The Voyage from Metropolitan Rationalism: Malcolm Lowry's Socialism and *In Ballast to the White Sea*

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Renewed interest in 1930s British fiction, literary criticism, and politics has been spurred not only by the distemper of our own time, but by the broadening and deepening of literary and historical research and the development of new perspectives across national and interdisciplinary boundaries. With respect to Malcolm Lowry, much has been revealed and expanded upon over the past three decades: two volumes of *Collected Letters*; a major biography by Gordon Bowker; several volumes of diverse Lowry scholarship; and (most notably) the publication of Lowry's "lost novel," *In Ballast to the White Sea*, in 2014. That he has still not been included in several important recent reconsiderations of the period[1] is understandable, given his absence from England between 1933 and 1954, his dearth of interaction with leading English literary figures, and the simple fact that his one canonical work, *Under the Volcano*, while set in the 1930s, was not published until 1947.

The aim of this article is to show how Lowry's modernist and romantic sensibilities evolved in response to the existential crises of capitalism and fascism in the mid-1930s and to the intellectual challenges of Marxism that accompanied them. Focusing on the extant draft of *In Ballast*, the article shows how Lowry uses his characters to interrogate each other's political and philosophical positions, particularly the limits of Marxist subjectivity, inclining the main protagonist toward an outlook that is sharply distinguished from the economic determinism of the Auden group. Although Lowry's 1930s politics converged in certain respects with the nascent anarchosocialism of Herbert Read and fellow members of what would become the New Romantic movement, they soon became obscured by his decision to abandon *In Ballast* and to de-emphasize political themes after the war. The rediscovery of the manuscript shows the lasting influence of this period upon Lowry as the confirmation of an organic and spiritual, as opposed to a mechanistic and materialist, view of

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the world.

George Orwell wryly observed in 1940 that while much "pure art was being thrown overboard" in the middle and late thirties in favour of "some rather ill-defined thing called Communism," the new Marxist movement had done less to cater to popular tastes than their High Modernist predecessors had done, while reasserting the intellectual authority of upper-class Englishmen in the process. For the young Malcolm Lowry, the Marxist critics may have seemed a step forward in their sensitivity to exploitation and their concern to combat fascism, but were more fundamentally a step backwards in their critique of modernism and their downgrading of its exploration of human consciousness. While privileging his own experience and the pursuit of his own identity, Lowry also exemplified modernism's aesthetic of unceasing motion, combined with an unsparing social scrutiny of every context in which he found himself. His voyage, which had begun in Liverpool, his birthplace, "that terrible city whose main street is the ocean," was influenced by mentors both American and Norwegian, by Russian film and literature, and by a formative trip to the Far East; it would lead eventually to both Mexico and Canada, the psychogeographies of which would help him to perfect his own visions of heaven and hell.

Lowry's skepticism toward Marxism from the mid-1930s onwards had more in common with Orwell's prescient non-conformity than with the disillusionment of many others, such as Koestler, Kolakowski, Merleau-Ponty, or Hook, that followed revelations about the Show Trials and the Hitler-Stalin Pact. Yet Lowry was also very unlike Orwell in expressing an ambivalence rooted more in his personal metaphysical attitude than in his knowledge of history or experience of communism. In one of the few comparisons made between Lowry and Orwell by a leading literary critic, Stephen Spender observes that Lowry's approach went well beyond that of the perceptive and determined loner, to the creative uses of solipsism:

> The central paradox of *Under the Volcano* is that it is a novel about action, that is, about action negated. At the centre, there is an impassioned cry that men should attain simplicity of being, love and live and act in a world of simple choices. Conrad Knickerbocker quotes Lowry: "The real cause of alcoholism is the complete baffling sterility of existence as *sold* to you." This implies a spiritual isolation greater than that of Orwell, who, although he was opposed to existing political groups, nevertheless belongs to a party of anarcho-socialist-conservative eccentrics which the reader easily recognizes in his own heart. Lowry had isolation which condemned him to perpetual self-searching, in which the mind creating is inextricably involved in the work created. Because there is no solution in the contemporary world of bogus solutions, art itself becomes a form of defiant action. (*Under the Volcano* xxiii)

Here Spender, who had long since renounced his Marxism and Communism, rather confusingly associates Orwell's politics with that of the New Apocalypse/New Romantics, who unlike Orwell were reacting against the political realism of the 1930s, and who shared Lowry's attraction to surrealism, myth, expressionism, and organicism.[2] Nevertheless, Spender is not wrong to stress Lowry's "greater spiritual

isolation," at least in comparison to Orwell. If, as Philip Bounds puts it, Orwell's worry in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* is that "an immersion in the relativistic world of art provides no foundation on which to construct a sense of moral and cultural continuity, which he clearly regards as the *sine qua non* of psychological health" (187), then Lowry's concern is just the opposite: to use art to expose the often fragile and ephemeral nature of life's foundations, psychological health be damned. In the less tragic versions of this exercise, the result is less bleak and paralyzing than in *Under the Volcano*, and therefore there is something for the author and protagonist to do besides just writing (and drinking). But in each case, Lowry insists not just upon a vision of the individual artist's life as committed to an open-ended journey and a never-ending expansion of consciousness, but also that this enlarged subjectivity is called for by the ontology of the world, which has a protean mutability that artists must try to comprehend even though they can never fully succeed. Literature premised upon such an understanding can be subversive of doctrinaire political programmes and law-like certitudes about history.

How 'unpolitical' did Lowry's politics become in the 1930s? *Under the Volcano* later problematizes both anarchosocialist political action, represented by Hugh Firmin, and apolitical Bohemianism, in the form of the filmmaker Laruelle. Just as Orwell did not go to Spain in the same way as Auden and Caudwell did—the latter being aligned with Stalinist Soviet forces—neither did Lowry's guilt-ridden absence from the fray exactly match Henry Miller's anarchistic rationale for refusing to fight, i.e. that "in living my own life in my own way I am more apt to give life to others" (H. Miller). In "Inside the Whale," Orwell reviews Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* against the background of the development of English literature in the interwar years, in particular the turn toward political purpose occasioned by the deepening economic crisis in the early 1930s and magnified by the rise of Fascism (Orwell, *All Art Is Propaganda* 107-127). While many of Orwell's readers were surprised at his apparent approval of a throwback to irresponsible and apolitical modernists of the 1920s, he was far more worried about what another World War would do to the already depressing state of English writing: "[t]he very people who for twenty years had sniggered over their own superiority to war hysteria were the ones who rushed straight back into the mental slum of 1915" (*All Art Is Propaganda* 127). At least Miller, who shares this concern, exemplifies a literary and politically *aware* form of irresponsibility: Orwell commends Miller for his courage and his sincerity, for "fiddling with his face towards the flames" (*All Art Is Propaganda* 131). But as C.M. Stan points out, this backhanded praise amounted to a misunderstanding: "[W]hile Orwell seems to be endorsing Miller's acceptant quietism, an underlining impulse to propose a more adequate version of commitment puts into question the sincerity of what he is openly commending" (304). James Gifford's comment is even sharper: "the misrecognition of Miller's unpolitical politics only makes sympathetic condemnation available to Orwell's pen, as was his approach to all of his anarchist friends [e.g. George Woodcock and Alex Comfort] during the Second World War" (35).

Orwell almost certainly would have said of Lowry, as he did of Miller, that he was "essentially a man of one book […] Like certain other autobiographical novelists, he had it in him to do just one thing perfectly, and he did it" (Orwell, *All Art Is Propaganda* 139). It is harder to mistake Lowry's bouts of voluntary destitution abroad, punctuated by subventions from his wealthy father, for a straightforward identification with either the downtrodden proletariat or the colonized peoples of the world. But it can be said of Lowry that, like Miller, "because, in one sense, he is passive to experience, [he] is able to get nearer to the ordinary man than is possible to more purposive writers. For the ordinary man is also passive" (Orwell, *All Art Is Propaganda* 105). Lowry could not, *as a writer*, "be attracted by a form of Socialism that makes mental honesty impossible" (Orwell, *All Art Is Propaganda* 123). He too is fiddling while contemplating the impending ruin of Western civilization. Lowry was highly individualistic and anti-authoritarian on account of his rejection of historical determinism, and radical not only in his defence of artistic freedom, *but in his confidence in the power of art*. Thus he might have, like Miller, have suffered Orwell's condescending compliment about "sincerity," while at the same time sharing Orwell's desire for a "more adequate version of commitment." For Lowry, at least during the 1930s and 1940s, holding political and aesthetic allegiances in tension was critical to his art. Fully embracing his anarchistic tendencies along with a "new faith" of assertive humanism and rejection of "the Cult of Leadership" and "the deceitful incursions of democracy" (Read 12-13) might have diminished rather than enhanced his creative project, which contained a commitment to multilevel perspectivism.

Lowry became deeply concerned with how history and society meshed with his vision of life and art, notwithstanding his focus upon his own solitary consciousness. Moreover, this was not just a reaction to the 1930s and to the War, but formed part of the microcosm/macrocosm that remained with him throughout the rest of his life. In a letter to his friend Downie Kirk in June 1950, he enthused about his recent discovery of Ortega Y Gasset's *Toward a Philosophy of History*, in particular its thesis that "human life in its most human dimension is like a work of fiction, that man is a sort of novelist of himself" (*Sursum Corda!* 2.254). Ortega's related remark that the [intellectual or bureaucratic] snob is hostile to liberalism, since "liberty has always been understood in Europe as the freedom to be one's 'real' self and […] it is not surprising that a man who knows that he has no mission to fulfill should want to be rid of it," is seized upon by Lowry as "one of the most convincing arguments against communism that he had ever read in such a short space" (*Sursum Corda!* 2.256).

Six months later, the discussion with Kirk shifted from communism's denial and frustration of individual calling to the flaws inherent in its assertions about collective destiny. When Lowry reflects on the "teleology of tyranny," which he describes as being "not nearly so hopeless in the case of communism as it was in the case of Nazism," he further muses that "anything [that] is a revolution must keep moving or it doesn't revolute: [communism] by its very nature contains within it the seeds of its own destruction, so by 1989, say, everything ought to be hunky dory" (307).

This guess proved to be uncannily accurate: after the fall of the Berlin Wall in that year, the failure of glasnost and perestroika to revive Soviet communism either as an international ideal or as a viable politicoeconomic system was no longer in doubt.[3] In order to venture such a bold prediction at the beginning of the Cold War, when China had just fallen to the Communists, and Marxism/Leninism as a response to imperialism was clearly on the march throughout the Third World, Lowry no doubt benefitted from the detachment afforded by his seclusion in British Columbia, as well as the intellectual inspiration of Gasset's philosophy. Nevertheless, to fully grasp the nature of his insights about Marxism and Soviet communism—at the level of the individual, the level of society, and the interrelation between the two—one must trace them from the beginning, at least fifteen years earlier, when Lowry was in the Metropole, looking outwards.

Solitary Art Meets Radical Politics: The Genesis of *In Ballast to the White Sea*

Lowry understood by 1950 that one of the few firm bases for prediction in history is that teleological theories are likely to fail. He had once remarked that he could not imagine a static eternal heaven any more than he could believe in the attainability of "a perpetual spiritual orgasm" (Grace, *The Voyage* 5). His skepticism toward the inevitable and permanent achievement of a harmonious classless society had much the same foundation: art should not hypostasize life, which is dynamic, protean and ultimately unknowable; and neither should a theory about politics. Malcolm Bradbury points out that Lowry's essential assumptions "tend to be purist romantic ones" (184). He certainly shares the romantic preference for organic rather than mechanical metaphors for society, and for the role of imagination and sentiment as well as reason in the comprehension of human affairs. Yet Sherrill Grace also correctly stresses how much more radical Lowry's own view was: the impossible, even absurd task that he set himself of capturing "the flux of noumenal and phenomenal reality" in his writing set him "apart from the main body of Western philosophic and aesthetic thought", straining traditional realist concepts of plot, character and language and leading him to a vision of life and art as an endless cyclical voyage (*The Voyage* 5-6). These metaphysical notions were already crystallizing when he was confronted with pressures for political commitment in the face of economic and political crisis in the mid-1930s.

Those demands came quickly upon Lowry, and from several different directions. His Marxist acquaintances from the Haldane circle in Cambridge (1929-1932) expressed what they saw as the validation of their beliefs in current events. In 1933 he met Jan Gabrial, a Jewish American writer with strong interests in proletarian causes, whom he married in 1934. He also met John Sommerfield, who would later write the pro-Soviet novel *May Day*, and who along with Lowry's Cambridge class-

mate, John Cornford, would soon join the International Brigade to fight in Spain; guilt about not joining them would become a recurring theme in Lowry's writing. Then there was Nordahl Grieg, whose novel about a young sailor's first sea voyage *The Ship Sails On* was so reminiscent of Lowry's own experience, and so eerily similar in substance and intent to his own first novel-in-the-making, *Ultramarine*, that it inspired Lowry's Pirandellian belief that he was in a sense, a character in someone else's novel (Grace, *The Voyage* 7). As a result, Grieg, an active supporter of the Russian Revolution and member of the Norwegian Communist Party, at least temporarily supplanted Lowry's erstwhile mentor Conrad Aiken as a personal and political influence as well as a literary one.

In Ballast to the White Sea was born out of this confluence. Lowry described its intended place in his work in a letter to his publisher Jonathan Cape in 1946 as "the paradisal third part of a Dantean trilogy, the whole to concern the battering the human spirit takes […] in its ascent toward its true purpose" (*Sursum Corda!* 1.504). The place it came to assume in Lowry myth, however, was as the tragic 'lost' novel, literally consumed by the flames when his squatter's shack on the beach in Dollarton, British Columbia caught on fire in 1944, thereby dooming its poor author to remain forever in the shadow of the infernal *Volcano*. Upon learning of the coincidence of this event with the death of Nordahl Grieg in Germany six months earlier, on the third anniversary of Lowry's second marriage, Lowry declared that "both Nordahl and my book about him" were dead. What he did not tell anyone, however, was that he had left a carbon copy of the 1936 manuscript of *In Ballast* with Jan Gabrial's mother just before the couple set off from New York on their fateful trip to Mexico that year. In accordance with Gabrial's wishes, another copy was deposited after her death in the Archives of the New York Public Library in 2003; a fully edited and annotated version was published in 2014.

The 1936 *In Ballast* is less extensive than the 1000-page draft that was lost in 1944—essentially, just the first seventeen chapters of an unfinished novel, plus some notes—and is less developed in terms of plot and character than even the 1940 version of *Under the Volcano* that was roundly rejected by publishers. It is nonetheless a revelation, due to its central tension between art and politics. Elsewhere in Lowry's work, political considerations are subordinated to existential ones, with heightened solitary consciousness, tragic or otherwise, the usual result. Here, philosophical references to the nature of time, reality, and consciousness are explicitly juxtaposed with political ideas for the first time, as he uses the latter to question and challenge his own aesthetic and philosophical orientation as well as vice versa. On display is the Lowry who as an undergraduate at Cambridge had already become committed to Read's view that English modernism and surrealism were derived from romanticism. A romantic sensibility, far from having been superseded by the Enlightenment, was needed to balance the Enlightenment's rationalism, which, if left unchecked, could lead to the downfall of western civilization itself. This view was articulated in the popular history of Oswald Spengler, but was also foreshadowed by the works

of Gogol and Dostoevsky; Lowry frequently alluded to Dostoevsky in his writings and once expressed a desire to become "a Canadian Ibsen or Dostoevsky" (396). In later works, Lowry would look increasingly to eastern philosophies, Indigenous and pre-modern cultures, and the natural environment as resources for spiritual regeneration, but it is remarkable how much this path was already ordained in 1936, when traditional Russian spiritual values and esoteric European and American philosophies appealed to him as responses to the juggernaut of modernity, and helped him to resist the pressing charge that 'art for art's sake' was politically irresponsible or naïve.

Lowry's Notes to the novel describe its main protagonist, Sigbjorn Hansen-Tarnmoor, as someone who believes in communism "but also believes that the soul is going out in its journey in life to seek God" (458). The former belief is not strictly Marxist, nor is the belief in life as a spiritual quest conceived in strictly Christian terms, but Sigbjorn is still driven toward a confrontation with those elements in Marxist thought that are potentially inconsistent with that journey as it relates to his art. The 27-year-old Lowry had begun to distance himself from Aiken, and would even confide to his friend John Davenport in the following year that he "no longer thought of the pro-fascist Conrad as a friend," but he was also irrevocably wedded to Aiken's model of artistic vocation as the expansion of consciousness. Indeed, he was already committed to taking that model much further, beyond Aiken's loosely Freudian self-analysis to a much broader epistemological and ontological position. A growing sense that it was the author's duty to convey in uncompromising terms the rich texture of life, giving due regard to its ineffability, could not therefore be fulfilled simply by expressing Grieg's more idealistic and socially concerned content within an Aikenesque structure and prose style. Nor could it proceed on the basis of an assumption that Grieg, as a Marxist writer, was more or less committed to: that the proletariat has a privileged insight into the final purposes of history owing to its special role as an exploited class.

The novel explores these various tensions and difficulties through Sigbjorn's dialogues with the other main characters: his brother Tor, who is a more committed socialist; their mutual love interest Nina; their father Captain Hansen-Tarnmoor; and the writer William Erikson, who, in all essential respects, is Nordahl Grieg. Tor serves as Sigbjorn's other self, and the love triangle formed by their rivalry over Nina dramatizes the underlying conflict in their worldviews, much as it does for Hugh and Geoffrey Firmin in *Under the Volcano*. In this case, however, it is Tor who commits suicide, and his death symbolically allows Sigbjorn to live. In political terms, Nina presents the Party line and gives Marxist objections to Sigbjorn's beliefs, while his father, the owner of a shipping line that has suffered the tragic loss of two ships, is portrayed somewhat sympathetically as a non-stereotypical capitalist and a gentle critic of both Sigbjorn's socialist leanings and his cultural romanticism. Whereas in *Volcano* the consul Geoffrey Firmin finds the simplistic idealism and calls to action of his half-brother—and "indoor Marxman"—Hugh unpersuasive, and Hugh's and Yvonne's betrayal beyond redemption, *In Ballast*'s Sigbjorn is pointed by his dia-

logues toward reconciliation, moral regeneration, and the hope of finding a political praxis that reconciles personal calling with the call to brotherhood.

Romantic Affirmation or Bourgeois Illusion?

In 1973 Malcolm Bradbury said of Lowry that his writing "is more obviously romantic than modernist […] Though certain modernist features seem essential to his work, his relation to them is oddly oblique, incomplete." His pattern of expatriation "was away from the cosmopolitan artistic centres rather than towards them, "and to the idea of exile and voyage itself. […] And typically Lowry liked to stress the lonely nature of his genius, his general separateness from influence, even his ignorance" (183). In reviewing Lowry's 1951 summary of his "lost novel," Bradbury notes that in a sense this romanticism is baked into the very structure of the story:

> If the Consul of *Under the Volcano* has aligned himself with a law of series that leads to damnation, […] then the hero of *In Ballast to the White Sea* was conceived as doing the reverse […] Geoffrey Firmin makes a destructive identification [with a transcendental]; but the hope of a romantic affirmation seems always to have been strong in Lowry's mind. (190)

We now have a more complete picture of both the truth of Lowry's originality—helped in no small degree by its separate development—and the myth, obscuring his close study of Joyce, Wolfe, Lawrence, and Fitzgerald, as well as his debt to more contemporary radical and neo-Romantic influences that were already afoot in the mid-1930s and which would formally appear as the New Apocalypse half a decade later. The text shows Lowry's willingness to take Marxism seriously and to use it to question his own romantic predilections.

Early in the story we learn that, prior to attending Cambridge along with his brother, Sigbjorn had spent eight months aboard a freighter as a coal trimmer, like Lowry, who in 1927 had worked as a crew member of the *SS Pyrrhus*, and Dana Hilliott in *Ultramarine*. The voyage had been intended to furnish experiences upon which he could base his first novel, and Sigbjorn comes to Cambridge more identified with the workers and more interested in socialism, although still not entirely persuaded by Marxism as a system of belief. Like Orwell, he doubtless never met a working man who had the faintest interest in Marxist dialectics. This ambivalence forms a backdrop to each of his subsequent encounters with the other characters. The dialogue between the two Tarnmoor brothers is marked by a couple of deep ironies. One is that Tor, who remained at home during Sigbjorn's sea voyage, most fervently promotes socialism and political activism as an antidote to the 'tyranny of the self'; this sets the stage for Lowry's first long look at bourgeois socialism. Ivory-tower Marxism is of course typical of Cambridge students of the period, but Sigbjorn does not pounce upon it for either naïveté or hypocrisy. Instead, he reflects that similar motives to those which had restrained Tor from joining the expedition were now

restraining him from giving himself entirely to the workers' cause, and that this problem might best be coped with artistically—by writing his book (*In Ballast* 7-8). The second irony is that Sigbjorn is chided by his brother for returning from the sea with "the last thing that might have been expected: a kind of vague mysticism that doesn't suit you at all" (*In Ballast* 25). This is an opportunity for Lowry to discuss the metaphysics underlying his own nascent artistic philosophy.

Tor grudgingly acknowledges how life experience could deepen one's sense of mystery rather than lessen it. Surveying his bookcase near the beginning of their final conversation, he admits to Sigbjorn that "of all these books […] only two things haunt me now *even if we include Marx*, namely: 'our' Soren Kierkegaard's *Personal Confessions* and 'Charles Fort's *The Mad Fisherman of Worcester*" (*In Ballast* 28; emphasis mine). Yet lending credence to Kierkegaard could create problems for Tor's Marxism, since Kierkegaard's critique in *Personal Confessions* of the political and cultural changes associated with modern mass society might logically apply to socialist regimes as well as capitalist ones; moreover, his prescription for authentic selfhood achieved through suffering and commitment of the single individual also seem at odds with communism. The mention of Fort's story of the paranormal reminds us that there are many unsolved mysteries and strange coincidences not accounted for by our grandest theories, and perhaps to signal Fort's general theme of skepticism about positivistic science and claims to ultimate knowledge of any kind.

Tor's acknowledgement of Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism and Fort's skepticism make it easier for Sigbjorn to remain faithful to his own sense of reality, 'mystical' or otherwise. Thus, when Tor's suicide moves Sigbjorn to accept his brother's injunction to "identify with the virile solidarity of the proletariat," that commitment to socialism does not carry with it Tor's nihilistic belief that there is no divine order, only "blind, malicious force." Here, Lowry avoids tying the socialist project strictly to a reductive and deterministic materialism, a view best represented later in *In Ballast* by Nina. She believes that the Revolution's goal, a classless society, is the only reliable guardrail against a chaotic, malevolent universe and a slippery slope into Fascism; and that Tor's virtue was that he did not pretend to see an order or meaning to the world by "tilting at windmills" like Sigbjorn did, while there were "real wrongs to right, real enemies to fight, real grievances to redress" (*In Ballast* 99). More than any other character in the novel, she represents and reinforces the myth of the 'Red Decade'; her certitude and determinism would become the targets of the dominant anti-communist view in the 1940s and 1950s. Benjamin Kohlmann and Matthew Taunton, in their reflections upon the recent surge of interest in 1930s British literature, have noted the influence of anti-Communism on the depoliticizing literary methods of the New Criticism in the postwar period, a trend that Lowry strongly resisted; and, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, how the 1930s speak to us "beyond the political reductions encouraged by presentist analogies with the period of Trump and Brexit" (4). Had Lowry completed and published *In Ballast* in the 1930s, he might have earned a place between the various elements of the "1930

intersubjective constellation" that included the anti-Communist Orwell and the future anti-Communist Spender, as well as the more sympathetic party members such as Cornford and Sommerfield. While Nick Hubble's investigations of literary anti-Communism make only a passing reference to Lowry ("Looking Back" 67), his analysis clearly shows that Lowry's political place was much closer to the post- (not "anti-") Communism exemplified by Sommerfield's 1977 novel *The Imprinted: Recollections of Then, Now, and Later On*, than to the total recantation of Stephen Spender ("Looking Back" 65-69). Hubble further notes that "Spender's crime was not his abandonment of Communism but his abandonment of the intersubjective collectivity of the 1930s in favour of a reassertion of bourgeois individualism" ("Looking Back" 67).[4]

Lowry shares Orwell's distaste for bourgeois socialism and Marxist certitudes, but is not so easily satisfied by Orwell's notion that socialism simply "means justice and common decency [… and that] the Socialist future [… is] a vision of present society with the worst abuses left out" (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 114). For in Lowry's view, reality *is* mysterious, and rationalism does not just need to be tempered with common sense but also countered and supplemented with diverse and ancient wisdom. Nigel Foxcroft's book *The Kaleidoscopic Vision of Malcolm Lowry* shows that by 1936 Lowry may not have yet fully incorporated Eastern mysticism, Mesoamerican customs, Kabbalah, and the Day of the Dead into his writing, as he soon would—this manuscript was typed just before he and Gabrial had departed for Mexico—but most of the esoteric, spiritual, and cultural works that he would rely upon in his later work, such as those of Blavatsky, Ouspensky, Dunne, Eisenstein, Fort, and Jung, were already playing a central part in the thematic shaping of *In Ballast*. Some of Lowry's letters from this period and references in *In Ballast* also suggest an awareness of the Atlantis myth, "providing him with the notion of a missing connection between the civilizations of the East and the West, of the Old World and the New, cradled by opposite shores of the Atlantic Ocean. For the Consul of *Under the Volcano*, this apparent bond represents a lost harmony in the life of an individual, symbolized by his perception of a Mexican Garden of Eden" (Foxcroft 12). Lowry was clearly disabused of any notion that the cultural, moral, and spiritual renewal of humanity would come in the form of a rational Truth emanating from the Metropole and universalized through war and empire. His thoughts on revolution were similarly hedged, notwithstanding any sympathies he would one day come to feel for Mexico's President Cardenas or the exile Trotsky.

Like Lowry, the Tarnmoor brothers were raised in Liverpool by a wealthy shipowner and educated at Cambridge. Lowry's decision to make them Norwegian-born[5] and still deeply connected to their Scandinavian homeland accentuates the theme of seafaring voyage and facilitates Sigbjorn's connection to William Erikson (i.e. Lowry's connection to Grieg). Just as importantly, it excludes a margin of comfort that many English people felt in the 1930s that, in Orwell's words, owing to the "gentleness of English civilization, […] England […] cannot, except possibly by conquest,

be turned into a replica of Nazi Germany" (44, 379). When Nina and Sigbjorn see a German freighter bearing the Nazi insignia setting anchor in the harbour, she is prompted to score a number of telling points against Sigbjorn's streak of bourgeois nationalism: that Norway stood "at the apex of Nordic culture", which fit comfortably with Nazi racist ideology; that Norway had always seemed "free and good" to Sigbjorn because his childhood had been spent in a wealthy family; that Norwegian timber and minerals would soon attract the interest of the Nazis; and that by drawing nationalist inspiration from "lovely Norway" and literary inspiration from D.H. Lawrence, who favoured 'dark forces' and 'blood consciousness' over rationalism, Sigbjorn could be subconsciously giving aid to them (112).

When Nina remarks ruefully to Sigbjorn that "the flag should always be flown at half-mast whenever a really good artist becomes 'metaphysical'" (*In Ballast* 91), Lowry shows that he takes this charge seriously, too. Neither Sigbjorn's experience as a worker nor his attempts to articulate a socialism more consistent with his idea of a spiritually authentic life impress Nina, who argues that Sigbjorn's 'old' ideology (i.e. utopian, rather than scientific socialism), while it may seem like an identification with the proletariat, is "still just simply an escape from yourself," and that he may have courage, but it is "blind" and "sentimental." Captain Tarnmoor later challenges Sigbjorn to consider whether Nina's denigration of the soul and downgrading of religious wisdom might be justified temporarily by the historical juncture—"*at the moment of the technic of the transition*" (*In Ballast* 147). This phrase refers to Waldo David Frank's important address to the First International Congress of Writers in Defence of Culture in Paris in 1935, in which he argued for an 'organic' process of political change: "The orthodox revolutionary creeds, which are the technic of the transition of this crucial hour, do not comprehend the whole man". Frank argued that man's "heart and mind, the subtlest sense and the deepest intuition" must partake in the movement, "or it miscarries" (258-264). It was a prescient warning to a largely Marxist international community of intellectuals that was more concerned to respond to immediate problems of capitalism and the Nazi threat than to worry about Stalinism.

Of course, spiritualism and romanticism also carry their own risks. The Captain notices in his son "the same tendencies that Ruge and Echtermeyer objected to in the German romantic school, a sort of medieval consciousness, a tendency towards mystical and ecclesiastical terminology which makes me think that you might, under certain circumstances, turn Catholic" (*In Ballast* 151). In acknowledging possible dangers in Romanticism, Lowry anticipates the work of Gyorgy Lukacs, who saw German Romanticism as marking the point in intellectual history where the German tradition separated from Europe and moved towards National Socialism.[6]

Lukacs's English counterpart, Christopher Caudwell, also wrote two books in the vein of dialectical 'Western' Marxism, *Illusions and Reality* (1937) and *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1938), which had not yet been published when Lowry was writing the existing version of *In Ballast*. Like all Marxists, Caudwell believed that literature could

not be separated from the study of society, but unlike previous English Marxists he clearly saw that literature was not only reflective but active and performing a social function. Moreover, Caudwell's dialectical theory of consciousness creates the basis of a possible dialogue with surrealism that could have interested the Sigbjorn character and Lowry himself during this period: for example, the discussions of D.H. Lawrence's inability to escape the limitations of the very bourgeois culture that he hated (Caudwell 18-19, 182). Lowry shared Orwell's sentiment that "[a]ny Marxist can demonstrate with the greatest of ease that "bourgeois" liberty of thought is an illusion [… but] it is a psychological fact that without this 'bourgeois' liberty the creative powers wither away" (Orwell, *All Art Is Propaganda* 128). But Lowry's ultimate anti-Marxism derived not primarily from a common-sense 'liberal' socialism rooted in sensory experience, but in a deep conviction about how Marxist metaphysics has failed to fully grasp the ineffable nature of the world. To substitute a certainty where none is warranted could be disastrous. He mentions Ruge and Echtermeyer's Young Hegelian writing, which affirmed Hegel's sense of society's progression towards freedom, while criticizing the thoroughgoing teleology of his theory.[7] This reference suggests that Lowry agreed with Kierkegaard's sentiment that Hegel would count as the greatest of thinkers "if only he had regarded his system as a thought-experiment instead of taking himself seriously to have reached the truth" (McDonald). He could hardly have thought differently about Marx's system, after Hegel was 'turned on his head' and his idealist teleology was replaced with a materialist one.

Politics in a Protean World

Lowry's rejection of Marxist *telos* and his conception of life as an open-ended journey do not vitiate his political commitment, but they unavoidably qualify and shape it. The remainder of the dialogues in *In Ballast* ratchet up the tension between art and politics by describing Sigbjorn's embrace of socialism following his brother's death, while at the same time confirming the self-consciousness of a solitary author; as Sigbjorn writes to Erikson:

> Three years ago I wanted to find myself, now I want to lose myself […] I am now equally concerned in forgetting all about myself and devoting my gifts, such as they are, to the common movement for change. It is strange however that in this letter I seem nevertheless to be drawing a remarkable amount of attention to myself. (*In Ballast* 43-44)

He even admits that his "special situation" upon discovering *The Ship Sails On* in a Liverpool bookshop leads to further speculations that amount to "party treason," betraying professed socialist convictions by accentuating his individual artistic aspirations. It is the one fundamental difference between what are two otherwise strikingly similar novels:

> Your characters' pilgrimage is a process of adjustment towards the proletariat: my char-

> acter is *merely one more introspective pilgrimage* into that region of the soul where man also ceases to be his own factor. In my book the mass is only important for the personal adjustment it enables one man to make; in yours the personal adjustment is important and rightly important only because it sensibly strengthens the mass. (*In Ballast* 50; emphasis mine)[8]

Sigbjorn's last letter to Erikson talks about the secret of life being "old creations erased by new real lives," and an allusion to Melville's *Pierre* and its theme of skepticism towards transcendentalism and lasting progress (*In Ballast* 53-54). Notwithstanding Sigbjorn's allegiances to both his brother and to Erikson, and Lowry's own identification with his many socialist friends and with Grieg, we find here a steadfast resistance to those elements of Marxism that are at odds with an appreciation of eternal flux and change. One might well ask whether Sigbjorn/Lowry could have anticipated Jean-Paul Sartre's attempts, starting in the late 1950s, to "reconquer Man within Marxism" (83), i.e. to restore dialectical fluidity to Marxism by combining the personal redemption of existential authenticity with a call for systematic social change. Like Lowry, Sartre came to reject the "utopianism" of the classless society (understood as some final state of human history, i.e., a "final totalization"). Lowry might have found Sartre's biography, with its personal struggles to find meaning both inside and outside of his life, to have had some instructive parallels as well. But, unlike Sartre, Lowry could not have cabined personal destiny within "economic relations under scarcity" as the one unsurpassable limit that would have to "orient political engagement" until such time as "real freedom beyond the production of life" could be sustained (34). Such a deferral, like the ones proposed by Nina and criticized by Waldo Frank, still suspends indefinitely some of the critical faculties of the artist for the sake of some posited historical law.[9]

Even though *In Ballast* represents Lowry's 'radical' period, we find a fairly sympathetic portrayal of Captain Tarnmoor as a 'middle class' employer, a 'tool in the hands of the system' and unfairly treated in the official reports on the sinking of the *Thorstein* (*In Ballast* 70). He is also depicted as a benign liberal nationalist who does not oppose his son's "feeling for the masses, given that Scandinavia has always been suggestible to all ideas of emancipation" (*In Ballast* 71). One finds no attraction to a crude instrumentalist Marxism that stresses the agency of the 'ruling class'; but Lowry doubtless would have found it difficult to achieve a rapprochement with later structuralist Marxism (e.g. Althusser, Eagleton) as well. His Heraclitean view of reality militated against any firm pronouncements about being shaped by the ends of history. Endless change and unpredictability are more pronounced themes in Lowry's later fiction, but they are at least alluded to in each of the dialogues of *In Ballast*. For example, as Sigbjorn and his father walk around the *Liverpool*, grappling with the misfortunes of the ship disasters and Tor's suicide, the contrast is made between the apparent absoluteness of the present and an underlying reality that is "fluctuant and transitory—for this architectural solidity housed many bankruptcies" (*In Ballast* 56).

Lowry's work suggests that eternal flux is inconsistent with communist teleology, but nonetheless is an ontology that is favourable to creative process and to self-determination: Sigbjorn remarks that "all conclusions seem final within me, even when I know them to be mutable", to which the Captain replies, "Yes, everything changing but at the same time, for once, all of them are going somewhere" (*In Ballast* 144). Several philosophical and psychological theories that were popular in the 1920s and 1930s were influencing Lowry's various formulations of this paradox. Henri Bergson's first major work, *Time and Free Will* (1889), proposed that the experience of freedom belongs to the temporal domain or the Duration (*la durée*), which is not completely accessible to "immobile" analytical intelligence that has conceived of time in spatial terms. His most important book, *Creative Evolution* (1907), insisted that the continuous, undetermined creation of life cannot be explained by the teleological approach of "traditional finalism," which makes genuine creation of the new impossible, since it entails that the "whole is given." His famous concept of vital impulse (*élan vital*) is proposed as a holistic form of finalism that is not mechanistic, that accounts for the creation of life and also the diversity resulting from creation: "If there is a telos to life, then, it must be situated at the origin and not at the end (contra traditional finalism), and it must embrace the whole of life in one single indivisible embrace (contra mechanism)" ("Henri Bergson").

Some Marxist and socialist commentators endorsed Bergson's philosophy for its description of humanity as a creative *homo faber* and its concepts of vital impulse and intuition, which were more in tune with the emergence of class consciousness in practical workers' struggles than was the abstract intellectualism of bourgeois literary elites.[10] Yet these arguments may not have sufficiently considered how much Marxist teleology resembled the "traditional finalism" that Bergson was critiquing in *Creative Evolution*. If nothing within a duration can be the cause of anything else within it, how much could a theory with duration as one of its central concepts be consistent with economic determinism? For Lowry, that would have been a sticking point.

Grace has observed how Lowry's "writing, from early stories until his death, expresses a need for time and a terror of space which, when perceived as cut off from temporal flow, threatens to enclose and destroy" ("The Creative Process" 61). Whether for emotional, artistic, or intellectual reasons, Lowry always strove to escape rational or spatial confinement of time. If anything, Lowry was prepared to go even further than Bergson did in this respect. While a student at Cambridge in the late 1920s, he had also discovered Pyotr Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*, which featured a denial of the ultimate reality of time and space, as well as a model of expanding consciousness; and J.W. Dunne's *An Experiment with Time*, which accounts for 'precognition' and destiny in terms of a series of higher dimensions of time, in which each corresponds to a higher level of consciousness. Both books influenced Lowry and were referred to by him throughout his career. In *In Ballast*, Tor's admission to having been 'haunted' by the Charles Fort story affirms the interconnectedness of nature and the Jungian

principle of synchronicity, of events being meaningfully related though not by strict laws of causation, as a way to account for strange coincidences and other temporal phenomena not amenable to scientific explanation.

The other major dimension of consciousness that concerned Lowry was the relationship between individual and collectivity. Carl Jung first made the distinction between the 'personal' unconscious and the 'collective' unconscious encompassing the soul of humanity at large, in his essay "The Structure of the Unconscious" in 1916 (263-292). In 1936, he reflected upon the growing political significance of the collective unconscious in an era of mass politics:

> Today you can judge better than you could twenty years ago the nature of the forces involved. Can we not see how a whole nation is reviving an archaic symbol, yes, even archaic religious forms, and how this mass emotion is influencing and revolutionizing the life of the individual in a catastrophic manner? The man of the past is alive in us today to a degree undreamt of before the war, and in the last analysis what is the fate of great nations but a summation of the psychic changes in individuals? ("The Concept" 47)

Lowry's push beyond Aiken's more private, Freudian model of artistic self-awareness echoed Jung's concept of individuality as the development of consciousness in relation to the subconscious aspirations of the collective (Lowry, *Sursum Corda!* 2.99-101, 2.405-407). Although the standard Marxist ideology may have indicated temporarily repressing (or harnessing) individuality for the sake of an intensifying class struggle, for Lowry similar progressive ends required asserting individual consciousness in the face of growing collective atavism. This is the ideal of "libertarian socialism" that Herbert Read would later defend, in *The Politics of the Unpolitical*, describing the freedom of the artist in explicitly Jungian terms (Read 114-115, 119); it is also not far removed from the more brazenly anarchistic and post-surrealist view that Henry Miller articulated in 1939. Artistic purpose and political purpose in these circumstances were therefore not necessarily antagonistic, but could, if properly conceived, be complementary: Sigbjorn may board a ship that is 'in ballast to the White Sea', but it is ultimately *his* voyage, and in confronting Erikson he will be able to advance political truths as well as artistic ones.

Swinging the Maelstrom, *Lunar Caustic*, and the Retreat from History

The long, disjointed development of *Lunar Caustic*, the only other book Lowry began in the 1930s, shows the growing attraction to socialist causes that entered his writing during the decade prior to the loss of the 1944 *In Ballast* manuscript, and the gradual dissipation of his political ardour thereafter. Based upon his confinement and treatment for alcoholism in New York's Bellevue Hospital in 1934 and published posthumously in 1965 as a novella by Lowry's wife Margerie and the poet Earle Birney, *Lunar Caustic* was actually an amalgam of two different versions, *The Last Address*

(1936) and *Swinging the Maelstrom* (1940). In the notes to the 1951 *Work in Progress* statement that he sent to his agent Harold Matson, Lowry declared an intention to follow the characterization in the later version, but also expressed doubts about the "metaphysico-political-ironical posture" of its conclusion (Grace, *The Voyage* 30). That conclusion was much more optimistic than that of the earlier work, or of the posthumously edited version of *Lunar Caustic*, as it features the main protagonist at the end of the story breaking through his isolation, instead of withdrawing from life, as he does at the end of *The Last Address*.

We now understand more perfectly how *Swinging the Maelstrom* had been intended to segue into *In Ballast to the White Sea*, in accordance with the original Dantean scheme that began with *Volcano*. The main character is an ex-sailor and artist (musician), Bill Plantagenet, who, like Geoffrey Firmin, is crippled by alcohol and by his bleak circumstances, which are mirrored in the political and economic environments of 1936. But, by the end of his purgatory, he senses the possibility for change: for example by complaining about the working conditions for nurses and abuses of power in the hospital, and upon his discharge, he even considers the possibility of joining a Loyalist ship bound for Spain. *In Ballast*'s protagonist Sigbjorn is likewise shown a path forward in the world of action. He is young, uncertain about his future, and troubled about his family's misfortunes, even about his own identity after discovering Erikson, as well as by the growing political crisis and the qualms that he has about the Marxist/communist solution being urged upon him from several quarters. But he is confident enough about his own sense of reality and its concomitant artistic mission to boldly accept all these challenges, and to reach toward a highly discriminating form of social praxis in fashioning his personal salvation. 'Paradiso', however fleeting and tenuous in a troubled and threatened world, was to have had a civic dimension.

After the *In Ballast* manuscript had been destroyed in 1944, however, Lowry gradually drifted away from large-scale political themes in his new fiction, a trend that was undoubtedly also encouraged by the passing of the apocalyptic historical moment captured in *Under the Volcano*. In the looser, more open-ended framework called *The Voyage That Never Ends, Lunar Caustic* was reconceived as a prelude to *Volcano*, leading deeper into hell rather than pointing a way out. The river outside the barred windows and walls of Bellevue remains beyond the reach of Plantagenet and the fellow inmates that he has befriended and has tried to help. The political ending from *Swinging the Maelstrom* is gone. There is no escape route on display from the 'tyranny of self'; Lowry in 1951, therefore, described the reimagined novel as one "of almost total blackness" (Grace, *The Voyage* 13). This change of emphasis occurs not just because of the fire that destroyed his manuscript, or the coincident death of Grieg, as much as Lowry read great significance into those events. It is also because Lowry's own consciousness had begun to revert to its normal, less political posture once the Depression and War years had passed. This is evident in the highly autobiographical *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid*, another unfinished novel

begun after his return visit to Mexico in 1944-45. It contains perfunctory observations about the achievements of the Mexican Revolution, but it is really about the author of *Under the Volcano*—thinly disguised as Sigbjorn Wilderness, the author of *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*—who admits to "the most dramatic events of history having swept by him like a liner in the fog" (42).

Such passages might strike some as a return to the 1920s modernism as described by Orwell in *Inside the Whale*: that "there's no attention to the urgent problems of the moment, above all no politics in the narrower sense." Nevertheless, as Ronald Binns observed in 1984, Ortega's theory that every life is "a work of fiction" appealed to Lowry, because it "enabled him to convince himself that his autobiographically based metafictions had a public significance". It was not sufficient, however, to avoid "an undeniable shrinkage of perspective in his writing" (66-67). The more successful short stories give much insight into his struggles as an author and about the process of writing itself; "The Forest Path to the Spring" and certain passages in *October Ferry to Gabriola* also describe the closest thing to paradise that Lowry himself had experienced, namely that of splendid isolation and temporary solace in nature. Yet he forgot, or chose to ignore, that the clash between his artistic philosophy and Marxism in the mid-1930s not only contained a powerful lesson for literary criticism—that artists can ultimately contribute more to political truth by resisting ideology (thereby exposing the limits of its orthodoxies), sticking to their metaphysical guns, and reaching for a true work of art—but also that *art itself can be improved by being tested and exercised in this way*. The publication of *In Ballast* has therefore enabled us to better evaluate both Binns's argument that Lowry's postwar art could have been improved by keeping its political focus, and how it compared to Spender's advocacy of a return to Modernism-and-Liberalism.

The ultimate vindication of Lowry's doubts about communism came not from the show trials or the gulag, but from the declining legitimacy of the Revolution, the overt beginnings of which he lived long enough to observe in the Hungarian and Polish revolts of 1956, the year prior to his death. Had he lived to see the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, he would have known that it did not mean, *pace* Fukuyama, the End of History.[11] His skepticism toward teleology clearly extended to romantic nationalism, liberal Hegelianism, and other theories of progress, as well as to Marxism, as evidenced as early as 1936 by how much the warnings of both the Marxist Nina and the capitalist Captain Tarnmoor weighed on Sigbjorn's mind. Lowry, therefore, would have been as likely as anyone to predict the *return* of history, in keeping with the spirit of his oeuvre's cyclical voyage metaphor; and he might not have been surprised at all by the appearance of nativist and populist leaders making nostalgic appeals to anomic populations in our own day. Such an Arendtian concern for the possible social-psychological origins of totalitarianism ties the eternal struggle with isolation and the 'circle of self' at the level of the individual to political struggle and the fate of mankind. That kind of connection was Lowry at his best, as demonstrated by the multilevelled symbolism and psychic resonances of *Under the Volcano*.

The enduring relevance of both Lowry's early metaphysical resistance to Marxism and his confident 1950 prediction of communism's demise suggests that *In Ballast to the White Sea*'s fundamental tension between art and politics could have been used to better delimit and to invigorate the development of the *Voyage* as a whole. More autobiographical than *Volcano*, yet more purely fictional than *Ultramarine* or most of Lowry's other writings, its characters' multiple tragedies, identity crises, sexual tensions, and yawning uncertainties, and their parallels in the world at large, gave it at least a scale and dramatic potential to match that of Lowry's masterpiece. The young Lowry's emerging sensibility was sufficiently developed to operate as a pre-political theory that determined what he could take from socialism (an antidote to isolation and withdrawal, and a praxis for dealing with human suffering), as well as what he found objectionable in Marxism (a scientific determinism, and a dogmatic and dangerous belief in ultimate or final consciousness), along with an awareness of bourgeois socialism as something essentially problematic, an idea that he develops further in *Volcano*.

Sigbjorn's struggle to articulate a socialism more compatible with life's protean, organic reality (an anarchosocialist moment that had much in common with the New Apocalypse writers) meant that for a time he was able to heed the warning of his imaginary muse, Herman Melville, against the "unpardonable sin […] of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood within man" (*In Ballast* 84). Unfortunately, Lowry later seized upon the supposed loss of his novel to embrace instead the tragic myth of the author's 'paradise lost', along with a now un-bridled romantic doctrine that "[a]n organic work of art, having been conceived, must grow in the creator's mind, or proceed to perish". By letting *In Ballast* perish, Lowry signaled retreat from socialist politics in his fiction, creating a bias once again toward solitary consciousness and its pitfalls.

This did not, however, simply represent a return to the putatively 'apolitical' semi-colonialism of the 1920s. Indeed, in the last decade of his life (1947-1957), Lowry's version of late modernism would continue to display a critical, at times even radical, posture toward both metropolitan culture and Enlightenment rationalism. Foxcroft stresses Lowry's portrayal of the Day of the Dead in terms of "the interface of Aztec and Zapotec cosmological traditions with Hispanic ones" (2). Lowry himself had extolled the virtues of Mexico as the setting for *Volcano* this way, in his famous 1946 letter to Jonathan Cape:

> the meeting place of Mankind itself […] the age-old arena of racial and political conflicts of every nature […] where a colorful native people of genius have a religion that we can roughly describe as one of death, so that it is a good place […] to set our drama of a man's struggle between the powers of darkness and light. (*Sursum Corda!* 1.508)

The cultural interplay and cultural hybridity evidenced by *Volcano* was continued in the unfinished and posthumously published novels *Dark as the Grave* and *La Mordida*.

Lowry also continued, and indeed sharpened, his adversarial attitude toward critics after the war and after the predominance of Marxists within literary circles had subsided. "Through the Panama," a novella based on journal entries of Lowry's voyage from Vancouver to Le Havre in late 1947 and sub-titled "From the Journal of Sigbjorn Wilderness," mentions the

> [t]ragedy of someone [i.e. Martin Trumbaugh, a character who Wilderness is creating] who got out of England to put a few thousand miles of ocean between himself and the non-creative bullyboys and homosapient schoolmasters of English literature, only to find them so firmly entrenched in even greater power within America […] I find it almost impossible to share what [Kafka and Melville] meant to me with these people. […] In fact I have to forget that there is such a thing as so-called "modern literature" and "new criticism" to get any of my old feeling and passion back. (*Sursum Corda!* 2.75)

Whether this slightly paranoid rant of the Trumbaugh character accurately reflects Lowry's mature view is deliberately obscured, but three pages later we read that "[bully-boys and schoolmasters now go to church, instead of Communist meetings, and obediently popular opinion follows, prayer book in hand" (*Sursum Corda!* 2.78). Now liberated from the need to reconcile his artistic mission with a proletarian cause that is in certain fundamental aspects antagonistic to it, Lowry is better able to articulate a politics consistent with his fiction. Its focus is the rise of materialism and consumerism at the expense of spiritual values: he complains of the "appalling sights of despair and degradation to be met with daily in the streets of Vancouver, Canada, where man, having turned his back on nature, and having no heritage of beauty else, and no faith in a civilization where God has become an American washing machine", but where coming to terms with the struggle between conservation and exploitation "probably presages an important new birth of wisdom" (95).

Notes

1. Lowry receives only passing mention in Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism*; that book focuses on establishing the canonical status of Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes, and Samuel Beckett as figures who both self-consciously manifest the decline of modernism and the emergence of postmodernism. Lowry also escapes mention in James Gifford's *Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and Later Avant-Gardes*.

2. The author wishes to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this oddness in Spender's commentary, i.e. his eagerness to conflate Orwell with libertarian anarchosocialists, and his possible political motives for doing so. It seems that he was not keen on articulating either a liberal socialism or a libertarian one; in fact, he resigned his editorship of *Encounter Magazine* the following year because of revelations about its CIA funding.

3. One speculation is that Lowry would have chosen 72 years as a suitable life-span for the legitimacy of the Russian Revolution because that corresponded to the average life-span at the time he wrote: 1917 plus 72 equals 1989. See Crawford, "Malcolm Lowry and the End of Communism."

4. Neither *Ultramarine* nor *In Ballast to the White Sea* merits mention in Nick Hubble's *The Proletarian Answer to the Modernist Question*, about modernist-proletarian texts from the period, probably

because Lowry is not in either case trying to write a "proletarian novel" as such. Nevertheless, Williams credits Lowry for writing convincingly about working-class people: "Of all the Thirties writers who dutifully immersed themselves in the working class by frequenting proletarian pubs or, later, by volunteering for Spain Lowry went furthest in his assimilation of working-class speech patterns into his writing" (70-71).

5. Although Lowry's father was a Liverpool cotton-broker, his maternal grandfather was a Norwegian sea captain.

6. As Chris Ackerly's *In Ballast* annotation #X.63 suggests, Lowry sees the spiritual sickness of Protestants diagnosed by Young Hegelians in the nineteenth century as culminating in the cultural turn toward Nazism in his own day, an analysis echoed by Lukacs in 1953.

7. The 1837 statement of the Young Hegelians, "Die Hallischen Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst," criticized Hegel's "vision of history as closed to the future" (*In Ballast* Note#X.63).

8. As Ackerly points out, this is probably an allusion to Stephen Daedalus's claim in *Ulysses* that Ireland is not important because he belongs to it, but because it belongs to him (#IV.64, 291).

9. In one of his letters to Downie Kirk, Lowry praised Gasset's philosophy by explicitly comparing it favourably to Sartre's: "[I]t's refreshing to read a philosophy that gives value to the drama of life itself, of the dramatic value of your own life at the very moment you are reading" (*Sursum Corda!* 2.255).

10. See e.g. Georges Sorel, 'L'Evolution creatrice."

11. An opposing view to Fukuyama's was Samuel P. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1996). Huntington anticipated a post-Cold War world in which ethnic and civilizational conflicts would increase and the dominant Western model would be relativized rather than universalized. An early influence of Huntington's was Oswald Spengler, whose *Decline of the West* (1918) is referenced in several of Lowry's writings, including *Under the Volcano*.

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