

J.A. Wainwright

**The Book "Being Written": Art and Life in *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid***

It seems to me sometimes that I do not really exist, but that I merely imagine I exist. The thing that I have the greatest difficulty in believing in is my own reality. I am constantly getting outside myself, and as I watch myself act I cannot understand how a person who acts is the same as the person who is watching him act, and who wonders in astonishment and doubt how he can be actor and watcher at the same time.

—André Gide  
*The Counterfeiters*

In the concept of art as experience . . . one implication . . . is that life and art are inter-changeable. Life can be converted directly to art, but to do so is to destroy life. Similarly, art and the artist may be destroyed by life . . . Life and art are so closely related that one can exhaust or destroy the other . . . Hence the continual struggle between life and art.

—Maurice Beebe  
*Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts*

That Malcolm Lowry was unable to detach himself from his artistic creations and hold a wholly objective view of them must be acknowledged by any perceptive critic of Lowry. Whether *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid*<sup>1</sup> is simply the proof of Lowry's dilemma in this regard, thinly-disguised, or whether the book is a remarkable explication of such a dilemma in fictional terms is open to debate. In his introduction to *Dark as the Grave* Douglas Day is concerned with Lowry's view of himself:

He was never able to define himself *to* himself, partly because he was afraid of what he would see if he looked deeply enough into his psyche. But like most visionary artists, he was acutely egocentric: his gaze was almost always inward, so much so that he was very nearly blind to the world outside—except in so far as it reflected his own thoughts and feelings . . . An elusive inner Malcolm Lowry alternately laughed at and sorrowed with his brilliant, incompetent outer self. Such a man could write only about himself, which is precisely what Lowry did. (p. xi)

In other words, Lowry did not distinguish between the Malcolm Lowry who wrote and the Malcolm Lowry who was written about; he did not distinguish between the "real" world and his imaginative perception of things.

Most critics of Lowry agree about his egocentric approach to art, but they do not always agree about the effect of Lowry's confused vision of himself in his art on his writing. Of this vision, as it influences *Dark as the Grave*, William H. New writes

The problem being explored involves the relationship between an author and his work—obviously, here, on the two levels of fact and fiction, which together create a kind of dialogue between levels of the mind. When a writer writes a work, he is expressing something of himself. Yet when he finishes it, publishes it, and launches it into the world on its own, it becomes something separate. It acquires its own identity or "reality". If the writer cannot for his part separate himself from that earlier world—if he continues to identify with his characters, that is—he runs the risk of losing his identity in the "real" world and so ending up wandering in limbo. Thus Lowry becomes [Sigbjorn] Wilderness, and Wilderness's identity is unstable. Place, past, and present meld together as the mind shuttles through intricate realms of reality that differ both in degree of actualization and in kind.<sup>2</sup>

Such a "loss of identity" on Lowry's part leads directly to his loss of artistic control in *Dark as the Grave*, according to George Woodcock, who asserts that "There is too much talk about art and too little art . . . . *Dark as the Grave* does not make its own universe . . . ." <sup>3</sup> But W.H. New, despite his statements about Lowry's "unstable" identity, insists that, although there is confusion in Lowry's mind between "real" and fictional characters, "What Wilderness makes of the characters and countryside has its actuality and impact inside his own mind and the difference between encountered events and remembered or anticipated ones is amply illustrated."<sup>4</sup> If Sigbjorn does have his own mind, then it might follow that *Dark as the Grave* has its own universe. It is my belief that such an independent mind and universe do exist in this novel.

W.H. New points out, "Lowry was enchanted with the notion that the novelist was the ideal metaphor for man. That a writer could create a character (who could be a writer-creator who could ostensibly in his turn do the same thing) suggested to him that the writer himself might be a character in the purview of an unknown artist/ perceiver . . . . The division between fact and fiction intentionally blurs."<sup>5</sup> But in *Dark as the Grave* Lowry did not write a book in which an artist named Sigbjorn

Wilderness, who has written a novel entitled *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, need be directly connected to another artist named Malcolm Lowry, who has written a novel entitled *Under the Volcano*. Even though Sigbjorn has a feeling that he is being written about as well as writing and that he often "behaves like the subject of a writer rather than the writer himself" (p. 11), the connection between Lowry and Sigbjorn is not what is being examined in *Dark as the Grave*. What are being examined, primarily, are the specifics of a proper relationship between art and life; these are clearly presented in *Dark as the Grave* through Sigbjorn's life and art without any dependence on the reader's prior knowledge of either Malcolm Lowry or *Under the Volcano*.

There is little reason to doubt that whatever exists in the haunted mind of Sigbjorn Wilderness, throughout most of *Dark as the Grave*, has its matrix in the mind, similarly haunted, of Malcolm Lowry. Very early on in the novel, during the plane flight south towards Mexico, Sigbjorn asks himself what he is after: "Why had he used Fernando Martinez of all people, as a kind of excuse for going to Mexico? What did his friend, his character Dr. Vigil, mean to him, but a nostalgia for delirium? Or oblivion. And his meeting with him another excuse, even such as the Consul liked to find, for 'celebration' " (p. 3). There is very little difference, if any at all, between this interior monologue by Sigbjorn and Douglas Day's explanation of Lowry's voyage south: "Lowry decided they ought to take a trip—to Mexico, where they could see Juan Fernando Marquez, show Margerie the land she had come to know so well from her work on *Under the Volcano*, and, perhaps, prove to himself that this time he would be strong enough to overcome the dangers of his own personal Inferno."<sup>6</sup> Day explains that most of *Dark as the Grave* came directly from the journals that Lowry kept on this Mexican trip, and he accepts the words of Sigbjorn as being applicable to Lowry's own condition, quoting the former to reveal the latter:

Was it that he wanted to return there, as if to gloat over the conquest of these things . . . with a feeling of pride, thinking that all this had been transcended? How much better I am now! . . . Had he really transcended it? Was he coming here with a pride of accomplishment with Primrose [Day uses "Margerie" here] and a gesture of defiance, to fling his gage in the face of fate and say (and say moreover in clichés), Look I have succeeded, I have transformed, single-handed, my life-in-death into life . . . .<sup>7</sup>

If one is writing a biography of Lowry then the material in *Dark as the Grave* is invaluable; but what Sigbjorn has to say about himself in the passage above is meaningful enough without its being related to Lowry's

life. It is valid commentary by Sigbjorn on his trip to Mexico, given what is already known about Sigbjorn at this point in the novel. Day is quick to point out the important distinction between the autobiographical nature of *Dark as the Grave* as it explains Lowry and the symbolic nature of the novel as it explains Sigbjorn Wilderness:

The facts of the Lowry's journey to Mexico in 1945-46 are only the bare bones of *Dark as the Grave*. Lowry was nothing if not a symbolizer: whatever happened, whatever he saw or heard, had to mean something, however obliquely . . . . His mind reaches deeply and broadly, drawing from the world, from his own considerable intellect, from his subconscious, new visions of the great old symbols. Not the authentic, simple forms of vine, plate, wine, stone, woman, tree—Lowry was after bigger game: the archetypal daemonic forms of abyss, labyrinth, burnt forest, monster, blighted garden, ruined castle, dark and ominous forces at work in an ancient and dangerous world. Thus Sigbjorn Wilderness is not simply Malcolm Lowry taking his wife on a vacation to Mexico: he is a Dante or a Virgil on his way down into the Inferno . . . . And the hell is no one else's but his own. (p. xvii)

It is not difficult to see *Dark as the Grave* as more than just the journals of a holiday; it can represent a symbolic experience of Mexico. Similarly, Sigbjorn Wilderness is more than just the alter ego of Malcolm Lowry; he can be seen as a symbolic figure, "a Dante . . . on his way down into the Inferno", the artist on his way down into his art and life. More important, I would suggest, Sigbjorn must be seen as a character who takes on a life and who has an art of his own and who resolves a very real dilemma about the relationship between the two, a dilemma that Lowry could not resolve for himself in his lifetime.

It is, perhaps, difficult to imagine anyone approaching *Dark as the Grave* with any serious critical intention who has not first read *Under the Volcano*. Obviously, many of Sigbjorn's references to his *Valley of the Shadow of Death* would make more sense and, perhaps, gain immeasurable depth from the reader's knowledge of Geoffrey Firmin's existence. But would such knowledge necessarily bring further depth to Lowry's portrait of Sigbjorn, and how much does the portrait of the artist in *Dark as the Grave* depend on *Under the Volcano* for its explication? There should be no doubt that *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* = *Under the Volcano*<sup>8</sup>; only the title has been changed. However, does Lowry assume that every reader of *Dark as the Grave* has read *Volcano*, or is his limited presentation of plot and character in Sigbjorn's *The Valley* sufficient for his purposes in *Dark as the Grave*? Those who have not read *Volcano* may well consider that it is of real importance to know

what goes on in Sigbjorn's *The Valley* beyond the rather sketchy information given. Who are the Consul and Hugh, and what kind of character is Dr. Vigil? What is Dr. Vigil's relationship to Fernando Martinez? Surely if such questions can be answered, Sigbjorn's dilemma will be more understandable, his art will, in fact, give his life some "form and meaning"<sup>9</sup>.

The irony of this seemingly reasonable critical approach is that if *Volcano-Valley* is read something of value is learned about its role in *Dark as the Grave*, though not, perhaps, what was expected. In *Volcano-Valley* Malcolm Lowry has created a work of fiction that, although based on some fact, is not dependent on such fact after its creation for its continued existence and meaning. The depth of the transformation of life into art, fact into fiction, the life of Lowry-Sigbjorn into the life of the Consul and the art of *Volcano-Valley*, is remarkable. However, it should also be realized that *Volcano-Valley* does not itself reveal anything about the life of Lowry-Sigbjorn; it is not an autobiographical novel and does not give that life any "form and meaning". Lowry knew this was so when he wrote *Dark as the Grave*, even though he was haunted by the themes, characters, locales, and general landscape of his great novel and had Sigbjorn haunted by the same things. Lowry sensed that it was not art by itself that gave life "form and meaning" but rather life which contained art that did so. He created Sigbjorn's "real" journey of discovery as a symbolic journey for himself to illustrate this. In doing so, he purposefully limited Sigbjorn's use and the reader's knowledge of *Volcano-Valley* and left Sigbjorn free to investigate the relationship between art and life through an ultimate investigation of his life which contains his art. The reader of *Dark as the Grave* is free to do likewise.

Lowry makes it clear that during Sigbjorn's Mexican journey and simultaneous haunting by *The Valley* it is not the distinction between life lived and life transformed by art (for example, how and why Dr. Vigil differs from Fernando) that Sigbjorn cannot accept; it is rather that the life lived before art still continues to be lived despite artistic transformation (Fernando is still Fernando in Sigbjorn's imagination despite Dr. Vigil, and Sigbjorn is still his frightened, confused self despite the creation of the Consul). In other words, Sigbjorn must realize that he is not haunted by his art *per se* but by the content of his life which includes within its borders the content of his art. Lowry emphasizes this by having Sigbjorn "living" rather than writing *Dark as the Grave*<sup>10</sup> (this in itself makes for a great difference between Lowry and Sigbjorn). As Sigbjorn defines it, *Dark as the Grave* is a work of

life; it must, therefore, exist in terms of its relationship to the earlier life of Sigbjorn Wilderness, a life within which he wrote *The Valley*. As far as Lowry himself is concerned, *Dark as the Grave* is an attempt to write about that life which still continues to be lived despite any transformation of life into art in *Volcano*. This is why George Woodcock's criticism that *Dark as the Grave* "exists only in terms of its relationship to the earlier novel [*Volcano*]"<sup>11</sup> is invalid. *Dark as the Grave* does have an important relationship with *Volcano*, but that relationship exists only so far as Lowry chooses to reveal it. *Dark as the Grave* exists despite *Volcano*, and this is not the same as being a "satellite"<sup>12</sup> of the earlier novel.

*Volcano-Valley* has its true importance in *Dark as the Grave* as a representative of the transformation of life into art which cannot, alone, transform life. As a completed work of fiction it cannot, apparently, "flow"<sup>13</sup> back into life to give that life its needed "form and meaning", even though as "an organic work of art" (p. 154) it does affect life and continues to grow in its creator's imagination. Lowry does not have Sigbjorn superimpose the Consul's existence upon his own existence but rather has Sigbjorn deal with certain limited aspects of the fiction he has created as this fiction relates to facts he encounters in Mexico and with which he must come to terms. *Volcano-Valley*, as it appears in *Dark as the Grave*, heightens but does not control or alter the facts of Sigbjorn's return journey to Mexico. Sigbjorn-as-artist voyages through life which contains art in Mexico and emerges, at the end of his journey, as an artist without his art alone to haunt or to guide him.

At the Los Angeles airport, waiting for the flight to Mexico City via El Paso and Monterrey, Sigbjorn Wilderness has a vision "of a flowing like an eternal river". It is a vision that seems to bring peace and harmony to all his previously-expressed and chaotic feelings about his art and life:

. . . 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 . . . Primrose and he . . . lay some meaning, or the key to a mystery that would give some meaning to their ways on earth. (p. 43)

However, "Between the idea/ And the reality . . . / Falls the shadow"<sup>14</sup>; the "flow" between art and life occurs only in Sigbjorn's imagination, not in his daily existence. Art and life flowing together with the strength

and solace of "that current in the Fraser River back home in British Columbia", art and life absorbing and transforming each other in such a positive, almost holy, fashion, simply does not occur throughout most of *Dark as the Grave*. Rather, art and life seem to intrude upon one another, each darkly claiming Sigbjorn, battering his psyche until he is not living life but being lived by it, and not creating art but depending for his own survival on art's continued creation of him.

How can art and life peacefully meld when Lowry suggests a far different set of conditions for their interaction as he has Sigbjorn try to explain his life and art to Eddie Kent and Dr. Hippolyte:

'Part of the artist's despair,' Sigbjorn said, half to himself, and walking restlessly now, 'in the face of his material is perhaps occasioned by the patent fact that the universe itself . . . 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. It was all I could do to finish *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* . . . 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 burning 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?' (p. 154)

If we fit Lowry's (and Sigbjorn's) river image with the implications of the passage above, then we have two rivers of fire (art and life) not merging in complementary fashion but uniting in destructive conflagration. To put pen to paper is, it seems, not to create a work of art but to partake in its destruction. Sigbjorn goes on with his analogy of art as a burning building by insisting that a work of art is never completed because it is continually altered *for* the artist—not *by* him—as new beams of wood are altered under the effect of fire. Sigbjorn further insists that, because of this universal process of creation, the artist is "at the same time living the book he is writing or supposed to be writing" (p. 156) and, in fact, any book that he has already written. Therefore, Sigbjorn insists that he is living rather than writing *Dark as the Grave*, and he also realizes that he is living, even though he has already written, *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*. Art and life surround and threaten to swallow Sigbjorn Wilderness (whose very name suggests where he is in relation to them) and cause him to be haunted by the thought that he is only a character in a novel written by someone else, or that he has become his own character.

On the plane flight south towards Mexico, Lowry presents Sigbjorn as a man almost incapable of doing anything else but making connections between different facts and fictions in his life, a man haunted by the tendency of his mind to overrun and gorge itself with names, places, dates, people, books, and events. Sigbjorn is a kind of conceptual solipsist who seems to be involved with the "real" world only when he picks up a bottle to pour himself a drink or when he feels the hard seat of a Mexican bus press into his tired body, a body usually suffering from a massive hangover. However, if he is lost in his imaginative conception of things, it is a conception within which constant collisions with the "real" world occur. Almost everything encountered in his mind is something to be worried about because it can be a symbol of or link with thoughts, memories, and fears that rush uncontrollably through his consciousness. Nearly all the collisions are the result of Sigbjorn's fascination, indeed obsession, with the affinity of seemingly disparate elements in his universe.

When Sigbjorn's wife Primrose gives him a copy of the book entitled *The Dark Journey*, this book becomes "a link with everything in the great chain of the infernal machine of his life" (p. 45); as he ponders over *The Dark Journey*, Sigbjorn reveals a length of that unbreakable chain of connection between his art and life, a chain that is constantly rattling through his existence: "Why should books like *The Dark Journey* start up at you just when you are trying to make a journey into life, he asked himself" (p. 46). He has already admitted that he lives in a "real" world which is "a world in suspense, a world in delirium, a drunken world in fear" (p. 13), a fact he can best make clear to himself by translating it into a metaphor about art: "Half the world was like a writer who has had his play rejected. In fact the world at times seemed very like a rejected play itself. Or a rejected novel, like for instance, *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, by Sigbjorn Wilderness" (p. 12). *The Dark Journey* reminds Sigbjorn not only of his major piece of writing, *The Valley*, but also of his unfinished work *In Ballast to the White Sea*; this is because, years before, he had bought a copy of *The Dark Journey* when he had first met his Norwegian author-friend Erikson, whose death by fire in a burning plane is connected by Sigbjorn to the almost-death by fire in a burning shack of *In Ballast*. It is his wife Primrose who has given him *The Dark Journey* as a gift, just as it was his first wife, Ruth, who gave him a book with an equally portentous title, *Flight into Darkness*. Of course, Erikson had his own flight into darkness, a dark journey into death, when he flew off in that doomed plane over Germany; now Sigbjorn, reading at random a passage from *The Dark*



*Journey*, feels that he is on his own plane flight into darkness: " 'It seemed to him,' he read, 'as though time had rolled back, and that all the anguish and terror of those last months were suddenly reduced to nothing. Perhaps nothing had happened since he had been there; the house and the cobbles seemed the same. If he had really committed a crime, would he risk himself thus in a place where everyone was eager to denounce him?' " (pp. 50-51). This passage not only reminds Sigbjorn of his own life but also, again, of his own art in *The Valley* from which he has recalled a very similar interior monologue. Sigbjorn even creates a new fiction in his mind out of this interaction between various facts and fictions: he believes that people will readily come to the conclusion that Erikson has been the author of all of the books by Wilderness. Yet this is a minor fear when compared with Sigbjorn's obsession with another work of fiction and its seemingly undeniable claim on himself and *The Valley*.

Close to the heart of Sigbjorn's preoccupation with *The Valley* is his feeling that he has turned his greatest weakness (drinking) into his greatest strength:

The writing of such a book was in fact itself a form of prolonged concentrated debauch, with the great difference that throughout it one was obliged to tell the truth. In brief it was the highest thing that, allowing for all the shortcomings of the type of consciousness that could entertain such a notion, and the shocks, bald necessities, and brute facts that one had brought to the pitch of doing it, an artist of that type could attempt. (p. 41)

When writing *The Valley*, Sigbjorn reminds himself, ". . . he was breaking not merely new ground, but building a terra nova, achieving something that was unique, in a sort of ultima thule of the spirit" (p. 24). Yet, for all this, Sigbjorn lacks the conviction of his beliefs. *Drunkard's Rigadoon* is a novel about drunkenness that has become a best-seller and has been made into a popular film whose advertisements seem to waylay Sigbjorn around every airport corner. *The Valley* has previously been established in his mind as the symbol of weakness transformed into strength and, therefore, giving his life "form and meaning"; but because *Drunkard's Rigadoon* has been published (and *The Valley* has not) and is such a popular success, Sigbjorn's greatest symbol is relegated on the plane flight to the position of being just another of the many symbols with which he has to deal. *The Valley* loses its meaning as something to be depended upon in the "real" world and becomes one of the many items in his imaginative reality which are in

collision with that world; the result is that Sigbjorn can only see "a death-scape of bleary hoardings" advertising "*Wilderness's Rigadoon*" (p. 26). Thus the wind of free association that blows through his mind is a levelling wind which gives all facts and fictions equal and distorted billing, allowing no distinction among them once they collide in any one of a thousand different ways. For Sigbjorn, graffiti on a washroom wall can say 'Kilroy was here' or "Read *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*" (p. 31). Or, as Primrose says, "'Christ, what a maze of complicated suffering and interrelated nonsense everything is'" (p. 31). Not until Sigbjorn lands in Mexico and begins to limit the free association in his mind to the relationship between his art, as specifically expressed in *The Valley*, and his life, as lived in the revisiting and re-evaluation of Mexico, can he sense the true nature of his minotaur and begin his struggle to emerge from his maze.

Part of Sigbjorn's plan, a very important part in Mexico, is to be Primrose's "guide", to be "her Virgil, through these intricate regions of ancient fire and purge and transcendent beauty" (p. 72); Mexico is to be handled objectively and calmly by a "responsible" Sigbjorn. However, as he discovers, though the regions are indeed intricate they are not for him so ancient, and any purge or sense of transcendence is not quickly forthcoming:

... he was treading, walking much more seriously over a sort of spiritual battlefield, in which Sigbjorn, Cortez-like, was the conqueror, the horrors of experience here that had been so far transcended by the completion of his book and his presence in Mexico at all being the defeated enemy. [Yet] there was the sense that he had perhaps used treacherous forces to bring out his conquest—he could not have said quite how or why—and by walking straight into the past like this, it was asking for them to have their revenge. On this level the future scarcely existed, and the more he travelled upon it in his mind, the less like any kind of conquest was it, did it seem. Indeed it felt here more like a defeat; a monstrous defeat, a *noche triste* in fact—only now even the sense of the battlefield disappeared. (pp. 79-80)

Staying at the Hotel Cornada in Mexico City, as he had seven years previously, Sigbjorn is overwhelmed by ghosts from the past, his own ghost in particular. He remembers his first wife, Ruth, and their separation at this hotel; it was here he returned from Oaxaca after seeing Fernando for the last time, and this was his final stop before being deported from Mexico. Walking through the streets of Mexico City, Sigbjorn encounters familiar cafés, sites where such cafés were but are no longer, street-corners where he was drunk, and too many "idiotic nostalgias".

He turns to his art for "solace", for a sense of order, so that his life will have "form and meaning", but he discovers that "merely to have written *The Valley* or to now have *The Valley* as a *fait accompli* was apparently not enough" (p. 92). At first he seems to be able to talk smoothly and objectively about his art and past life to Primrose, to be a Virgil of sorts:

'No, this was once the El Petate . . . Don't you remember the poem of the Consul's that Yvonne and Hugh found on the menu in the old Popo—just before Yvonne's death, when they set out for the Farolito? . . . We kept the name El Petate in chapter eleven for another cantina where Hugh and Yvonne failed to find the Consul, the cantina that was all that was left of the "burned Anochitlán"—by which I really meant Nochtitlan in Oaxaca, where I went with Fernando to deliver money . . . Anochitlán isn't very far from Parián, where Fernando and I had to say goodbye. Or Doctor Virgil and I, Juan Cerillo and I, just as you like to call him.' (p. 84)

But there is really very little "form and meaning" to be derived from the passage above despite Sigbjorn's wishes to the contrary. The confusion that naturally exists for the reader ignorant of the plot of *The Valley* (who are Hugh and Yvonne?) is meant to underline the increasing confusion in Sigbjorn's mind about the relationship between his art and life. When Primrose reminds him of his own flight northwards in Mexico seven years ago, Sigbjorn is no longer the confident Virgil:

But the Consul had not fled north . . . he had fled to the Farolito, in Parián, there to meet his death. And they, Primrose and he, had not yet fled north either, at least not yet. They had flown south, a hell of a way south, and pretty soon, "as soon as we can," they would be flying even further south, to the Farolito too—who knew?—for the Farolito was not in Parián, but in Oaxaca city itself . . . And in Oaxaca they might even put up at the Hotel La Luna if it still existed, from which Sigbjorn used to stumble at four a.m. to the Farolito . . . It was very singular. (p. 85)

It is immediately after this unsuccessful attempt to integrate art and life, to show Primrose how his art has given his life "form and meaning", that Sigbjorn says, for the first time, ". . . this is the book . . . The real book" (p. 85). He means that the living of their present lives, which include lives and art past, will somehow yield the required "form and meaning". But it takes Sigbjorn a long time and much anguish to close the pages of *The Valley* and embrace the "real" book of his life which contains *The Valley*, because such a closing and embrace must include a meeting with "everything that . . . the self had imperfectly transcended" (p. 91); to use Sigbjorn's own image, the funeral pile must, this time, prove adequate to the phoenix. In order to lay ghosts, Sigbjorn must

wander ghost-like through his past and the pages of his novel; he must learn from such wanderings that there are more things in heaven and earth, besides those he has transformed into the art of *The Valley*, which must contribute to the funeral pile.

He is certainly on his way to such a learning as he and Primrose head for Cuernavaca on the bus. Aside from the dead dog he sees, "which itself seemed exhumed out of *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*" (p. 101), Sigbjorn does not confuse art and life on the bus trip; indeed, he senses that his art has not done justice to life. As he watches the passing landscape, he feels as if he is reading a novel (his novel, *The Valley*), but particular passages of this novel run through his mind because of "a sense of their omission or ineptitude" (p. 102). Sigbjorn keeps seeing what he has missed in his art, and it is important that he does not have a notebook on hand to allow him to alter the novel he has already written. He does not worry about what he has missed because he gradually senses that what he is reading here is not his completed novel but rather a book that ". . . had not yet been wholly written, and probably never would be, but that was, in some transcendental manner, being written as they went along" (p. 103). He is happy to be a protagonist in this always-incomplete book and to leave up to fate what will happen to him as a protagonist. However briefly, a sanguine Sigbjorn has emerged.

But, when they arrive in Cuernavaca, Sigbjorn forgets the book "being written" and goes back to *The Valley*. He recognizes scenes from his Chapter VII and Chapter XII, and the reality of the fiction threatens to take over from the "real" world when Primrose announces that she has found an apartment for them in the tower Sigbjorn had written about in *The Valley*, a tower he calls "that madhouse of M. Laruelle's" (p. 107). Sigbjorn fears the complexities of this tower; after all, he had described its interior in *The Valley* even though he had never been inside it. Would not living in it be like stepping into his own fiction? Ironically, by living in this tower for the first time, Sigbjorn is not re-living his life; rather he is able to live as close as possible to his fiction and past life while actually living through experience he has not had before; his present life in the tower is not just a repetition of a life lived seven years previously. Had Sigbjorn, for example, lived in this tower before, and had he written parts of *The Valley* in it, there would be no chance for him to now separate fact from fiction. It is difficult enough for him to distinguish between himself and the ghost of the Consul who haunts the tower, but he does so because his own ghost does not dwell there. The battle for Sigbjorn's sanity and survival may be between a fictional character (the Consul) and the creator of that character (Sigbjorn), but the latter can

draw on forces outside of the tower and, therefore, outside of his novel to achieve victory. Even though Sigbjorn has yet to go through a kind of personal hell in order to gain a vision of Eden, he does glean hope from his initial horror of the tower and its accompanying claims on his psyche:

Surely it bankrupted the imagination, or at least invested it with powers that were normally held to be beyond it . . . it was enough to drive you crazy, or make you think that you were on the track of some new truth that everyone had somehow overlooked and yet was bound up with some fundamental law of human destiny. (pp. 108-109)

A little later, Sigbjorn stands beside a barranca which, although it is not exactly *the* barranca in *The Valley*, is still “. . . vast, threatening, gloomy, dark, frightening: the terrific drop, the darkness below” (p. 109); yet out of this deep feeling of anxiety, “happiness” comes “floating like an essence.” Though such happiness had not thus come for the Consul, Sigbjorn wants to believe that “the transformation of the nefarious poetic pit into sober or upright prose” (p. 109) has freed him to consider more than the despair of life. There follows in his mind a paean to his and Primrose’s life of beauty and peace back home in British Columbia; even the “sinister omen[s]” of Mexico are prophetically transformed as he and Primrose watch an eclipse of the moon and hear “the pure voice of a Mexican singing somewhere on a balcony, as if rejoicing that the world had relinquished its shadow and the moon was with them again” (p. 111). Such a vision does not only result from Sigbjorn’s considerations of the factual and fictional barranca. “The transformation of the nefarious poetic pit” is not yet complete; it has less to do with *The Valley* and more to do with the book “being written” which, while it has not yet taken precedence in Sigbjorn’s mind, is growing in influence. This is evident as Sigbjorn considers both art and life which has contained art:

It was the happiness engendered . . . by work itself . . . or was it the happiness engendered by the memory of work finished, of happy days, other evening walks, or rather, more accurately, of the memory of their escape—from some or other part of that transformation, after tea, when they discussed it to some sort of conclusion, and in this respect purposely of turning evil into good—to see Mauger, the fisherman with his tales of salmon drowning eagles, or of how the wind blowing wildly seemed to keep the tide high up a whole day, or of beaked fish with green bones. (pp. 109-110)

Chapters VI, VII, and VIII in *Dark as the Grave* form the borders of Sigbjorn's pit of despair in the novel; they are the chapters in which he meets his several ghosts face-to-face and in which *The Valley* threatens to swallow him whole, locking his mind forever into a fictional past which has no possible future. For Sigbjorn, in these chapters, "the city is of night, but not of sleep" (p. 117), and his confused mind, the product, simultaneously, of drink and hangover, memory and guilt, has its own particular experience of delirium tremens. It is overwhelmed by the clamour of night-time Cuernavaca, "a maddening aeolian horror that would almost have kept even his poor Consul out of a cantina, however much he needed a drink" (p. 116). Sigbjorn's mind is also overwhelmed by his sense of being split in two: one part of him is a helpless, watching Sigbjorn; the other part is that "other Wilderness . . . who wanted the tower". There is one especially horrible moment when "it was as if he were the Consul himself and the next thing Dr. Vigil would be on the phone, asking him to go to Guanajuato" (p. 120). However, it is the watching, helpless Sigbjorn who is gradually gaining control of his entire being, and who, despite his continued inability to do without alcohol of some kind, is groping slowly but surely upwards out of the "pit". He can conveniently put the blame for all his suffering on God:

But that his torment was supernatural, or at least inhuman in some sense, there seemed no doubt in his mind. It wasn't good art but it was the truth . . . . What had God been up to in creating such a man and what was his purpose in keeping him alive, if alive he could be said to be? . . . Yet what strange power was in him . . . was this a power that was wasted on writing and that God had determined must in some sense serve chaos? (pp. 122-123)

Yet Sigbjorn himself is the god who has created *The Valley* and the Consul, and he must be the one to determine whether or not his novel must serve chaos. What he realizes, while so determining, is that *The Valley* is good art but does not contain or explain all of Sigbjorn Wilderness. He cries out to Dr. Vigil as someone to talk to but replaces him with the "real" Fernando whom he will soon see in Oaxaca; it is Fernando's words which gradually begin to replace scenes from *The Valley*: "'Write and tell me if you have not killed yourself with drinking . . . . Sickness is not only in body but in that part used to be call: soul' " [sic] (pp. 125, 127). Sigbjorn then speaks to himself in Fernando's voice: "Ah, old maker of tragedies, are you making more tragedies?" (p. 127). An author in search of a character is changing, however unwillingly in his mind's eye, into a man in search of himself; Sigbjorn will find himself by

finding Fernando, not the Consul or Dr. Vigil: "Strange though, how he kept remembering Fernando's words all these years, and would have remembered them, doubtless, *even had he not made him a character*" (p. 127, italics mine).

This distinction between art and life which contains art is emphasized by Sigbjorn's determination to go to Oaxaca without any more stalling and find Fernando, and is further emphasized during the early-morning-hours conversation with Eddie Kent and Dr. Hippolyte. Sigbjorn articulates to others, for the first time, and to himself as well, the difference between fact and fiction as far as *The Valley* is concerned. He starts out by talking about the connection between fact and fiction in his **life**:

'What I wanted to say, Eddie, was this. For some reason I made a rather important character of mine live in that blasted tower over there. And also one of the most important scenes in the book takes place in it . . . a scene where my hero has to choose, to put it rather stupidly, between life and death . . . . And now I'm living in the thing myself.' (p. 140)

But Eddie Kent, not really interested in such a connection, gets Sigbjorn to stand back from it by giving a correct translation of a Spanish sign the Consul encounters in *The Valley*. '*Le gusta este jardín? Que es suyo? Evite que sus hijos lo destruyan!*' means something very different from what both Sigbjorn and the Consul thought, and Sigbjorn's response to Eddie's new translation is very important in terms of his relationship with the Consul: " 'It alters everything . . . . Still that gives me an idea . . . . I'll have to alter it of course. But I could have my Consul think that's what it means at first. Yes, I can see that that would be better still' " (p. 141). This may seem like a small point but it is not, because Sigbjorn is treating the Consul as a character to be haunted by something that no longer haunts Sigbjorn as an author. When he was involved in the actual writing of *The Valley*, Sigbjorn was not haunted by his characters or theme (when Dr. Hippolyte reminds him that he had at that time "a sense of security", Sigbjorn does not deny it). Now he is able to be objective again, and this objectivity is sustained by an English publisher's qualified acceptance of *The Valley*. Publication will come with a rewriting of the novel, so Sigbjorn replies to a letter from an editor with a detailed analysis and defence of each chapter of *The Valley*, a defence, shown in the flashback to it in Chapter VIII of *Dark as the Grave*, which insists that he controls, rather than is controlled by, his art:

It was all something like the case of the Italian composer, Pietro Rinaudi . . . who . . . had taken to building a fantastic tower of music; three oratorios, on the first day one being performed, on the second the second, and on the third the third, and on the fourth evening all three being performed at once with different conductors, under the direction of yet another conductor, the composer himself. (p. 180)

Sigbjorn knows that *The Valley* is a true work of art very purposefully and carefully put together, but it takes Primrose's encouragement for him to stick by this knowledge and not lapse into a completely defeatist comparison between the partial rejection of his novel and the failure of his life. He does sit down and write an "exhaustive analysis" of each chapter, but, because he does not yet comprehend the proper relationship between his art and life, he feels that what he and Primrose "these two good people, artists themselves, [lack is] precisely the solace of art" (p. 183): "What made it worse, and wasted even more time, was that during each evening, during their drinking period, he would invariably forget what was supposed to be the purpose of the letter, and find himself engaged in tearing his book to pieces and even thoroughly agreeing with the reader" (p. 183). In the days that follow, *The Valley*, rather than giving "solace", begins to actively interfere with his life, becoming an "enemy" and getting in the way of his proposed trip to Oaxaca and Fernando. Surely that he is working so hard to separate fiction from fact in his letter to his English editor enables Sigbjorn to begin to recognize the inadequacies of a past whose partially successful transformation into art in *The Valley* he is defending. He can thus come to some kind of a decision about the attention he will pay to that past and to the present and future life which seems to exist beyond his art (but which, in actuality, should contain his art). He decides that he will not go with Eddie Kent to Acapulco where he (and Yvonne in *The Valley*) had his first port of entry into Mexico and where he last saw the hated Stanford; he will go instead to Oaxaca and to Fernando, with whom (as, he discovers, with Stanford) he will have to come to terms without the help of art.

Meanwhile, back in Chapter VII, Dr. Hippolyte is willing to listen to Sigbjorn's explication of his novel as well as his theory of art, and Sigbjorn is more than willing to talk. He talks about the life of Fernando, his work with the Banco Ejidal, how he acted in Eisenstein's *Thunder Over Mexico*, and how, if Fernando is not in Oaxaca, Sigbjorn and Primrose will go up into the hills to find him. Slowly Fernando dons the trappings of the "real" world, and the reader's sense (along with Sigbjorn's) that he exists and is waiting in a not-too-distant future is amplified. Sigbjorn also, at this point, offers the most succinct précis he has yet given of the plot of *The Valley* and its connection with his life:



'Of course, strictly speaking he was no longer a Consul. If it comes to that he was, almost, no longer a man. He had lost his wife: she divorced him, but on the day the story really opens, she had come back to him. His friends, Monsieur Laruelle up in that tower over there, and his half-brother—that is to say me, I might say the same of all the other characters too, in a sense—who happens to be staying with him, and of course Doctor Vigil—whose real name, did I say, is Juan Fernando Martinez . . . all these people, including the Consul's wife, try to help him, in various ways, to stop drinking, to go away, to Canada, to cultivate new interests, to drink something else, to go, so to speak, to Acapulco. For instance, Doctor Vigil invites him to go to Guanajuato with him, by car, just as you've invited me to go to Acapulco, and so on.' (pp. 149-150)

This is the last time that Sigbjorn-as-author will mingle so directly with his characters, trying to insist upon and point out similarities between his life and art. This is due in large measure to Dr. Hippolyte's insistence that Sigbjorn explain his concept of his art rather than his concept of *The Valley*. Sigbjorn describes the foundations of his novel, how it grew out of a single, startling incident on a bus trip from Cuernavaca to Chapultapec in 1936. Hippolyte, however, is not concerned with what takes place in the novel; instead he wants to know what Sigbjorn thinks he has accomplished by writing it. Sigbjorn says to him, "I began to elaborate upon that theme of drunkenness, both in my life, and in the book too . . . I invested my vices in a figure of authority so as not to feel too bad about them myself" (p. 151). Hippolyte reminds him that in art, as in the Voodoo ceremony and dance, "a bell is rung when it has reached a certain point beyond which it might become dangerous. You have to become your own priest and ring your own bell" (p. 152). When Sigbjorn asserts that ". . . writing a book about it [that is, making art out of an unhealthy life] . . . constitutes a very good attempt at a cure", Hippolyte presses him to elaborate; he asks Sigbjorn two questions of considerable importance because they have to do, simultaneously, with *The Valley* and with Sigbjorn as an artist after *The Valley* has been completed: "But what are you doing now? How do you go about writing such a book" (p. 154). Sigbjorn's lengthy but significant reply includes an attempt to unite the two previously distinct parts of his artistic personality—the one lost in the past and the one lost in the present—and to give the resultant combination a sense of direction. The continual process of creation in the universe and the accompanying continual process of individual artistic creation allow Sigbjorn to see a progression from his writing and completion of *The Valley* to a point where he is presently ". . . living the book [he is] supposed to be writing." He even gives that book a title—and a prophetic one at that—"Dark As the

*Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid*". There is no solace, no cure in what the artist has done, only in what he is doing. On the other hand, the artist is haunted by the process of creation as well as by what he has created on his "voyage that never ends".<sup>15</sup>

The conversation with Eddie Kent and Dr. Hippolyte takes place in Chapter VII and in the night before Sigbjorn and Primrose are to set out for Oaxaca. Despite this conversation and what Sigbjorn has contributed to it, the chapter ends with him standing in the haunted tower and still haunted by his book in "the hour before dawn, the last hours of the condemned" (p. 159). However, the ending of this chapter and its image of death must be linked directly to the ending of Chapter VIII after Sigbjorn has considered the "dark grave" in which he is living. As a condemned man, Sigbjorn will see the dawn and be granted a reprieve, and he discovers the justification for such a reprieve by finding life in the dark days and nights of his soul (prior to his talk with Eddie and Hippolyte) which he is sure should have defeated him entirely.

Sigbjorn had ". . . found himself sinking more and more into fear, into a barranca, his own, a barranca of fear . . . that possesses one like a paralysis" (p. 164), and it became so bad that he was afraid to go outside. The life of fact and fiction inside the tower had become all his life. It is Primrose and her being so "uniquely alive", an alternative to his own death in life, who calls him out of his apathy:

. . . here he stood, in the tower of his own creation, surrounded by these ghosts of the past, of his life—it was a dream—and about to set off to meet one of his characters. Surely this was more what was meant by death. Death in life, for you could be dead, and yet have existence on earth too, at least according to Dante . . . But Primrose, that was another matter! She was not dead; she had been spared, and he had been allowed to know the joy of her being spared. (p. 189)

To his surprise, when he decides to take her on a trip to Yautepec (a town which has, of course, appeared in *The Valley*), Sigbjorn discovers that he is not just remembering scenes but "seeing them . . . with fresh eyes" (p. 168). This leads him on to thoughts about life in a "voyage that never ends", and it is plain that Sigbjorn's attempt to clarify to Hippolyte his condition as an artist has emerged from an attempt to clarify the condition of his life in the "dark grave" and to do something about it. An investigation of life does lead, as the following passage indicates, to a clarification of art:

To a casual observer, these little trips on the side, visits, these little excursions, were simply trips, visits, excursions. But that morning, on this last day of the old year that had given birth to a new age, they had not appeared to him in this light. They were indeed like attempts, not only on their own part but on the part of their marriage . . . to arise, to be reborn . . . It was like the tide at Eridanus. The farther it came in, the farther it went out. Each time was like a rebuilding, each time had a fire. Nor was this symbolism, if one could call it such, confined to trips or excursions. The act of finishing *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, after the fire, had been like that. And then . . . building their house . . . coming to Mexico . . . to Cuernavaca. All these little flights had something in common: and their rhythm had been something like this: starting with disaster, reaction, determination to transcend disaster, success, failure. Every time . . . the effort became greater and the subsequent failure worse . . . to put them on an upward spiral . . . The thing was to do it, to bring it off. (p. 169)

Even though, as with the Consul at a particular point in *The Valley*, "His life stretched before him like a hill of tossing stone that went on forever like a life of agony", Sigbjorn reaches the top of his own hill and has there a vision of promise, of the rhythm continuing and the pattern that must be broken: "Far beyond the volcanoes far, far beyond the horizon, impossibly far away . . . as might have appeared the Promised Land to the Children of Israel, or Ceylon at three bells to the seaman chipping rust, it had seemed to Sigbjorn pointing that there, dimly and for the first time, was a shadowy hint of Oaxaca" (p. 172). He can come down to the mailbox and the waiting letter from the English publisher asking him to defend his art, because he has begun to find solace in his life; but, it is in these moments when he is severing himself from his art's claim upon his life (by vigorously defending his art's right to its own existence in his letters of defence) that he is split down the middle. He senses "an ascension of the soul . . . a realization of its true purpose" (p. 185) in the tower where he writes his letter of severance; but behind him is the "ruthless . . . other Wilderness" who seeks not life but death-in-life through submergence in art. Sigbjorn panics and turns to death itself by cutting his wrist; for this to be a fatal act would be derivative of *Drunkard's Rigadoon* (where the hero "had been on the point of suicide") and, therefore, to find solace in art. Sigbjorn's attempt at suicide is half-hearted; he will survive to seek Fernando in Oaxaca, he will put his thoughts about death "off on the Consul", and he will ". . . strive to give a centre to their lives, realizing the impossibility of amending his life by himself" (p. 189). The Christian images of faith, and their solace, which Sigbjorn now encounters, are something the Consul lacks entirely. Both author and fictional character have worn

"the tortured and anguished face of the dark Christ" (p. 190), but only the former will be resurrected.

When Sigbjorn awakes on the morning of their journey to Oaxaca, this resurrection imagery is present. He thinks that "God himself" is trying to help them and remembers Freud's adage that "Every rising in the morning is thus like a new birth" (p. 192); Fernando is viewed as a "lifeward . . . principle". Such feelings of hope must still survive comparison with images in *The Valley*, but the book "being written" claims Sigbjorn too: "Here he was enclosed in his own book. In one sense it gave him a feeling of power [the book "being written"], and in another he felt like a puppet [*The Valley*] (p. 195). Then there is God who could ". . . close the book upon him, as if he were an insect" (p. 195); but God, it seems, is trying to help, and such help is evident when the bus avoids certain routes it would have taken had it been a bus in *The Valley*. In fact, the closer Sigbjorn and Primrose get to Oaxaca, the more original the route becomes and something that Sigbjorn has not ever imagined before. There is a moment on the bus reminiscent of a scene on the bus in *The Valley* that Sigbjorn has already described to Hippolyte and Eddie. Something "horrible, or frightening" occurs by the side of the road, but Sigbjorn does not see what it is and so the dying Indian from his novel does not enter his mind. The "dark grave" is also a womb fertile with a future:

Here in this bed [in a hotel at Matamoros], he felt none of the strangeness of Mexico, the fear that passes all understanding, the fear that possesses one like a paralysis. It was silent and in this silence he felt safe. It was a silence *like* the silence of the dark grave itself. He thought of his wife . . . . If anybody in the world represented that abstraction "life" it was Primrose Wilderness. She was . . . herself a perceptiveness of life, *this perceptiveness of what life remained to him*. She was a person whose creative perception was simply that of creative life and living, not a writer, but a person who loves life, who expresses her creative life in the *living* of life. (p. 202, first two italics mine)

If Primrose is living so that Sigbjorn might live, he must still discover that Fernando has died for him that he might live and that, in a sense, so has *The Valley*. He recognizes, when suddenly stumbling across "*Le gusta este jardín/ Que es suyo? Evite que/ Sus hijos lo destruyan!*" [*sic*] in the dark, that he has ". . . come back a great deal farther than the Consul to verify the sign" (p. 217).

Sigbjorn first enters the realm of life without art; he remembers himself, not the Consul, drunk in the Farolito, and his own hellish return from Parián to drink more mescal. In the dining-room at the

hotel in Oaxaca he sees not a fictional ghost from his novel but a "real" ghost who threatens to haunt him even more: Stanford, who ". . . had only just escaped being a character in *The Valley*" (p. 220). Sigbjorn must meet Stanford without any reference to art, and to his amazement he is able to do so. But this is only the beginning; there is something at the bottom of his relationship with Fernando with which he must come to terms:

It occurred to Sigbjorn that perhaps not three days had passed since they had married without his having mentioned Fernando with friendship and love, then a terrifying thought followed it—was this but another manifestation of his secret desire for death? . . . So unimaginably frightful and intense had been his suffering that he looked back upon those days almost as he looked back upon the beauty and health of their Canadian life. They were days as beautiful as vultures circling in high sunlight, as beautiful as death that flies just for love of flying. And of all these things Fernando was in some way the symbol. No one could be more alive or life-giving in spite of all that he was. Which made it all the more puzzling that what all these things were that he loved so much should also so obviously be death." (p. 223)

If Sigbjorn has been making up a kind of fiction about Fernando, he now recognizes that such a fiction is inadequate; when he learns that Fernando has been dead for six years, the "maker of tragedies" must throw away his mind altogether<sup>16</sup>, because he cannot create a greater tragedy than this one which somehow aligns itself with his life. He hears Fernando's voice, now from the future, asking, "Are you making more tragedies? . . . Write and tell me if you have not killed yourself with drinking" (p. 240). If the answer is 'No' then Sigbjorn must solve this riddle surrounding Fernando of life-in-death (no longer answerable by the death-in-life desire of the "other Wilderness"). The solution lies in his being able to light a small candle for the dead Fernando, a candle which ". . . like the cross . . . is a symbol of acceptance of suffering, but . . . also of resurrection" (p. 245). There is a mystery here which Sigbjorn, for once, does not try to explain; he sees "the whole thing as inexplicable, as mysterious as God himself" (p. 247). Thus Sigbjorn can pray with faith for Fernando, himself, Primrose, "the whole world", and even Stanford; thus he can go to the ruined city of Mitla, so much like the ruins of his past life, and see "the inconceivable yet magnificent desolation of the whole place, an image, indeed, of death [but also] . . . the even greater magnificence of being alive" (p. 246).

It is significant that Sigbjorn should use an analogy of art and life to explain his own new concept of art-in-life. He thinks about Edgar Allan

Poe, about Poe's despairing story *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and of the film of the same name that transcends the story. But he is also thinking of Sigbjorn Wilderness, Sigbjorn's despairing story, and of the life which now transcends *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*:

No matter how despairing Poe's story, the genius of the director had managed, and with triumphant aesthetic success, to impose . . . a happy, or a hopeful ending upon it . . . . What was the theme of *The House of Usher*? It was, or so it seemed to him at the moment, of the degradation of the idea of resurrection. But in the film, when the entombed was Usher's wife and not his sister, she came back, as it were with the doctor's help, to save him: they went out into the thunderstorm but into a new life.

Were we not empowered as the director of that film at least to turn the apparent disaster of our lives into triumph? Suddenly 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? Was he the director of this film of his life? Was God? . . . He was an actor in it, but if God were the director that was no reason why he should not constantly appeal to Him to change the ending. (pp. 248-249)

So the book "being written" has a happy ending as opposed to *The Valley* with its conclusion of despair. Though the two are connected, just as the new Sigbjorn is connected to the old Sigbjorn, and the Consul as well, by the "invisible Farolito" in every soul, the new Sigbjorn will not be haunted by a frozen frame of himself entering that amalgamation of cantinas in his novel. The "real" Farolito has moved to a new location on the Calle Humboldt, the street of the tower and the Consul, but now Sigbjorn enters the church where the candle of "suffering . . . resurrection" still burns. If *The Valley*, as the story of a man denied Paradise, is Sigbjorn's Old Testament ('Yea though I walk . . .'), then the film of *Dark as the Grave*, in his mind's eye, is surely his New Testament ('. . . I will fear no evil'): Fernando has died for Sigbjorn; Adam leaves Eden for a life of promise, perhaps salvation. In the beginning was The Word, but in this new genesis for Sigbjorn Wilderness The Word is no longer exclusively *The Valley*.

#### NOTES

1. Malcolm Lowry, *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid* (Toronto: General Publishing Company, 1968). The book will hereafter be referred to as *Dark as the Grave*. All subsequent quotations will be taken from this edition and will be immediately followed in the text by their respective page numbers.
2. William H. New, *Malcolm Lowry* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 45.

3. George Woodcock, *Odysseus Ever Returning* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 73.
4. W.H. New, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 47.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
6. Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1975), p. 286.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291. Day is quoting from pp. 210-211 in *Dark as the Grave*.
8. Hereafter referred to as *The Valley* and *Volcano* respectively. For purposes of this argument, the reader should not have too much difficulty with the use of the terms 'Volcano-Valley' and 'Lowry-Sigbjorn'.
9. This term, which is central to Lowry's view of the relationship between art and life, is found on page 43 of *Dark as the Grave* and will be considered elsewhere in this essay.
10. "... and that's the whole point, I suppose, that I am living what I should be writing" (p. 156).
11. Woodcock, *Odysseus Ever Returning*, p. 72.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
13. This verb is found in the same passage on page 43 of *Dark as the Grave* which contains the term "form and meaning". The significance of each will become clearer in further analysis of the novel in this essay.
14. T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men", from *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 80.
15. Lowry always intended to join *Under the Volcano*, *Dark as the Grave*, and the incomplete *October Ferry to Gabriola*, *Eridanus*, and *La Mordida* into a prose cycle to be called *The Voyage that Never Ends*. See W.H. New, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 9.
16. "'Throw away your mind,' Fernando seemed to be saying, 'my maker of tragedies . . . Si, hombre, you have overlooked that you are a creature of luck'" (p. 191).