanical movement in the dream is contained, frozen within the static frame of the El Greco painting.

The second dreamer, aware that he was about to see "something extraordinary which in some manner held the past and the present in its meaning," articulates more clearly the horror of the dream: "Only, in this dream, we seemed to have no individuality. We were shadows whirling together in the void of a nightmare"(10). Despite the fact that Lowry is here dealing with a dream phenomenon, the qualities of the dream have wider importance; they bear upon the type of consciousness with which Lowry is dealing in general. Though Lowry drops the overt dream in his later work, the nightmarish loss of identity and the whirling visionary shapes recur (in Los Borrachones, for example). The dreamer's way out of this infernal closed circle is effective for subsequent Lowry heroes:

Then I knew that unless I took action swiftly, Terry would be compelled for ever and ever to go on performing the fatuous dumb show of her own death. (11)

This is the lesson that Dana learns and the Consul rejects. Clearly Lowry, with the help of Ouspensky's time spirals and recurrence, was beginning to realize that in order to break out of a totally internalized landscape or dreamworld, one must act, move, interfere. The nature of this activity, however, was still to be discovered.

"June 30th 1934!" an early unpublished story, marks a considerable formal advance over "Bulls of the Resurrection" and "China." Here Lowry attempts to capture his developing concept of the dynamic circle which underlies Ultramarine and is fundamental to the voyage theme.

The story deals with the reflections and visions of a British clergyman, Bill Goodyear, during his return from an unsuccessful mission in the far East. Accompanied by a fellow traveller named Firmin, he moves from one element to another - from a train, to a boat, to a train. Paralleling this physical movement, Goodyear's perception moves, as Ouspensky suggests, from one level to another until he has a vision of the heart of reality:

They were changing elements, but the idea struck him; no, it is more than this, something greater is being changed -

A new cycle was beginning, [...] the face of the world was changing...

Lowry employs two central metaphors to embody his idea of movement and change - the voyage and alchemical transformations. The voyage embodies the structure of the story: Goodyear moves closer and closer to his home as well as to an understanding of reality. The alchemy suggests, through repeated references to metals and alloys, the transformation of Goodyear's psyche until he is able to apprehend the meaning of life. Physical movement through time and space parallels the psychic metamorphosis; the elements of human consciousness may expand and change like physical reality.

During these moments of psychic metamorphosis (he even feels at one point that he has become Firmin), Goodyear has two visions. He seems to see a young boy racing through the fields "charging alone, keeping up with the train." At one point, this boy is his own son Dick; later the boy seems to be Firmin as a youth. In fact, as Goodyear realizes, the boy is a vision of the future racing into the past; he symbolizes the movement of time. The second vision comes during the third part of his journey when Goodyear is again on a train, this time in Britain. Peering through "the steaming glass" of the train window, he realizes that,

Chaos; change, all was changing: the passengers were changing: a sea change.

Goodyear lay back in his seat. He could feel the change within him, somehow his thoughts were becoming longer: an insidious metallurgy was in practice within him as his ores, his alloys, were isolated. The titanic thunder of the night-shift hammered on his nerves, lacerating them as though it would draw out from him the fine wire of his consciousness.

He knew that he had been altered by the true pattern, the archetype of the events, on the surface so trivial, of the journey. And he sensed that the other passengers [...] were even at a crucial point in their lives, turning towards another chaos, a new complexity of melancholy opposites.

The dramatic force of Lowry's story comes less from Goodyear's visions, marred by the excessive explication which Lowry sedulously cut in the Volcano, than from the circular structure of the tale. Goodyear moves from a train, to a boat, and back to a train speeding through the night. Throughout, the protagonist is further encircled

or contained in the boat and in the trains as well as in the intense all-enveloping space of his mind. This encircling, emphasized by references to the train's wheels, and the wheels and levers of the boat's engines, is not static or closed, but dynamic. The circumference of the circle, symbolized by the encircling walls of the train or ship, are moving, and the centre, Goodyear's consciousness, is moving, expanding, and changing as well.

Goodyear comprises Lowry's first attempt to meet and overcome the everpresent boundaries and crossroads in life - physical and spiritual. The activity, symbolized by the structure of the story, signals release from the infernal circle through a repeated shaping of new circumferences around an ever-expanding centre. Juxtaposed with a final image of time plunging into a future of war and chaos, "as the express screamed on like a shell through a metal world," is Goodyear's realization that,

> It's never too late, never too late. To start again- You bore in the earth. Silver and copper. Silver and gold. Man makes his cross. With crucible steel. Base metal; counterfeit; manganese; chromium; makes his iron cross; with crucible steel.*

As always with Lowry, the outcome is ambiguous; the transformation may be counterfeit or the true philosopher's stone. The most important point, as in October Ferry, is that change must be welcomed and one must be willing to begin again.

In "Seductio Ad absurdum," Lowry again develops the contrast between time and space suspended within the closed circle of the mind, and the flux of life. The short story was originally published in Experiment (Winter, 193), under the intriguing title "Punctum Indifferens

*The mention of the iron cross is an allusion to a book which Lowry greatly admired, Herman Broch's The Sleepwalkers: A Trilogy (London, 1932). In Broch's book, the military iron cross worn by the aristocratic and romantic von Pasenow symbolizes the achievements of man-kind which, despite their apparent substance, are pathetic, destructive illusions. In the preceding paragraph of "June 30th 1934," Lowry calls the train's passengers "somnambulists" and this description, coupled with the reference to the iron cross, gives an ironic twist to Goodyear's vision of change.

Skibet Gaar Videre"* (Pointless Point The Ship Sails On), and comprises the major part of Chapter IV in Ultramarine.[4]

The most significant feature of the story may be briefly stated. Dana, listening to the crew discuss and abuse him, and wandering off in his own memories of the past, decides suddenly to challenge his chief enemy. Time (as memory) and space (within the mind and the ship), concentrated into one moment's hatred become literally and metaphorically pointless. All Dana's effort in holding time and space suspended in a long brooding stretch of anger leads to nothing; his challenge fails and the crew disperse to their chores—the ship sails on. In Ultramarine, this persistent attempt to fix time and space within a closed circle of the mind is Dana's besetting sin. The form of the novel creates this stasis as well as the consequent explosion of a false order imposed upon the restless movement of life.

Ultramarine, originally published in 1933, was reprinted with some of Lowry's later revisions in 1963. According to Margerie Lowry's "Introductory Note," it was intended to be, "in its rewritten form, the first volume in ...The Voyage That Never Ends."[5] With this purpose in view, Lowry changed the name of Dana's ship to the Oedipus Tyrannus and made other links with the Volcano. Although the book obviously remains a first novel and is certainly not of the stature of Under the Volcano, Ultramarine is seldom, if ever, given its due. For the most part, critics are content to point out the novel's debt to Aiken's Blue Voyage and Grieg's The Ship Sails On.[6] Lowry himself was ashamed of the book.

In spite of weaknesses, the structure of the book illustrates the tremendous control which Lowry was developing over his materials.

* "Skibet Gaar Videre" is the Norwegian title of Nordahl Grieg's novel. Grieg's book, although written in a simple style with a strong moral, reveals a profound philosophical pessimism in its title and in scattered remarks such as: "Life had played one of its scenes over again, a new spiral had wound its way upward, and now he found himself looking down into it" (167). Lowry's attraction to Grieg's novel was more than a simple affinity for the nineteen year old hero's initiation into the horrors of life on a first sea voyage. Underlying the story are hints that time repeats itself inexorably, that life is a maelstrom of meaningless change, and that reincarnation is likely (see pages 78 and 87).

As with the Volcano and Dark As the Grave, in Ultramarine Lowry expands a short period of time, approximately forty-eight hours, into the months and years enfolded in Dana's consciousness. Nineteen years are contained within the small circle of two days passed in one place.

The structure of Ultramarine is circular. Beginning in Dana's mind, the narrative circles repeatedly from external action and dialogue back into Dana's consciousness until the final line of the book places the reader within the hero's mind once more. The book is crowded with images of circles and encircling - the engines, wheeling birds, eyes, Dana's lost compasses, - even the ship, the harbour of Tsjang-Tsjang, and the sea, function as further layers of encircling reality.

Within the first four chapters, Lowry counterpoints two geographical and spiritual points along the circumference of the superimposed circles of the voyage and Dana's consciousness. The first geographical and spiritual point is the ship's departure for the East which Dana remembers as the book opens. It is essential to emphasize that Ultramarine begins as the Oedipus Tyrannus is nearing the port of Tsjang-Tsjang, the furthest point of her voyage. In Dana's mind, however, the ship is still preparing to leave Liverpool. During the course of the first four chapters, Dana moves deeper into his past before gradually circling his way back again, in Chapter IV, to the time of his departure from home. His memory transcribes an enormous circle until it catches itself up at the crucial moment of severance, the sailing of his ship (pages 140-142). This point in time haunts him because it symbolizes severance from his youth and initiation into life. Furthermore, it is just this initiation or birth, this breaking out of the womb-like circle of his past, from which he shrinks in dread.

The second geographical and spiritual point of Dana's vicious circle is the furthest point of the voyage, the harbour of Tsjang-Tsjang and the abyss of the present self. While the ship is idle at dock, Dana, his mind and soul in an analogous static state, plumbs the very depths of his private hell. This hell, projected upon external reality by his distorted vision, results from his constant

re-living of the past in the present and his persistent refusal to welcome life. Transfixed, like a "tinfoil Jesus," between these two points, Dana must first learn to recognize the self-inflicted hell for what it is and then to move out of his closed circle of time and space.

By the end of Chapter I with the boat docked and night falling, Dana, who has refused to enter life by going ashore, retreats to his bunk and his memories of the past. The visions which he has as he falls asleep highlight his spiritual crisis. Dana is so entirely enclosed in self that he cannot consciously articulate his problem until the end of the book. The reader, drawn into the maelstrom of Dana's mind, experiences the claustrophobic horror of a consciousness closed in upon itself. Believing that the ship "had a manifold security: she was his harbour; he would lie in the arms of the ship"(43), Dana glides into a sleep immediately filled with wheeling screaming horror:

> Above, the moon soared and galloped through a dark, tempestuous sky. All at once, every lamp in the street exploded, their globes flew out, darted into the sky, and the street became alive with eyes; eyes greatly dilated, dripping dry scurf, or glued with viscid gum: eyes which held eternity in the fixedness of their stare: eyes which wavered, and spread, and, diminishing rapidly, were catapulted east and west; eyes that were the gutted windows of a cathedral, blackened, emptiness of the brain, through which bats and ravens wheeled enormously[...]. (44)

Significantly, the vision is one of movement and the breaking of enclosing circles: lamps explode, their "globes" flying into the sky, eyes waver, and "diminishing" are "catapulted east and west"; even the enclosing glass of windows is shattered allowing bats and ravens to "wheel enormously" through their empty frames. This is a vision of the chaotic flux which Dana must accept; however, at this point in his voyage he is only capable of seeing chaos as nightmarish horror. The closest he comes here to confronting his true position occurs in the dream which concludes the Chapter - without his compasses (to draw continual circles or to locate his own centre) he is "Lost. Lost. Lost."

In Chapter II, the ship static in the harbour parallels Dana's increasing withdrawal into an abyss of self. Dana escapes the reality

of present time and space by dredging up time past and pre-voyage places until they form a hard shell of encrusted memory around his timorous psyche. The climax of his descent into self comes when, with perception inverted and distorted, he envisions the Oxenstjerna, a symbol of movement, life, and a positive growing past, the ox-star "that shines above the lives of men," grounded and oozing death:

> It is the Oxenstjerna they are talking about, the Oxenstjerna that has gone aground. It is the Oxenstjerna which now turns over and sinks into the sand, while the oil spreads a mucous film over the Mersey; and now the white sea gulls...known by name to the dockers, are dying by the score - (74)

Lowry, with the virtuosity that characterizes Under the Volcano, forges here a most striking image of stasis and enveloping death which functions like a magnet within the heart of the book. In one brief passage he enfolds the cluster of motifs surrounding the Oxenstjerna with the various bird motifs in the novel, and even the haunting motif of eyes; "a mucous film" (like all the eye imagery, drawn from Lowry's personal sufferings) recalls the vision of eyes in Chapter I, and fuses with the general theme of Dana's spiritual blindness. Lowry's technique, in a miniature example such as this image of the Oxenstjerna, as well as in larger structural units, is one of enfolding and encircling. The image is superficially quite simple, but it vibrates with a plenitude of centripetal meaning. In addition to embodying several motifs, motifs which can only be fully understood when viewed within the totality of the book, the Oxenstjerna passage symbolizes Dana's consciousness: Like the ship he has gone aground and "now turns over and sinks into the sand."

The lowest point of Dana's descent occurs in Chapter III as he stumbles about Tsjang-Tsjang in a drunken nightmare. This lowest point, however, fully in keeping with Lowry's concept of the fusion of opposites, marks the beginning of his ascent; Dana grapples with the recognition and articulation of his position. His self-analysis is still typically exaggerated and maudlin but he at least admits to these aspects of his nature. Enclosed within the rhetoric of his self-portrait is the further realization that he alone creates his heaven or hell:

> Tinfoil Jesus, crucified homunculus (who is also the cross), spitted

on the hook of an imaginary Galilee! Who is the crown of thorns dripping red blossoms and the red-blue nails, the flails and the bloody wounds. The tears, but also the lips cupped to embrace them as they fall; the whips, but also the flesh crawling to them. The net and the silver writhing in the mesh,and all the fish that swim in the sea. - The centre of the Charing Cross, ABCD, the Cambridge Circle, the Cambridge Circus, is Hilliot - but every night, unseen, he climbs down and returns to his hotel - while the two great shafts, the propeller shafts, the shafts of wit, laced with blood, AB,CD are diameters.

Now with his navel as centre and half CD as radius, describe a vicious circle! (98 - 99)

Amidst a geometrician's paradise of circles, Dana sees himself as a cheap poseur, a Christ who climbs down from his self-inflicted cross to seek the shelter of his bed in a hotel room. The image of Dana as the centre of a circle with the four circumference points making a cross, ABCD, crystallizes his physical and spiritual dilemma; the points are fixed, the radius is given, the circle is closed, vicious.

Questioning his entire purpose for this voyage, Dana explains his failure in the very terms which will help him break out of his calcified circle of time and space. Challenging Janet's belief in him he cries:

[C]ould you still believe in me, still believe in the notion that my voyage is something Columbian and magnificent? Still believe in my taking a self-inflicted penance; in this business of placing myself within impenetrable and terrible boundaries in order that a slow process of justification to yourself may go on. [sic] (99)

Naming the names and saying the words is always magic with Lowry. Dana will soon break out of the seemingly "impenetrable and terrible boundaries" of his self-created hell. As centre to his circle he will move and in moving transcribe an ever new circumference.

By Chapter IV, Dana's agonized attempts to re-inhabit the past have brought him circling back to the point at which the book opened, the departure from England of the Oedipus Tyrannus. In the retrospect of his return to Liverpool after the farewell with Janet, the Mersey strikes him as "like a vast camera film slowly and inexorably winding. Soon he will be entangled in her celluloid meshes, and wound out to the open sea."(142). In a sense, Dana has encircled in memory his own position (much as he does later with Andy); he has come full circle. Now is the time to strike out anew. The challenge to Andy represents

his first decisive action of the voyage. He does not grasp the profound truth, however, that this intense moment which gathers up all his anger and frustration is, in fact, a "punctum indifferens." Life cannot be seized and frozen in this way for it flows on, forever eluding the grasp. As the card players remark upon returning to their game after Dana's interruption, "- pass -" "- pass -" "- pass -"(153)

The ship sails on or, at least in Chapter V, it prepares to leave port. Prior to the ship's departure, the culminating crisis of the book occurs. Norman's pet pigeon (with consequences that recall the Ancient Mariner's albatross) escapes from its cage and drowns. Dana and the crew stand by helplessly watching it die while a nearby motor boat, "its occupant[...] spinning the easy wheel while it circled around gaily[...], turned on itself and rolled in its own swell" (162). The last moments of the ship's stasis at the dock parallel Dana's inability to save the bird. Suddenly, amidst rolling winches and coiling ropes, "the windlass clanking and racing around gladly" and the tiger "moulding its body to the shape of its cage," Dana remembers Norman's grief at the loss of his pet and sees the truth:

> No, such things couldn't happen really. But Norman's words made a sort of incantation in his brain. "Time! Of course there would have been time. Time wouldn't have mattered if you'd been a man." (166)

This truth is without value, however, unless one knows how to use it, and Dana is still uncertain. With the renewed peace of the vessel under sail, he contemplates the roaring fires in the "pulsating and throbbing" engine room:

> Why was it his brain could not accept the dissonance as simply as a harmony, could not make order emerge from his chaos?[...] Chaos and disunion, then, he told himself, not law and order, were the principles of life which sustained all things, in the mind of man as well as on the ship. (169)

Being unable to accept chaos as good is Dana's great sin. In his efforts to order and contain reality, he has only succeeded in stifling himself, and life, within a tightly sealed tomb of time and space.

Now that he has admitted the priority of chaos, he is ready to move on to a reconciliation with Andy who symbolizes the forces of life into which Dana must be initiated. With the meaning of the maelstrom and "a reason for his voyage" clearly perceived, Dana looks down into

the engine room once more. There he sees Nikolai, the fireman, serving the very source of energy and chaos:

> The iron tools blistered his hands, his chest heaved like a spent swimmer's, his eyes tingled in parched sockets, but still he worked on, he would never stop - this was what it was to exist - (171)

Never to stop in the journey of life, this is Dana's discovery. Life is flux, chaos, energy, while death, like a ship gone aground, like a fixed, transcribed circle ABCD, is stasis. Paradoxically, life exists in the fiery abyss of the ship and Dana cherishes his discovery while "somewhere," as if warning that this point of rest is a "punctum indifferens," "a lantern clanged with eternal, pitiless movement" (172).

Significantly, Ultramarine does not end on this pinnacle of insight. Although the narrative rhythm reaches completion by the end of Chapter V, the novel continues, mirroring in its structure what Dana has still to learn. In this sense, Ultramarine was an ideal prologue for Lowry's intended voyage that never ends. Dana Hilliot, prefiguring the restless voyaging of subsequent Lowry heroes, realizes that he has "surrounded Andy's position" and must move on; life is a continual movement of centre and circumference, a never-ending voyage undertaken for the sake of the voyage itself:

> (There is [...] a storm flood within, as my heart beats with the beating of the engine, as I go out with the ship towards the eternal summers. A storm is thundering out there, there is the glow of tropical fire! Bad, or good, as it happens to be, that is what it is to exist!... It is as though I have been silent and fuddled with sleep all my life. [...] I know now that at least it is better to go always towards the summer [...]. Then at last again to be outward bound, always outward, always onward, to be fighting always for the dreamt-of-harbour [...] -) (201)

Then, lest this solution of life's mystery appear too simple, Lowry charts the next stage in Dana's initiation. A fireman is ill and Dana is chosen to replace him; he must descend into the abyss of life which he earlier contemplated with acute insight. During his last moments on deck, a strange ship drifts through the night mist "morseing" her name: Oxenstjerna. Like a voice from his past this ship calls to him, reminding him that on the point of creating a new circle into the future he must take the past with him--as comfort and as threat. If he again makes the profound mistake of withdrawing

into a hard shell of time and space, he will destroy his world. For life is perpetual activity "always outward, always onward."

The next stage in Lowry's The Voyage That Never Ends is prefigured in Dana's descent into "the little hell" of the ship's furnaces. In Lunar Caustic, begun in 1935, the protagonist "gliding over the cobbles lightly as a ship leaving harbour" searches frantically for "any harbour at all."[7] The Lowryean protagonist of Ultramarine finds, in Lunar Caustic, that he is "outward bound" for hell. The essential aspect of Lowry's Voyage That Never Ends is to create a movement of withdrawal from reality and return. In this sense, then, Lunar Caustic embodies a withdrawal after the temporary respite and return established at the end of Ultramarine.

Lowry was proud of Lunar Caustic referring to it in 1952 as a "masterwork" (Selected Letters, 292). The published novella represents the work of Lowry editors Earle Birney and Margerie Lowry, however, who completed Lowry's melding of two rather different versions of the story.[8] In 1936, Lowry completed a first version of the story based upon his own brief visit, in 1934, to New York's Bellevue Mental Hospital; the story, never published, was called The Last Address. In 1940 Lowry wrote a second version entitled Swinging the Maelstrom. The two versions of the story differ in one very important respect: The Last Address ends darkly with the protagonist withdrawn from life as in the published Lunar Caustic: Swinging the Maelstrom, however, issues in greater hope with the protagonist breaking out of the circle of self in order to establish a limited contact with others. As the second title suggests, the experience is not a descent into the maelstrom (after Poe) but a swinging or a weathering of the storm. Whether Lowry intended to give Lunar Caustic a slightly more positive ending or not is unclear; certainly it has a negative conclusion in its published form. The protagonist of Lunar Caustic does not escape his private hell which turns encircling layers of reality into a Dantean inferno.

Lunar Caustic traces the inner torment of its hero, William Plantagenet, alcoholic and ex-jazz musician, from his drunken admission into a mental hospital to his release shortly afterwards as much of an alcoholic failure as before. The topography, drawn largely

from Melville and Poe, is a landscape of the mind with the hospital, a symbol of containment and stasis, juxtaposed with the busy river seen from the barred hospital windows. The river, flowing symbol of movement and life, remains inaccessible to Plantagenet as well as to the boy Garry and the old man Kalowsky whom Plantagenet befriends in the hospital. Unable to help Garry or Kalowsky, incapable finally of escaping from the circle of self, Plantagenet leaves the hospital only to descend deeper into internal stasis.

The horror of Lunar Caustic springs from its claustrophobic atmosphere of stasis and enclosure. The hospital symbolizes the simultaneity of time and space - time does not exist, and there are no clear boundaries (apart from the oppressive bars and walls of the hospital itself) to reality in this world of the insane. The hospital, not only a symbol of physical enclosure, represents the mind of the hero as well:

> Looking down at [the river] a delicious sense of freedom possessed him, a sense of being already outside, free to run with the wind if he wished, free to run as far away from the hospital as he liked. Yet the bars were still here, and they resembled the bars of his mind [. . .]. He had not escaped them yet, nor would he escape them merely by leaving. (65)

The prison-like hospital is only the outer circle or shell of the more terrifying prison of his mind. Plantagenet is locked within himself, in an inner world where all time and all space exist here and now.

Strangely enough this inner world of maelstrom with its furious whirling is also a doldrum. Plantagenet's circlings of the hospital prior to his entrance parallel the futile circlings of the ward which comprise the main compulsory activity of its inmates. During the puppet show Plantagenet perceives the stasis of this timeless world:

> He had the curious feeling that he had made a sort of descent into the maelstrom, a maelstrom terrifying for the last reason one might have expected: that there was about it sometimes just this loathsome, patient calm. (37)

Plantagenet's realization that there is a "loathsome, patient calm" about the maelstrom is important. Later, in his interview with the doctor, he blames the hospital for encouraging a fatal acceptance and resignation in its patients; lack of activity, he maintains, leads to

increased withdrawal from life and ultimately to physical and spiritual paralysis. Insanity is not his problem and the doctor, not deceived by Plantagenet's rhetoric, knows that he is not talking about the hospital inmates but about himself. By blaming external forces for causing his inability to play jazz, to love, or to act, Plantagenet (like Geoffrey Firmin) overlooks the fact that it is his own refusal to act that is destroying him.

Bill Plantagenet is a failure. His adopted name, "Lawhill," the name of "a windjammer that survived more disasters than any ship afloat" (50), is not his real name; he is not made of such sturdy sailing stuff. Furthermore, his mission is a failure. He enters the hospital shouting,

'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!" (11)

The slamming of the hospital door undercuts this messianic cry: "With the dithering crack of a ship going on the rocks the door shuts behind him" (11).

The threat, inherent in the "dithering crack" of the hospital door, culminates in Plantagenet's nightmare vision of the storm prior to his hospital discharge:

> There was a furious crash of thunder and simultaneously Plantagenet felt the impact of the plane, the whale, upon his mind. While metamorphosis nudged metamorphosis, a kind of order, still preserved within his consciousness, and enclosing his catastrophe, exploded itself into the age of Kalowsky again and into the youth of Garry, who both now seemed to be spiralling away from him until they were lost [. . .]. But while that part of him only a moment before in possession of the whole, the ship, was turning over with disunion of hull and masts uprooted falling across her decks, another faction of his soul, [. . .] knew him to be screaming against the renewed thunder and saw the attendants closing in on him [. . .]. (72)

In this most striking and ambitious passage, Plantagenet's hard shell of self is shattered. This "disunion of hull and masts" should be positive; this is a dynamic vision of the flux and chaos of life. The hellish descent into the maelstrom, however, can embody a purgation in preparation for the renewed voyage of life only if the annihilation of constricting boundaries is transcended, if, like the "s.s. Lawhill," the ship of the soul can struggle through to rebirth.

The moment for Plantagenet's rebirth has not come for he leaves the hospital after the storm "with no sense of release, only

inquietude" (73) and makes his way into the sterile space of a bar "where, curled up like an embryo, he could not be seen at all" (76). Any hope for re-birth that can be wrung from the closing image of the book seems faint. Assuming a fetal position symbolizes dramatically Plantagenet's rejection of reality and his withdrawal into a timeless, static, inner world. The embryo image, recalling the description of Dana in Ultramarine (43), will be picked up later in Under the Volcano to describe Hugh's withdrawal into self; the image is consistently static. Certainly here, in Lunar Caustic, the hero is unable "to resolve the immedicable horror of opposites"; the lunar caustic does not work. Plantagenet moves deeper into the nightmare of self which Geoffrey Firmin must relive.

NOTES: CHAPTER III

[1] See the bibliography for a further list of Lowry's early stories. Suzanne Kim's "Les Oeuvres de Jeunesse de Malcolm Lowry," Etudes Anglaises, no.4(Oct. - Dec., 1965), is the only discussion so far of Lowry's efforts at the Leys. The present study is concerned with four more mature stories which illustrate Lowry's growing appreciation of structure and his efforts to articulate his basic themes. The two manuscript stories, "China" and "June 30th, 1934!" are held in the University of British Columbia Lowry Collection.

[2] "The Garden of Etla," United Nations World (June, 1950), 45 - 47.

[3] "Bulls of the Resurrection," Prism International, 5, no. 1(Summer, 1965), 5 - 11. Further references are included in the text.

[4] The story was published under its new title (suggested by Aiken) in The Best Short Stories of 1931, ed. E.J. O'Brien (New York, 1931), 80 - 107. Further references are included in the text. Lowry made one particularly extensive addition to this story when he incorporated it into Ultramarine; in the novel there is a long passage of retrospect in which Dana relives his last night in Liverpool.

[5] Ultramarine (Jonathan Cape, London, 1963), p. 7. All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.

[6] See, for example, the first two chapters of Costa's Malcolm Lowry. In his book on Lowry, Tony Kilgallin devotes a short chapter to Ultramarine in which he points out many further influences on or allusions in the novel.

[7] Lunar Caustic, edited by Earl Birney and Margerie Lowry, was first published in Paris Review, no. 29 (1963) and subsequently re-issued by Jonathan Cape in 1968. All references are to the Cape edition and are included in the text. Lowry began his story about a visit to a mental hospital sometime after his own brief stay in New York's Bellevue Hospital in 1934.

[8] David Benham deals with the two versions in some detail in his article, "Lowry's Purgatory: Versions of Lunar Caustic," in Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work.

CHAPTER IV
The Luminous Wheel

Many studies have been made of theme and symbol in Under the Volcano, but there has not as yet been an attempt to analyse Lowry's novel as it developed out of his philosophy of time and space or out of early versions of the text where philosophy is less well transformed into art.[1] Clearly the topic is a large one, especially with respect to the manuscripts of the novel, and this chapter is only an attempt to open discussion along these lines. The approach, via Lowry's philosophy and manuscripts, is useful however, for it paves the way to a more thorough understanding of Lowry's artistic purposes in Under the Volcano as well as in the projected Voyage That Never Ends. In this chapter a brief examination of influences and the 1940 manuscript of the Volcano, is followed by a more detailed study of Lowry's handling of temporal and spatial dimensions in the narrative structure of his book.

The entire question of Dunne's influence upon Under the Volcano is an interesting and unexplored one. Lowry, who agreed with Martha Foley that there was too much concern with serial time in the 1940 version of the novel (see Chapter II, page 33), set about burying this influence deeper in his narrative, but he certainly did not eradicate Dunne's influence. In the early version of the book chapter I develops Jacques Laruelle's position as a serial observer through a rather heavy-handed dream mechanism; Laruelle becomes Geoffrey, thereby dreaming the events of the past Day of the Dead, events which are somehow to be precognitive as well. Laruelle is able to observe a larger slice, as it were, of Geoffrey's time dimension, a slice which enables him to see the past and the future with hopes of intervening in the future. The chapter is laboured and unconvincing to say the least. Although Lowry dropped his original vehicle for precognition in chapter I, he did not rule out precognition altogether

in his final version. Geoffrey's hallucination in chapter III is meant to be a glimpse into the future of the peon and of himself.[2] The newspaper headline "Es inevitable la muerte del Papa" functions in a similar way.

Lowry deliberately casts the reader of Under the Volcano as a Dunnian serial observer as well. The reader who has carefully read chapter I is aware of the past and the future which chapters II to XII create. The reader exists, furthermore, in a whole new time dimension which includes and surrounds his reading experience. As Dunne suggests, an individual does not "die" in a serial universe, he simply moves on into a larger time dimension; the Consul, therefore, lives for us on our time level despite his murder in 1939 - a fanciful concept perhaps, but one exploited dramatically and with tremendous effect in the Volcano.

Most important for the structure of Under the Volcano is Dunne's concept of serial containment which underlies his serial universe as well as the serial observer. Dunne likens the serial universe to a series of Chinese boxes in which each time level is contained within a larger dimension ad infinitum.[3] In chapter XII of the Volcano, the Consul moves from the bar "into an inner room, one of the boxes in the Chinese puzzle" (361) of El Farolito. This principle of containment is absolutely fundamental to Lowry's book which is itself a Chinese puzzle enclosed finally in its "trochal" form. The condition of containment, exemplified in the Consul's destructive withdrawal inside his own circumference, reflected in images of containment throughout the book, (bars, rooms, gardens, toilets, and the bus) and created on all levels of the book from its style to its chapter divisions, is content and form, meaning and structure.

An important purpose of this chapter is to discuss Under the Volcano in terms of the serial concept of containment; however, Dunne is not the only influence on time and space in the novel and it is useful to examine Ouspensky's and Bergson's contribution to the book. In addition to Geoffrey's levels of mystical drunkenness which correspond to Ouspensky (see Chapter II, page 31) and the treatment

Lowry gives to recurrence (Chapter II, page 32), Lowry incorporates in his novel Ouspensky's belief in multiple futures which exist in the sixth time dimension. Throughout the Volcano there appear several alternative futures along the circumference of the vicious circle of Geoffrey's life. There is the Consul's future represented by the book itself which exists anew for us. There is Yvonne's dream of Canada which persists even into the centre of Hell as Geoffrey, sealing his fate with Maria, focuses upon the calendar ironically depicting the month of December amidst a Northern scene. Vigil's offer of a new life, symbolized by the proposed trip to Guanajuato, pursues Geoffrey as well.* Yvonne's lost and previously unread letter in chapter XII underlines the horror of an equally lost yet real future:

'Where are you, Geoffrey? I do not even know where you are. Oh, it is all too cruel. Where did we go, I wonder? In what far place do we still walk, hand in hand?' - (385)

Lowry's obsession with time past is articulated in Bergsonian terms. In keeping with his belief that for Bergson time was a device which kept everything from happening at once,[4] Lowry fully exploits the horrific potential of simultaneity in the Volcano, in particular in chapter X which is discussed in detail below. For Lowry simultaneity in time and space, with all times and places coalescing, is Hell, and his purpose in writing Under the Volcano is to tell us "something new about hell fire" (Selected Letters, 80).

Under the Volcano, which took Lowry almost ten years to complete, was finally accepted for publication in 1947. Before accepting it, Jonathan Cape wrote Lowry suggesting that he make substantial changes in his manuscript. Lowry, angry and stubborn, accepted this request as a challenge and sent Cape, in one of the most fascinating letters of literary history, a chapter-by-chapter exegesis of the form and

*In his 1946 letter to Cape, Lowry points out that Guanajuato represents "life," while Tomalín which involves Parián stands for death. Selected Letters, 74.

theme of his masterpiece (Selected Letters, 57 - 88). He asked for Cape's belief in the book based upon his own painstaking efforts to make every detail integral to a work of art which "was so designed, counterdesigned and interwelded that it could be read an indefinite number of times and still not have yielded all its meanings or its drama or its poetry" (Selected Letters, 88).

Under the Volcano, a story of the last twelve hours in the life of its tortured drunken hero, Geoffrey Firmin, begins twelve months after his death. As Lowry points out in his letter, the number twelve is of great importance for mystical, astrological, and literary reasons, and the twelve chapters of the novel, each one a carefully constructed "block," create the essential "form of the book, which is to be considered like that of a wheel, with 12 spokes, the motion of which is something like that, conceivably, of time itself" (Selected Letters, 67).

Lowry's concern with time, both in the theme and the form of his book, is clear; his concern with space emerges in the spatial metaphors he uses to describe its structure - the book is a "wheel," or a circle, which is, at the same time, "like some Mexican churrigueresque cathedral" "designed, counterdesigned and interwelded" (Selected Letters, 88). The many ways in which Lowry creates temporal and spatial dimensions and, most important, his purpose in erecting the complicated spatio-temporal structure of the Volcano is largely unexplored. Before examining time and space in the novel, however, it is helpful to look briefly at the early version of Under the Volcano, the version which was refused by no less than thirteen publishers in 1940-41.[5] The major changes that Lowry made in his manuscript directly affect the structure of the book that developed only slowly into the "designed, counterdesigned and interwelded" final product.

Lowry's creative method appears to have been an architectural one. Beginning with a key block or episode in a chapter - for example, the peon in VIII, the bullthrowing in IX, or Laruelle's conversation with Bustamente in I - Lowry worked outward on either side of this foundation. The manuscript versions of the novel, as well as Lowry's notes, illustrate this process most clearly. Frequently Lowry worked upon several versions of a sentence, paragraph, or episode concurrently. Once sections of a chapter were satisfactory he would

begin to shift them around within the chapter or even from chapter to chapter until they fitted properly. For everything cut he added something else, a word, an allusion, etc., gradually building up his "churrigueresque"- or overloaded - edifice.

The early version of the Volcano is, with the exception of chapter I, a temporally straightforward story of the Consul's last day. Chapter I represents Lowry's attempt to makes Jacques Laruelle, more important at this point than in the final novel, actually become the Consul via an unconvincing dream mechanism, in order to report on Geoffrey's last day. The typescript is choked with half-baked social criticism, boring character analyses and awkward exposition. The time scheme is vague; when the story opens the Consul has been dead two or three years. Little attempt is made to jump back in time with chapter II which gets off to a very slow start with Yvonne (Geoffrey's daughter instead of his wife) still in her hotel in Acapulco.

The temporal and spatial links between the chapters are clear; chapter III follows on, assisted by a strong omniscient narrator, from chapter II and so forth. It was not until 1941 that Lowry divided up the chapters according to the strict point of view of one or other of the characters, thereby telling chapter I from Jacques' point of view, chapters IV, VI, and VIII from Hugh's, chapters II, IX, and XI from Yvonne's, while the five remaining chapters are perceived through Geoffrey's mescal-fogged eyes. In shifting the narration away from a pompous omniscient narrator to a subtle combination of cryptic narrative voice and character point of view, Lowry was well on his way to creating the self-enclosed tragic worlds of the Volcano's characters.

The sense of distorted isolation is further emphasized in the final version by the temporal and spatial gaps between the chapters. Lowry cut all direct temporal and spatial links between chapters when he rewrote his novel. For example, in the 1940 typescript, chapter IX opens with Yvonne, Hugh, and Geoffrey arriving in Tomalín and attempting to phone for medical aid; the temporal and spatial sequence develops clearly out of the scene with the dying peon in VIII. In the final version, of course, no such carefully delineated

cause and effect occurs; the reader leaps abruptly into "Arena Tomalín ..." and Yvonne's mind. The disjunction between chapters IX and X of the novel is still more complete. The closing scene of IX in which the three characters watch an aged Indian shuffle out of sight is dramatically juxtaposed with the opening word of X - "'Mescal'." In the 1940 version, however, chapter X opens with temporal and spatial explanation: "Finally they walked down toward the restaurant Salón Ofélia [...]." The word "finally" refers back to the end of IX when the three paused to watch the old Indian; the rest of the sentence carries the action forward, specifying their movement through space and their destination.

The changes Lowry made in his novel- the telescoping of chapters IV and V, XI and XII, the rigorous use of chracter point of view, the recasting of chapter I within a tight temporal framework symbolized by the backwards revolving, luminous wheel, above all the creation of spatio-temporal abysses between chapters - illustrate the direction in which he was moving. All of these changes help to spatialize Under the Volcano, to break up temporal sequence and to force the reader to consider the book reflexively with a view, in Lowry's words, to the "poetical conception of the whole" (Selected Letters, 59).

In his discussion of Under the Volcano in his biography, Douglas Day maintains that nothing is static in the novel.[6] Victor Doyen and Terence Wright, however, both argue for the stasis of Under the Volcano arising from spatial form.[7] These conflicting views of the novel stem from insufficient analysis of the narrative structure. Certainly there is little that appears "static" in the Volcano; everything is wheeling, reeling, rushing, but this hallucinatory movement is circular, repetitive and infernal. The gigantic wheeling form of the book is a symbol of the paralysis portrayed on all thematic levels. The novel cannot, however, be described as an example of spatial form without some acknowledgement being made of the traditional narrative illusion of temporal flow derived from plot.[8] Time most certainly moves within the fictional world of twelve consecutive hours in a single day and the total time span of the book includes the pasts of the main characters as well as glimpses of the future.

There are two conflicting narrative rhythms in Under the Volcano. On the one hand, Lowry exploits a reader's expectation of sequential temporal flow. The cryptic narrator of the novel, present only as a voice that introduces us to Quauhnahuac, that comments obliquely throughout the book and finally tells us of Geoffrey's burial in the barranca, keeps the tale moving with the consequent illusion of time passing and of one event leading on into another. Geoffrey himself keeps us constantly aware that time is passing. On the other hand, Lowry's handling of chapter, scene, symbol, and the special techniques discussed below counteract this narrative flow by breaking it up, spatializing it. The most significant characteristic of Under the Volcano, when compared with the 1940 manuscript, is its spatio-temporal transformation. Lowry went to great lengths to create a reflexive narrative rhythm which would counteract and eventually overwhelm, the temporal narrative flow. Throughout the hot, tragic day the reader is kept aware of the relentless ticking of clock time as the characters constantly check the time on ubiquitous Mexican clocks. Horological time, a mechanized, infernal time totally removed from the psychological time of human suffering, represents the civilized, technological world which repels and mocks the Consul. Clock time forms the intransigent background against which the lives of the three characters are projected.

The peculiar stasis of Under the Volcano is best understood in terms of the wheel or the circle which whirls on forever in the same place. As in Ultramarine, Lowry employs the closed circle of perception, the closed "madly revolving world" that encircles, strangles and destroys. Lowry saw the form of the book as "trochal." He hoped that at the end of chapter XII the reader would feel compelled to turn back to the beginning which temporally succeeds the main events of the book. The great "luminous wheel" spinning backwards in the dark night of Chapter I symbolizes Buddha's wheel of the law, a cinema wheel, the wheel of time, and the wheel of the book (Selected Letters, 70, 88)

Wheels appear everywhere, in every chapter of the book. The chapters themselves are like wheels encircling, enclosing a focal point. The lack of spatio-temporal ellision between chapters

intensifies the sensation of disjunction making each chapter a self-contained, closed unit. Each single point of view contributes to the claustrophobia that, for the isolated souls in the novel, is mimetically true.

There are many brilliant scenes throughout the book in which time is spatialized. The description of the burning of Geoffrey's letter in chapter I, for example, captures the effect of space collapsing enclosed upon itself; the time required for the letter to burn is transformed into spatial metaphors:

> The flare lit up the whole cantina with a burst of brilliance in which the figures at the bar [...] appeared, for an instant, frozen, a mural: [...] M. Laruelle set the writhing mass in an ashtray, where beautifully conforming it folded upon itself, a burning castle, collapsed, subsided to a ticking hive through which sparks like tiny red worms crawled and flew, while above a few grey wisps of ashes floated in the thin smoke, a dead husk now, faintly crepitant....(49)

The most exciting example of spatialization in the Volcano is the Tlaxcala scene in chapter X. The episode, which Lowry intended as a play or a poster, is a paradigm of the book; the toilet, the "Cave of the Winds" contained within the Salón Ofélia, surrounds the Consul who in his desperation wonders why he is "always more or less here":

> The Consul sat, fully dressed however, not moving a muscle. Why was he here? Why was he always more or less, here? He would have been glad of a mirror to ask himself that question. But there was no mirror. Nothing but stone. Perhaps there was no time either, in this stone retreat. Perhaps this was the eternity that he'd been making so much fuss about, eternity already, of the Svidrigailov variety, only instead of a bath-house in the country full of spiders, here it turned out to be a stone monastic cell wherein sat - strange! - who but himself? (309 - 310)

Significantly, this is the Consul's eternity and, as the scene develops, the sensation of timelessness created through spatial form reveals its truly infernal nature: Lowry knew from Bergson that time is needed to keep everything from happening at once.

The scene begins abruptly with Geoffrey's realization that he is not eating with the others. The toilet of cold grey stone suggests the sacrificial blocks of the Aztecs (mentioned in the Tlaxcala

tourist folder).* To make matters worse, Cervantes answers the Consul's call for help with offers of a stone, "'A stone, hombre, I bring you a stone'" - whether the philosopher's stone or Sisyphus' stone is not clear. Then Geoffrey, his perception increasingly distorted by mescal, begins to read snatches from the Tlaxcala tourist folder proclaiming the historic importance of this state, home of Mexico's betrayers, with its "density of 53 inhibitants to the square kilometre "[sic](311). Key phrases stand out for Geoffrey; Tlaxcala city is "said to be like Granada, said to be like Granada, Granada ..." (the place where Geoffrey and Yvonne first met) and, "in the inside" of the San Francisco Convent, "there is a secret passage, secret passage" (a passage which Geoffrey will now never find). The Consul's mutterings about Parián, " In the Farolito -'," are ironically juxtaposed with another paragraph from the folder entitled: "SANTUARIO OCOTLÁN IN TLAXCALA" (315).

From the dining room the voices of Hugh and Yvonne, who are discussing the peon, penetrate Geoffrey's consciousness. Together with disjointed snatches of this overheard conversation and disembodied passages from the tourist folder, the Consul hears voices from earlier in the day - his own, Vigil's, Yvonne's, his familiars', even Weber's. The babel increases in intensity; all time and space become superimposed, fused in one infinte, eternal moment of horror:

'Have another bottle of beer...Carta Blanca?'
'Moctezuma...Dos Equis.'
'Or is it Montezuma?'
'Moctezuma on the bottle.'
'That's all he is now - '

*Lowry, who had read Lewis Spence's The Myths of Mexico and Peru (London, 1920), was aware of the ancient Mexicans' obsession with time. The reason for Aztec ritualistic killing was to propitiate their gods; without human sacrifice the gods would allow time to stop and the cycles of life would not be renewed. According to Spence (page 77) the mountain Popocatepetl was sacred to the rain-god Tlaloc to whom regular sacrifices were made. Geoffrey's 'sacrifice' is, then, a small positive sign that life will continue, especially when it is remembered that the Pleiades were considered as the planets of hope (Spence, page 44) by the ancient Mexicans. On the last day of the fifty-two year cycle all Mexicans watched for the beginning of a new cycle. In chapter I, Jacques refers to the Culmination of the Pleiades and, in chapter XI, Yvonne dies as the Pleiades rise; the suggestion is that time has been renewed and that the voyage will continue.

TIZATLAN

In this town, very near to the Tlaxcala City, are still erected the ruins of the Palace, residence of Senator Xicohtencatl, father of the warrior by the same name. In said ruins could be still appreciated the stone blocks where were offered the sacrifices to their Gods...In the same town, a long time ago, were the headquarters of the Tlaxcaltecan warriors....

'I'm watching you...You can't escape me.'
' - this is not just escaping. I mean, let's start again, really and cleanly.'
'I think I know the place.'
'I can see you.'
' - where are the letters, Geoffrey Firmin, the letters she wrote till her heart broke - '
'But in Newcastle, Delaware, now that's another thing again!'
' - the letters you not only have never answered you didn't you did you didn't you did then where is your reply -'
' - but oh my God, this city - the noise! the chaos! If I could only get out! If I only knew where you could get to!'

OCOTELULCO

In this town near Tlaxacala existed, long back, the Maxixcatzin Palace. In that place, according to tradition took place the baptism of the first Christian Indian.

'It will be like a rebirth.'
'I'm thinking of becoming a Mexican subject, of going to live among the Indians, like William Blackstone.'
'Napoleon's leg twitched.'
' - might have run over you, there must be something wrong, what? No, going to - '
'Guanajuato - the streets - how can you resist the names of the streets - the Street of Kisses - ' (316 - 317)

A great deal could be said about this passage from the Tlaxcala scene but it would require a chapter to itself. Earlier versions of this scene illustrate Lowry's painstaking efforts to balance the sequence of conversation, folder material, and remembered voices as the Consul sinks deeper into his private maelstrom. The disjointed cry, "' - but oh my God, this city - the noise! the chaos! If I could only get out! If I only knew where you could get to! '" first appears in chapter III (92) as the Consul, in Yvonne's bedroom, confronts the impending sexual encounter with his wife - an encounter from which he wishes to escape. The act of love, ironically, represents an escape from the abyss of self which he needs; it is his way out of himself. Here in the toilet, as there in Yvonne's room, Geoffrey is trapped; the two enclosures, bedroom and toilet, become one and each represents the closed circle of Geoffrey's consciousness.

Furthermore, the city of Tlaxcala and the city of New York are like Geoffrey's mind, traitorous and noisy. In this one brief passage, space is condensed and stripped of demarcation or boundary. All places, his house, Yvonne's bedroom, Tlaxcala, New York, exist here in Tomalín, in the stone toilet of the Salón Ofélia, and in the Consul's mind.

Time is similarly compacted in this scene; no distinctions exist between past, present and future - everything is happening now. The history of the ancient Tlaxcaltecans and the history of the conquest co-exist with November 1938. Yvonne's plea from chapter IX that "It will be like a rebirth" melts into Vigil's description of Guanajuato from chapter V. The present moment - "'Have another bottle of beer....'," loses all distinction as it disappears behind the voices of Geoffrey's familiars and the inquiring voice of the English tourist from chapter III - "'might have run over you, there must be something wrong, what?'"

The spatial form of this scene with its intense sensation of simultaneity is the perfect dramatic projection of the state of Geoffrey's mind and soul. He has become a self-enclosed destructive circle unable to distinguish past from present or even to perceive physical and spiritual boundaries. He is in Hell.

Lowry uses some striking techniques such as motif, cinematic devices, and the descriptions of plastic art, to contribute to the spatializing of his novel. His use of motif is almost Wagnerian; the Strauss Allerseelen stands for Yvonne, the refrain of losing the Battle of the Ebro belongs to Hugh. Many Promethean, Faustian, and other allusions evoke the Consul. "No se puede vivir sin amar" and "Le gusta este jardín" become more than motifs, however; they encapsulate and contain the message of the book.

Two motifs which bear rather amusingly upon the temporal scheme of the book are the traditional Spanish toast "Salud y pesetas y amor y tiempo para gastarlas" and the Spanish greetings "Buenos días - Buenas tardes - Buenas noches." In chapter I Laruelle and Vigil use part of the toast, "Salud y pesetas y tiempo para gastarlas" (12) but neglect to mention "y amor." Later, in chapter XI, Yvonne and Hugh repeat "Salud y pesetas" three times (345). When one

remembers the "y tiempo para gastarlas" of chapter I, its omission here becomes significant; there is no longer time for health or wealth—time has run out. The irony of dropping the "y amor" from the toast each time it is used seems clear because the story is about the loss and crippling of love. Important for the narrative structure of the book is the fragmentation and positioning of the toast; its full meaning can only be appreciated in a reflexive reading of the text. "Buenos días " and "Buenas tardes" or "noches" refer, of course, to the three main divisions of the day, morning, afternoon, and evening. At seven in the morning (chapter II) the Consul greets a Mexican in dark glasses with "'Buenas tardes, senor.'" Much to Yvonne's embarassment, the Consul addresses another ragged man in the same way. Then, lest the joke be overlooked, the two Mexicans nudge each other "as if to say: 'He said "Buenas tardes", what a card he is!)"[sic] Later in the morning in chapter IV (122), Yvonne correctly greets the little girl with the armadillo: "Buenos días, muchacha." Finally, in chapter XII, the Consul greets the fascist police with a polite "Buenas tardes, señores"(388). The implication is obvious; for the Consul it is always "tardes" (tard, tardy)—it is always too late. The "Buenas tardes" motif comments ironically, sadly, upon the Consul's obsession with time and suggests in retrospect that time as movement or change does not exist for him. After his encounter with Maria he asks the pimp "Qué hora?" only to be assured by the filthy little man who is "fliend Englisman all tine, all tine" that it is "half past sick by the cock"(370). Time for Geoffrey is a state, not a process.

Under the Volcano contains many striking cinematic effects which, due to their visual impact, contribute to the spatial form of the book.[9] Lowry uses signs and advertisements to interrupt the reader's sense of spatial and temporal continuity. For example, in chapter II as Geoffrey and Yvonne pass through the "zócalo," perspective collapses suddenly when the sign for boxing or "Las Manos de Orlac" leaps before the eye; the reader is catapulted from the midst of dialogue or reflection into an unexplained confrontation with a disjunct piece of space rising from the landscape. The recurrence

of these signs creates an aura of uneasiness. Wherever the characters turn they are met by these signs until it seems that they are surrounded spatially by sinister and menacing warnings. In addition to creating a dramatic sense of entrapment for the characters, Lowry's handling of signs forces the reader to piece the story together around these visual interruptions. The signs themselves, especially the advertisement for "Las Manos de Orlac" and the mysterious "Le gusta este jardín," reflect backwards and forwards on the events and situations of the story to create a mosaic of symbolic and ironic comment.

Lowry also uses the technique of double exposure to great effect. The reader's introduction to Yvonne in chapter II is a picture of Yvonne standing outside the Bella Vista bar at seven in the morning on the Day of the Dead, superimposed upon a description of Yvonne sailing into Acapulco the evening before. Two different times and places are fused, not simply juxtaposed, through the double exposure effect.

Later, as she and Geoffrey pause outside the printer's shop, Lowry elaborates still further on the double exposure device:

> They stood, as once, looking in.[...] From the mirror within the window an ocean creature so drenched and coppered by sun and winnowed by sea-wind and spray looked back at her she seemed, even while making the fugitive motions of Yvonne's vanity, somewhere beyond human grief charioting the surf. But the sun turned grief to poison and a glowing body only mocked the sick heart, Yvonne knew, if the sun-darkened creature of waves and sea margins and windows did not! In the window itself, on either side of this abstracted gaze of her mirrored face, the same brave wedding invitations she remembered were ranged[...] but this time there was something she hadn't seen before, which the Consul now pointed out with a murmur of 'Strange'[...]. (61)

The image of Yvonne in the present moment and in the near and more distant past is superimposed upon the photographs and invitations within the window. These, in turn, are seen against the enlargement of "La Despedida" "set behind and above the already spinning flywheel of the presses[.]" (61). Reflected in the window, Yvonne sees Geoffrey and herself as they once were ("They stood, as once, looking in."). She sees herself as she has recently been, "coppered by sun and winnowed by sea-wind." There is even the suggestion that a completely different Yvonne appears in the window, a Venus-like Yvonne "somewhere

beyond human grief charioting the surf." But moving forward through these fragmented images of Yvonne's personality are further levels of present and past reality - the photographs and invitations linking past to present, the spinning flywheel which temporally precedes the invitations, and finally the ancient glacial rock, at one time whole, now split by fire. The passage is a superb example of the way Lowry uses visual effects to support his overall design of containment. The window serves as a mirror to frame and contain a series of temporal and spatial dimensions; it is a miniature serial universe.*

In three important instances Lowry uses paintings (murals and the poster "Los Borrachones") to create a stasis that reflects and comments upon the events of his story. In chapter VII, Geoffrey and Jacques Laruelle look at the Rivera frescoes which depict scenes from Mexican history. Time, here the historical time of the Conquest, is spatialized, laid out in the space created by plastic art. At the end

*In 1928 Lowry saw Fred Murnau's Sonnenaufgang about which he said in 1951: "70 minutes of this wonderful movie - though it falls to pieces later, doubtless due to the exigencies of Hollywood - have influenced me almost as much as any book I ever read, even though I've never seen it since" (Selected Letters, 239). In chapter XI of the 1940 version of the Volcano there are several references to Sunrise. Although the overt references are cut, chapter XI of the final version opens with the cryptic direction "SUNSET" and in chapter VII as the Consul pictures El Farolito in his mind's eye, he remembers a sunrise he had watched from there, "a slow bomb bursting over the Sierra Madre - Sonnenaufgang!"(214) Although Murnau's Sunrise was not the only film to make its way into the Volcano (Laruelle's house looks like something from The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, and Los Manos de Orlac is omnipresent), it is probably a more profound influence. Murnau's subject is an adulterous marriage in which "The Man" - none of the characters have names as Murnau wished to universalize his theme - attempts to kill his unwanted "wife." The first part of the movie has interesting double exposures with the surrealistic effect of good and evil battling for possession of the man's soul. The man's tortured form takes on symbolic proportions and the landscape comes to life via menacing lighting effects. The couple are reconciled after near disaster and, while they gaze at wedding photographs in a window, there is a sequence of shots which resembles Lowry's handling of double exposure in the chapter II scene with Yvonne. Murnau's Sunrise ends happily, however, with the sun rising on the newborn pair who have returned to their pastoral paradise that is now purged of all evil. The subject, some of the techniques, and the general allegory of Murnau's film, are solid Lowry material.

of the same chapter, as Geoffrey gulps tequila in the "Cantina El Bosque," he suddenly perceives the unfinished murals running around the cantina walls:

> They were precisely the same in every detail. All showed the same sleigh being pursued by the same pack of wolves. The wolves hunted the occupants of the sleigh the entire length of the bar and at intervals right round the room, though neither sleigh nor wolves budged an inch in the process. (243)

Here the Consul is surrounded by static visual images. The pictures of movement that do not move, repeated again and again around the room, comment obliquely upon the paralysis in the Consul's life.

"Los Borrachones" captures and contains still more emphatically the unchanging image of Geoffrey's damnation. In chapter XII, as he recalls the picture from Laruelle's bedroom, the Consul realizes that it depicts his damnation as well as the now forfeited alternative of salvation in tragic juxtaposition. Like the drunkards in the painting, his identity is dispersed, lost, indistinct; the people around him, even "the ash and sputum on the filthy floor [...] correspond [...] to some fraction of his being" (380). For Geoffrey, what might be called psychological space, that rudimentary and essential ability to distinguish self from not-self, does not exist.* He realizes, furthermore, that had he continued to struggle, to act, to break out of the circle of self, he would have become free, separate and distinct like the righteous spirits in the picture. The Consul sees this salvation in terms crucial to an understanding of the Volcano and to Lowry's concept of the voyage that never ends:

> Here would have been no devolving through failing unreal voices and forms of dissolution that became more and more like one voice to a death more dead than death itself, but an infinite widening, an infinite evolving and extension of boundaries, in which the spirit was an entity, perfect and whole: [...] (380)

*There is a striking similarity between Geoffrey's inability to distinguish self from not-self and the psycholanalytical theory of orality that Douglas Day uses to describe Lowry. According to Day, who quotes Freud and Norman Holland, "the key transaction" in the development stage known as "orality" is the differentiation between self and object. See Day, pp. 70 - 71. Although I am reticent about labelling Lowry as orally fixated, the term works very well as a description of the Consul, Sigbjørn Wilderness, and Ethan Llewelyn.

Here is the secret passage, the lost pass-port, the philosopher's stone in Lowry's "magnum mysterium!" By consciously striving the Consul might have achieved a life of infinitely "widening," "evolving" and extending boundaries; the very words, echoing of course Frater Achad and Ouspensky, reveal the positive temporal and spatial movement at the heart of Lowry's cosmology.

Lowry's concern to create stasis and containment in Under the Volcano is evident on all levels of the narrative, from the trochal from of the book to its style, symbolism, and imagery. Geoffrey's vision of the cantina Puerto del Sol during his abortive love-making with Yvonne illustrates Lowry's "churrigueresque," deliberately convoluted, style. It is a long passage but selections suggest Lowry's intention:

> But now, now he wanted to go, passionately he wanted to go, aware that the peace of the cantina was changing to its first fevered preoccupation of the morning: [. . .] now, now he wanted to go, aware that the place was filling with people not at any other time part of the cantina's community at all, people eructating, exploding, committing nuisances, lassoes over their shoulders; aware too of the debris from the night before, the dead matchboxes, lemon peel, cigarettes open like tortillas, the dead packages of them swarming in filth and sputum. Now that the clock over the mirror would say a little past nine [. . .]. now he wanted to go! Ah none but he knew how beautiful it all was, the sunlight, sunlight, sunlight flooding the bar of El Puerto del Sol, flooding the watercress and oranges, or falling in a single golden line as if in the act of conceiving a God, falling like a lance straight into a block of ice - (98 - 99)

Lowry extends and prolongs the moment of Geoffrey's evasion of reality through the repetition of "Now." The accumulated phrases pile up to form small buttresses between the Consul's repeated wish for the cantina. The final line of the passage, "falling like a lance straight into a block of ice - " works in two directions simultaneously. The harsh consonants coupled with the punctuation bring the passage to an abrupt ironic close that announces the Consul's admission of failure: the "block of ice" refers back paratactically to the preceding detail of "the iceblock dragged in by a brigand with an iron scorpion" (99). Lowry's prose moves in circles doubling back on itself in the last line. The entire cantina vision is an example of Geoffrey's mental habit of circling out and away from a physical encounter only to be struck by reality as the circle closes. By withdrawing

into himself at this point, he becomes incapable of entering the one enclosing space which offers salvation – and a future in the form of a child – his wife's body.

In a book like Under the Volcano, so full of symbols and and evolving images, it is difficult to isolate key symbols or image patterns. The barranca runs through the book linking chapters I to XII, linking 1938 to 1939, Geoffrey's garden with the Farolito, Mexico of the Conquest with modern Mexico, even linking "opposite sides of the Atlantic" (22). In other words, the barranca serves to enfold all time and space in a single symbol. Popocatapetl and Ixtaccihautl symbolize many things, but Popocatapetl functions above all as a magnet at the centre of Geoffrey's circular journey drawing him ever closer. Then there are the Hellbunker, the lighthouse ("pharos," El Farolito), the Samaritan, the horse, bull, or goat, the scorpions, the vultures, and the numbers – the symbols in the Volcano require a full length study.

Perhaps the one symbol that stands out from the others as important to the novel is that of the circle or the wheel. The circle, manifested in the wheel, symbolizes the form of the book and the voyage that never ends; it can be, for Lowry, infernal or paradisal, negative or positive, blindly recurrent or regenerative; it can represent closed final containment or open creative movement. In his letter to Cape, Lowry points out that wheels occur throughout the book.

From the beginning of his work on the novel, Lowry was anxious to emphasize the wheel symbol and the related circle imagery. Several passages from the early version of the novel (cut later due to their over-explanatory nature) make this clear. For example, in the 1940 typescript of chapter I, Senor Bustamente explains the reappearance of Las Manos de Orlac at his cinema with the remark; "And neither do we revive them. They return. They redonde, and begin all over again. It is the redonde eternal." In chapter VIII of the early version, Lowry made the significance of his whirling wheels blatantly clear; Geoffrey, staring at the busy fairground, bitterly reflects:

Round and round went the Mexican children on the improvised

merry-go-rounds[. . .]. Round and round up in the square went the men and the women who tonight would be segregated, drifting round the bandstand when the gutter crawlers would creep in bottom gear around the outer pavements of the plaza, squaring the circle[. . .]. Round too would go the dancers, cavorting like devils or like Dante's trimmers under the wavering flags, skipping all night in the same limited circle, with no variation of tune or step, their homage to St. Vitus.

Round and round swung the planets, the moons, the satellites, round and round reeled the drunken, bawdy earth, and round and round went the circumpolar conversations, which were always with oneself.

Apart from the most obvious wheels in the book, the great ferris wheel brooding over Quauhnahuac and the wheeling stars (in his notes for chapter IX Lowry jotted down, "continue the procession of the constellations . . . as a GIGANTIC WHEEL"[sic]), each chapter contains its own wheels and circles. The streets of Quauhnahuac, in chapter I, proscribe "an eccentric orbit" (30). In chapter II one sees "the already spinning flywheel of the presses" (61). The Consul compares his drunken-mystical state "to the paths and spheres of the Holy Cabbala" in chapter III. These paths and with them gates and doors are inextricably associated with Lowry's wheels and circles; they symbolize the way in or out of an enclosure, be it a garden, cantina, or even the Cabbala. Interestingly enough, Geoffrey thinks of intercourse with Yvonne as "that jewelled gate the desperate neophyte, Yesodbound, projects for the thousandth time on the heavens to permit passage of his astral body" (98). The aim of the Cabbalist is to pass through the "jewelled gate" into Yesod, the first sphere (a circle in its beneficent guise) of the innermost sanctum of knowledge.* Geoffrey's impotence is tantamount to his failure to penetrate the "jewelled gate" of the Tree of Life.

Even in chapter IV where the characters appear less trapped and enclosed, ominous images of wheels and circles abound. Yvonne's once beautiful flowerbed is "completely, grossly strangled by a coarse green vine"(107). Birds loop the loop "immelmaning at unbelievable speed" (118)** A stream casts "mill-wheel-like reflections" on the wall of the brewery - an image which recurs in IX. An innocent

*See the diagram of the Tree of Life on page 36 in chapter II.

**Lowry's choice of the word "immelmaning" to describe the birds' flight is interesting. The word comes from Max Immelmann, a German aviator in World War I, and refers to the half loop half roll that a plane uses to gain altitude while turning to fly in the opposite direction.

armadillo becomes an image of destruction on "tiny wheels." Chapter V is, of course, the perfect vicious circle of Geoffrey's distorted hallucinatory world. Any doubt about the power of the wheel and circle to convey Lowry's message of infernal spatial and temporal dislocation is dispelled by the whirling vortex of Geoffrey's mind. Enclosed within his garden, the ruined garden of Eden, surrounded by fences and the barranca, Geoffrey who feels very "hemmed in" suggests to the Jehovah-like Quincey that God's curse on Adam may have been to leave him trapped in Eden "alone." Only in the Tlaxcala episode does the reader again enter so dramatically into the infernal world of Geoffrey's consciousness. In chapter VI, as "reflections of vultures a mile deep wheeled upside down"(162) in the pool, Hugh circles through his ever-present past until he hears Geoffrey's call for help. The Consul, it would seen, is suffering from "the wheels within wheels" (185) of delirium tremens (if not Ezekiel's wheels). As he shaves the Consul, Hugh recalls a caricature made of him at Cambridge "as an immense guitar, inside which an oddly familiar infant was hiding, curled up, as in a womb" (189) - yet another spatial image of temporal stasis.

Chapter VII, "on this side of the drunken madly revolving world," is the focal point of the wheel and circle imagery. Geoffrey's "great wheeling thoughts" are repeated with interest in the whirling machinery of the fair. In his panic he boards the 'Máquina Infernal'* where "alone, in a little confession box," he is flung around and around until:

*The 'Máquina Infernal" is a reference to Jean Cocteau's play of the same name which Lowry saw in Paris in 1934. Cocteau portrays the Oedipus story in terms of "une des plus parfaits machines construites par les dieux infernaux pour l'anéantissement mathématique d'un mortel." La Machine Infernale (Paris, 1934), p. 15. At the beginning of Act II "the voice" of the chorus announces that Acts I and II, the attempted warnings of Jocasta by the ghost of Laius, and Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx, take place simultaneously. The idea must have intrigued Lowry whether or not the play was staged to suggest this overlap in time. At the end of the play as Creon rushes to the aid of Jocasta, he is stopped by Tiresias: "Reste? . . .le prêtre vous l' ordonne. C'est inhumain, je le sais; mais le cercle se ferme [. . .]. " p. 205.

All at once, terribly, the confession boxes had begun to go in reverse: Oh, the Consul said, oh; for the sensation of falling was now as if terribly behind him, unlike anything, beyond experience; certainly this recessive unwinding was not like looping-the-loop in a plane, where the movement was quickly over[. . .]. Everything was falling out of his pockets, was being wrested from him, torn away, a fresh article at each whirling, sickening, plunging, retreating, unspeakable circuit, his notecase, pipe, keys, his dark glasses [. . .] his small change [. . .] he was being emptied out, returned empty, his stick, his passport[. . .]. What did it matter? Let it go! There was a kind of fierce delight in this final acceptance. Let everything go! Everything particularly that provided means of ingress or egress, went bond for, gave meaning or character, or purpose or identity to that frightful bloody nightmare he was forced to carry around with him everywhere upon his back, that went by the name of Geoffrey Firmin[. . .]. (236)*

All the references to the Tarot, the Karmaic Wheel, and eternal recurrence are galvanized here in the image of the Consul trapped in a steel cage or "confession box" and stripped by the recessive whirling, of all identity. The passage contains echoes from preceding chapters (the looping-the-loop birds of IV, the recessive unwinding of the luminous wheel in I) and prefigures Geoffrey's "sensation of falling" in XII. It is at this point that he loses his passport, symbol of his identity, "means of ingress and egress," and vital document in Mexico.

It is no coincidence that he is enclosed in a steel "confession box" taking "fierce delight in his destruction," for he has given in to powers of evil and his prime sin is his acedia. The Consul's destiny is to be so encircled and contained within the infernal, whirling machine of fate that he is destroyed; the "Máquina Infernal" is the perfect objective correlative of Geoffrey's closed circle of perception. There is motion here, but the Consul himself is unmoving inside the blindly repetitive whirling of the box. Time and space lose all meaning with the Consul suspended "motionless" over the world. The only movement he makes from this point on is to exchange one enclosure for another; the confession box gives way to the bus, the bus to the circular arena, the arena to the toilet, and the toilet to the series of cell-like rooms inside El Farolito.

*The emphasis is mine.

With the bus ride of chapter VIII, Lowry employs his favorite device for creating motion through time and space which is simultaneously stasis. Inside the bus the characters sit "lulled into a state from which it would be pain to waken" (254) while for Hugh "the naked realities of the situation, like the spokes of a wheel, were blurred in motion toward unreal high events"(250). As Yvonne, Hugh, and Geoffrey wait for the bull throwing in chapter IX, the reader is reminded of the containing shape of the arena by the poor bull's futile circling of the ring. Yvonne, in a retrospect paralleling Hugh's of VI, reviews her past which she envisions as a film unwinding mercilessly from the middle on with the reason for her destiny buried in the past perhaps to "repeat itself in the future" (281). Even the bull (symbol of them all, possibly of life itself) resembles "some fantastic insect trapped at the centre of a huge vibrating web . . ."(282).

Chapter X, the most intensely claustrophobic of all the chapters, represents one enclosure containing yet another and another with who else but Geoffrey enthroned in the centre amidst his "whirling cerebral chaos"(325). Before her death in chapter XI Yvonne describes the stars as a "luminous wheel" rivaling and opposing the "luminous wheel" of chapter I:

> And tonight as five thousand years ago they would rise and set [. . .]. Tonight, as ages hence, people would [. . .] turn in bereaved agony from them, or toward them with love [. . .]. And the earth itself still turning on its axis and revolving around that sun, the sun revolving around the luminous wheel of this galaxy, the countless unmeasured jewelled wheels of countless unmeasured galaxies turning, turning, majestically, into infinity, into eternity, through all of which all life ran on - (338 - 339)

Here the wheel appears in its positive form representing the possibility of hope and salvation through the beauty of nature. For Yvonne, time and space are dynamic: tonight is connected to "five thousand years ago" and "ages hence"; life 'runs' on "into infinity, into eternity." At her death Yvonne is drawn up, like Faust's Marguerite, towards the "beneficent Pleiades" through "eddies of stars scattering aloft with ever wider circlings like rings on water" (354). The eddies of stars refer back to the "Eddies of green and orange birds scattered aloft with ever wider circlings like rings on water" (333) from the

opening of the chapter. These "ever wider circlings," like Geoffrey's vision of "infinite evolving and extension of boundaries" (380), embody Lowry's concept of the creative aspect of wheels and of containing circles; they are not closed, whirling meaninglessly, but open, forming and reforming, above all expanding in dramatic contrast to Geoffrey who is at this very moment contracting finally in upon himself. As Lowry tells Cape, "the very end of the chapter [XI] has practically stepped outside the bounds of the book altogether" (Selected Letters, 84). He is referring to the "ever wider circlings" (a central image in "Forest Path") through time and space of the voyage that never ends.

In the Farolito, the perfect serial image of the Consul's withdrawal and paralysis "filled by that ticking: the ticking of his watch, his heart, his conscience, a clock somewhere" (355), Geoffrey waits while "the clock on the Comisaría de Policía, annular [ring shaped], imperfectly luminous"(371) strikes the note of his approaching doom. All the images and symbols of the book converge here mirroring the Consul's perception; everything is alive, menacing, a disjunct projection of himself. Ironically, tragically, for it is now too late, Geoffrey reads Yvonne's lost letter for the first time:

'Oh Geoffrey, how bitterly I regret it now. Why did we postpone it? Is it too late? I want your children, soon, at once, I want them. I want your life filling and stirring me.' (364)

Yvonne is the one encircling space that offered Geoffrey salvation in a future; this is the space, empty now forever, which he was unable to enter in chapter III.

The images of paths and gates from earlier chapters which relate the mythical (Cabbala) and allegorical (Garden of Eden) levels of the book to Quauhnahuac and Geoffrey's forest path to the Farolito reverberate throughout chapter XII. Having lost his passport, his means of ingress and egress, Geoffrey is enclosed on all levels within the infernal cantina; he has lost the Cabbalist's path, he has lost Christ's way of love, he has lost his wife, his future, his life. Doors stand open but Geoffrey remains immobile:

The main bar-room of the Farolito was deserted. From a mirror behind the bar, that also reflected the door open to the square, his

face silently glared at him, with stern, familiar foreboding. (355)

Under the Volcano is a novel of stasis; ultimately, the narrative rhythm of temporal sequence is overwhelmed by the spatial form. The formal stasis which Lowry so brilliantly produces through his art embodies the condition of the Consul's soul: "Both his will, and time, which hadn't advanced five minutes since he was last conscious of it, were paralysed" (388).. By exploiting the metaphoric value of containment, expressed in Dunne's theory of serial time, through the symbol of the circle and wheel, Lowry created a mimetically powerful work of art. Indeed, the concept of containment, reinforced by the poetic structure of the book which Lowry hoped would "explode in the mind," can be extended to include the act of reading itself; the reader exists on a larger time dimension than the book and, in reading it, contains or encircles the experience.

Wheels and circles of containment are not only infernally static for Lowry; like most Lowry symbols they are profoundly ambivalent— all depends upon the individual's perception and effort. As long as the wheel whirls eternally in the same place there can be no meaningful movement, no advance. The wheel of consciousness must expand through "ever wider circlings" in order for life to become dynamic and regenerative. Even in Under the Volcano where Lowry emphasizes stasis in the chapters, in the trochal form of the book, in various techniques, in the wheel and circle imagery, and in the wonderful-horrible Tlaxcala scene with its temporal-spatial Hell of simultaneity, there are stirrings of the regenerative wheel of life. The Volcano was to be an Inferno in Lowry's The Voyage that Never Ends and although stasis is Hell, the book embodies glimpses of hope, prefigurings of "ever wider circlings," because the voyage never ends.

To the degree that Under the Volcano can be seen as one of many low points in Lowry's never ending voyage, it is clearly not final; despair and negation are unavoidable stages in a journey. To the degree,

however, that Under the Volcano stands alone as Lowry's masterpiece, its chief impact arises from its stasis. It is a story of hell-fire and hell-fire, for Lowry, arises from the annihilation of time and space. Without the will to 'unceasingly strive upwards' the human spirit, like the "obscene circular movement" of Senor Zuzugoitea's hips, deteriorates in a "Progresion al culo."*

*Translated literally "Progresion al culo" means, progress towards the anus or ass-hole. However, it is also a Latin American colloquialism for activity which is futile or leads nowhere, and as such summarizes quite aptly the Consul's state. The expression occurs twice in chapter XII, once on page 376 and again on 388. It is a delightful Lowryean pun as well- a progression a l c h o h a l!

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

[1] All references to Under the Volcano are to the first edition published by Jonathan Cape (London, 1947) and are included in the text.

[2] Selected Letters, p. 73. All further references to the Letters in this chapter are to Lowry's 1946 letter to Jonathan Cape, pp. 57 - 88, and are included in the text.

[3] An Experiment With Time, p. 158.

[4] In his article, "The Garden of Etla," Lowry refers to Bergson as maintaining this theory about time.

[5] The manuscript versions of Under the Volcano, six in total including the short story version, are housed in the Special Collections Division at the University of British Columbia. The manuscript version examined here is an annotated copy of the first complete novel version of the book. This annotated copy is marked, possibly in Margerie's writing, as "the draft refused by publishers in 1940 nearly complete." Several pencilled remarks on the typescript indicate Lowry's ideas for the eventual re-writing of the book.

[6] Day, 332.

[7] Victor Doyen, "Elements Towards a Spatial Reading of Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano," English Studies, 50 (1968), pp. 65 - 74, and Terence Wright, "'Under the Volcano', The Static Art of Malcolm Lowry," Ariel: A Review of International English Literature, I(October, 1970), pp. 67 - 76.

[8] In Time and the Novel (New York, 1965), p. 125, Mendilow points out the narrator's capacity to control the reader's sense of time, to speed up or slow down the narrative and to emphasize causality or purposiveness. If plot (events, actions) is emphasized, the narrative tempo is quick; if character (feeling, thought) is emphasized, the tempo is slow. In his convincing article, "Under the Volcano: A Reading of the Immediate Level," Tulane Studies in English, XVI(1968), pp. 63 - 105, Dale Edmonds argues that the plot of Volcano functions very well and that events develop quickly and logically, one from the other.

[9] For a further discussion of cinematic effects in Under the Volcano see Paul Tiessen's "Malcolm Lowry and the Cinema" in Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work. In Malcolm Lowry, Tony Kilgallin points out many references to various films in Under the Volcano. Neither Tiessen nor Kilgallin analyses Lowry's debt to Murnau in sufficient depth.

CHAPTER V

Encyclical to a Closed Order

In a 1952 description of his work, Lowry spoke of Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid, Fridanus, and La Mordida as a "trilogy" (Selected Letters, 307). Little, if any, of this trilogy ever reached completion. Fridanus survives in "The Forest Path to the Spring" and in a chapter also called "Eridanus" in October Ferry to Gabriola. Eridanus was at one point intended as an "Intermezzo or point of rest" within the larger work. La Mordida, a novel drawn from the journals Lowry kept on his 1945-46 visit to Mexico, exists in a sprawling typed draft of 422 pages in the Special Collections Library at the University of British Columbia. In 1951, Lowry planned to place La Mordida last in the voyage cycle because it "throws the whole thing into reverse and issues in triumph" (Selected Letters, 267). If the typescript is ever to be published, it will require massive editing for it is a combination of prose passages, journal notes, and Lowry's debates with himself about art.

Dark as the Grave has already received this editorial treatment; Douglas Day and Margerie Lowry pieced together the published novel from three versions which Lowry was working upon concurrently.[1] Although the book inevitably represents a splicing job, it is unfair to dismiss it, as does Richard Hauer Costa, as nothing but a "gloss on Under the Volcano."[2] Lowry intended Dark as the Grave to be an "Under Under the Volcano," a still worse hell. The book's value lies, not in the information it offers on the Volcano, but in Lowry's handling of the concept of the writer being contained in his work.

Although Lowry planned to put La Mordida last, it is helpful to examine the typescript of this work before discussing Dark as the Grave. La Mordida (the bite or the bribe) grew out of the Lowrys' 1945-46 trip from Cuernavaca to Acapulco, their trouble with the Mexican authorities in Acapulco due to an allegedly unpaid fine and their final release at the United States border, after nightmarish harrassment. The typescript is adorned with Lowry's pencilled

references to Ouspensky and Bergson, as well as to Yeats, Swedenborg, and others. Lowry planned to develop spatial and temporal dimensions, as in all his books, through the constant movement of the hero and his wife between their hotel, the Quinta Eugenia, and the Immigration Offices. The symbol of the border, which plays a key role in Dark as the Grave, was to function dramatically here as well. Once again the hero's problem arises from his withdrawal behind the borders of self, his obsession with the past, and, of course, the danger of final stasis involving a total inability to act.

It quickly becomes apparent, as Sigbjørn and Primrose travel by bus towards Acapulco, that they are heading into trouble, Sigbjørn is plagued by unspecified guilt and fear. In a fascinating "Note" to the unpublished La Mordida manuscript Lowry remarks:

> (Note the antimonsoon of the past. the Bergson motif again. the antimonsoon - the upper, contrary moving current of the atmosphere over a monsoon;- in this regard, while they are travelling toward Acapulco they are going in the same direction as the monsoon, toward the future, while static in Acapulco, because Sigbjorn instead of going ahead futilely worries about the past, in an attempt to discover its meaning in relation to the present, the monsoon reverses itself. Cuernavaca and Mexico City is now the direction of the monsoon, while Sigbjorn and willy-nilly Primrose are caught in the continually contrary moving current of its upper air in the lofty Hotel Quinta Eugenia: '. . . [sic]

While the future blows by them in the opposite direction, Sigbjørn and Primrose are swept into the past and held there in a stasis intensified by their incarceration in the Quinta Eugenia. Lowry's idea of the monsoon moving in two ways simultaneously finds its way into Dark as the Grave in the allusion to Chaucer's Troilus and Cressida: "Al stereless and in a boot am I, amid the sea, between windes two, that in contrarie standen evermo" (11). Both images, the monsoon and the "contrarie windes," express beautifully Lowry's idea of spatio-temporal stasis; the characters are trapped, unable to move with the wind, locked into a past which has not been sufficiently well understood or expiated. Someone must continue to pay "la mordida," the full toll to hell.

Later in the La Mordida typescript, during a particularly horrible point in their incarceration in the Hotel, Lowry has incorporated

notes on the FU Hexagram from the I Ching which deals with the subject of return:[3]

"Fu indicates that there will be free course and progress (in what it denotes) (the subject of it) finds no one to distress him in his exits and entrances, friends come to him, and no error is committed. He will return and repeat his (proper) course. In seven days comes his return. There will be advantage in whatever direction movement is made." . . . But the I Ching then goes on to show the meaning of each line making up the Hexagram, from bottom up, and the last section contains a warning. It may have been bad to repeat (or revisit) the scene of your book, [sic]

Victories are never easily won with Lowry and the FU Hexagram contains a threat in its sixth line:

(6) The topmost line, divided, shows its subject all astray on the subject of returning. There will be evil. There will be calamities and errors. If with his views he puts the hosts in motion, the end will be a great defeat, whose issues will extend to the ruler of the state. Even in ten years he will not be able to repair the disaster. [sic]

Lowry apparently planned to introduce the I Ching Hexagram in order to suggest further levels of meaning for Sigbjørn's return to Mexico and the past. The FU Hexagram states that return will be propitious, and a propitious return to the past is consistent with Lowry's aim to have La Mordida reverse the fortunes of his protagonist. Whether Lowry would have developed the I Ching references in La Mordida or in Dark as the Grave which is also about return, it is impossible to say. Certainly he was impressed by the I Ching for in the typescript he goes on to say:

This reminds them [Sigbjørn and Primrose] of happy days, it should be pointed out that, while this may seem hocus pocus to the ordinary person, it bears in part upon the most remarkable book in all the world's literature. [sic]

La Mordida remains a raw transcript of Lowry's Mexican trip, but passages like those of the Bergsonian monsoon and the FU Hexagram clarify his concept of a necessary, though profoundly dangerous, return to the past. Although the past must be fully understood and incorporated in the flow of time into the future, one can destroy the present and the future by becoming entrapped in the past. The voyage into the past is a necessary descent into the hell of self in which one risks all in the quest for regeneration.

Dark as the Grave is best seen as a buffer or even as a window between the earlier works, Ultramarine, Lunar Caustic and Under the Volcano, and the later works, October Ferry and Hear us O Lord. In terms of the Voyage cycle it looks both ways, reflecting back upon the Volcano and pointing on to October Ferry. The idea of moving in two directions simultaneously is as important to Dark as the Grave as it is to the monsoon of La Mordida; the idea develops into the symbol of the border through which Lowry expresses his concept of intersecting spatio-temporal levels. Dark as the Grave holds a key position in Lowry's theory of the writer being written, of life being a novel and man the novelist. In one sense The Voyage That Never Ends explores the relation of life to art, and in this respect Dark as the Grave is particularly important, for it is a fiction about fiction whose hero is the author of Under the Volcano re-named The Valley of the Shadow of Death. Dark as the Grave, then, like a larger dimension in a serial universe, is the outer frame for the Voyage books. Finally, as William New has remarked, Dark as the Grave holds a mediating position between a fully projected work of art like the Volcano and the autobiography of Malcolm Lowry, the man.[4]

Within the manuscript of the 172 page draft of the novel appears Lowry's explanation to himself of the way Dark as the Grave relates to his work. The analysis is marked "Material from the Ledger" and reads in part as follows:

> Note: In order to relieve the reader of a certain aversion of embarrassment at sight of what is apparently naked autobiography pretending to be surprised to be functioning as a sort of novel, I feel it better to state at the outset that this book was planned before Under the Volcano (The Valley of the Shadow of Death) was accepted by any publisher, with the notion that the protagonist - or a protagonist - or Hugh or the Consul - of the former should be the author of the latter, the intention being a sort of imaginary descent of the creator into the world of his creation [. . .]. [W]hile it has become useless to conceal that some of these happenings in question are autobiographical, the author requests humbly of the reader that he bear the original plan in mind, and to regard Sigbjorn Wilderness as he was originally conceived, namely, a separate entity conceived of as the author of U.T.V., which was a work of imagination within a larger reality, and not simply as the author himself, or as a whipping boy for the same [. . .]. What I had wanted to do at one point was to write, as E.M. Forster had suggested someone should, the history of someone's imagination. Sheer panic at where I was arriving at, combined with a philosophical deficiency, have made me decide to push this quest no further and at that I think it has gone quite

far enough. [sic]

Dark as the Grave was intended as a fictional frame for Under the Volcano and, in a sense, it contains that novel. Simultaneously, it explores the dangers of an artist entering his own fictional world to become entrapped there. With Dark as the Grave, Lowry tried to push the idea of withdrawal into a closed circle one step further than he had in Ultramarine or the Volcano. The circle is not only a device of structure and image; it represents the serial relationship of life and art (as Lowry saw it) where it is difficult to say whether life or art is the larger containing dimension." Lowry's remarks make absolutely clear that Wilderness is intended as the major character in The Voyage That Never Ends; he contains the many other Lowry heroes who represent isolated aspects of his imagination or particular troubled levels of his psyche. The function and significance of Wilderness is discussed in greater detail in chapter VII. Fascinating as Lowry's intentions may have been, Dark as the Grave remains the least successful of his posthumously published works. His attempt, unlike Gide's Les Faux Monnayeurs, remains raw and awkward; it is not enough that "the author requests humbly of the reader that he bear the original plan in mind."

Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid is an exploration of the abyss—a "setting out into the future . . . by setting out smack into the past"(39). The book deals with the Wilderness' flight from Vancouver to Mexico, where in the Quinta Dolores (five sorrows) in Cuernavaca, which is none other than Jacques' tower in the Volcano, they await news from the would-be publishers of Sigbjørn's book. Depressed by the Quinta Dolores, depressed further by the partial rejection of his book, Sigbjørn sinks into a hell of stasis:

> In bed Sigbjørn tried to move, to stretch out toward his wife lying beside him, but he could not: he could not even move a little finger. Though bits of the ceiling crumbled, sifted down ceaselessly on his face, still he did not, or could not move. (117)

He attempts to reverse this destructive pattern by setting out further into his past with a trip to Oaxaca and a search for an old friend, Juan Fernando Martinez. As a result of this effort he is able to meet and overcome the past, then to move forward into the future.

Although not a literary palimpsest like Under the Volcano,

Dark as the Grave draws upon a wide spectrum of literary reference. In addition to scattered allusions to Julian Green, Yeats, Nietzsche, Chaucer, Poe, Thomas Mann, Swedenborg and Grieg, Lowry uses Pirandello and Keats to emphasize his concept of 'life flowing into art,'—the constant expansion, the forming and breaking of encircling boundaries, which he found in Bergson, Dunne, Achad, Ouspensky, and later Ortega. As he stands in the airport queue dressed in second-hand clothes waiting for the El Paso flight, Sigbjørn reflects on his own identity flowing into that of his characters as well as into the identity of other authors and their characters. He decides that this shared identity comprises a "more-than-Pirandellian theme."[5] All Sigbjørn's possessions, his clothes, his watch, even his copy of Julian Green's The Dark Journey, are second-hand, suggesting, somewhat sardonically, his multifaceted identity. As with the Consul in Under the Volcano, Sigbjørn's great danger is to lose the sharp outlines of personal identity until he disintegrates into a confused reflection of external reality.

The balance, however, between a clear personal identity and the acceptance of a Heraclitean reality is supremely difficult to achieve. While waiting for the El Paso flight, Sigbjørn has a vision of this flowing reality:

> [H]e had suddenly a glimpse of a flowing like an eternal river; he seemed to see how life flowed into art: how art gives life a form and meaning and flows on into life, yet life has not stood still; that was what was always forgotten: how life transformed by art sought further meaning through art transformed by life; and now it was as if this flowing, this river, changed, without appearing to change, became a flowing of consciousness, of mind, so that it seemed that for them too, Primrose and he, just beyond that barrier, lay some meaning, or the key to a mystery that would give some meaning to their ways on earth. (43)

Significantly, it is over the barrier or the border, on another spatio-temporal level of consciousness, that this reality moves, and Sigbjørn loses contact with his vision of life when he withdraws into the static closed circle, or inside the borders, of his own psyche; flow and movement are cut off leaving only stasis and death.

As Sigbjørn points out, in his long conversation about art with Eddie in chapter VII, this balance between preserving a core of personal identity and accepting the flowing vitality of art and

reality is particularly acute for the artist:

"Part of the artist's despair [. . .] in the face of his material is perhaps occasioned by the patent fact that the universe itself - as the Rosicrucians also held - is in the process of creation. An organic work of art, having been conceived, must grow in the creator's mind, or proceed to perish. [. . .] In fact, of course, it is always doing both so that the author, while working, is like a man continually pushing his way through blinding smoke in an effort to rescue some precious objects from a burning building. How hopeless, how inexplicable the effort! For is not the building the work of art in question, long since perfect in the mind, and only rendered a vehicle of destruction by the effort to realize it, to transmute it upon paper?" (154)

While Eddie snores, Sigbjørn laments this Rosicrucian universe and goes on to suggest that a short poem "thrown up in an instant of inspiration" may "manage to outwit the process" (155). Better still, a play by its very nature is not expected to be always the same, static, for the actors recreate it: "For that matter a reader is likewise an actor" (156). Clearly, as was suggested in chapter II, Lowry's aesthetics are consistent with his metaphysics; the underlying principle of both is flow, movement, and constant expansion. Ideally life continues to flow through a narrative work of art, making it new for each reader. The idea that, in the reader's recreation of the text, a novel may be saved from destruction seems slight consolation for the novelist who believes that art like life must flow perpetually. Lowry set himself a Promethean task indeed, a task that fills his work with tremendous tension. The battle is always to avoid stasis and to embrace movement, to infuse space with the flow of time.

Dark as the Grave lacks the complicated form of Under the Volcano, but neither does it have what George Woodcock calls a "depressingly linear structure."[6] Lowry was searching for a structure that would incarnate his vision of a Rosicrucian universe where "life flowed into art [and . . .] life transformed by art sought further meaning through art transformed by life" (43). Although Lowry did not live to tighten up the structure of this novel, there are many indications in the published text and the manuscripts that he intended the first eight chapters to take place on a single night, the moonlit night in Cuernavaca prior to the crucial Oaxaca trip.*

*In fact, the structure of Dark as the Grave has never been carefully studied and no one, to the best of my knowledge, has recognized the convoluted nature of the first third of the book.

As early as the extant pencil draft of Dark as the Grave, Lowry was working out the dream mechanism for the first five chapters and wondering (in a marginal note to himself) at what point it would "prove advisable . . . that it should be divulged . . . that Martin is already in Cuernavaca . . . ."* In the 172 page typed draft of the novel, this "Note" appears:

> Yet another, and probably the best alternative, is to have Sigbjorn aware that he is in Cuernavaca itself, when the rhythm of this section breaks and they are in Cuernavaca actually! One should come to earth by gradations. (1) transition from plane to bus (2) transition from bus to realization he is in Cuernavaca (3) transition from the realization, he is in the tower. [sic]

In another typed copy, the following note appears at the beginning of what was to become chapter VI in the published text:

> It is at this point that Sigbjorn either wakes up or you realize he is in bed all this time at the tower thinking these things. . . . Sigbjorn lies there half awake, perhaps. The full moonlight in the room, the moonlight of precisely one month later, recalls him to his sense . . . . [sic]

Chapters I to V are a dream containing a retrospect of Sigbjørn's life and of his return trip south to Mexico. It is a powerful opening device for a book concerned with the return to time and place past, the "regressive unwinding" of the self in order to emerge reborn - or, as Sigbjørn puts it paraphrasing Dunne, a book about "re-experiencing the past [and] prefeeling - horrible word - the future."** Sigbjørn's dream ends in chapter V with the culminating vision of the lunar eclipse - "little by little the shadow of the old earth drew across the moon" (111). Chapter VI opens with a brief bridging passage, reminiscent of the beginning of chapter V in the Volcano. The passage supposedly portrays Sigbjørn's confused thoughts as his sleeping consciousness, bathed in the "brilliant full moon" following the eclipse, surfaces to present reality:

*At a later point in the genesis of the novel, Lowry changed the hero's name to Sigbjørn Wilderness. The emphasis is Lowry's.

**In chapter IX (192), as Sigbjørn awakes on the morning of the Oaxaca trip, the morning after the dream, he thinks: "Every rising in the morning is thus like a new birth. Freud. Sleep is a sinking into onself. Hebbel. Sleep means reexperiencing one's past, forgetting one's present, and prefeeling one's future. Stekel."

Sigbjørn lay there with the moonlight of a month later streaming in upon him. Gradually he became aware that he was half dreaming, and at the same time that he actually was in Cuernavaca itself. Quauhnahuac!

The significance of the lunar eclipse becomes clear through references to Keats' Endymion in the dream bridge*:

The moon sleeps with Endymion . . . . Thus, whilst Endymion is given an opportunity of rising out of his own fatal self-absorption to help another, the fate of Glaucus throws additional light upon the problem, which is before Keats' mind all through the poem, the relation of love in its different forms to higher ambitions of the soul . . . . La Luna ilumina la noche. Enfolded by her light he slid swiftly with her once more into total eclipse. Then the horrible shadow of the earth fell over her. (113)

The moon, symbol of ideal beauty in nature, art, and life in Keats' poem, has also been (as Cynthia) Endymion's first love. "The horrible shadow of the earth" blotting out the moon's light represents the destruction of the ideal by gross reality; in more Lowryean terms, the eclipse symbolizes annihilation of the future, of creativity, of life itself, by the dark, ominous shadow of the past. Significantly, however, for Sigbjørn and his Cynthia, the return to waking reality is heralded by "the moonlight streaming in upon him." The eclipse is over, the past finished - at least in terms of the five dream chapters.

A further temporal and spatial convolution in the structure of Dark as the Grave occurs in chapter III. Sigbjørn, in a dream within a dream paralleling Endymion, imagines that he is a wife-slayer being flown over the border from Los Angeles to face punishment in Vancouver (pages 53 - 55). Although the relevance of this dream, to the story or to Sigbjørn's character, remains vague, it is a deliberate Dunnian attempt to create different time levels in serial containment: "It was as if, and this was to happen with the experience itself, he had opened his eyes upon another reality"(53). The dream in chapter III is

*Keats dedicated his poem Endymion (1818) to Thomas Chatterton - one of Lowry's kindred spirits. "Endymion," the leader of his people, falls into lassitude and, in Keats' poem, he rouses himself to journey through heaven and the underworld in search of the ideal. "Endymion's" mystical voyage begins as he falls asleep and develops through a "dream within dream" technique. His quest ends in the knowledge that only through the real can mankind approach the ideal. See Endymion in Selected Poems and Letters of John Keats (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). The parallels between Endymion and Dark as the Grave are many, if not always well developed by Lowry.

contained within the larger dream of chapters I-V, which is in turn contained within one night in Cuernavaca; that night itself is contained within the book-life of Sigbjørn Wilderness.

The dream within dream mechanism supports the overall circling structure of chapters I to V in Dark as the Grave; from one point in time and space Sigbjørn circles through his past and back to the present.[7] Lowry conveys necessary exposition, as well as capturing the present force of the past—so crucial to Dark as the Grave—through the dream. The serial containment of the first five chapters creates a sensation of stasis which parallels the stasis of the plane trip to Mexico. During the trip, Sigbjørn is motionless, enclosed within the moving plane. Chapters I to V, far from being linear, suggest the convoluted nature of Sigbjørn's mind. The plane trip to Mexico is a mental voyage where "the sense at once of descent, tremendous regression, and of moving, not moving" (1) symbolizes the stasis of an inner landscape.

Chapters VII and VIII are the least artistically transformed and the weakest chapters in the book. Sigbjørn's lumbering monologues in VII require prior knowledge of Under the Volcano to be fully understood, while Eddie and Dr. Hippolyte remain undeveloped and irrelevant. The important point about both chapters is that Sigbjørn is now awake in the present and in a specific place. It becomes possible to move either into the future or deeper into the past: he does both, of course, the trip to Oaxaca signifying simultaneous movement into past and future. Chapter VII ends on a symbolic note. The cathedral bells ring for matins " - it was the madrugada, the hour of dawn, the last hours of the condemned" (159). Sigbjørn stands at a threshold or border; on the other side lies his future and his past.

Chapter VIII is Sigbjørn's "madrugada." Standing motionless beside his sleeping wife, he recalls their weeks in Mexico during which he "had found it more and more difficult to move at all" (162). He speaks of his withdrawal into self as a kind of stasis:

> Even as the garbage would, Sigbjørn found himself sinking more and more into fear, into a barranca , his own, a barranca of fear of he knew not what! Ah, the strangeness of Mexico, and this fear that possesses one like a paralysis - (164)

> And yet, while Primrose was being renewed again, Sigbjørn seemed to see nothing, to love nothing, to sway away from her into some anguish of the past, into some agony of self, chained by fear, wrapped in the tentacles of the past, like some gloomy Laocoon.... (165)

He is not ready yet to break loose from his spiritual and physical stasis with a trip to Oaxaca. His memories of their New Year's Eve trip to Yautepec flood over him instead (pages 167 - 186) creating another spatio-temporal loop in the narrative. The Yautepec trip had been a disaster culminating in the arrival of the publisher's letter questioning the value of his novel. His effort to be reborn on the last day of the old year, like all previous attempts to rebuild, resulted in yet another swing of the pendulum towards defeat.

Looking back on the Yautepec trip, he discovers the reason for this failure to be reborn:

> Actually this was the first trip they had made north, back in the direction of Mexico City, by extension, of Canada. All their other trips were still south, still toward their destination, whether Oaxaca or Acapulco. [. . .] [I]t was curious how this little trip had seemed to illustrate how dangerous or even impossible this turning back was, until at least whatever strange discords had been set playing by the original error, inherent in his return to Mexico at all, had been somehow resolved. [. . .] But come what might there was no return yet, and this is what this little day seemed to have to tell them. (185 - 186)

"No return yet." As in La Mordida where the I Ching corroborates the value of return, Sigbjørn's return must be further into the past if it is to be propitious.

Chapters IX to XII describe this journey into the past/future of Oaxaca. The trip represents the beginning of movement for Sigbjørn; he finally breaks out of the enclosing mental world of chapters I to VIII. Paralysis, containment and stasis give way to freedom: "His getting up, as it were, symbolized the struggle between life and death to him" (191). Another Lowryean bus ride brings the couple to Oaxaca where they stay in a hotel called "La Luna" (the evil associations of this hotel from Sigbjørn's past are balanced by its name, for the moon has already been established as a good omen). There Sigbjørn meets Stanford, a representative of "the past and the difficulty of transcending it" (219). He learns that Fernando, the friend whom he had ostensibly returned to Mexico to find, is "MURIÓ IN VILLAHERMOSA" - dead in the beautiful city. Stanford's role is

undeveloped but the discovery of Fernando's death clearly releases Sigbjørn from his fatal attachment to the past. With the death of the past established in Oaxaca, it is now possible to rebuild a future.

Fernando, who never appears in the story because he has already been dead for six years, is, nevertheless, an important force in the book. Fernando, like Stanford, represents "the past and the difficulty of transcending it," but for very different reasons. As a rider for the Banco Ejidal, he was devoted to enriching the Mexican land.* Sigbjørn's memories of Fernando are all happy ones and Sigbjørn, who suffers from such paralysing fear of the present and the future, conveniently retreats into the past that he shared with his Mexican friend. The relationship of the two men, however, is still more complicated. Fernando has become a part of Sigbjørn through their shared experiences and through Sigbjørn's book; he is both Sigbjørn's past and a character in the book about that past. Furthermore, his murder uncannily parallels the murder of the hero in Sigbjørn's book. Given Sigbjørn's belief in the contiguity of life and art and his feeling that he Is the character in his book, it is not difficult to appreciate the magnetic power that the memory of Fernando holds over him. By learning of and accepting Fernando's death, Sigbjørn is able to bury his obsession with the past; the goodness that Fernando represented is released in the present by this relinquishing of the past. At the end of his Oaxaca journey Sigbjørn is able to perceive that Fernando lives on in the renewed fruitfulness of the Valley of Etla: "The Banco Ejidal had become a garden" (255). The implication is that, with the past buried in Fernando's tomb, Sigbjørn's life will flower like Oaxaca; the past will regenerate, instead of engulfing, the present. The journey to Mexico becomes a last rite for the past and the visit to the Mitla tombs completes Sigbjørn's symbolic death.

Chapter XII, following the discovery of Fernando's death, is poorly controlled. Sigbjørn and Primrose visit the tombs of Mitla, walk through the early morning Oaxaquenan streets, visit the Church of the Soledad, and, finally, begin the trip back to Cuernavaca. This time they travel on the first northward stage of their homeward voyage.

*The Banco Ejidal was an agrarian land bank set up by Cardenas in order to restore the quality of farm land and to return it to the peasants. Ejidal riders were Cardenas supporters who carried necessary funds to outlying villages.

For the moment, at least, Sigbjørn is released from the necessity to "traverse this route many, many times again, backward and forward" (96). Now he can cross the state borders of Mexico with hope; the journey into the past is a journey into the future. Despite the meanderings of chapter XII, its general direction in relation to the book as a whole is clear. Dark as the Grave does not have a circular structure like Under the Volcano; the open-ended structure creates spatio-temporal movement leading forward into the future.

The three most important symbols for time and space in Dark as the Grave are those of the border, the circle, and the cross. The border is a versatile symbol representing a block or stasis if one is stopped, or a point of passage into another level of time, space, or consciousness. Border towns such as El Paso (the pass), a point of ingress or egress, are what the Consul lacked. The border is a complex spatial image, facing Janus-like in two directions at once; it may be an obstacle or a point of passage, the way up or the way down all in one.

The border symbol is associated with images of threshold, boundaries, crossings, movement and stasis. Throughout the book there is a constant crossing of national and international borders triggering Sigbjørn's memories of deportation over the Mexican border and his refusal of entry into the United States. The movement of the book parallels his crossing of the borders of time, from the present into the past and finally into the future. Frequently, he crosses borders or "thresholds" from one level of consciousness into another, hovering in chapter VI on the border between dream and waking. The achievement of a waking state is perhaps the most important border-crossing in the book; he crosses from a state of withdrawal into dream and the past into a present where a future becomes possible.

The most interesting use of the border image occurs in chapter I as Sigbjørn broods upon his refusal, years before, at the border town of Blaine.[8] As the plane approaches Los Angeles, where he and Primrose had met and where he had been headed when turned back at the Canadian border, he begins to remember his poem commemorating the mishap:

Sigbjørn remembered that he had wanted to give the impression of the bus going one way, toward the border and the future, and, at the same time, of the shopwindows and streets flashing by into the past: he had wished to do that, but something more: since the poem was to be about his being turned back at the border, these shop windows and streets that he was so glibly imagining in the past were in the future too, for tonight and at the end of the poem he would have to return from the border by a similar bus along exactly the same route, that is, in both an opposite direction, and an opposite mood. (17)

Only the first stanza of "The Canadian Turned Back at the Border" appears in the published Dark as the Grave. The significance of the poem lies in the way its eight stanzas, all of which appear in the typescript, reflect the voyage of Sigbjørn's mind. This voyage, a voyage into the past-as-future, is the theme both of the poem and the novel. The seventh stanza of the poem, not included in the published text, emphasizes the dual nature of the voyage dramatically:

> The packed bus that brought me back glared and stank
> Of beer, chiefly mine, in vaporous quarts.
> But chaos caught me in the suction
> Of a roaring parallel darkness, now
> Stabbed with landmarks in the wet night, none quite
> Verified, all of a heartbreak flowing
> Past lovers united on bill boards, through
> The crash - sigh - of juggernauts borderward,
> And the grinding of hypocrites voices,
> And the mind jammed in reverse forever . . . [sic]

"The mind jammed in reverse" summarizes aptly the first five chapters of Dark as the Grave. Indeed, the entire Mexican journey is a regression, a journey into the past, a descent into self. Unless Sigbjørn can overcome the "forever" in his poem and somehow cross a border into a new world, he will be trapped within "the suction of a roaring parallel darkness." The most difficult border to cross, in the poem and the book, is the border of the mind isolating Sigbjørn from communication with others and preventing the flow of life into the future. As in Under the Volcano, the protagonist is imprisoned within a static circle of self.

In all Lowry's fiction, the circle and containment play an important symbolic role, but in Dark as the Grave it is a solely negative one. The first five chapters comprise a miniature serial universe of enclosures. During the stay in Mexico City Sigbjørn finds himself in a hotel room whose windows will not open (77), and

later, when he enters the underground Bach café,

> it was much as if by so entering the past, he had stumbled into a labyrinth, with no thread to guide him, where the minotaur threatened at every step, and which was moreover a labyrinth that now at each turn led infallibly to a precipice [. . .]. (80)

Once more there is an inevitable Lowryean bus ride with "weary circling" to signify stasis for Sigbjørn: "for there was something in his nature that loathed to break the rhythm; only more than stopping at all did he hate to move on, lulled into a certain mood" (98).

The side-trip from Mexico City to the Gaudalupe Basilica prefigures the disastrous stasis and entrapment into which Sigbjørn later falls in Cuernavaca. The square in front of the Basilica is prepared for a carnival with merry-go-rounds and sideshows. Amidst this "tumultuous scene," Sigbjørn has "the feeling of definite pilgrimage toward the Basilica, and yet the virtual impossibility of moving a step, or one found that one was only going round and round the square" (101) – squaring the circle! The Bishop, attempting to speak over the noise, reminds Sigbjørn of Mann's Mynheer Peeperkorn pronouncing an "encyclical to a closed order" (101). That Sigbjørn is re-living these past events in a dream constitutes a further involution.

In chapter XII, the dangers of encircling space are powerfully symbolized by Mitla. Mysterious Mitla, place of sorrow, burial ground, image of death, represents the very depths of the past and the finality of containment. Mitla is a site of prehistoric tombs – an image of the spatialization or stasis of time indeed! While roaming the subterranean vaults at Mitla, Sigbjørn suddenly realizes why he is in Mexico; "it occurred to him that this was what he was doing in Mexico: was it not for him too a sort of withdrawal into the tomb?" (249). At the end of one subterranean tomb they come to the "Column of Death." According to the legend "if one embraced the Column of Death, the number of fingers that could be placed in the space between the hands denoted the number of years the person embracing the stone would live" (247). The oracular column, another circular image, announces death when it is encircled and Sigbjørn fears that despite his refusal to consult it, his death is nevertheless within it. "[T]he column was still there" and the circle, as a symbol of death and stasis, is always present to the Lowry protagonist.

The Mitla tombs, however, represent life and movement as well as encircling space and temporal stasis; they are in a cruciform shape, the cross being another major symbol in Dark as the Grave. Like the border and the circle, the ancient symbol of the cross embodies an essentially spatial concept. Although the cross imagery is less well developed than that of the circle, it reverberates throughout Dark as the Grave, recalling Dana's cross in Ultramarine and foreshadowing the crossroads in Ethan Llewelyn's life. It is Christ's cross with associations of death and resurrection. It is the Southern Cross of the heavens. It is the only thing upon which Sigbjørn can focus during the flight from Vancouver to El Paso – "the moving shadow of the plane below them, the eternal moving cross" (1).*

Finally, of course, the cross represents a turning point or crossroads in Sigbjørn's life. The crossroads is a central metaphor in the Voodoo religion and, although the extent of Lowry's knowledge of Voodoo is debatable, he certainly knew something about it.** The manuscripts indicate that he was planning to expand the character of Dr. Hippolyte who, in chapter VII, describes Sigbjørn's problem in terms of Voodoo:

In Voodoo, there is a great lesson. There is discipline. The dancers do not leave the blazing circle. If you like to call it neuroses that they get rid of then that is what they do. And even if the

*The emphasis is mine. Lowry never misses a chance to suggest the dynamic foundations of his metaphysical and aesthetic beliefs. The irony here is that Sigbjørn, unable to understand the meaning of the "eternal moving cross," persists in his condition of physical and spiritual stasis. This vision of the cross, coming during his dream, prefigures the resolution of chapter XII.

**The extent of Lowry's knowledge of Voodoo is uncertain. In his biography, Day describes Lowry as drunk or in hospital during most of his 1947 visit to Haiti. Lowry, however, was at least familiar with the basic concepts and point of view of Voodoo: he admired the novels of the Haitian writer Phillippe Thoby-Marcelin and owned a copy of Milo Marcelin's Mythologie Voodue, 2 vols. (Haiti, 1949). In Mythologie Marcelin explains the foundation of Voodoo as the intersection of the natural and the supernatural via the rite of possession. The cross and the circle figure prominently in the diagrams used in the book. For Lowry's praise of Voodoo see Selected Letters, 235.

priest becomes possessed, the ceremony goes on. A bell is rung when it has reached a certain point beyond which it might become dangerous. You have to be your own priest and ring your own bell. [. . .] You are possessed too, you are possessed by Sigbjørn Wilderness. (151 - 152)

Within the "blazing circle" the celebrants become possessed by the "loas" or Gods; in other words, within the circle stands the cross representing the intersection of the physical and metaphysical orders.

In Divine Horseman: The Living Gods of Haiti, Maya Deren describes Voodoo cosmography:

> The metaphor for the mirror's depth is the cross-roads; the symbol is the cross. For the Haitians this figure is not only symbolic of the totality of the earth's surface as comprehended in the extension of the cardinal points on a horizontal plane. It is, above all, a figure for the intersection of the horizontal plane, which is this mortal world, by the vertical plane, the metaphysical axis, which plunges into the mirror. The cross-roads [9] . . . is the point of access to the world of les Invisibles . . . .
>
> The crossroads as a point of intersection between physical and metaphysical worlds is of necessity the point of access, of ingress and egress, the juncture for communication between mortal and spiritual realms. The cross is the way out of the circle; it is, as Lowry says, "the eternal moving cross." Stasis, occasioned by withdrawal inside the closed circle of self, is overcome through participation in the ritual of the cross. In Voodoo this cross is a dynamic symbol of time and space, including in its vertical axis all time, in its horizontal axis all space.[10]

As he explores the tombs of Mitla, Sigbjørn wonders: "Cruciform tombs. Cruciform tombs - Christ - what was this strange persistence of this symbol? What was the real significance of the cross?" (248) The cross symbolizes hope and the rich multiplicity of the world, a world that unites Christian death and resurrection with the dynamic vitalism of Voodoo. The cross imagery intercedes with the circle imagery; both are necessary but the cross embodies the way out of the infernal closed circle into a renewed cycle of voyaging.

In Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid the spatio-temporal obstacles of the border and the static closed world of the circle give way to the moving cross, symbol of intersection and communication. To an extent Lowry did succeed in forging a unity of

form and meaning in this book. The structure of Dark as the Grave can be seen as that of a cross, with the dream chapters I to V as the horizontal dimension of space, the containment or spatialization of time, and chapters VI to XII as the vertical dimension of time; only in chapter VI does time, however slowly, begin to move.

Dark as the Grave signals an advance on the position of Under the Volcano; it marks a point of return within the withdrawal-return rhythm of The Voyage That Never Ends. In a moment of illumination (as well as one of the most striking spatial images in the book) Sigbjørn envisions the human mind and soul as the city of Oaxaca:

> Ah, these walled closed streets of Oaxaca that did not give out their life at all, these blank thick-walled cantinas behind which lurked such deepness, such complexity, such beauty of patios and sawdust rooms when you entered them, depth beyond depth, those barred prison windows, and huge worn wooden doors through which how occasionally you would see some enchanting vista of stone courtyards arches, and gardens - what was all this an image of? It was not enough to ask. Did not men too have such walled closed streets, such hidden gallantries, such concealed gardens and cloisters and misericordes, and rooms wherein took place such invisible debauches? What soul, moreover, did not have its invisible Farolito, where it drank itself to awareness in the dead watches of the night? And here was the Church of the Soledad, of the Virgin for those who have nobody them with. (253)

Sigbjørn has visited the depths of his own mind; he has wandered through the labyrinthine rooms, with "barred prison windows," of his own soul. He has withdrawn into the circle of the past, understood and accepted it, and returned, crossing the borders of "the state of Oaxaca"—the state of the soul—into the future:

> Then they were leaving the state of Oaxaca behind them, and behind them too, in the dark church of the Virgin for those who have nobody them with, one candle burning. . . . (255)

Through Fernando Sigbjørn has died in order to be reborn. The "one candle burning" commemorates Fernando and the past.

NOTES: CHAPTER V

[1] Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid (World Publishing Co., 1969); all page references are included in the text. The Lowry Collection in the Special Collections Division of the University of British Columbia library holds the three separate drafts of Dark as the Grave, one of 172 pages, one of 148 pages, one of 380 pages; see An Inventory of his Papers by Judith Combs.

[2] Costa, Malcolm Lowry, p. 115.

[3] According to Mrs. Lowry in a letter to myself, Lowry studied the I Ching with Charles Stansfeld-Jones. The I Ching or Book of Changes is an ancient Chinese text, integral to Taoism, used as an oracle and a book of wisdom or right conduct and cosmic understanding. It is based upon the principle of change which assumes a cyclic form. The sixty-four Hexagrams of the I Ching, obtained by throwing the yarrow stalks, are configurations formed by chance in the moment. Both coincidence and individuality are of great importance to the wisdom of the I Ching. In his introduction, G.C. Jung writes: "The Chinese mind . . . in the I Ching, seems to be exclusively preoccupied with the chance aspects of events. What we call coincidence seems to be the chief concern of this peculiar mind, and what we worship as causality passes almost unnoticed." The I Ching or Book of Changes, 2 vols., trans. from the German by Cary F. Baynes (New York, 1950).

[4] New, Malcolm Lowry, p.44.

[5] Lowry is probably thinking of Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author which explores the identity of character and author through the equation of life and art. Lowry praises Pirandello's idea in Selected Letters, 210.

[6] George Woodcock, Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work, p. 69.

[7] In his article "Masks and the Man: The Writer as Actor," Matthew Corrigan recognizes the circular nature of experience in Dark as the Grave. He writes: "The trip through Mexico leading to Oaxaca . . . itself takes on a circulatory motion, duplicated visually in the vultures that gyre in the high sunlight, and on another level, duplicated in the circumlocution of the style." Shenandoah, XIX(1967-68), p. 91.

[8] Sigbjørn's refusal of entry into the United States at the British Columbia border town of Blaine arises from Lowry's being refused entry in 1939 as a person likely to be a public charge. Lowry had hoped to meet Margerie Bonner, with whom he had fallen in love, in Los Angeles, but when this trip failed he wired her of his desperate state and she came to Canada to nurse him back to health. Typically, Lowry invested the mishap with tremendous importance and added it to his growing list of personal injuries.

[9] Maya Deren, Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti (London, n.d.), p.35.

[10] Deren, p. 37.

CHAPTER VI

Beginning Yet Again

October Ferry to Gabriola represents Margerie Lowry's editing of a work-in-progress.* The work is unfinished and there are undeveloped aspects of the writing, but *October Ferry* is by no means a raw effort. The novel functions very well and is a rich, often moving book which, together with "The Forest Path to the Spring," embodies Lowry's most sustained vision of paradise.[1] It is also a powerful continuation of *The Voyage That Never Ends*.

Lowry began work on the *October Ferry* theme shortly after a 1946 trip to the gulf island of Gabriola. Dissatisfied with the story, he put it aside until 1950 when he began working in earnest (*Selected Letters*, 216). Late in 1951 Lowry believed the novella to be "a hell of a fine thing." By 1953 he was obsessed and delighted by *October Ferry* which was threatening to become a novel though still closely related to companion stories in *Hear us O Lord*. As the novel grew it severed its close relationship with the stories in *Hear us O Lord*; both books, however, deal with the return from withdrawal to a state of balance and are, therefore integral members of *The Voyage That Never Ends*. Along with "The Bravest Boat," "Present Estate of Pompeii," "Gin and Goldenrod," and "The Forest Path to the Spring," *October Ferry* grows out of Lowry's profound, almost symbiotic, relationship with the British Columbia coast. In December of 1956, Lowry wrote to David Markson that he was "working like absolute sin on *Gabriola* with which I have completely fallen in love" (*Selected Letters*, 394).[2] Lowry's destructive love-affair with the novel arose perhaps, as he himself suggested, from some "fanatical narcissism or other that makes me set the touchstone impossibly high, as a result of which I am now writing a huge and sad novel about Burrard Inlet called *October Ferry*

*_October Ferry to Gabriola_ (World Publishing, New York, 1970). See the "Editor's Note," p. 335. All further references are included in the text. Due to the fact that the MSS of the novel do not fall into easily distinguishable drafts and that not all extant material from Lowry's last years is, as yet, available at U.B.C., it is impossible to be certain how exactly the published text follows Lowry's plans.

to Gabriola . . ." (Selected Letters, 409).

October Ferry to Gabriola, superficially a simple book, is the story of a husband and wife's search for a new house because they face eviction from a much beloved fore-shore cabin on Eridanus Inlet. What Lowry means by eviction, secular and divine, not to mention the significance of the new house (their fourth house) is not, however, simple. The theme of eviction and the search for a new house, combining with Ethan's problems of guilt, fear, and hatred, accumulates importance as the book proceeds. The story is set in British Columbia and covers approximately twelve hours of the day in which Ethan Llewelyn (meaning, of strength unknown, 47) and Jacqueline travel from Victoria to Nanaimo by bus, wait in Nanaimo for the Gabriola ferry and ultimately leave on the ferry for the gulf island. This simple immediate level, however, expands and proliferates through the consciousness of Ethan Llewelyn, a semi-retired criminal lawyer, who spends the first part of the day re-living his past - his boyhood in England, courtship and marriage in Ontario, the burning of a second house in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the finding of their third home in British Columbia. Much time and space is thus condensed into the three or four hours spent on the bus.

Two themes, insufficiently developed, counterpoint the main theme of eviction and search. Ethan suffers paralysing guilt over the suicide of a university friend, Peter Cordwainer; Cordwainer himself follows Ethan from England to British Columbia in the guise of billboards advertising the Cordwainer Industries product: "Mother Gettle's Kettle Simmered Soups." In addition, Ethan is tormented by the case of a fifteen year old Vancouver boy sentenced to hang for murder. Despite his horror at society's condemnation, Ethan finds that he is unable to force himself to openly defend the Chapman boy.

The usual Lowry equipment is once again present. During the long bus ride which occupies two thirds of the book, Ethan withdraws simultaneously into his own guilt-ridden consciousness and into his past. His perception of reality, like the Consul's, is increasingly distorted; the landscape bristles with symbols, signs threaten, snatches of overheard conversation are strange messages for him, and films become his life.

Once again, the Lowry protagonist is outward bound: "beginning: beginning: beginning again; beginning yet again" (5), and October

Ferry can be best understood, thematically and technically, in terms of Lowry's obsession with time and space. In his letter to Erskine (Appendix II) Lowry says that Gabriola "is, finally the future"; Eridanus represents the past and the necessity to move on, to begin again. The danger for Ethan, as for each of Lowry's heroes, is the threat of stasis, the fatal temptation to become surrounded and calcified in one place.

October Ferry, like Under the Volcano, is a profoundly religious book and Ethan Llewelyn's voyage is a multilevelled quest; a search for "life" in every sense of the word. On the social level the voyage represents Ethan's need to be reunited with mankind. During his three and one half year retreat at Eridanus, throughout his entire life in fact, he has become more and more withdrawn. Here, the Lowry dilemma of withdrawal and return is re-enacted with Ethan ultimately "received by mankind." In an important unpublished letter to Albert Erskine (1953), Lowry clarifies this aspect of the quest:

> The ferry reaches Gabriola at dusk, where those meeting the boat are swinging lanterns along the wharf: but you have the feeling that Ethan is now being received by mankind, that arms are stretched out to help him, help he now has to and is prepared to accept, as he is prepared to give help to man, whom he had formerly grown to hate so much: thus the characters journey toward their own recovery.*

This social acceptance by mankind includes renewal of Ethan's marriage that had been under considerable strain, and the finding of a new home for his wife and son.

The psychological level of the quest is perhaps more important for it is on this level that Ethan must come to terms with his past in order to discover the future. In his letter to Erskine, Lowry goes on to explain that,

> on this plane the whole thing can be read slightly differently and in a sense more hopefully, as a kind of abreaction of his past: I like the word cathexis, too. In some psycho-genetic sense also - if that's the word? - the news of their own reprieve (on this plane) would seem to precipitate Ethan's recovery, in the way that shell-shocked soldiers may recover at the news of the armistice.

Lowry's use of the term "abreaction," a psychoanalytic term for the release of psychic tension through verbalizing of repressed traumatic

*This unpublished letter to Erskine comprises, to the best of my knowledge, Lowry's most complete analysis of October Ferry; therefore, the entire letter is included in Appendix II.

experience, is important. The book, a highly ratiocinative work, may well be seen as therapeutic verbalization of the past.

Ethan, possessed by past traumas, the most crucial being Cordwainer's suicide, is also unwilling to relinquish his own youth. Ethan's guilt over Peter Cordwainer merges with his reluctance to defend the Vancouver boy thereby intensifying his torment: not only was he Peter's murderer but now, through professional inertia, he is killing Chapman. The significance of both Cordwainer and Chapman crystallizes in his imaginary defense (self-defense) of Chapman when Ethan quotes a long passage from Hesse's Demian. According to Hesse, the time of puberty is a profoundly traumatic "sequence of death and rebirth." Loss and loneliness terrify the adolescent making him long to stay within the comforting world of childhood:

> They cling their whole life long painfully to the irrevocable past, to the dream of a lost paradise, the worst and most deadly of all dreams. . . (268)

Ethan, of course, is unwilling to leave his paradise at Eridanus although it has become polluted by his repressed guilt over Cordwainder and Chapman. October Ferry's long verbalization of Ethan's trauma is the therapy freeing him finally from the past and his youth, (from Eridanus, Cordwainer, and Chapman) and allowing him to mature in the future.

Closely connected to the concept of Eridanus as a childhood paradise is the image of the cabin and the physical and spiritual Eden it represents for the Llewelyns. They are Adam and Eve, evicted from paradise, exiled from God, and beginning the soul's long voyage back to God, their harbour and home.* William New, in "Gabriola:

*There are many striking parallels between Lowry's heroes and models of the exile found in Anglo -Saxon literature. The figure of the exile falls into one of two categories, that of the Augustinian exile whose salvation rests within himself and that of the "exile as uncreator," a social outcast filled with bestial, destructive hatred which he directs against God, society, and all creativity. The "exile as uncreator," based upon the archetype of Cain, is a solitary figure barred from all communication, particularly discourse, with his fellows. I am indebted for this information to Prof. David Williams of McGill University whose study of the Anglo-Saxon anti-hero is as yet unpublished. Lowry was certainly aware of the exile tradition in romantic literature and in his own Protestant background, and his use of the Anglo-Saxon word "abye" in October Ferry suggests that he may have been interested in the mediaeval models. At one point Ethan feels "the Middle Ages closing over him"(31). It would be a mistake, however, to press the analogies too closely for Lowry's quest is a romantic one; the journey is more important than any goal.

Malcolm Lowry's Floating Island," suggests that Ethan's voyage might be seen as the neo-Platonic journey of the soul in exile on its way back to God.[3] The quest, in its religious aspect however, cannot be reduced to one myth. Ethan is searching for faith and this search runs through the book until, in the last chapter, "Uberimae Fides" (bountiful faith), he appears to have found it.

The metaphysical quest unites the social, psychological, and religious levels of the book. The Llewelyns, Ethan in particular, must come to understand the nature of reality, of time and space. Significantly, Ethan accuses himself of being a "miseoneist" (199) – a hater of change – and change is the quintessence of the Heraclitean universe in which Lowry believes. The focal point of his voyage, therefore the message of October Ferry, is that Ethan must learn to accept the protean nature of reality. He has come to want to possess Eridanus, despite the profound truth

> [t]hat impermanence, indeed, the ramshackle tenuity of the life, were part of its beauty. The scene, too, that confronted them through their casement windows was ever-changing; the mountains, the sea never looked the same two minutes on end: why then be afraid of change? (171)

By refusing change, Ethan is attempting to stop time, to surround, to enclose, to spatialize experience. Through his fear and guilt he becomes static, a piece of death. In a fascinating marginal note to a manuscript version of the ferry's approach to Gabriola, Lowry has scribbled: "outside time, an ocean of suffering, just as he had seemed outside time in that three years on the beach." Only by placing himself within the flow of time, only by crossing the borders of self and escaping from the closed circle of consciousness, can Ethan be "received by mankind," transcend the past, or find the faith to carry him forward into the future.

Finally, the voyage in October Ferry is an epistemological quest. It is on this level, more than on either the metaphysical or the religious, that the Cabbala operates. The Cabbala, as interpreted in Achad's Q.B.L., plays an important and unexplored role in Lowry's novel. It affords an interesting structural model, many images, at least two important symbols (the numbers three and four), as well as an epistemological tool. The Cabbala functions as a method of

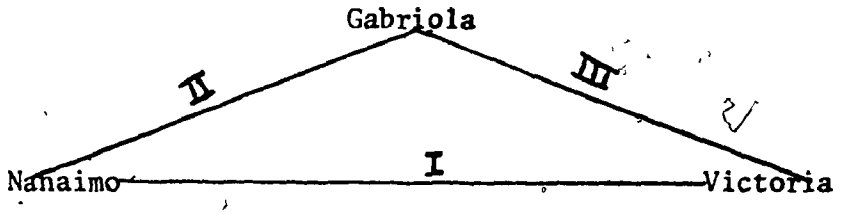
thought for the achievement of harmony or balance. Ethan finds that a book on the Cabbala given him by the McCandless is,

> not only extraordinarily interesting but, as a method of thought, profoundly helpful. In fact he could sum up no better their life on the beach than to say it had been, in a manner, his cabbala, in the sense that, if he was not mistaken, that system might be regarded on one plane as a means less of accumulating than of divesting oneself - by arrangement, balancing them against their opposites - of unbalanced ideas: the mind, finally transcending both aspects, regains its lost equilibrium[. . .]. (169)

The words "balance" and "imbalance" constitute a refrain throughout the book as Ethan circles through his past, repeatedly losing all vestige of balance, until he finally regains it in the last chapter of the book. In October Ferry, the reader shares the protagonist's epistemological quest. Ethan's consciousness is in the process of growing, expanding, learning, and the exploration of the past, with all its terrors, is the main element of the learning process.

Lowry found the writing of October Ferry especially difficult: "[I]t has cost me more pains than all the Volcano put together" (Selected Letters, 334); the book had become a "challenge" to his personal salvation. The published letters, especially from 1953, contain many references to his plans for the book. For example, in a letter to Erskine, he describes the form of the novel as like a triangle:

> You will be wondering at the length of this first chapter too . . . so I will expound thus far the magic of Dr. Lowry's dialectical-Hegelian-spiritualism-Cabbalistic-Swedenborgian-conservative-Christian-anarchism for ailing paranoiacs: the first chapter . . . is as the base to a triangle or a triad (and/or a radical having a valence of three): viz



> Which is meant to illustrate no more than that Chapter I might be 180 pages long, Chapters II and III each half that length, without its form being overbalanced - to the contrary. (Selected Letters, 346)

This concept of a "triangle or triad" is crucial to an understanding of the book's structure as well as to an appreciation of the Cabbalistic ordeal of the protagonist and is discussed in detail below. Lowry goes

on in the letter to assure Erskine that the repetitions of the first part of the book are meant "to give the effect of the man caught, washed to and fro in the tides of his mind, unable to escape . . . ."

In the unpublished letter to Erskine dated December 1953 (see above, page 167 and Appendix II), Lowry again explains the structure of this book in which "the difficulty of the future taking any shape at all, as of the present having any meaning for the protagonists, is really the whole plot." The three chapters of October Ferry have now become three "parts." After explaining the necessity for the long first part – the characters, "potential suicides . . . hopped up to the gills," are having "more trouble getting to Gabriola than K to the castle" - he goes on:

> However I'm only equipped to write all this: not to describe it. I believe it to be bloody good and that it gets better. But it's not intended to fall into any particular category or obey any of the normal rules of a novel. The second part of the book concerns their difficulty in finding the ferry and takes place in Nanaimo, mostly in a pub, where Ethan gets pretty tight; there are powerful dramatic scenes (though I sez it) in Nanaimo both in the present and the past: a scene of lyrical beauty is balanced against a Grand Guignol horror that takes place on the scaffold. (A waiter turns out to be a man Ethan's saved.) The third part is on board the ferry itself.

The triangle or triad constitutes the structure of October Ferry in much the same way as the circle shapes the Volcano. The number three is repeated throughout the book: the Llewelyns have had three houses; with Tommy they form a family of three; the three parts of the book correspond to the three temporal dimensions (past, present, and future) as well as to the elements of fire, earth, and water; the protagonist sits, talks, and thinks, within three specific spaces, that of the bus, the Ocean Spray, and the ferry. There are three bars in the book and in the third, Ethan reflects upon the way the partitions can be moved in order to expand the men's side of the bar:

> These partitions were usually moveable, for at crowded hours the Men's side was much fuller than the Ladies and Escorts: the partition would thus often be found slowly moving in on the territory of the latter, producing, sometimes, if you were obliged to leave your lady for several minutes, on your return a certain eerie feeling of perichoresis. An isolation that was, at the same time, begotten by an interpenetration. (251)

Lowry's use of the word "perichoresis" is interesting. Perichoresis literally means the act of going around, rotation. It is also used,

however, in theology to explain the unity of the divine trinity. There is a great deal of literal perichoresis in October Ferry; in addition, it appears in its theological aspect when Ethan, catching sight of the astrological magazines by the Nanaimo dock, contemplates "the duplication of the cube, or the trisection of the right angle, not to say the Symbol of the Divine Trinity in Unity" (233).

The triangle is a useful structural paradigm for October Ferry because of its versatility and all-inclusiveness. Geographically it represents the Llewelyns' voyage:

> For they had been travelling as it were along the upended base of a triangle of which Eridanus itself on the mainland could roughly be considered the apex [. . .]. (153)

Spiritually, it indicates the result of their voyage; not only may they find the Divine Trinity in Unity but they may anneal their little secular family of three and achieve the social unity which William Plantagenet and Geoffrey Firmin lack. Most important, the triangle or triad is, together with the circle, the main structural element of Achad's Tree of Life. According to Achad, the Tree of Life is composed of a "Trinity of Triads" with the second and third triads derived from the first by reflection to form a balance.

Clearly, the Cabbala is far from the only influence upon Lowry's novel, but it is significant that Achad's Q.B.L. was one of the few books that Lowry asked specially to have sent to him in 1956 (Selected Letters, 387). The Cabbala with its "method of thought" is important to the epistemology of the book and, in addition to the McCandless who is a Cabbalist, the text contains many references to and images from Achad's studies. The noteworthy point about the "Trinity of Triads" in the Q.B.L. is that they represent a path or a way, a method in fact, for the adept to achieve balance. By progressing from one triad or level to the next, the adept gradually attains to inner balance, wisdom, harmony or, if you will, God. Furthermore, the three triads are contained (with a little mystical suspension of disbelief) in the fourth level of the Tree, the tenth Sephira called "Malkuth," or "The Kingdom":

> Finally, this TRINITY OF TRIADS being in itself a UNITY is Symbolized by the TENTH SEPHIRA called MALKUTH, THE KINGDOM, a SINGLE SPHERE pendant to the above and summing up in itself all the foregoing qualities which it MANIFESTS according to the Creative Plan.

Q. B. L. OR THE BRIDE'S RECEPTION

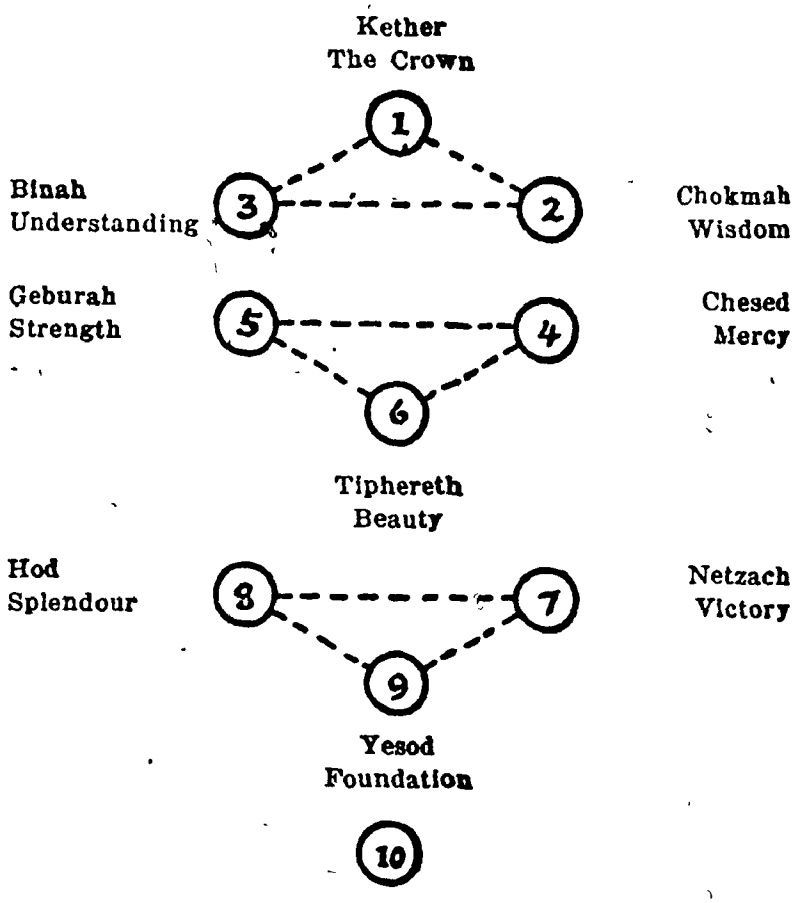


Fig. 4

This shows clearly the TRINITY of TRIADS with MALKUTH pendant to them, manifesting their Influence in the Material Universe.

All these qualities may be said to be Potentially inherent in KETHER The Crown - with which MALKUTH is, in a certain Mystical sense, ONE, as it is written: 'Kether is in Malkuth and Malkuth is in Kether but after another manners.'[4]

(See Figure #4 from Q.B.L.)

As Lowry himself emphasizes, there are three parts to October Ferry, and the Llewelyns are searching for their fourth home on Gabriola which represents their salvation. Without forcing the novel into a constraining mould, it is possible to see the three parts of October Ferry as parallels to the "Trinity of Triads" in Achad's Tree of Life. The fourth house on Gabriola which they have such difficulty in reaching parallels Malkuth, The Kingdom - the Divine Trinity in Unity.

Certainly, Achad's system offers rich metaphoric possibilities. The Tree of Life embodies constant movement, expansion and proliferation; time is real, flowing and creative, and space never encloses, never stops, this flow of life.* Similarly, the three parts of October Ferry flow and expand, each mirroring and reflecting the other through Lowry's brilliant use of image, motif, and allusion. Throughout the book Ethan perceives the nature of reality in precisely Achad's terms:

All at once, without knowing why, he felt as if he were seated at the center of the infinite itself, then, that this was indeed true, that the center of the infinite was everywhere, just as its circumference must be nowhere. Everything seemed part of a miraculous plan, in which nothing stood still, everything good was capable of infinite development, everything evil must inevitably deteriorate. (224)

The time span of October Ferry's tripartite structure is superficially very short - one day, from sunrise to sunset, approximately twelve hours. Using the number three and Achad's concept of movement, Lowry expands the few hours spent on the bus to include the thirty-nine years of Ethan's life through a further structural division of the first part of the book into another triad. Part one of October Ferry comprises three distinct time loops within Ethan's mind. the first loop includes chapters I to X, the second chapters XI to XXI, and the third chapters XXII to XXVII.

*Achad points out, "If we would obtain the Fruits of the Tree of Life, we must be prepared to put in a little of this Present Time on the study of First Principles. When we have a grasp of these the rest will come in due course, for, as I explained before, The Hidden Influence FLOWS easily once the channels have been opened up." Q.B.L., p. 103.

Each of these loops develops a period from Ethan's past; he is, in fact, reliving (or verbalizing) his past. The first loop covers Jacqueline's and Ethan's earlier years, as well as their courtship and marriage. Lowry introduces details of Jacqueline's birth, her Mother's suicide, her Father's beliefs, and important information from Ethan's past. The Cordwainer theme is initiated and the significance of films, especially Outward Bound, is dramatically established.

In the second time loop, Ethan's mind travels over the early years of their marriage, the birth of their son Tommy and, most important, the burning of their second home. At the same time that Ethan moves forward in time closer to the surface of the present, he plunges deeper into despair, fear, and stasis. The Niagara-on-the-Lake period is dominated by fire and loss which threaten the sanity of both characters as well as their marriage.

In this second time loop Lowry conterpoints a film of Temple Thurston's The Wandering Jew with an account of Thurston's death by fire in order to explore the interpenetration of reality and illusion, life and art. Ethan, horrified by the intuition that life and art are contained in each other or that both are contained in some larger dimension of a serial universe, experiences a hellish "St. Paul's vision upside down" arising from "an almost complete and mysterious identification of subject with object" (146). Like the Consul, Ethan sits paralysed in a bar, slowly losing all sense of his identity, until the enclosing room becomes his soul:

> Ethan now held this collective mental image for an instant completely, unwaveringly, on the screen of his mind. Image or state of being that finally appeared to imply, represent, an unreality, a desolation, disorder, falsity that was beyond evil. (146)

The third time loop of the first part of October Ferry brings Ethan's consciousness to the most recent past; their life at Eridanus in their third home and the threat of eviction. Peter Cordwainer continues to haunt him as he becomes more and more certain that his life has been one long penance for contributing to Peter's death. Ethan "bound to these thoughts like Ixion to his wheel" (192), sinks deeper and deeper into stasis. The apartment house where they have put up while searching for their fourth house turns out to have been an abortionist's clinic and, as Ethan points out, they seem to be

living in the world of Sartre's No Exit (198). The descent into the abyss of self reaches its climax as Ethan, his mind surfacing to a present in which he feels "strapped into his seat" (208), confronts his image in the rear-view mirror of the bus:

> The face in the mirror, a half face, a mask, looked at him approvingly, smiling, but with a kind of half terror. Its lips silently formed the one word:
> Murderer! (216)

In each of his works Lowry seems obsessed with complicated temporal involutions that, in October Ferry, intensify the protagonists' struggle to break free from the tentacles of the past. A sense of psychological time is suggested by these narrative loops which contrast ironically with the relentless unilinear movement of the bus and clock time into the future. Through the handling of the three main time loops, Lowry establishes the crucial rhythm of the book: "to give the effect of the man caught , washed to and fro in the tides of his mind, unable to escape . . . ." (Selected Letters, 347). In each time loop Ethan's consciousness flows back and forth between present reality on the bus and the greater reality of his past; the ultimate effect is precisely that of tidal flux and reflux. In chapter XIII, entitled "The Tides of Eridanus," Ethan is aware of a "slow, stealthy, despairing deepening of the medium of his thoughts [which is] like a high tide of Eridanus coming in" (76). With the steady advance of the second loop into the past, Ethan faces greater and more dangerous "snags":

> Now there was only this tide of his mind still rising, and deepening, reaching out toward those other grislier, more menacing timbers that were fears, anxieties, obsessions, horrors, it had not yet set afloat, [. . .] (81)

In addition to establishing this tidal rhythm of the mind with its terrifying "snags" from the past, the three loops create the rhythm of withdrawal and return upon which October Ferry and the entire Voyage cycle is based. Each of the loops carries Ethan's thoughts from brightness to a state of darkness, from communication with others to utter isolation. With each loop, Ethan must begin again to confront the meaning of his past and with each loop he moves deeper and deeper into an inner hell of distortion, terror, and stasis.

The second phase of October Ferry takes place in the present, beginning with the arrival of Jacqueline and Ethan in Nanaimo in chapter XXVIII, "Wheel of Fire." The bus is following a hearse into the town, and this chapter, enclosed within the fiery wheel of Ethan's consciousness, prefigures his symbolic death and harrowing of hell in the Ocean Spray bar. Chapter XXXI, "Twilight of the Raven," marks Ethan's descent into hell. The Men's side of the Ocean Spray with its "columns of mirrors, carefully designed to look broken, under a ceiling of dried blood," its light that turns the "denizens of the place into corpses," and its view-destroying glass of "a thick corrugated verdigris green" (259) represents hellish stasis indeed:

> Though its boundaries seemed yet to be determined, if the purpose were not to leave them flexible as now, this newly renovated Men's section proper of the beer parlour appeared to be finished to the satisfaction of whatever inverted genius had created it. Finished. It was the end. (258)

Both the reality of present time and the sense of temporal flow are destroyed as Ethan, trapped by the bar and his own tormented mind, presents his statement for the defense - the defense of Chapman and his self-defense. Chapter XXXI, in many ways the most powerful and extraordinary chapter in the book, reminiscent in its complicated richness and temporal stasis of chapter X in Under the Volcano, is discussed in greater detail below.

The third and final phase of the book begins with chapter XXXIII as Ethan and Jacqueline board the little ferry outward bound for Gabriola. Finally time, in every sense, regains reality and the present flows into the future as the ferry, not without a final setback, approaches the island amidst "a boundless sense of space, cleanliness, speed, light, and rocketing white gulls" (329).* The return to Nanaimo threatens to cancel their hopes of reaching Gabriola but proves, ultimately, to be a good omen, for the evening newspaper is thrown on board and the Llewelyns learn of their reprieve from eviction. This reprieve is essential to their victory in the future; in a sense it frees them finally from all restrictions and entanglements in the past:

*The emphasis is mine. The boundlessness of space is crucial because, in Lowry's time-space conflict, space with rigid bounds constricts and destroys. Only when boundaries are flexible and open to the flow of time is life and creativity possible.

"Good-bye for the present."
"Good-bye for the present."
Well, time and heart enough to find out about everything now . . . *(329)

The book closes with Ethan's vision of the approaching evening when he and Jacqueline will walk along the shore of Gabriola in "the moonlit, meteor-bright night" (331). This vision of the stars and moon, always Lowryean symbols of life and hope, gives way once more to the present reality of Gabriola with its "sheltered valley that sloped down to a silent, calm harbour" (333). Once again the Lowry protagonist has achieved wisdom, balance, and a temporary point of rest.

Chapter XXXI, "Twilight of the Raven," like chapter X in Under the Volcano, marks the climax of horror, the most crucial point in Ethan's struggle for balance. In this chapter, Lowry intensifies themes of eviction, guilt and social responsiblity through the fusion of external and internal reality; within Ethan's distorted mind the present becomes one long, timeless moment of infernal stasis. Ethan's physical stasis within the bar mirrors his spiritual stasis. A close examination of chapter XXXI reveals Lowry's expert use of several techniques and dispels any doubt as to the power of the book.

"Twilight of the Raven," (the title recalling Poe's nightmare poem The Raven and Wagner's Gotterdämmerung), takes place in a bar, the third bar in October Ferry. The fact that Ethan's visions occur in bars is important, for the bar is a place of secular and divine law, a place of judgement and prosecution, a place where the soul sits in judgement upon the excesses of the flesh. Furthermore, to Ethan's eyes, "life was like this bar, from which you could not see out" (263). Ethan's plight is intensified by the fact that he is breaking the law as soon as Jacqueline abandons him in the Ladies and Escorts; the waiter, who has just seen "the goddam inspector" (257), asks him to leave. Ethan, evicted from the room with a view, from communion with his wife, enters the infernal Men's side of the bar where:

The windows were either boarded up, like those of prisoners, he thought,

*Earlier in the day Ethan reflects on the Anglo-Saxon word "abye . . . meaning 'to atone for'. But it also meant 'to endure'." "Abye" is now "Good-bye" (God be with ye); Ethan has both atoned and endured in order to receive Grace.

> in the citadel of Parma, against the view, or the glass was a thick corrugated verdigris green. (259)

Once in the Men's bar, Ethan is trapped "in a deliberately uncomfortable attitude he could not, for some reason, change" (260). Like Geoffrey, like all Lowry's heroes, Ethan the misoneist becomes paralysed. His lack of a view in the overwhelmingly repulsive bar signifies his own distorted, self-enclosed, destructive perception. This prison-like bar is a final static enclosure.

Slowly, with stasis increasing and Ethan becoming more and more enclosed by his distorted perception, external reality gives way completely to inner nightmare. "Sunrise! Twilight of the Dove" (255), commenting upon the chapter title, becomes "Twilight of the Dove. Sunrise!" (263) The repetition of the phrase enfolds the opening of the chapter into the inferno of Ethan's thoughts; "Sunrise," as well as signifying beauty and rebirth, is the time for hanging. Rebirth becomes death as the gruesome associations of sunrise reflect back to cancel Ethan's earlier vision of an Eridanus sunrise. As is typical with Lowry, the interpretation of a sunrise depends upon point of view and ability to act; as Ethan's thoughts shift from "the delight of swimming at sunrise" (255) to "a thick morning mist [. . .] creeping out of the hollows into the prison cabbage patch" (264), he seems less and less able to transcend his hell of self.

The sunrise of the condemned man ushers in one of the most gruesome passages in any of Lowry's works when Ethan presents, "by prolepsis"(266), his arguments for the defense of young Chapman. Lowry's use of the term "prolepsis" is interesting. In rhetoric it refers to the anticipation of arguments or the setting forth in brief the details of what is to follow. The word also signifies, in a more literal sense, the taking of a future event as already existing. Ethan's "literal or chronological" prolepsis, then, sums up very aptly the temporal stasis of this chapter, for prolepsis suggests the absence of flow of time into a future that already exists.

With the long quotation from Demian, it becomes evident that Ethan is defending himself as much as the Chapman boy; in a sense, he is Chapman. It is Ethan who is the murderer, and it is Ethan who is afraid to leave his "own lost Paradise, [his] own irrevocable past; in short that of Eridanus itself" (269). At this point accusatory voices take over embodying simultaneously the most acute distortion

of Ethan's consciousness and the truth itself. The chapter concludes with a chorus of past and present voices screaming at Ethan—voices from the bar, voices from the newspaper (Lowry collected newspaper clippings concerning the actual trial of a Vancouver boy), voices from his own divided consciousness:

> "Save him!"
> "Oh, shut up!"
> "It's no good, this kind of life."
> "But you, Ethan Llewelyn, what did you say? What did your able pen do, your pen more able than mine, or your still small voice, the one voice, the one pen still able to save him?"
> "Hang him!"
> "Hang him!"[. . .]
> "Hang Ethan Llewelyn!" (271)

It is impossible in a short space to recapture the entire chapter with its many echoes from the rest of the book, its refrains of reprieve, sunrise, scaffold, Dweller of the Threshold, etc.* The chapter reflects and contains the two previous nightmare moments in bars developing further the horror they prefigure. The essential function of the chapter, however, is to serve as a temporary stasis within the flux and reflux of the book. It is at this point, in the present, that Ethan experiences his most intense hell for he is immobilized, trapped

*The allusions to "Sunrise" and the mysterious refrain "Dweller of the Threshold" (pages 111, 263, and 296) are important. In his drafts of the novel Lowry had planned to incorporate a Blake stanza:

> "He who bendeth to himself a green joy
> Doth the winged life destroy
> But he who embraceth the life as it flies
> Doth live in eternity's sunrise."

Although the stanza does not appear in the published text, it clarifies Lowry's concern for movement; to possess is to invite stasis, whereas to "embrace the joy as it flies" is to live.

"Dweller of the Threshold" comes from Bulwer-Lytton's mystical romance Zanoni mentioned in Eino Railo's The Haunted Castle (London, 1927), p. 209. Lowry's notes for October Ferry contain many references to and long quotes from Zanoni which portrays the struggle of the Ideal and the Real via a Gothic story of Italian passions. In his explanation of the novel, Lytton writes that the "Dweller on the Threshold" is "FEAR (or HORROR)" which may only be dispelled by "defiance and aspiration . . . whose Messenger and Instrument of reassurance is Faith." Zanoni (New York, 1928), p. 538. Zanoni was important to Lowry who saw Ethan as tormented by fears like Geoffrey and Sigbjørn but finally achieving faith at the end of his ordeal.

and surrounded, while temporal and spatial realities cease to exist. Here the rhythm established in part I of the book - the rhythm symbolized by the rising of the tides - breaks, in preparation for the gradual ebbing and creation of a new rhythm in part III.

Lowry's use of specific techniques in October Ferry, if not as refined as in Under the Volcano, is nevertheless interesting. An exploration of Lowry's allusions would comprise a lengthy study in itself. In addition to allusions, Lowry uses motifs, film devices, signs, newspapers, dialogue, visions, hymns, and several languages to support his magical edifice. Even chapter headings serve specific purposes, counterpointing or balancing other chapters, commenting ironically upon chapter contents, stating and repeating themes, always forcing the reader to read reflexively. Lowry's notes for October Ferry contain references to "visual Murnau-like" techniques and he appears to have considered writing in terms of shots and cuts. As was pointed out in chapter II, Ethan (and Lowry) believe that films are, in a sense, more 'realistic' than novels because they create an illusion of motion. Certainly the bus ride in which scenery and signs flash by suggests the movement of film - a physical movement into the future that contrasts dramatically with the replay of Ethan's past. More than once, Ethan reflects on the interpenetration of life and art encountered in film:

> (and ah, the eerie significance of cinemas in our life, Ethan thought, as if they related to the afterlife, as if we knew, after we are dead, we would be conducted to a movie house where, only half to our surprise, is playing a film named: The Ordeal of Ethan Llewelyn, with Jacqueline Llewelyn) [. . .]. (26)

One of the more complicated (probably because it is not well developed) instances of a film allusion in October Ferry is that of Temple Thurston's The Wandering Jew. In chapter XX, entitled "The Wandering Jew," Ethan sees the film and experiences the terrifying sensation that he is the accused Jew (132). Here, as in Volcano, the Lowry hero under stress loses all sense of psychological space; he is unable to distinguish the boundaries between self and not-self. Of course, the parallels between Ethan and the Jew are not just fanciful; Ethan is chased from one home to another in his journey through life and, like Thurston's Jew, he does finally receive Grace.[5]

However, Lowry attempts to make more of the film than simply a thematic parallel for his story. When Ethan learns of the death-by-fire of Temple Thurston, he perceives a precise parallel between the writer's death and that of the Jew in the film. This coincidence provides him with "a glimpse into the very workings of creation itself" (147). The film apparently functions as a kind of gate or secret passage into the realm of motion and coincidence that, as far as Lowry is concerned, constitutes reality. Consequently, the film reassures Ethan of the significance of the universe: "Gone was his fright. In its stead was awe" (148). The meaning of the entire Wandering Jew-Thurston-Fort complex is less clear than this would suggest and in an amusing note on the manuscript of this episode, Lowry has written that "its purpose in the book baffles me."

The subject of literary allusions in October Ferry can only be opened in the present study for the text is as encrusted with references, quotations, and parallels as is Under the Volcano. The most important allusion is to Sutton Vane's play Outward Bound, but Lowry also gleaned many references from Eino Railo's The Haunted Castle, a study of Gothic and romantic literature, and from Charles Fort's books.* Blake and Shakespeare are used to develop themes, and Lowry manages to work in references to such diverse writers as Chaucer, Berkeley, Defoe, Bunyan, Carlyle, Bulwer-Lytton, Clare, Wordsworth, Keats, Emily Brontë, Eliot, Hardy, Poe, Melville, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, Stendhal, Sartre and Hesse.

Outward Bound casts the greatest light upon Lowry's intentions in October Ferry. Written in a disarmingly simple style, Vane's play portrays the postmortem voyage of a small group of passengers outward bound for heaven or hell: "It's the same place, you see."[6] The three acts of the play take place in the ship's bar where the bartender, Scrubby, a kind of Charon, gradually reveals the nature of the voyage. Two of the passengers, Ann and Henry, have committed suicide and are, therefore, "half-ways" who must "go on like this . . . backwards and forwards - backwards and forwards." Interestingly, in his unpublished

*Lowry took much of his information on fires and other "supernatural" happenings from the books of Charles Fort who rejected rational explanations of the universe and believed that "all existence is a flux and reflux" within a pattern of "infinite serialization." The Books of Charles Fort, p. 313. Eino Railo's The Haunted Castle is the source for the "Wandering Jew" passages in chapter XX and the Spenser stanza on page 155.

letter to Erskine (see Appendix II), Lowry describes his plan of making Peter Cordwainer appear to Ethan on the ferry as Scrubby:

> [Ethan] has to face the fact also that he actually is - or has been - next door to a murderer and a criminal himself in the case of Cordwainer: though it's time he stopped punishing himself - he's had 20 years of penal servitude already - and others for it, including Cordwainer himself, who appears in a dream to him on the ferry boat (Scrubby the barman in Outward Bound - you might expect to find him on a ferry boat) to inform him that in so far as Ethan had murdered him, he had saved him from the lot of a suicide in the next world . . . . [sic]

In Act III of Outward Bound, the passengers hold a meeting in the bar - "in view of the shortness of time . . . and the nature of the harbour we are approaching" (112) - to look over their pasts and to be examined by a clergyman. Each of the passengers receives his sentence except the suicides who remain suspended in limbo. Scrubby reminds Ann that time does not exist in limbo: "A week! A century! A moment! There's no time here" (170).

This lack of time and space - heaven and hell are the same place and time does not exist - are clearly paralleled in parts of October Ferry. Lowry has also incorporated the bar as place of judgement and the theme of suicide in his novel. The title Outward Bound is important, not only in October Ferry where it provides two chapter headings, but throughout Lowry's Voyage cycle; from Ultramarine on, the "outward bound" motif recurs as a reminder that the voyage must always begin anew. In fact, Vane's play provides an interesting insight into Lowry's entire concept of the voyage: if one commits suicide (and Ethan nearly does in chapter XXXIV) literally or metaphorically, one remains trapped, like Ann and Henry, in a limbo where time does not exist and where the voyage cannot go on.

Motifs are an important structural technique in October Ferry and, as with allusions, they are largely unexplored by critics. Signs "Safeside-Suicide," notices - "Vous qui passez/ayez pitié," seemingly casual puns such as "called to the bar," phrases like "beginning again," and Luther's hymn "Ein Festerburg ist unser Gott," repeat throughout the book. The repetition, as Lowry pointed out to Erskine, is purposely "beyond that which you can believe" (Selected Letters, 339). Lowry saw his use of motifs as something new to fiction. In a note to Margerie on the manuscripts, he remarks:

Leit-motifs go backwards & forwards here as they don't in Wagner, & the whole technique & meaning is revolutionary & new to art, I believe, certainly to fiction. And it has to be simple, unaffected naturalism 'au meme temps'. [sic]

The motifs serve many functions: they introduce and develop themes, comment ironically upon an event or thought, and generally deepen the meaning of the book. Most important, of course, they disrupt the temporal cause and effect progression of the story by their "backwards & forwards" movement. The closely interwoven texture of the narrative represents the consciousness of the protagonist and the leit-motifs suggest the density of a mind that remembers and interprets everything it perceives in its pursuit of abreaction.

The words "time" and "life," for example, occur repeatedly in the first part of the book, but it is not until chapter XXIV that their significance is sharply focused:

And down down it was anyhow, what with Time and Life on the table, with their bouncing advertisements of a bouncing life with Big Cousin that never was on land or sea, or if it was, in his opinion shouldn't be [. . .]. Christ Jesus how he hated it all. Where had their life, their time gone [. . .]. (181)

"Time" and "life" reflect back upon the preceding chapters for up to this point Ethan has only been remembering (not living) "their life, their time."

As the narrative moves into the present, the "time" and life" motif recurs more frequently. The Llewelyns pass a magazine stand in their search for the Gabriola ferry ticket office and on the stand appears: "Your weight and your destiny. Time and Life . . ." (234). With each repetition of the words, associations multiply. At this point the motif serves as a subtle reminder of the continuity between past and present, but the interpretation of this link is left uncertain; time and life will either continue to be only a memory or the present will become a lived reality. Later that afternoon as they again make their way down to the ferry, the motif carries some hope: "Libra's year ahead. Difficulties of the Fourth House . . . Time and Life" (284). The sign of Libra, with the balance or scales, symbolizes the supposed justice in Ethan's legal profession; the suggestion is that in the year ahead—time future—Ethan will achieve balance. "Difficulties of the Fourth House," yet another leit-motif, refers to the Llewelyn's trouble in finding their fourth home (Achad's fourth world): until now

the stars have been against them not to mention Ethan's misanthropism; however, with "Libra's year ahead," they will surely have "time" to build a new "life" in the "fourth house."

In the last chapter, "Uberimae Fides," Ethan has discovered the faith necessary to go on into the future and relinquish the past. The reprieve from eviction reinforces the need for a new life: "No, it was time to leave, however much it hurts. Time to - " (325). Finally, as the ferry approaches Gabriola, the Llewelyns know that now they are moving in time once again: "Well, time and heart enough to find out about everything now . . ." (329).

October Ferry is as rich in symbolism as it is in motif and allusion. There are the symbols of fire, birds, flowers, the bastion (which, according to Lowry's notes, symbolizes God), the law, the tides, the numbers three and four, and so on. Three symbols are of particular importance, that of place (Gabriola and Eridanus), the mirror, and the circle or wheel with its ambivalent associations of containment and movement.

The symbolic value of Gabriola and Eridanus is extensive. Gabriola, being an island, calls to mind the references to the lost Atlantis scattered through Lowry's work as well as the mention of Prospero's island in October Ferry (157). Situated in the Gulf of Georgia, the island is in a sense afloat on the gulf ("Golf=gouffre= gulf") which consumed Geoffrey Firmin in Under the Volcano. Angela d'Arrivee (the angel of arrival if not of the Annunciation) who lives on Gabriola, is waiting to welcome the Llewelyns and, as Lowry told Erskine, the island "is, finally, the future." Eridanus is a still more complex symbol; it is the name of their inlet and of a ship that ran aground there. It is also the name of a constellation - the river of life and death. More ominous still, the Eridanus is the river that, in the Aeneid, "watered the Elysian Fields of the Earthly Paradise" (164). Eridanus is the Llewelyn's earthly paradise, "a gift of grace, finally a damnation" (79). As long as they are able to live there without possessing it, physically or spiritually, the Llewelyns are safe, but Ethan has come to wear the cabin "like a shell" and in the Cabbala shells signify the Qliphoth or world of demons.

The mirror is a central symbol in October Ferry. Many of the chapters are reflections of each other and the repetition of motifs increases the mirror-like nature of the book. Broken mirrors occur in each of the bars in which Ethan experiences his hellish visions. Twice he confronts his own face in a mirror (46 and 216) only to perceive that he is a "Murderer!" The mirror is essential to Achad's theory of the Tree of Life wherein each of the triads is a reflection of the first and all three triads are reflected in Malkuth. If the glass is whole or undistorted, then reflections will be clear; the search for clarity of mind and soul that will perfectly mirror the universe is another way of describing Ethan's spiritual and metaphysical quest.

The work of art itself is, in Lowry's eyes, a magic mirror, for it reflects the creative process of God. Lowry was forever searching for the art form that would be in constant motion and incarnate his belief in change;* by its perpetual motion, this work of art would perfectly reflect the universe. In one of the more striking passages of the book, Ethan, sitting in the Ladies and Escorts of the Ocean Spray - the bar with a view - describes the activity of the bartender:

> The bartender, glancing from time to time out of the window at the scene outside, began to pile the glasses one within another in a stack on the counter, a dull-seeming occupation, about which, Ethan now understood from the bartender's glances of satisfaction at the stack, the position of which he altered now and then, evidently to suit some aesthetic whim, there was, on the contrary, something almost godlike: it was a creative process, an act of magic: for within each glass lay trapped the reflection of the window, within each window the reflected scene outside, extended vertically by the glasses themselves, the reflected windows flowing upward in a single attenuated but unbroken line in which could be seen a multiplicity of lighthouses, seabirds, suns, fishing crafts, passenger boats, Australia-bound colliers, the

*In chapter X of October Ferry (61), Ethan decides that films are more realistic than novels because they create the illusion of motion:

> Films had more reality to him than life until he had found his little house, but novels possessed secretly no reality for him at all. Or almost none. A novelist presents less of life the more closely he approaches what he thinks of as his realism. Not that there were no plots in life, nor that he could not see a pattern, but that man was constantly in flux, and constantly changing.

minuscule coal rushing audibly down the minute chute [. . .]. (250)*

The stack of glasses is "a creative process, an act of magic", because it reflects "flowing," "unbroken," "multiplicity"; life is contained spatially, as in a serial universe, in the mirror-like glasses, but it is not static - space is alive in time. This passage is a "locus classicus" in Lowry's works containing the very heart of his philosophy and aesthetics while, at the same time, reflecting all his novels; glasses, bars, windows, ships, lighthouses, seabirds echo and reverberate through Ultramarine, Lunar Caustic, the Volcano, and Dark as the Grave. The very word "reflection" appears on practically every page of October Ferry reminding the reader, in "millwheel reflections" of the Volcano and heightening the reflexive nature of the text.

The symbol of the wheel or circle functions as dramatically in October Ferry as it does in Under the Volcano. The book is a kind of "perichoresis" of Ethan, Jacqueline, and Tommy, or even more accurately, of the secular trinity of the past, present, and future. The concept of containment presented through the circle or wheel is once again fundamental to Lowry's work. Whether within a shell-like house, a bus, a bar, or a ferry, (at one point Lowry toyed with the idea of bringing the bus onto the ferry!) Ethan is continually enclosed within the circle of his own consciousness. The first part of the book with its three time loops operates like a Dunnian serial universe where time dimensions intersect and Ethan's visions of life on Gabriola are prefigurations of the future.

The wheel and circle are as profoundly ambivalent in October Ferry as in all of Lowry's works. References to Ixion (St. Catharine's College, Cambridge) where Peter died appear frequently, but the wheel

*The emphasis is mine. In a typescript of this passage Lowry has a marginal note paraphrasing Achad:

> "NB An image Kether is then the Junction of these two Infinites, that particularly represents the concentration of the Light to a point on its way to the Infinitely Small, while Malkuth, - the 10th Sephira & Sphere of the elements - which the Cabbalists say is one with Kether - is the substance which is ever expanding, &, so to speak, gradually filling up the nothingness of the Ain-Suph-Aur (Limitless Light of Chaos)"[sic].

in its negative guise appears most powerfully in chapter XXVIII, "Wheel of Fire." The "wheel of fire" refers, of course, to King Lear where it symbolizes an Ixion-like torture:

> You do wrong to take me out o' th' grave
> Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
> Do scald like molten lead.

Ethan, like Lear, must continue to suffer.

Wheels and circles exist on every side - Nanaimo is laid out "like the spokes of a wheel" and as the bus follows a hearse leaving a Catholic church a Latin phrase (probably from a tombstone) catches the eye: "Circum ipsam autem libamina omnibus mortuis" (230). The wheel symbolism reaches its climax at the end of the chapter as Ethan overhears a conversation between two old men, a conversation "addressed mysteriously to Ethan himself; and [. . .] almost every phrase had another meaning, perhaps many meanings, intended for his ears alone" (231). One of the men describes how a blacksmith makes huge coach wheels:

> "- well, they shrink them on. Now the wheelwright has delivered the wheel to the blacksmith, and the blacksmith builds a ring of fire [. . .] now they have the iron welded together and they put it in the fire [. . .]. Then, when it's ready the blacksmith with his two helpers, they take it out of the fire with tongs, and they force it over the edge of the wooden wheel, and then it smokes something awful, it damn nearly sets fire to the wheel. So then they run like mad pouring water on it. Now you understand it has swelled in the fire, and now it shrinks quickly, and now it has clasped the wheel forever - " (232)

"Clasped the wheel forever" develops into a refrain which haunts Ethan through the second part of the book (pages 236 and 282). This image of the iron wheel captures, with terrifying force, the stasis and containment of Ethan's mind which has been relentlessly clasped by the past. The burning wheel, reminiscent of Blake's tiger, also suggests plunging of the spirit into the moulding fires of experience. Significantly, the blacksmith builds a "ring of fire" in order to temper the iron. Ethan himself has been plagued by a "ring of fire" at several points in his past life; advertisements for Mother Gettle's soup seem "ringed with hellfire" (47), and the fires in Niagara-on-the-Lake spring up around the Llewelyns so that they are surrounded by an actual "ring of fire" (118). Ethan Llewelyn (strength unknown)

is being tempered* in the fires of his ordeal which, if they do not destroy him first, will shape him into a better man.

As Ethan moves into the future in part three of the book, the circle is transformed from a searing static enclosure to a symbol of movement and life. The gliding, "free-wheeling" ferry with the seagulls circling overhead and "great whirlpools and whorls like sea-shells" (299) in the water beneath, the ferry with its circular lounge and wheelhouse in which the skipper twirls the wheel (297), transcribes one last complete circle before finally heading out to Gabriola. This last circle, superficially so full of despair, brings the ferry back to Nanaimo where Ethan learns of the Eridanus reprieve. He realizes that the day's "multiplicity of signs," indeed the disasters, events, coincidences of his entire life, were full of an interrelated significance that contained this moment. Ethan has overcome the,

> extremity of motion that was no motion, where past and future were held suspended, and one began thinking of treadmills. (53)

He has overcome his fear of change by obeying the Cabbalist command to "fear not CHANGE, but embrace it with open arms for all change is of the nature of love . . . ."[8] The "free-wheeling" ferry is once again outward bound: "Beginning: beginning again· beginning yet again" (322).

October Ferry to Gabriola is not as perfect a book as Under the Volcano. It is not as polished and inter-welded, but then it is not finished. Some minor inconsistencies exist such as in the name of the boy accused of murder and in the wine that becomes gin once Ethan is on the ferry. The son Tommy is unsatisfactorily dismissed so that one wonders why, apart from the trinity symbolism, he exists at all. These slips are unimportant, however, when compared with the incomplete portrait of Ethan himself. Lowry had planned to develop Ethan, especially with regard to the reasons for his professional retreat, and the more recently discovered working notes for the novel contain many attempts to expand upon Ethan's drinking problem and his disillusionment with the law.[9] More thorough exposition of Ethan's despair

*The verb 'temper' has many meanings: to moderate or mitigate; to work into a proper consistency; to impart strength or hardness by heating and quenching (metallurgy). All senses of the word apply well to Ethan's ordeal.

would have lent him greater credibility; it is hard to believe in Ethan's agony as like Lear's, especially after the tragic disintegration of Geoffrey Firmin. The working notes also include long passages on the Cabbala, and Lowry, who was planning to expand the character of the McCandless, may have intended to incorporate more of the Cabbala into the portrait of Jacqueline's magician father. In any case, the additions were never made and speculation is useless.

As Lowry pointed out in the unpublished letter to Erskine, October Ferry does not "fall into any particular category or obey any of the normal rules of a novel" (Appendix II, page 168). His use of pattern and motif, and his idea that the first part of the book would suggest that Ethan's thoughts were caught in a rising tide of past despair, reinforce the unique nature of this lyrical work.[10] October Ferry resembles Wordsworth's Prelude in the sense that it explores the growth of perception in a highly sensitive individual through the intensely personal reliving of past experience. The book takes place almost entirely within Ethan Llewelyn's mind, in a world of internal time-past that rises like the tides against the bulwarks of mechanical clock time. There is little Wordsworthian tranquillity in October Ferry, but Ethan does achieve a point of temporary rest and insight; the tide that threatens to overwhelm the mind, destroying all hope of present and future, subsides. As in "The Forest Path to the Spring," "the characters journey toward their own recovery."

October Ferry, despite weaknesses, is a successful book in its own right. The intricate tripartite structure with its temporal involutions and complex motifs creates the powerful tension of withdrawal and return, of stasis and motion. Lowry succeeds wonderfully in his portrayal of eviction and quest with Ethan learning that he must leave his past in order to embrace the future. As the McCandless points out in his telegram to the Llewelyns after the burning of the Barkerville Arms:

> GREATEST COMMISERATION ON YOUR LOSS BUT CONSIDER SOCALLED DISASTER CAN BE BEST POSSIBLE THING FOR YOU BOTH STOP I TOLD YOU LONG AGO WHAT PERILS CAN LURK AT THAT GATE OF UNCHANGE . . . (95)

Stasis is the greatest danger to a Lowry protagonist; only action, motion, movement in time and space, is life. Lowry emphasizes the

importance of the October Ferry search in a fascinating marginal note to a draft of Ethan's final vision of the meteors:

"it must be firmly planted in the drang of the situation and the reader's mind far more than ever THEIR NEED for a house they can really call their own, for even if you feel they're not going to get one perhaps, it is on this continued search that the pathos and drama of the situation depends. -"

Not a very comforting proviso, perhaps, but for Lowry it is not the finding but the searching that is important and October Ferry ends with a sense of movement and expectation; Ethan, balance restored, is now ready to resume his multilevelled voyage into the future.

October Ferry to Gabriola is a triumphant and integral member of the Voyage cycle. In the unpublished letter to Erskine (see Appendix II), Lowry leaves no doubt as to October Ferry's role: "The end is thus a kind of Volcano in reverse and the final theme Faustian, with everything from flights of angels, balls of fire, and Madonnas, to the intervention of grace and the Himmelphart"[sic].* With October Ferry to Gabriola the Lowry voyager escapes (for the moment) the enclosing static circle of self, of perception, of the past, of exile; the luminous wheel moves bringing faith, life, and balance:

> Voyage, the homeward-outward-bound voyage; everybody was on such a voyage, the Ocean Spray, Gabriola, themselves, the barman, the sun, the reflections, the stacked glasses, even the light, the sea outside, now due to an accident of sun and dislimning cloud looking like a luminosity between two darknesses, a space between two immensities, was on such a voyage, to the junction of the two infinities, where it would set out on its way again, had already set out, toward the infinitely small, itself already expanding before you had thought of it, to replenish the limitless light of Chaos - (252).

*Lowry's reference here is to the end of Goethe's Faust. His words, however, are a paraphrase from Santayana's Three Philosophical Poets (Cambridge, 1927), p. 193. Lowry knew Santayana's book well (see Appendix II, p.170) and Santayana's interpretation of Faust as well as his theory of the romantic journey influenced Lowry's voyage concept.

NOTES: CHAPTER VI

[1] Critics have been reluctant to accept the work as it stands. Consequently, October Ferry has been overlooked and much of the essential groundwork is undone. The novel has not yet been subjected to the kind of scrutiny which has opened up Under the Volcano - the themes, allusions, myths, literary parallels, etc., remain unexplored. For the studies of October Ferry to date, see Corrigan, Harrison, Kilgallin, and New, in the bibliography.

[2] For a more complete discussion of the history of October Ferry, see Tony Kilgallin, "The Long Voyage Home," in Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work.

[3] New's analysis of October Ferry is included in Articulating West (Toronto, 1972). In "Death in Life: Neo-Platonic Elements in 'Through the Panama'," Geoffrey Durrant sees another of Lowry's voyages as based upon the neo-Platonic myth of the soul's journey through the world of matter on its way back to God. The parallel is interesting for October Ferry and "Through the Panama," but one crucial distinction must be made: unlike the neo-Platonists, for Lowry the final timeless goal is not important; it is the voyage which is of value.

[4] Charles Stansfeld-Jones (Frater Achad), Q.B.L. or The Bride's Reception (New York, 1972), pp. 8-9.

[5] E. Temple Thurston, The Wandering Jew (London, 1920).

[6] Sutton Vane, Outward Bound (New York, 1924), p. 63. Further references are included in the text.

[7] King Lear, The Kittredge Shakespeares (1968), p. 124.

[8] Q.B.L., p. 100.

[9] There are three boxes (nos. 19, 20, 21) of Lowry MSS at the University of British Columbia that were received from Harold Matson in the spring of 1973. As yet the material is unsorted so that any statements concerning it must be tentative.

[10] In his study of the "lyrical novel," Ralph Freedman describes such novels as emphasizing formal design instead of event and employing passive characters who mirror a world perceived solipsistically. In addition, the "lyrical novel" usually creates a strong sense of spatial form; details, images, etc., are presented in juxtaposition in order to be perceived as a poetic whole. The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hesse, Gide, and Woolf (Princeton University Press, 1963). October Ferry conforms to Freedman's description of a "lyrical novel" in some ways but Lowry does not aim at presenting a timeless static poetic unit in his work. As with any effort to categorize Lowry's writing, the term "lyrical" must be applied to October Ferry with restraint.

CHAPTER VII

Symbols of Tenuous Order

> Schoolbells toll from the invisible coast wise railway
> across the bay;
> And other sounds, diatonic, of fog; a muffled cosmopolitan
> hum.
> Other bells & explosions strike on the rail:
> Gone too: circles of water spread; spider's web, like frosted
> Symbols of tenuous order, the same order as the circles of
> water:
> The fog comes rolling in before the sun that will drive it
> away again.
> And behind, the huge green trees, guard the little house with
> friendly arms of benediction.
> And in this paradise, one loves, swims, eats & works
> And pays nothing, save in tribute to God, ordering past
> suffering.*

Hear us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place is a miniature Voyage That Never Ends, a paradigm or reflection of Lowry's great masterwork. For this reason, as well as for the fact that individual stories bear important relations to the Voyage novels, Hear us O Lord provides an excellent summary of Lowry's work. This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to discuss the individual stories in terms of Lowry's constant concerns - the protagonist's search for identity, the voyage of withdrawal and return, and finally Lowry's "symbols of tenuous order." The order envisioned in the book is "tenuous" in two senses: Lowry's life ended in miserable disorder just as he was finishing Hear us O Lord (for that matter, the greater part of his life was spent exploring disorder); more important for his art, Lowry believed that moments of order and balance must be followed by collapse and despair. By concluding this study of Lowry's art with Hear us O Lord, I do not wish to imply that order has been reached, that the voyage is over; even "The Forest Path to the Spring," written in the past tense, is predicated upon the continuation of the voyage.

Sometime in 1950 Lowry began work on the stories in Hear us O Lord. By November he had plans for seven stories, including "October Ferry to Gabriola," but some of them were dropped as he developed his idea of closely inter-related stories (Selected Letters, 216). By 1951 the book had taken clearer shape and, according to his Work in Progress statement, Hear us O Lord, along with poems and a play, was to be

*This is a fragment of a poem from the notes for "Present Estate of Pompeii." Lowry wrote out the basic ideas for Hear us O Lord in poetry before expanding them into prose.

incorporated into Eridanus in The Voyage That Never Ends[1]; furthermore, the last of the eight sections of "Forest Path" was to "serve as the coda to the whole Voyage That Never Ends cycle." Of course, this plan was never realized and Hear us O Lord was published with "Lowry's final revisions," by Margerie in 1961 when it won the Governor General's Award for fiction.[2]

Hear us O Lord has been sharply criticized for lack of "vitality"[3]; there is very little sense of plot in the stories and the chief protagonist, while bearing the same name in three of the stories, differs from story to story. Judging by his comments in his letters, however, Lowry did not aim to write a conventional collection of short stories:

> Hear us O Lord - with its 12 chapters - would be, if done aright, less a book of short stories than - God help us - yet another kind of novel: a kind of - often far less serious, often much more so - Volcano in reverse, with a triumphant ending, but ending (after "The Forest Path") in the same way, with the words Le Gusta Este Jardin, etc.
>
> (Selected Letters, 338)

As early as 1940 Lowry had been considering the possibilities of the short story and he wrote to Jimmy Stern;

> It is possible to compose a satisfactory work of art by the simple process of writing a series of good short stories, complete in themselves, with the same characters, interrelated, correlated, . . . full of effects and dissonances that are impossible in a short story . . . .
>
> (Selected Letters, 28)

Hear us O Lord is his "another kind of novel," for it is interrelated and correlated through theme and motif, while the characters, as William New suggests, are masks for Lowry, who is in the process of becoming "his own protagonist."[4]

Hear us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place (the title coming from the Manx fisherman's hymn that runs through the book), consists of seven stories that comprise a voyage of the narrator from British Columbia to Europe and home again. The identity of the narrator and the significance of the voyage are the interrelated subjects of the book. Three of the stories are set in British Columbia, three in Italy, and one, "Through the Panama," carries the protagonist from Canada to Europe. Each story connects with its companions via the many motifs repeated throughout the book in "an assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another -"(98). Many of the motifs, for example "outward bound" and "Frère Jacques," echo and recall the major novels.

The stories portray the evolution of 'the protagonist' from a

position of hellish stasis and confusion to a position of wisdom and balance by a process "less of accumulating than of divesting oneself - by arrangement, balancing them against their opposites - of unbalanced ideas" (October Ferry, 169). Each of the stories explores, in turn, an aspect of the voyage: "Through the Panama," embodying frequent references to Under the Volcano, is the abyss; "Forest Path," repeating once more the entire circle through hell and purgatory, is the vision of paradise or moment of achieved balance. Each of the stories repeats with variations (like the canon Frère Jacques) the movement of withdrawal and return. The stories are one cycle of the never-ending voyage complete with false starts, repeated explorations of the past, and final recapitulation of the entire process. They are, finally, an epistemological exercise in which Lowry arrives at a knowledge of reality and himself.

The protean protagonist is crucial to an understanding of Lowry's purpose in Hear us O Lord and, together with Dark as the Grave, the stories offer the clearest insight into Lowry's concept of the narrator/protagonist of the entire Voyage cycle. There are five different protagonists in Hear us O Lord: Sigurd Storlesen in "The Bravest Boat," Kennish Drumgold Cosnahan in "Elephant and Colosseum," Roderick Mc Gregor Fairhaven in "Present Estate of Pompeii," the nameless first person narrator of "Forest Path," and Sigbjørn Wilderness.* Wilderness is the key protagonist for both Hear us O Lord and the Voyage which was to be contained by The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness, parts I and II (see Chapter I, page 2). Wilderness is the author of Under the Volcano (see Chapter V, page 99), the voyager in Dark as the Grave, a writer being written in "Through the Panama," an "American writer in Rome on a Guggenheim Fellowship" (99) in "Strange Comfort" and a drunk in "Gin and Goldenrod." He is, of course, Lowry's chief persona or mask. Describing the "real protagonist of the Voyage" in his letters as "not so much a man or a writer as the unconscious," Lowry goes on to say that Wilderness is not, in the ordinary sense in which one encounters novelists or the author in novels, a novelist. He simply does not

*Sigbjørn in Norwegian means "self Bear," the "Ursus Horribilis" of "The Bravest Boat" (20) and the constellation. Probably Lowry was interested in the puns contained in the name; Sigbjørn must learn to bear with himself. The name also sounds like "sea-borne." Wilderness refers to the wilderness -paradise of Eridanus or equally to the possibilities of becoming lost in the wilderness. In "Gin and Goldenrod," Wilderness knows that the "conquering of wilderness, whether in fact or in his mind was part of his own process of self-determination" (205).

know what he is. He is a sort of underground man. Also he is Ortega's fellow, making up his life as he goes along, and trying to find his vocation . . . . According to Ortega, the best image for man himself is a novelist, and it is in this way that I'd prefer you to look at him . . . . Moreover he is disinterested in literature, uncultured, incredibly unobservant, in many respects ignorant, without faith in himself, and lacking nearly all the qualities you normally associate with a novelist or writer . . . .His very methods of writing are absurd and he sees practically nothing at all, save through his wife's eyes, though he gradually comes to see. I believe I can make him a very original character, both human and pathetically inhuman at once. I much approve of him as a doppelgänger . . . .

(Selected Letters, 332)

Sigbjørn Wilderness, for the purpose of Lowry's fiction, does not know who or what he is; in "Through the Panama" he asks," - Who am I? -" (47). Lowry hoped that, for the reader, Wilderness would also represent mankind in the Jungian journey over the sea of the unconscious. Either way, as confused individual or universal archetype, in Hear us O Lord and the Voyage he is Ortega's man in the process of creating (as opposed to finding) his identity through the creation of masks. The "I" of "Forest Path" is, then, Sigbjørn Wilderness who contains or reflects all the other protagonists.[5] Lowry found support for this concept of the multiple "I" in the process of self-creation not only in Ortega whom he discovered late in his life, but also in Ouspensky's theory of repeated incarnations, and in the serial theories of Dunne with whom he was familiar from his twenties. According to Dunne, a serial universe necessitates a serial observer who consists of an infinite number of observers each one containing or contained by observers on other time levels.

The various protagonists in Hear us O Lord, as in The Voyage That Never Ends, represent aspects of the chief protagonist Sigbjørn Wilderness or, perhaps more accurately, levels of consciousness of this protagonist. In themselves, the subsidiary protagonists are not rounded characters (Lowry was not interested in creating such characters), but fragments, usually the projections of obsessions, weaknesses, fears, experiences, and sins, of the main protagonist which must be understood before he is free to journey on. As Dana says toward the end of Ultramarine:

I have identification with Andy: I am Andy. I regard it all now with sanity and detachment. But I have outgrown Andy. Mentally, I have surrounded Andy's position [. . .] .

Andy symbolizes the fearful world of experience and, by surrounding

Andy's position (a circle in its positive guise), Dana is able to evolve, to move on.

The most important feature of Lowry's concept of self-creation is its constant change.* By creating various masks the individual consciousness is expanding, or to use Ouspensky's term, evolving. These masks – for Lowry, the various protagonists in his novels - are not simply discarded, but understood and transcended in the constantly evolving identity of their creator. In a sense, the writer (or man) must repeatedly withdraw into a new protagonist and then return to a self which, if the voyage is a success, has evolved in the process. The ambiguity and danger of this aspect of withdrawal and return fascinated Lowry. In Geoffrey Firmin's crippling failure to distinguish subject from object, in Dark as the Grave and "Through the Panama," he deliberately elaborates the horror of a failure of this withdrawal and return; the Consul loses any sense of identity to which he can return – he loses himself.

In Hear us O Lord, as in the Voyage, the subject is Lowry's great theme of withdrawal and return. During the voyage from West to South to North-East and finally, completing the geographical circle, West again, the characters explore the horrors of hell, wrestle with the past, sink into despair, and finally surface to a position of happiness and balance. As the last line of "The Bravest Boat" suggests, these are "the storms they had come through"(27). Lowry's emphatic use of the pluperfect tense here serves two functions: it indicates that the stories following "The Bravest Boat" are from a fictional past, and, completing the circle into the fictional present which is picked up again in "Forest Path," it suggests that the Lowry protagonist has moved on into a future from which he is looking back upon the cycle of experience portrayed in the stories. He is creating another circle into the future through the writing of these stories.

"The Bravest Boat" functions as an overture to Hear us O Lord

*Cosnahan, the surname of the protagonist in "Elephant and Colosseum," is interesting in this connection. The name does not appear in dictionaries of names or in major telephone directories, suggesting that Lowry made it up. Following the Gaelic connection – Cosnahan is from the Isle of Man (another Lowry pun) and speaks Manx Gaelic – the name means little or son of (han), cabbage, wood or cozzner (cos). Cosnahan, with his divining powers, is a son of the wood and, most importantly, a little cheat or confidence man constantly changing shape.

introducing and reflecting the themes, motifs, and images that are to follow. The story portrays the sea-shore walk of a couple, Sigurd Storlesen (uproarious laughter) and his wife Astrid (star), as they commemorate their meeting seven years earlier. They were originally brought together by Astrid's discovery of the toy balsa wood boat that young Sigurd had set afloat twelve years before. In this modern world where the rituals of Tammuz have degenerated to hypnotism (18), man must create his own sacred rites. For Lowry, a believer in the magic power of language and the significance of coincidence, the occasion for celebration in "The Bravest Boat" is the wedding anniversary of this couple so mysteriously brought together. Their ritual is the repetition, "almost like an incantation" (25), of the events leading up to their meeting; this magic chant illustrates a way of ordering and using the past creatively. The rest of Hear us O Lord is just such a reliving and ordering of the past.

The musical analogy implicit in calling "The Bravest Boat" an overture is deliberate. Musical parallels were important to Lowry whose protagonist in "The Forest Path to the Spring" is a jazz musician versed in Schoenberg and Alban Berg's Wozzeck, and writing an opera entitled "Forest Path to the Spring." The "demonic orchestras" of Under the Volcano are overcome in Hear us O Lord where Poe's "Descent Into the Maelstrom" (recalling Lunar Caustic and October Ferry) becomes a jazz composition called "Swinging the Maelstrom"(250). The most significant of the many songs repeated throughout Lowry's work is Frère Jacques, the simple canon recalling Jacques Laruelle and imitating the sound of a ship's engines. In an intermediate draft of "Through the Panama," Lowry explains that Frère Jacques,

> represents finally the oneness of the universe itself: what Swedenborg called a sound like 'one . . . one . . .,' Plato, the Music of the Spheres. A simple little tune sung by children, with infinite variations, because the children grow up.

Lowry hoped to capture the rhythm and unity of the universe by applying what he called, the "canon form" of Frère Jacques to his work so that the stories in Hear us O Lord repeat with variations the themes in "The Bravest Boat." Hear us O Lord as a whole repeats over and over the rhythm of withdrawal and return in The Voyage That Never Ends. The motifs, basically a musical device, even the words (for example, "mirror" or "reflection" or "Pleiades" from "The Bravest

Boat"), recur like musical phrases and notes.* The scale announcing "Your weight and your destiny" (14 and 15) echoes October Ferry, while Chaucer's "contrary winds" (22) recall both Dark as the Grave and October Ferry. The "giant pinnacles, images of barrenness and desolation, upon which the heart is thrown and impaled eternally" (22), while recurring in "Through the Panama" (32), inevitably recall Geoffrey's Popocatapetl in Under the Volcano. In short, the motifs reinforce the unity of the book, heighten similarities among different stories, and forge links between Hear us O Lord and the rest of Lowry's work.

The most important and beautiful passage in "The Bravest Boat" is the narrator's description of the trials encountered by the little boat forced to begin its twelve-year voyage again and again:

> Ah, its absolute loneliness amid those wastes, those wildernesses, of rough rainy seas bereft even of sea birds, between contrary winds, or in the great dead windless swell that comes following a gale; and then with the wind springing up and blowing the spray across the sea like rain, like a vision of creation, blowing the little boat as it climbed the highlands into the skies, [. . .] and then sank down into the abyss, but already was climbing again, while the whole sea crested with foam like lamb's wool went furling off to leeward, the whole vast moon-driven expanse like the pastures and valleys and snow-capped ranges of a Sierra Madre in delirium, in ceaseless motion, rising and falling and the little boat rising, and falling into a paralysing sea of white drifting fire and smoking spume by which it seemed overwhelmed: and all this time a sound, like a high sound of singing [. . .] as again the boat slanted onward [. . .]. (22)**

Not only does Lowry establish here the background to "The Bravest Boat," but the punctuation and the rhythm of the passage capture the sensation of ceaseless, incremental withdrawal and return fundamental to Lowry's aesthetic and metaphysic. Time and space as flow and stasis are carefully counterpointed; the stasis of "the great dead

*The references to Schoenberg and Berg suggest that Lowry was aware of the twelve tone technique developed by Schoenberg and popularly called "serial music." The very names "twelve tone" and "serial" would be sufficient to intrigue his correspondence orientated imagination. Whether he applied the principle of twelve tone technique (the arbitrary arrangement of twelve tones in a series which may be repeated only after the entire series has been used) in his writing is unlikely, but the concept of repeated series is, of course, basic to his thought. See also, Selected Letters, 265.

**The emphasis is mine.

windless swell" gives way to "ceaseless motion" and again to "a paralysing sea." The "abyss" of Under the Volcano becomes the "fire" of October Ferry while ever present is the "vision of creation" ("Through the Panama," 74) and "a high sound of singing" ("The Forest Path," 274)* which serve as constant reminders of the significance and beauty of universal motion; hell and heaven are perceived one within the other.

In "Through the Panama," the voyage proper begins with Sigbjørn Wilderness' exploration of hell. "Through the Panama," constantly echoing Under the Volcano, depicts a multi-faceted hell consisting of the southward journey to the infernal region of Mexico [6] and the static containment of the ship in the locks. The journey and the locks symbolize the withdrawal and descent of the protagonist within the abyss of self and, more serious, the loss of identity of the writer emmeshed in his own book.

"Through the Panama" consists of the journal entries of the writer, Sigbjørn Wilderness, during a passage from Vancouver south to Panama and east to Europe. During the voyage, Wilderness, plagued by vague guilt, hatred, suspicion, sinister coincidences (a fellow passenger is called Charon) and tormented by the threat of separation from his wife Primrose on the increasingly crowded boat, sinks deeper and deeper into despair. His days are spent longing for the next aperitif and writing fragments for a novel about a novelist, Martin Trumbaugh, who becomes emmeshed in his own novel. By the time the boat encounters a dreadful storm in mid-Atlantic, the journal entries no longer distinguish between Sigbjørn and his character or between inner and outer reality.

Lowry's narrative techniques, in particular the journal and the gloss from The Ancient Mariner, create a temporal dislocation that reinforces the hellish stasis of the story. The journal with its precisely dated entries serves as a reminder that calendar time is passing, but this relentless march of time becomes ultimately meaningless as the entries increasingly involve the subjective world of Sigbjørn's

*The image is from Aiken's Blue Voyage and neatly capsulizes the importance of movement in space: "And from the whole world, as it revolved through space, came a sound of singing."

novel and Sigbjørn/Martin's reflections on shipwreck. The more Sigbjørn withdraws into his private world and his novel, the more the temporal sequence becomes distorted and utterly useless as a gauge for external reality; in this inner timeless world, position reports and dates are irrelevant. The gloss from The Ancient Mariner has two important functions. It breaks up the page spatially, forcing the reader to abandon the customary temporal reading sequence, and it reinforces the interpretation of stasis as Hell. Coleridge's Mariner, who on one level symbolizes the Lowryean protagonist obliged to retell and relive his tale, is trapped in "his loneliness and fixedness" just as Sigbjørn/Martin is caught within "The fixity of the closed order" of perception which is "death in short" (38). This "death-in-life" will only give way after the sinner perceives the beauty of life and allows his soul to flow outwards in blessing; in other words, Sigbjørn, like the Mariner, must overcome the destructive bounds of self. At this point in the story the gloss reminds the reader that motion is salvation for the Mariner "yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward" (38).

The long passages of paraphrase from Helen Nicolay's The Bridge of Water, also typographically juxtaposed with the main narrative, contibute further to the dislocation of time. The distinctions between the historical account of the Panama Canal and Sigbjørn's agonized reflections become blurred; external, factual reality merges with internal, felt reality as Sigbjørn reads the book, until the former gives way to the latter. The juxtaposition of historical past with personal present undercuts all sense of temporal reality; time stands still on the space of the page. As Martin/Sigbjørn notes, only ships passing in the opposite direction are in the Bergsonian flow of time: "Another ship from London, all going the other way steaming very swiftly as with current. (Bergson.)" (59).

The containment and stasis of the locks symbolize many things to Sigbjørn. The Panama Canal is "something like a novel - in fact just such a novel as I, Sigbjørn Wilderness [. . .] might have written myself - " (62). Sigbjørn, trapped within his novel about a novelist, is "Ortega's man" writing his life as he goes along. The horrifying thought is that, perhaps, Sigbjørn is only a character in someone else's

novel of life and so on ad infinitum. The "celestial meccano" of the locks represents the containing layers of Sigbjørn's consciousness; the mind, as well as the external reality of the canal, is modelled upon Dunne's serial universe with a series of observers each sitting in control over a lesser observer. Worse still, past, present, and future seem to be fixed and static within this serial universe where the "superlative general observer"[7] sitting "in his invisible control tower [. . .] is able to see everything that is happening to me at every moment - and worse, everything that is going to happen -" (61).

The climax of the story occurs "Beyond and astern of time" (80) during a terrifying "STORM OVER ATLANTIS" (82) which threatens to destroy the ship. Both time and space are meaningless terms - unless one can salvage some hope from the 'fact' that the ship is over the lost apocryphal city of Atlantis! Sigbjørn is Martin, position reports are pointless, and crew and passengers are awake day and night in the struggle to stay alive. The dilemma of the ship, caught "Amid the sea, betwexen windes two" (87) and steering "by dead reckoning" (89), parallels the Sigbjørn-Martin dilemma; as Sigbjørn notes, Martin "could not make anything move" (86). Wheels are utterly useless in this "descent into the maelstrom" (90) where everyone is isolated from everyone else:

> -Martin took his ignorance of the nature of the crisis to heart, telling himself that it was because these Liberty ships were not like the old ships where you could see what was going on, that there was an almost Kafka-like occlusion, everything closed, ghastly [. . .]; but no matter what he told himself, it seemed all part and parcel of his wider isolation, and in fact like the ultimate ordeal of - (92)

The "ultimate ordeal" of "occlusion" (or death) is the descent into hell which, for Lowry, is always symbolized by containment, timelessness, and stasis.

"Through the Panama" has the most emphatically circular form of all the stories in Hear us O Lord. The circle, however, is not as tightly closed as in Under the Volcano, for Sigbjørn, like the Mariner, has his "vision of creation" and is able to bless. The ceinture around the boat, a beneficent circle, has brought the ship through the storm, and the engines no longer sing "lamentina [. . .] doom doom doom" (35). "Through the Panama" explores the hell of timelessness and loss of identity but, as the title suggests, the ship comes "through."

As in The Voyage That Never Ends, the protagonist is not finally trapped but voyages on. The circle is magic and, depending on one's perception, can destroy or create, enclose or revolve "through space."

The next three stories in Hear us O Lord, "Strange Comfort Afforded by the Profession," "Elephant and Colosseum," and "Present Estate of Pompeii," develop the significance of the past – literary, personal, and historical. In "Strange Comfort" the past exists as both torment and comfort. The lonely protagonist, Sigbjørn Wilderness, a writer in Rome on a Guggenheim Fellowship, visits Keats' house and then retreats to a bar. There, meditating on the merciless display of the dead poet's letters, he studies his notebook only to discover notes made years before while visiting Poe's house and a draft of a letter from his own past in which he pleaded for help. These two entries disturb him because he had thought the notebook to be empty of any "destructive stoop, from the past" (110).

Two refrains running through the story clarify the meaning of the past. In his visit to Rome's Mamertine Prison, Wilderness had recorded in his notebook that "The lower is the true prison" (103). Likewise the draft letter is "from absolutely the lowest ebb of those low tides of his life" – the past is, then, the lower and true prison. The past as prison is torment but the past represented by his notes on Poe also brings comfort – the strange comfort afforded by the literary profession. The second refrain, "descent into the maelstrom," is destined to become "Swinging the Maelstrom," while the knowledge that he is one of a long line of literary sufferers like Poe – "And many others"* (103 and 109) – brings a kind of relief. The story ends with an ambiguous cough-laugh as Sigbjørn realizes that the coincidence of finding his old letter has led him to a fuller realization of his affinity with Keats and Poe. In a sense he is continuing in the law of series by repeating the artist's ordeal.

"Elephant and Colosseum," together with "Through the Panama" and "The Forest Path to the Spring," is crucial to the voyage theme of

*The many others, besides Poe and Keats, include Shelley, Gogol, Mann, Proust, Eliot, Joyce, Hemingway and Fitzgerald: "Fitzgerald in Forum. Eliot in Colosseum!"(103); just one of the many subterranean links between stories. Henryk Sienkiewicz appears in the references to Nero (103). Sienkiewicz' novel Quo Vadis about Nero is mentioned in "Through the Panama" and Under the Volcano.

Hear us O Lord. Here the withdrawal into the past yields insight into the coincidences and recurrence, which indicate the significance of life and lead to faith and rebirth. Once again the Lowry protagonist, this time Kennish Drumgold Cosnahan, an American writer of Manx origins with vague magical powers, and author of Ark from Singapore (a book reminiscent of Ultramarine) sits alone at a trattoria in Rome. He is in Rome primarily to contact the Italian translators of his book. As he sits in the restaurant, terrified by the traffic, unable to move or write, he catches sight of his face reflected in the window and of his photograph on the back of his book. Neither of these images of his face nor the biographical blurb on the book's dust jacket reassures him of his identity. To the contrary:

> Reading these later eulogies produced in Cosnahan a bizarre mental commotion as of some endless mirrored reduplication [. . .] for a moment he felt like an eternal writer eternally sitting in the eternal city, eternally reading precisely the same sort of notices [. . .]. (119)

This sense of lost identity, intensified by his immobility, merges with a loss of the sense of time; time stands still in the eternal city and as Cosnahan's memories grow, the present reality of Rome fades.

Finally, disturbed by the waiter, Cosnahan rises to begin his long "circumambient operation" of crossing frenzied streets such as the "circolare Sinistra" in order to meet his publisher. His fear of crossing streets is significant. As in Dark as the Grave where the phenomenon of crossing borders symbolized the movement of the protagonist from one level of consciousness or sphere of reality to another, "Elephant and Colosseum" is primarily about the "translation" of Cosnahan's consciousness across the frenzied barriers of memory and of immediate reality: "the very word 'translated' had a mystical tinge to him" (136).*

Rome, the eternal city of crossroads where one is sure to come across someone (or something) one knows, is the ideal setting for Cosnahan's "translation." Once again Lowry is employing his concept of space, here the space of city streets, as a boundary which must be

*Typically, Lowry has used a word with a wide range of meanings. In addition to its literary significance, "to translate" means to interpret, to transform the nature of, to move from one place to another, to exalt, or enrapture, and to convey to heaven without natural death.

crossed if life is to have value. Seen positively, spatial boundaries are points of intersection, but one must have courage to cross these "awful and dangerous" (148) roads. For Cosnahan this is a major ordeal; consequently, during his walk, he escapes immediate horrors by withdrawing into "contra-Proustian reveries" (151) - his past is "contra-Proustian" because for Lowry and each of his protagonists the past is the least difficult temporal dimension to recapture! When he finally arrives at the publisher's office, Cosnahan learns that he is unknown there, that his book is not being translated there, and that he is likely in the wrong city. However, if the book is not translated in Rome, Cosnahan is, and he makes his way to the Rome zoo, where his "anagnorisis" (167) awaits him in the form of Rosemary, the elephant heroine of his book.

Cosnahan's meeting with Rosemary is crucial in many ways to both the voyage concept and the Lowryean protagonist. Rosemary provides testimony of Cosnahan's identity; she recognizes and remembers him. In a sense Rosemary provides external validation of a Cosnahan who exists in the present. Furthermore, the coincidence of meeting Rosemary indicates the importance of recurrence in temporal phenomena: "Naturam expellas pitch-fork, something or other recurret!" (126)* History, personal or social, moves in cycles. In the typed notes for "Elephant and Colosseum," Lowry explained that Horace's famous remark was "the main theme or motif of the story":

> The main theme of the story, thus - although an apparently light and humorous one - is to the highest degree intellectual . . . . For example, the apparition of Rosemary herself is an example of nature coming back again (and indeed in the zoo scene we even have the image of the pitchfork). The ancient idea of eternal recurrence which is the form of the story is another example. [sic]

As in all his work, Lowry fuses form and theme of this story into a narrative structure embodying a complex metaphysical concept in its perfect symbolic counterpart. The form of the story is a beneficent circle; Cosnahan, in his walk around Rome transcribes a circle through space while, by meeting Rosemary, he completes a temporal circle as well: "and so his earlier train of thought, like Cosnahan himself

*Lowry's notes for "Elephant and Colosseum" show that he gleaned this quotation from Arnold Toynbee's "Russia's Byzantine Empire," Horizon, XVI (August, 1947), p. 82. The Latin phrase, "Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret" is also a motif in October Ferry.

in his walk around Rome, came full circle - " (171).

By finding this verification of his personal identity and gaining, through the coincidental encounter with Rosemary, crucial insight into the nature of time and space, Cosnahan escapes from the Rip van Winkle stasis experienced earlier in the day. The meeting with Rosemary restores peace, love, faith in the meaning of life, and most important, his ability to write. His circular movement through time and space has led to his "translation":

> . . . Indeed, Cosnahan had changed himself, was aware, quite apart from the extraordinary sense of well-being he felt, of one of those changes which, fiction to the contrary, it is given to very few to remark exactly when they take place, for the good reason, he thought, that maybe they take place in sleep. And Cosnahan felt that he'd woken up. (168 - 169)

By accepting change he has himself changed and now, seated confidently at his trattoria of the morning, he finds that, "the same ceaseless traffic" has "riches and peace and grace about the flow of it" (169).

Cosnahan has escaped stasis, successfully crossing the boundaries of perception that enable him to see into the recurrent flowing nature of reality. His journey through time has culminated in the "miraculous" encounter with Rosemary that is "a little like meeting himself" (170); now, "translated - his mother's son at last - into a conscious member of the human race" (173), he knows he is one with Quayne, Quaggan, Quillish, and Illiam Dhone. His journey brings him full circle to "one of those points where life and poetry meet" (172) and he is ready to "begin again" (172).

"Present Estate of Pompeii," the third exploration of the past, is another withdrawal into despair. Although similar to "Through the Panama," this time the emphasis is less on timelessness than on the fear of time running out. The title plays upon the significance of the fact that ancient ruins persist into present time, bequeathing (estate as inheritance) their ruined condition (estate as condition in life) to future generations; Pompeii is an ominous symbol. The protagonist bears the ambiguous name of Roderick (from Poe's "chute the chute") MacGregor Fairhaven. Apparently ruin and safe-harbour (Fairhaven) co-exist within this unwilling traveller who would prefer to be in his British Columbia home on Eridanus inlet. Suffering from "a migraine of

alienation"(177), Fairhaven withdraws into the "anonymity" of trains and dark Pompeiian restaurants. His wife Tansy, however, is a born traveller who belongs in a "moving ever changing background" (178). Once again the Lowry protagonist, reflected this time " in a flawed mirror" (177), is emmeshed in the dilemma of stasis versus motion and repeatedly escapes the present reality of their guided tour through the ruined city by withdrawing into memories of Eridanus.

The past, represented by Eridanus, counterpoints the present in Pompeii, simultaneously contrasting two ways of life; to Fairhaven, the present survival of Pompeii seems more sinister than its destruction. Memories of an evening at Eridanus when he had read to his neighbours the Wildernesses from Volney's Ruin of Empires, bring the meaning of the "present estate" of Pompeii into sharp focus:

> Going through the forest that night with the bounding and whirling cat all at once it had seemed to him, as if he stood outside time altogether, that in some way these cities of Volney's had not been exactly destroyed, that the ancient populations had been reproduced and perpetuated, or rather that the whole damned thing was happening now, at this moment, continually repeating itself[. . .] . (194)[8]

Signor Salacci (salacious), their guide, interrupts these thoughts with details concerning Roman brothels and disease. A Yeats refrain, recalling "Through the Panama" and Under the Volcano, provides succinct comment: "The abomination of desolation sitting in the unholy place" (198).

In "Present Estate of Pompeii," the cycles of history – unlike the cycles of nature – appear negative and revolting. The story ends on a note of cynicism; man now, as in the past, lives in a dislocated relationship with his environment amidst an everpresent threat of ruin: "Partly it was as if man built with ruin in view . . ." (199). Life unfortunately has not changed; mankind has not been "translated." As Signor Salacci remarks of Vesuvius, "'Yesterday she give-a the beeg-a shake!'" (200); man always lives under a volcano.

"Gin and Goldenrod," although the shortest and least substantial of the stories, performs an important function within the overall voyage of Hear us O Lord. Following the withdrawal and despair of "Present Estate of Pompeii," the story charts the penitential pilgrimage of Sigbjørn Wilderness through a limbo-like motionless landscape:

> It was a warm, still sunless day in mid-August. The sky did not appear so much cloudy as merely a uniform pearly gray[. . .] . The sea, where they saw it through the motionless drooping trees, was gray too,

the bay looking like a polished metal mirror in which the reflections of the lead-gray mountains were clear and motionless. (201)

Sigbjørn's penance is truly Lowryean – almost a joke – for he is on his reluctant way to pay a bootlegger for a vast quantity of gin. Consumed by "terror, fear, distrust, anger, anguish, and a hatred" (202), due to the infernal bourgeois suburb of Dark Rosslyn which lies between his Eridanus cabin and the bootlegger's home, Sigbjørn soon discovers that he is unsure of the way; "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai in . . . "(158 and 115) seems most applicable here in this Dantean journey. Sigbjørn, lost and despairing, wants to give up the search until reminded by his wife that the journey was undertaken "to make a new start" (207). Largely due to her persistence they find the house, pay the bill, and leave.

On the way back, life appears to have been redeemed – they gather flowers, speak to a woman in her garden, and worry over an ambulance. No longer is Sigbjørn trapped in an abyss of hatred and self-absorption. Finally, the heavens move: "The rain began to fall, soft and gentle and cool, a benison" (213), prefiguring the circles of raindrops in "The Forest Path to the Spring." Primrose Wilderness confesses that one bottle of gin has survived Sigbjørn's debauch and is hidden at home; they can celebrate the successful completion of their ordeal: "In the cool silver rainy twilight of the forest a kind of hope began to bloom again" (214). This return from withdrawal, if somewhat ironic, nevertheless marks a return, "a new start." Once more, stasis is overcome and the Lowry voyager is free to move on into the cycle of "The Forest Path to the Spring."

The final story, "The Forest Path to the Spring" is Lowry's beautiful vision of paradise. It is written in eight parts, the last of which was to be the coda to The Voyage That Never Ends. Lowry believed the story to contain "some of the best things [he had] ever done" (Selected Letters, 245):

> (. . . it is a story of happiness, in fact, roughly of our life here in the forest, exultant side of) entitled "The Forest Path to the Spring." So far as I know this is the only short novel of its type that brings the kind of majesty usually reserved for tragedy . . . to bear on human integration and all that kind of thing: though it isn't my final word on the subject by a damn sight, I'm mighty proud of it.
>
> (Selected Letters, 266)

"Forest Path," the story of an ex-jazz musician's life in a beach cabin on Eridanus inlet, is an unsentimental celebration of the beauty and ferocity of nature. The plot, if it can be called such, consists of a couple's daily activities – swimming, building, boating, helping neighbours, and, most important, fetching water and finding a spring. Whether or not the story can be called a "short novel" is debatable. Douglas Day calls it, along with the other stories in Hear us O Lord, a "meditation."[9] Certainly it is yet another statement of the Lowry myth. "Forest Path" is a quest, a journey in which the nameless protagonist endures withdrawal and return, twice confronts the hell of his past, succumbs to hatred and stasis, and finally voyages on, with renewed insight, to a temporary position of harmony, balance, and wisdom.

"Forest Path" repeats and resolves the conflict in Hear us O Lord; it marks the full circle point for the voyage introduced in "The Bravest Boat" and begun in "Through the Panama." Important motifs such as "Frère Jacques" and the fisherman's hymn, "Hear us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place," even key words such as "translate," are repeated. "Forest Path" is a serial structure in which all the stories are reflected or contained. The story contains not only Hear us O Lord but, in a sense, the entire Voyage. Once again, the Lowry world of sea, ship, bells, and lighthouse (the lighthouse that invites the storm and lights it) appears in a natural setting of mysterious power. The central symbol of the story is that of the path ("Del cammin") linking Hear us O Lord with Under the Volcano, Dark as the Grave and October Ferry.* The path is Achad's Cabbalistic path in the Tree of Life and Ouspensky's Tarot path.[10] It is called the "Proteus" path in the story emphasizing its metaphysical value as

*Fascinated by the symbol of the path, Lowry describes the absence of a path in his poem "No Still Path":

> Alas, there is no still path in my soul,
> I being evil, none of memory; [. . .]
> There is no path, there is no path at all,
> Unless perhaps where abstract things have gone
> And precepts rise and metaphysics fall,
> And principles abandoned stumble on.
> No path, but as it were a river in spate
> Where drowning forms, downswept, gesticulate.
>
> (Selected Poems, 50)

a symbol of movement, change, and potential spatial flexibility:

> There has always been something preternatural about paths, and especially in forests [.] for not only folklore but poetry abounds with symbolic stories about them: paths that divide and become two paths, paths that lead to a golden kingdom, paths that lead to death, or life, paths where one meets wolves, and who knows? even mountain lions, paths where one loses one's way, paths that not merely divide but become the twenty-one paths [Achad's Cabbalistic paths] that lead back to Eden. (269)

The path in "The Forest Path to the Spring" is the road that the Lowryean voyager must travel in his multilevelled quest for the water of life and the season of rebirth. On the psychological level, the narrator must come to accept the past: "This much I understood, and had understood that as a man I had become tryannized by the past, and that it was my duty to transcend it in the present" (279). The past is like the ladder that the protagonist "salved"* from the sea:

> And I reflected: yes, and like this vermiculated old ladder, stinking with teredos and sea-worms, washed down from the saw-mill, this sodden snag, half awash when I first saw it, is the past, up and down which one's mind every night meaninglessly climbs! (261)

By making use of the past - for the ladder connects his house to the path - the narrator is able to escape the closed circle of self and distorted perception which in each of Lowry's novels becomes a static hell. Only by transforming the past, or by confronting it without fear as he does the cougar on the path, is the Lowry voyager able to create himself in the present and to believe in the future. The crucial psychological connection between a static time past and the success of the voyage is made clear towards the end of "Forest Path"; transformation of the past is the necessary first step and the goal:

> Sometimes I had the feeling I was attacking the past rationally as with a clawbar and hammer, while trying to make it into something else for a supernatural end. In a manner I changed it by changing myself and having changed it, found it necessary to pass beyond the pride I felt in my accomplishment, and to accept myself as a fool again. (280)

The success or failure of the psychological quest necessarily involves the social quest. By overcoming his withdrawal into the past, the narrator can overcome his misanthropy enabling him, unlike

*To salve means to apply a medicinal healing ointment, to soothe or assuage (conscience), to save from destruction, and the root from the Latin is a salute - another interesting Lowry word.

Geoffrey Firmin to enjoy communion with his wife and neighbours. The hatred that nearly destroys him on the path, as it had destroyed the Consul on another forest path, arises from forgetting "nature's intolerance of inertia" (229). He wants to stop the ugly encroachments of civilization and to maintain his pristine retreat from social, moral, and technological contamination, overlooking the profound truth that, "One could not make a moment permanent and perhaps the attempt to try was some form of evil" (255). Lowry tended to see all sources of conflict in terms of stasis and motion; the consuming problem of hatred that plagues the Lowry protagonist in his search for social identity should also be seen in this light. In a remarkable image of forest fire, the "Forest Path" narrator describes his agonized hatred as a flaming perversion of the tidal rhythm of the inlet:

> But the movement of the forest fire is almost like a perversion of the movement of the inlet: flames run into a stand of dry inflammable cedar, yellow flames slice them down, and watching, one thinks these flames will roll over the crest of the hill like a tidal wave. Instead, perhaps an hour later, the wind has changed, or the fire has grown too big for itself, and is now sucking in a draft that opposes its advance. So the fire doesn't sweep up the hill, but instead settles back to eat the morsels of the trees it felled during its first rush. So it seemed was this hatred behaving, turning inward and back upon myself, to devour my very self in its flames. (244)

The religious quest in Hear us O Lord, despite the use of the hymn, is not a sectarian or a simple one. The Lowry protagonist is searching for faith and meaning which he finds in nature and in virtues that are fundamentally Christian. On one hand, "Forest Path" explores a religious crisis in which the narrator, diving into the brimming tides, feels "as though [he has] been baptized afresh" (270). Eridanus is a world with church bells and a neighbour called "Kristborg," but it is also a colony of squatters' shacks perpetually under threat of eviction. Ultimately, the Lowryean paradise comprises the sunrises, tides, and mountains which the balanced mind perceives as a gift from God. The greatest insight that the narrator of the "Forest Path" achieves is that "the joy and happiness of what we had known would go with us wherever we went or God sent us and would not die"(281). Paradise, then, is a hard won state of mind sustained

by the acceptance of change, and faith in the creative power of the past. The fact that Lowry more frequently depicted the past as a hellish static abyss reveals how ambivalent, how tenuous is the moment of faith.

The quest is also an aesthetic one. The narrator's friends bring him a cottage piano because they know that he must create in order to live. In order to create he must be able to act and escape the paralysing forces of hatred, doubt, guilt and fear. Surrounded by the rhythm of the tides he realizes that what he creates, poem, prose, or jazz opera, must capture reality as does his cabin on the beach:

> It was not merely that the sunlight came in, but the very movement and rhythm of the sea, in which the reflections of trees and mountains and sun were counter-reflected and multi-reflected in shimmering movement within. As if part of nature, the very living and moving and breathing reflection of nature itself had been captured. (273)

Again and again in his notes and manuscripts, Lowry refers to the significance of his cabin and pier (see Chapter II, page 48). They typify true 'realistic' creations - unlike so-called realistic novels - because they are not static. Certainly Hear us O Lord, with its changing scene and protagonists, is an attempt to creat a 'realistic' work of art. By Lowry's own standard the book is a success reflecting as it does his entire opus and transcribing yet another circle through time and space.

The metaphysical quest underlies, contains, and informs all other aspects of the journey. The insight Lowry found in Aiken where he learned that "'from the whole world, as it revolved through space, came a sound of singing'"(271), the theories he discovered in Achad, Bergson, Ortega, and in Ouspensky and Dunne, are given artistic form in "The Forest Path to the Spring." The most dramatic symbol of this accumulated wisdom is the path itself for the path moves. During his trips to the spring for water, the narrator feels that the path is "shrinking at both ends" (268); time and space change, the contraction of space somehow involving an expansion of time. The "Proteus" path is the place where, conscious and unconscious fears overcome, he experiences mystical illumination, "a wonderful and profound moment" that reveals the protean nature of reality. Recalling this indescribable moment in a dream, he likens it to the feeling that

his "being had been transformed into the inlet itself" (269). The inlet, of course, is always one of Lowry's symbols for movement:

> But here in the inlet there was neither sea nor river, but something compounded of both, in eternal movement, and eternal flux and change, as mysterious and multiform in its motion and being, and in the mind as the mind flowed with it, as was that other Eridanus, the constellation in the heavens. The starry river in the sky[. . .]. (234)

Man's greatest task, in Lowry's terms, is to live in harmony with movement. Only by perceiving and understanding the nature of time and space does one know oneself, reality, or God. If, like Lowry, one is tormented by a reductive Protestant system based upon sin, guilt, and fear, the search for metaphysical truth is an arduous ordeal. It also becomes a never-ending quest in which man stands perpetually in jeopardy; if the universe is founded on a principle of eternal flow then there can be no final absolute rest: "Punctum Indifferens: Skibet Gaar Videre." The voice of the narrator in "Forest Path" speaking in the past tense is enough to remind us that this position of beauty and vision has already been left behind.

"The Forest Path to the Spring" closes the circle of Hear us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place, but the voyage of withdrawal and return, the expansion and translation, never closes. The circle, Lowry's symbol for tenuous order, is like the rain falling into the sea:

> 'Each drop falling into the sea is like a life, I thought, each producing a circle in the ocean, or the medium of life itself, and widening into infinity[. . .]. Each is interlocked with other circles falling about it[. . .]. Then we saw that the whole dark water was covered with bright expanding phosphorescent circles. [. . .] They were perfect expanding circles of light, first tiny circles bright as a coin, then becoming expanding rings growing fainter and fainter, while as the rain fell into the phosphorescent water each raindrop expanded into a ripple that was translated into light. And the rain itself was water from the sea[. . .] raised to heaven by the sun, transformed into clouds, and falling again into the sea. While within the inlet itself the tides and currents in that sea returned, became remote, and becoming remote, like that which is called the Tao, returned again as we ourselves had done. (282)

NOTES: CHAPTER VII

[1] See Lowry's Work in Progress statement in Day, 426.

[2] Hear us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place (London, 1961). See "Publisher's Note." All references are to this edition and are included in the text. The book has also been published in a Penguin paperback. "The Bravest Boat" and "Strange Comfort Afforded by the Profession" were published separately during Lowry's lifetime.

[3] See Dale Edmonds, "The Short Fiction of Malcolm Lowry," Tulane Studies in English, XV(1967), p. 70, and Day, p. 446.

[4] New, Malcolm Lowry, p. 13. Professor New uses Hear us O Lord as an introduction to the design of Lowry's intended masterwork. The book serves equally well as a summary of Lowry's work, and it is perhaps more consistent with chronology and the sequence of Lowry's Voyage to discuss it as a culmination rather than as an introduction.

[5] Professor New maintains that the "I" in "The Forest Path" is Lowry, Malcolm Lowry, p. 13, but Professor Day is surely more precise in saying that the "I" is "none other than Wilderness" (444). The point is not a major one because either way the concept of man-as-novelist writing himself is equally emphatic. In a work of fiction, albeit autobiographical, it seems better to steer clear of confusing the real author with his fictional projections.

[6] In "Death in Life: Neo-Platonic Elements in 'Through the Panama'," Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work, Geoffrey Durrant offers a convincing argument for Lowry's use of the neo-Platonic myth of the soul. The myth helps to account for Lowry's use of The Ancient Mariner and his use of the south as an infernal region.

[7] In An Experiment With Time, page 196, Dunne allows for a God-like final observer, although how this is consistent with a serial universe is unclear.

[8] Lowry is referring to Constantine F. Chassebeuf de Volney's Volney's Ruins; or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires (Boston, 1835), a heavily moralistic tract supporting historicism and reason.

[9] "Once again, we are liable to feel that nothing is happening, that no one does anything; that properly speaking, these are not stories at all. . . . Suppose we say that Hear us O Lord is a collection not of short stories, but of fictional meditations: reflective pieces, more or less autobiographical in nature, on a common theme." Day, 446.

[10] In A New Model of the Universe, p. 203, Ouspensky describes the Fool of the Tarot thus:

"Weary and lame he dragged himself along a dusty road, across a lifeless plain beneath the scorching rays of the sun.

Gazing stupidly sideways with fixed eyes, with a half-smile, half-grimace frozen upon his face, he crawled along neither seeing nor knowing whither, plunged in his own chimerical dreams, which moved eternally in the same circle.

The fool's cap and bells was on his head back to front. His clothes were torn down the back. A wild lynx with burning eyes leaped at him from behind a stone and drove its teeth into his leg.

He stumbled, nearly falling, but dragged himself ever further, carrying over his shoulder a sack full of unnecessary, useless things, which only his madness forced him to carry.

In front the road was cleft by a ravine. A deep precipice awaited the crazy wanderer . . . and a huge crocodile with gaping jaws crept out of the abyss."

In "Forest Path" the protagonist learns "to accept myself as a fool again" (284) and the stages of the Fool's journey as described by Ouspensky clearly correspond to stages in Lowry's Voyage - the mountain lion in "Forest Path" recalls Ouspensky's lynx.

Appendix I

These notes are from Annie Besant's The Ancient Wisdom (Theosophical Publishing House, 1939) pp. 5-9 and p. 66. They are typed from Lowry's handwritten notes by Margerie and are included in the manuscript of The Ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness. Unfortunately, there is no indication of how Lowry meant to use these notes. Certain ideas such as the concept of the triple reflection of God, a form of repeated incarnation, and most importantly the constant flow of the Tao, coincide with ideas that Lowry found in Achad, Ouspensky, and others, and therefore recur frequently in his works. The withdrawal and return of the Tao forms the closing image of "The Forest Path to the Spring" where Lowry uses words strongly reminiscent of the Tao passage in Besant.

"From Annie Besant he learned for the first time that there were three main spiritual verities of 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.

China . . . was peopled in old days by the Turanians, the 4th subdivision of the great Fourth Race, the race which inhabited the lost continent of Atlantis, and spread its offshoots over the world.

The Divine Ruler of the Golden Gate was the title held by the Initiate who ruled the Toltec Empire in Atlantis, and its use

suggests that the classic of Purity was brought thence to China when the Turanians separated off from the Toltecs.

The Great Tao has no bodily form but it produced and nourishes heaven and earth. The Great Tao has no passions but it causes the sun and moon to revolve as they do. The Great Tao has no name but it effects the growth and maintenance of all things.

This is the manifested God as unity, but duality supervenes.

Now the Tao shows itself in two forms, the Pure and the turbid and has the two conditions of motion and rest. Heaven is pure and earth is turbid: heaven moves and the earth is at rest. The masculine is pure and the feminine is turbid: the masculine moves and the feminine is still. The radical (purity) descended, and the (turbid) issue flowed abroad, and thus all things were produced.

There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before heaven and earth. How still it was and formless standing alone and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted). It may be regarded as the Mother of all things. I do not know its name and I give it the designation of the Tao. Making an effort to give it a name, I call it the Great. Great it passes on - in constant flow. Passing on, becomes remote Having become remote, it returns.

The Physical Plane.

Evolution may be summed up in a phrase: it is latent potentialities becoming active powers.

The Astral Plane.

The vague loose thoughts which are so largely produced by undeveloped minds gather round themselves loose clouds of elemental essence when they arrive in the astral world, and drift about attracted hither and thither to other clouds of similar nature, clinging round the astral bodies of persons whose magnetism attracts them - either good or evil - and after a while disintegrating, to again ferm part of the general atmosphere of elemental essence. While they maintain a separate existence they are like entities, with bodies of elemental essence and thoughts as the ensouling lives - "

Appendix II

This letter is held in the Lowry Collection at the University of British Columbia. It is an important letter rivalling in analytical detail Lowry's famous 1946 letter on Under the Volcano. Douglas Day dismisses the letter as incoherent (Malcolm Lowry, 436) but the letter makes absolutely clear the tripartite structure, the multi-levelled thematic development, and the significance of Santayana and Sutton Vane's Outward Bound, in October Ferry. I would like to thank Albert Erskine for providing me with the closing sentences of the letter, for when I read it at the University of British Columbia it broke off, to my great frustration, with -- "the original kobbold in" -! According to Margerie Lowry, the letter was written in December of 1953.

Dear Albert:

I know. You've caught me at a bad time to write a letter like because I have to catch a boat to an island whence the post are few and far between. In fact a December Ferry to Bowen Island. Of October Ferry - of ~~which~~ I've just completed another 40 pages I'm going to try and get off by the New Year I'd say, counting those 40, (which are new and written in the last 5 days and concern an outbreak of Fortean phenomena following the Llewelyn's fire in Niagara-on-the-Lake) I'd say it's not quite half through: say 400 - 450 pages in all. For the rest I'm getting it in readable form as quickly as I can, albeit I'm dependent on Margie for the final typing. I do nothing but work on it and am suffering slightly from battle fatigue: otherwise fine. At the present rate I hope to get you another hundred pages by the extended deadline. I hadn't counted on the extensive revisions in final typing I've had to make or I'd say it could be finished by then. In the sense that there is a all but final draft complete and detailed down to the final sentence I'd say too it was already finished. But that reckons without hitches, also "inspirations" such as the last week's. Where it insists on growing I have to give it its head.* As things stand it should be finished sometime in April, that is to say, six weeks "late": but it might be a little earlier or later. As for where the story's going there an excellent and sinister reason for its apparent inability to move into the future: it turns out that both characters are potential suicides. Each has also become afraid that in a fit of hysteria or drunkenness one may murder the other. Thus the difficulty of the future taking any shape at all, as of the present having any meaning for the protagonists, is really the whole plot. They have more trouble getting to Gabriola than K to the castle though Gabriola is not a castellan symbol; it is, finally, the future.

* Not too much

It also turns out that both characters are hopped up to the gills: that is Ethan only doesn't realize he's got a hangover till a little later because he's been stealing Jacqueline's barbiturates. However I'm only equipped to write all this: not to describe it. I believe it to be bloody good and that it gets better. But it's not intended to fall into any particular category or obey any of the normal rules of a novel. The second part of the book concerns their difficulty in finding the ferry and takes place in Nanaimo, mostly in a pub, where Ethan gets pretty tight; there are powerful dramatic scenes (though I sez it) in Nanaimo both in the present and the past: a scene of lyrical beauty is balanced against a Grand Guignol horror that takes place on the scaffold. (A waiter turns out to be a man Ethan's saved.) The third part is on board the Ferry itself. There is a long scene here where Ethan is tempted to commit suicide but the ferry, which has run into a storm has to turn back, less for this reason than because one of the passengers has a haemmorrage. Back in Nanaimo, at a crisis of double despair, while the sick woman is being transferred to the dock, the mainland evening papers, which have just come, are tossed aboard and they read that the inhabitants of Eridanus have a reprieve and may go on living there. This is correlative to a decision Ethan (who you learn has become a complete misanthrope by this time and though managing to keep himself in balance with barbiturates is dangerously close to a serious breakdown) to go publicly to the defense of a 15 year old boy sentenced to hang and endeavour to procure a reprieve for him. He has not been able to bring himself to do this formerly because he has feared that the publicity would draw attention to the fact he lived in Eridanus and hence that of the newspapers once more to the uneasy lot of the squatters on the beach, and prejudice even further the public against them. The storm has now dropped and the ferry once more proceeds to Gabriola but the whole book, and with it the ferry - something like those ships you see rising with the filling locks in the Panama Canal - now rises to another plane: whereas before the ferry was a Charon's boat proceeding to a kind of hell, now it is another sort of ferry proceeding, as it were, toward the Mount of Purgatory (Mount Baker). With this too, Gabriola loses its ambivalence on the lower plane: assumes it on a higher. Centrally and realistically it becomes now the accepted future. Meantime - if you've followed that - you can see that effect of the glorious news of Eridanus' own reprieve upon Ethan must be anything but what the reader has been led to expect. He is, in fact, knocked out literally. To save them both he has already had to "renounce" Eridanus (on the psychological plane an infantile fixation, so far as it is that I mean.) Now he has to come to terms with himself and accept the fact that he has become too mentally ill to live there, even should they return. It is he and no one else that produces the so-called coincidences and disasters that happen to them: himself, as it were, the paranoiac black magician of their own lives. He has to face the fact also that he actually is - or has been-next door to a murderer and a criminal himself in the case of Cordwainer: though it's time he stopped punishing himself -- he's had 20 years of penal servitude already - and others for it, including Cordwainer himself, who appears in a

dream to him on the ferry boat (Scrubby the barman in Outward Bound - you might expect to find him on a ferry boat) to inform him that in so far as Ethan had murdered him, he had saved him from the lot of a suicide in the next world, where he would be quite content. if Ethan's continued self-punishment did not keep drawing him down to this world: if Ethan should kill himself he would thus be turning Cordwainer's spirit into Ethan's murderer. Ethan as a consequence has to renounce not only Eridanus but his destructive life and ways: among other things he has to stop drinking and I hope that the poor bugger reaches this decision with the maximum of humour. The end is thus a kind of Volcano in reverse and the final theme Faustian, with everything from flights of angels, balls of fire, and Madonnas, to the intervention of grace and Himmelphart. The ferry reaches Gabriola at dusk, where those meeting the boat are swinging lanterns along the wharf: but you have the feeling that Ethan is now being received by mankind, that arms are stretched out to help him, help he now has to and is prepared to accept, as he is prepared to give help to man, whom he had formerly grown to hate so much: thus the characters journey toward their own recovery. Something like that. I haven't told it very well. I'm sorry I'm late with it. The book loses something by not being with its fellows: Forest-Path to the Spring, Ghostkeeper and Present Estate of Pompeii. Also the idea of Hear Us is closer than ever to my heart now I see - touch wood - I can finish this which I have several times thought was going to polish me off.

I have sent an S.O.S. to my bank in England who now owe me a hell of a lot of money I've made repeated applications for in vain - I'll inform you of the results, with the hope of being able to buy some time or otherwise somehow help to amortize my obligation to you which I am carrying out as faithfully as possible, though I don't see why I should assume you or others will be satisfied with its progress even though I love Gabriola. Should you have to cut me off I'll find some way of carrying on. About all I can say is that if Gabriola can't be all in on the already extended dot - should I abandon temporarily the project of the other stories in Hear Us - and should you choose to consider Gabriola as a separate novel (which of course it is too), that being delivered, I oughtn't to have much difficulty in having the revised Lunar Caustic, say, in by the next deadline.

God bless and happy Christmas from us both -

[Signed Malcolm]

P.S. Partisan Review just took The Bravest Boat!

P.P.S. I haven't said anything of the psycgological level on October Ferry takes place but I now think I should since on rereading this letter I perceive that described in this manner, some doubt might be case upon the author's sanity, let alone that of the chief protagonist. Moreover on this plane the whole thing can be read slightly differently and in a sense more hopefully, as a kind of abreaction of his past: I like the word cathexis, too. In some psycho-genetic sense also - if that's the word? - the news of their own reprieve (on this plane) would seem to precipitate Ethan's recovery,

in the way that shell-shocked soldiers may recover at the news of the armistice. (Actually this is the scene - following that news - of the perilous chapel; a scene intended to be, and which is, I hope, horrifying, in which Ethan is actually involved in a grapple with death:) For the rest, though I haven't been slap through my 3 philosophical poets lately, you better consult that work by Santayana. In brief: the future, once accepted in this case imposes its own teleology; thus - though I have the data on the subject I don't a la Simenon bother to analyse in either case, what one could conceive to be the original kobbold in the closet. Both protagonists lie to themselves, perhaps they will have to continue to do so. Our expression is the ancient psychiatric one that it is nobler to do so than to make a suicide pact, and the meaning widens on the reader's soul as he realises what I mean by eviction.

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