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EDWARD UPWARD: AN INTRODUCTION

GEORGE STONIER, writing in 1933, described the arrival of the New Countrymen on the English literary scene in these words:

From the cactus land discovered and solely inhabited by T. S. Eliot they emerge strangely on bicycles, removing ties, waving placards, and chanting inscrutably in native argot. We catch phrases as they pass: 'Take a sporting chance'; 'It's up to you now, boys'; 'What time's the train for No-man's land?' and so on. But as our hearts rise or sink to these echoes, we notice with astonishment that the faces express something quite different: rapture, irony, surprise, rage, despair, high spirits, bad nerves—which is it? While we are wondering, the shouts die away and there is only the evidence of a thinning cloud of dust. Which, as pedestrians, we naturally resent.¹

Less than ten years later the bicycles lay abandoned in the bushes and the band of riders had confusedly dispersed. The dust that they raised, however, has never completely settled, for the literature of the New Countrymen, because of its political nature, has provoked almost ceaseless resentment and critical controversy, the most recent incidents of which have been Julian Symons' apologetic *The Thirties* (1960) and John Mander's astringent *The Writer and Commitment* (1961).

Among the New Countrymen, Edward Upward held a place of special importance. Stephen Spender includes him in the imaginary cabinet of young university artists who were, they all felt, about to seize the centre of the English literary stage, the cabinet invented and presided over by Auden in his sunless Oxford room. Spender recalls that "just as Auden seemed to us the highest peak within the range of our humble vision from the Oxford valleys, for Auden there was another peak, namely Isherwood, whilst for Isherwood there was a still further peak, Chalmers [i.e. Upward]."² John Lehmann remembers his awe upon first learning of Upward's existence: "I heard with the tremor of excitement that an entomologist feels at the news of an unknown butterfly sighted in the depths of a forest, that

behind Auden and Spender and Isherwood stood the even more legendary figure of Edward Upward."³ Among his New Country friends, Upward enjoyed a unique reputation as an intellectual and an artist. Auden not only alluded to him in *The Orators* but often quoted from his unpublished work in lectures.⁴ Spender has stated that, as a result of conversations with Upward in Berlin, he moved closer to the recognition of the necessity of Marxism.⁵ And Isherwood remarked as recently as 1961, "He's still the final judge, as far as I'm concerned, of my work; I always send everything to him."⁶ Whereas Auden excited his contemporaries by the daring diversity of his thinking and poetic practice in the early thirties, Upward sobered them by his unwaveringly rigorous criticism of both literature and life. An examination of Upward's works, therefore, should shed clearer light on some of the difficulties that not just he but, in different ways, all of the New Countrymen faced in trying to reconcile art and politics, in trying to write committed literature.

II

The Upward canon is small. Owing to what Lehmann calls "his slow and fastidious creative methods",⁷ Upward has published only five stories, two essays, and one novel. Between 1942 and 1961 he published nothing. However, the publication in 1962 of the novel *In the Thirties*, the first part of a projected trilogy, refutes the notion that Upward is artistically dead.

The earliest of Upward's extant works has only the faintest of political implications. In *Lions and Shadows* Isherwood relates how he and Upward, while still at Cambridge, invented and elaborated the mad world they called Mortmere, which in a later reminiscence Isherwood describes as "a sort of anarchist paradise in which all accepted moral and social values were turned upside down and inside out, and every kind of extravagant behavior was possible and usual. It was our private place of retreat from the rules and conventions of university life."⁸ Of the apparently numerous Mortmere pieces, only one has been published: Upward's "The Railway Accident", his farewell to Mortmere, appeared pseudonymously more than twenty years after it was written.

"The Railway Accident" caricatures mental and moral disorientation before and after two apparent catastrophes. They are "apparent" because what gives the story its bizarre quality is that, from beginning to end, the incidents that occur do so only in the deranged mind of the narrator, Hearn. From the beginning of the story Hearn's morbid tendency to detect the ominous in the obvious becomes evident; glancing about the station before his train departs, he reflects:

Other insignia of the bogus, curt and modern cathedral ceremony which in my day-dream, induced partly by the cold, I had begun to arrange were the reverberating stammer of slipping driving wheels on suburban trains and the fussing haste of porters loading the guard's van with wooden crates. Outside the station the air would be warm and I should remember the voluntarily ascetic life I had often planned; there would be crocuses or vultures, it would not be the same as it was here. Immediately the train started everything would be changed (pp. 86-87).

Studying fixedly a nearby express, Hearn notes that its coaches seemed "of a new triple bogie pattern crouched on concealed springs" and "were too heavily built, almost armored, to sustain the image." He visualizes the coaches, "very long, tubular, dead", speeding through the night like steel coffins. He feels as if he was plunged briefly into "a world in which I should have felt as wholly disorientated as though, suffering from amnesia after an accident, I had found myself among hoardings bearing futurist German advertisements" (p. 89). The uneasiness lurking just behind Hearn's daydreams becomes more pronounced and terrifying when, after his own train has finally left the station and he has settled back to anticipate the pleasures of his approaching vacation at Mortmere, the inexplicable presence of Gustav Shreeve and his extraordinary and totally irrelevant introductory query "Fond of poetry?" (p. 90) initiates a sequence of events that makes it clear that Hearn has in fact crossed the border into a world "wholly disorientated", that he has indeed journeyed into the mad world of his private terrors.

From this point on the story traces the steady degeneration of Hearn's psyche to a final state of catastrophically complete horror. His tendency to see the malevolent all about him assumes increasingly gigantic proportions as the train trip continues. Shreeve, himself the personification of fear and suspicion, excites Hearn's own agitations, for Shreeve can talk only of a past train accident and of his conviction that Wherry, the Mortmere architect, caused it deliberately. Then, just as Hearn's earlier vision of futurist German hoardings foreshadowed the hallucination of Shreeve, so now Shreeve's obsession with the past accident leads to Hearn's growing realization that the accident pattern is beginning to recur. As he watches in dismay, the train plunges down an abandoned siding towards a blocked tunnel, the site of the earlier accident. Amidst squealing brakes, he and Shreeve jump. Then Hearn sees the express thundering down the same siding:

The express had taken the switch. Booster-fitted, excessively rolling, the racing mogul engine rounded the curve, bounded into the rear of the carriage we had left. Coaches mounted like viciously copulating bulls, telescoped like ventilator-hatches. Nostril gaps in a tunnel clogged with wreckage instantly flamed. A faint jet of blood sprayed from a vacant window. Frog-sprawling bodies fumed in blazing reeds. The architrave of

the tunnel crested with daffodils fell compact as hinged scenery. Tall rag-feathered birds with corrugated red wattles limped from holes among the rocks (p. 108).

In the second half of the story all mention of this catastrophe vanishes quickly, and for a time it seems that crocuses have supplanted vultures in the mind of Hearn. The main action concerns the rector Welken's absurd Treasure Hunt, in which game Hearn figures as the object of everyone's search. As in the first part of the story, however, the pattern of steadily increasing anarchy and violence repeats itself. The inverted game of hide and seek begins innocently, develops into brutality, and climaxes when the smouldering hostility between Shreeve and Wherry leads to a duel fought with pea-pistols, one of which turns out somehow to be a real pistol and permanently lames Wherry.

Both catastrophes, the railway accident and the accidental laming, as well as the bizarre series of events leading up to them, illustrate an individual impotence bred of intellectual insecurity and a moral apathy to gross brutality. Hearn, under the influence of the hallucinatory Shreeve, finds himself transfixed by growing terror as the accident pattern takes shape on the train. After the collision, he dismisses it as casually as Rector Welken who, upon finding the dazed Hearn and Shreeve on the embankment, remarks heartily: "We'll have you home in a jiffy, and then you can tell us all about it." A similar superficial response occurs after the wounding of Wherry: "A most amazing thing", a bystander exclaims. In Hearn's private nightmare world, the world from which he cannot escape, not only is human action illogical and violent, but human reaction lacks relevance and depth. It is, in fact, a world of total disorientation.

An abundance of fantastic incidents and details fills out this bedlam vision: the English Territorials splintering the compartment wall and then striding along the carriage roofs just before the collision, Harold Wrygrave saluting solemnly among the bushes, Wherry's Provençal hat and pirate's cape, the cruelty of Boy Radnor and the other choirboys toward the effeminately handsome Anthony Belmare, and the public measurement of Miss Belmare's forty-five-inch bust. Yet all of this fantastic subject matter Upward renders in a simple, rigorously denotative prose style that gives the story an ironically factual quality, a disturbing suggestion of reality. For instance, when Hearn discovers the treasure, an ivory paper-knife, Upward describes his impressions in this series of short, graphic sentences:

At the cool entrance brambles obstinate as wire had eaten into the doorless jambs. The beehive stood on a single-legged table spoked with warped cricket stumps. Whorled coils of black horsehair or blood sausages. It broke in my hands like cake, issuing dark treacle (p. 113).

According to Isherwood, Upward modelled this dispassionate style after that of E. M. Forster, of whom he once said: "The whole of Forster's technique is based on the tea-table; instead of trying to screw all his scenes up to the highest possible pitch, he tones them down until they sound like mother's-meeting gossip."⁹ In Montmere, however, the tea-table belongs to a mad hatter.

Isherwood also tells how he and Upward grew away from the cult of romantic strangeness. He observes that as a writer, however, Upward needed Montmere and could not afford to abandon it altogether:

He was to spend the next three years in desperate and bitter struggles to relate Montmere to the real world of the jobs and the lodging-houses; to find the formula which would transform our private fancies and amusing freaks and bogies into valid symbols of the ills of society and toils and aspirations of our daily lives. For the formula did, after all, exist . . . quite clearly set down, for everybody to read, in the pages of Lenin and Marx.¹⁰

III

Perhaps more than any of his fictional works, the essay "Sketch for a Marxist Interpretation of Literature"¹¹ has kept Upward's name alive, if only in a footnote. It expresses with emphatic clarity his complete artistic and personal commitment to Marxism.

George Steiner recently pointed out that in 1934 the Stalinists turned their official backs on Engels' belief that "the more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art", and embraced as the central premise of the Marxist literary aesthetic Lenin's uncompromising demand that "Literature must become an integral part of the organised, methodical, and unified labours of the social-democratic Party."¹² Upward's essay defends unreservedly this Party line. After positing the material basis of both life and literature, Upward asserts that "The greatest books are those which, sensing the forces of the future beneath the surface of the past or present reality, remain true to reality for the longest periods of time" (pp. 46-47). In terms of the present, this means that "no modern book can be true to life unless it recognises, more or less clearly, both the decadence of present-day society and the inevitability of revolution" (p. 49). Proust, Joyce, and Lawrence, all of whom tried to tell the truth about modern life, failed because their ideas derived from a decayed social class doomed to ultimate extinction, and their failures confirm Upward's conviction that "A writer to-day who wishes to produce the best work that he is capable of producing, must first of all become a socialist in his practical life, must go over to the progressive side of the class conflict" (p. 52).¹³

In the course of his argument, Upward took special pains to denounce his earliest writings:

a modern fantasy cannot tell the truth, cannot give a picture of life which will survive the test of experience; since fantasy implies in practice a retreat from the real world into the world of imagination, and though such a retreat may have been practicable and desirable in a more leisured and less profoundly disturbed age than our own it is becoming increasingly impracticable to-day (p. 48).

And this rejection of pure Mortmere remained in effect in 1949, at which time Isherwood revealed:

Today, Chalmers is inclined to disown Mortmere and his share in its saga—hence his wish to appear under a pseudonym. He feels that the kind of literature which makes a dilettante cult of violence, sadism, bestiality and sexual acrobatics is peculiarly offensive and subversive in an age such as ours—an age which has witnessed the practically applied bestiality of Belsen and Dachau.¹⁴

Despite protestations to the contrary, however, Mortmere remained an essential if subordinate part of Upward's literary style.

The three stories that Upward published between 1933 and 1935 represent attempts to solve the problem of finding a literary form appropriate to Marxist dogma. New forms were needed, for, as Upward observes later in his sketch, "already now the old forms can no longer adequately reflect the fundamental forces of the modern world. The writer's job is to create new forms now, to arrive by hard work at the emotional truth about present-day reality" (p. 54). Each of the stories describes, with little or no plot, the intellectual awakening of an individual to the necessity of Marxism. A character, as a result of observing the decadence and deceit of the world about him, makes a political decision that promises to lead him away from an aimless passivity that foreshadows the delusory world of Hearn and towards purposeful, dynamic social action, towards orientation.

"The Colleagues"¹⁵ portrays the psychology of two schoolmasters, Lloyd and Mitchell. In the first part of the story, the thoughts of the experienced and confident Lloyd are presented. He disapproves of much that the school stands for, particularly the educational philosophy of its headmaster Taylor:

in Taylor's world effort and guts are vulgar; only skill is respectable. One is born either dull or bright, and nothing afterwards can change one's nature. Certainly not Taylor's own methods of dealing with the young. But if we're to get these kids anywhere we've got to cater for the average. The world's work isn't and never will be done by exceptions. As time goes on there will be less and less room for the type of person whose sole object is to evade responsibility. Whether we like it or not there

are changes in the air. And the boy with guts is the one who is going to survive (p. 177).

Upon seeing the new master, Mitchell, approaching him, Lloyd thinks: "Why can't the man change into proper clothes when he's refereeing?" (p. 177). Here the point of view switches to the nervously uncertain Mitchell, whom Lloyd persuades to take on extra duties next day. In the course of the persuasion Lloyd reveals in passing that his own ideas on education, though more gutty, are no less debilitating than Taylor's. He urges Mitchell not to worry about teaching the boys: "Charades. Games. Making up codes. Anything that will keep them amused. Provided they don't kick up a row or break the furniture" (p. 179). Though he agrees to help Lloyd out, Mitchell reviles his own weakness and conjures up absurd visions of rebellion: "Why acquiesce for an instant? Decline utterly to be an accomplice. Queer the whole schedule. Cheap water-pistols for fussing terriers. Clear straight out of the house after lunch" (p. 180). Such romanticism collapses rapidly into impotent despair:

Nothing that happens in the school grounds has any connection with what happens in the town outside. Every day here certain ceremonies are independently performed. Latin lessons are given. Games are organised. Surplices are worn. Outmoded precautions are scrupulously taken. Nothing which a clergyman might think risky to neglect is neglected. We are servants of the parents' most contemptible misgivings. I shall be here or in places similar to this for the rest of my life (p. 181).

Then something meaningful does happen. Mitchell observes Lloyd again, this time amusing himself alone on the rugby field. But for the first time, Mitchell sees his colleague in a startling new light: no longer is he merely the attractive personification of tradition but rather, for one brief and lucid moment, the external and material confirmation of all of Mitchell's inner doubts about the degeneracy of the educational system of which he has become a part:

He sprang, he raced towards the tennis courts. Bucking, heavily agile with jerking shoulders. Baboon or antelope. Going all out, broad-backed in a tight sweater. How terrific. How electrically vile. He plunged, he touched down, stumbling among tree roots (p. 182).

Mitchell interprets this flash of insight as the gift he needs to find the meaningfulness that his personal life has lacked:

I've had an hallucination. Probably involuntary. It's a reward. It's going to happen again. In the night. At lunch. Everywhere. An award of power. This is only the beginning. A genuinely religious delusion. I am very glad (p. 182).

"The Colleagues" lies midway between *Mortmere* and *Marx*. The *Mortmere* effects serve well to depict the different psychological states of Lloyd and Mitchell. But the nature of Mitchell's escape from despair lacks focus: whereas the ugly vision of Lloyd "stumbling among the roots" does symbolize vividly the degeneracy implicit in Lloyd's complacency, Upward's introduction of religious overtones, even though qualified by such psychological terms as "hallucination" and "delusion", does not point very clearly in the direction of Mitchell's earlier rebellious thoughts. Mitchell has crossed a border, has made a beginning along the road to truth, but the map that he consults remains something of a mystery.

Upward's other two stories, being considerably more tendentious, raise few problems of interpretation. "Sunday"¹⁶ is an interior monologue of an office worker on his way home from a walk. His political intellect has already reached a far more advanced stage than that of Mitchell; he thinks, for instance, that "Everyone will appear quite at ease, fairly well-dressed, comfortably married, not at all furtive or sinister. Nothing will visibly suggest that they are all condemned, that what they stand for is already dead, putrescent, stinking, animated only by preying corpse-worms" (pp. 184-85). He requires no epiphany, therefore, to decide to act upon his beliefs and to join "the small club behind the Geisha cafe", the members of which "are not content to suppress misery in their minds but are going to destroy the more obvious material causes of misery in the world" (p. 189).

Thematically, "Sunday" is familiar and obvious, more an exhortatory essay than a story. Aside from its pronounced Marxist bias, its most striking quality inheres in the speaker's penetrating eye for aspects of modern city life that suggest the bogus. He is cynically suspicious, for example, of the municipal motives lying behind the remodelling of the city park: "I am invited, everyone is invited, we are expected to stop and look at the mandarin ducks, to use the less direct path up the side of the valley, smell the lupins, poke groundsel through the wire meshes of the aviary. Why did the council put flood-lights in the trees around the fountain and build a thatched hut for the ducks on an island?" (p. 183). Similar ominous images occur when he nears his lodgings: "Who will be there? Only the table, the flower with protruding stamens arching from its jug like a sabre-toothed tiger, the glass of custard, pleated apple-green satin behind the fretwork fleur-de-lis panel of the piano" (p. 184). Such observations, which gradually give way to more abstract patterns of thought ranging from Epictetus to Lenin, vivify this white-collar worker's contempt for the emptiness of the life he has had to lead. Marked stylistically by a shift from the first person to the second person point of view, paralleling the shift

from the subjective to the objective attitude towards life, such thoughts culminate in the decision to join "the enemies of suffering."

"The Island"¹⁷ resembles "Sunday" in that it is more an exhortation than a story: dialectical argument replaces characterization and plot development. The reader enjoys a tour of the Isle of Wight, and his guide is the Marxist conscience that, presumably, lies within him. From this guide, the reader-vacationer learns that, even though he has temporarily escaped "the bullying foreman", he has not escaped social reality even on this apparently idyllic island. Even here where natural beauties abound and where "No strength should be denied . . . no weakness exposed or tortured" (p. 106), signs of human destructiveness and injustice protrude from beneath the island's glittering surface: the aircraft carrier anchored in the bay, the guns angled from the masked cliffside forts, and "this woman shuffling along in dirty canvas shoes, searching among the lines of rubbish left by the tide . . ." (p. 109). Such realities make bogus the gaudy amusement arcade, reveal it is a symbol of deceit and decadence: "fraudulent as vulgar icing on a celebration cake rotten inside with maggots, sugary poison to drug you into contentment" (p. 110). Yet, while giving clear evidence of man's decay, the island also provides physical proof of his potential for progress: its rock formations illustrate his former mastery of material conditions, and its historical sites the evolution of human freedom. To realize his potential today, however, man must abandon fantasies: "Come out of that sickly dreamland, that paradisaic island of culture and everlasting joy, come and see the island as it really is . . ." (pp. 108-9). He must develop "new eyes" so that he will not be shocked when, for instance, a group of cyclists "wearing the badge of a workers' sport club" sing of hunger and war and revolution. He must see that the island itself confirms the burden of their songs that only through revolution will war and hunger end and will the island change from "a ghost-place dazzling with false promise" into "a real place, the island as it can be, a place fit for men and women, as it must be, and it will be" (p.110).

Whereas in his earlier Mortmere story Upward used bizarre imagery and sequential illogic to create the vivid and violent world of a disturbed mind, in these three stories he relegates such effects to the minor role of imaging a pervasive cultural sickness and introduces as major emphasis the curative force of Marxism. With the exception of the indecisive "The Colleagues", the demands of *Tendenzpoesie* seem to have forced Upward into the adoption of an exhortatory form of literature that necessitated the subordination of his most remarkable artistic talent. Like his friend Isherwood, Upward could still use the camera technique to register graphically the facts of modern life, but, because his camera carried a heavily coloured

lens, Upward's photographs, though often vivid, suffer from distortion. The search for the formula that would transform "private fancies" into "valid symbols" may have ended, as Isherwood asserted, but Upward still needed to find the literary form that could satisfactorily accommodate both his Mortmere manner and his Marxist faith. In his novel *Journey to the Border*,¹⁸ he tried anew to find this form, "to arrive by hard work at the emotional truth about present-day reality."

IV

In *Journey to the Border* Upward combines the themes and techniques of the four short stories. The novel explores the psychology of near insanity in the Mortmere manner of caricature; it introduces the inner voice of a Marxist conscience to expound the necessary political choice; and it follows a dialectical thematic pattern of initial personal dissatisfactions, a series of futile and nearly fatal attempts to escape these dissatisfactions, and a climactic recognition of the necessity of Marxism for the achievement of personal as well as social integration. By indulging in increasingly Hearn-like evasions of the glimpsed but suppressed truth of Marxism, the hero of the novel, an unnamed tutor not unlike the earlier Mitchell, travels to the borderline between sanity and insanity, at which point, no longer able to escape the inescapable, he is forced by his own desolation to hear the truth and to realize that he can find fulfilment only through identification with and participation in the workers' movement. To use the more familiar metaphors of Auden, the tutor suffers from but finally corrects "the negative inversion" of his will, forsakes his "coward's stance" and, by reversing himself, rebuilds his life according to "new styles of architecture", having had if not a "change of heart" at least a change of head.

At the beginning of the novel the tutor has concluded that the family for whom he works, the Parkins, represents a spiritual and physical decadence that threatens to infect his own integrity. He determines, therefore, to find "a new technique, a first step towards solving the problem of how to live in this house" (p. 9). During the remainder of this critical day, he tries to come to terms with the Parkin world, but all of his efforts prove abortive because of his failure to go beyond his own ego. Instead of fastening on to external realities, his increasingly agitated mind conjures up gross distortions of reality that reflect his own private revulsion for the world he sees about him. He sees the Parkins not as pitiful representatives of a dying culture, but as monsters crippled by disease: inwardly he mocks Mr. Parkin's gimp leg, facial twitch, conspicuous blackened tooth, red-

rimmed eyes, and greasy, sallow complexion; he exults at the brief sight of the bed-ridden Mrs. Parkin's fat-wristed hand; and he stares with horrified pleasure at young Donald Parkin's flabby leg and efflorescent flesh. Similarly the Parkin estate reeks of the bogus: its artificial lake, fir trees, four lawns, and sprawling flowerbeds signify to the tutor "a faked and isolated world incompletely retrieved from the eighteenth century" (p. 8). Only after a nearly complete mental breakdown and after the Marxist truth has escaped from his unconscious does the tutor come to understand that, because of his own weakness, he has distorted the facts of life into gross melodrama:

Mr. Parkin would not scream or shake his fist in the tutor's face. He was not a maniac. He was not even the unspeakable swine that the tutor had formerly supposed him to be. That supposition had been due to the tutor's cowardice, to his failure to assert himself against Mr. Parkin (p. 254).

The tutor's first attempts at finding "a new technique" consist of willful self-delusions. Having failed to assert himself by refusing to accompany the Parkins to the races, he withdraws into the privacy of his self and tries to impose a romantic image on the world about him. But sheer will power proves inadequate, and the ugliness of life he longs to escape from remains stubbornly before him: "he was aware of two marquees—one large and beflagged and white, the other small and dull and gray" (p. 50). He tries again, this time buttressing his private vision with an external fact. On the way to the race track Mr. Parkin seemingly becomes enraged when a steam roller impedes his car, and the tutor seizes on this machine as an ally and as a source of strength in his personal battle against decadence:

Its boldness, its simplicity, its power, were what the tutor had wanted to see, had struggled to see, and now they were here before him, outside him, wholly independent of his wanting and struggling. Now he could cease to want and to struggle and the steam-roller would still be there, animating him from outside with its boldness and simplicity and power. The new vision was here and it was solid and real and it could not fade (p. 58).

But the vision and the sense of power it provides do fade as soon as the steam roller drops out of sight, and the tutor remains once again locked within his frustrated self.

At the race track he passes through a series of increasingly terrifying delusions. Overwhelmed by his own inadequacy and guilt, he fabricates first the humiliating hallucination of a juggling race-track tout denouncing him in public: "I'll tell you straight what I think of your principles. You don't believe 'em any more than I do. You only pretend to. Because you're in a bad funk'" (p. 95). Repelled by

this self-truth, the tutor forces himself to join a group of bright young people whom he recongnizes, but this attempt to escape soon turns into another confrontation of his own cowardice: imagining himself urging Ann MacCreath to run away with him to Reykjavik, he is appalled to hear her reject his proposal with a socialist argument in which "he recognizes phrases which he himself had used in earlier conversations with her" (p. 106). Even in his private fantasies, he finds no escape from his conscience. From this point on, the political implications of his inner fears and failings become more marked. Unable to grasp "the actuality before his eyes" the tutor finds himself drifting helplessly towards intellectual and political darkness. Tod Ewan's casual remarks about his bullying of Nigerian natives expand in the tutor's imagination into a Fascist harangue in which Ewan boasts of the formation of Storm Troops in England that will annihilate the socialists, "real scum from the gutter. Most of them Jews" (p. 123). Gregory Mavors' subtle and initially tempting argument in favor of unreason—"There is only one sin . . . and that is disobedience to our desires" (p. 139)—becomes grotesque when the tutor imagines that Mavors joins the Storm Troop formation at one end of the marquee. And when the wealthy and powerful Master of the Fox Hounds (the M.F.H.) enters the marquee and announces, amidst great applause, that his horse will run in the main race, the tutor's fevered mind envisions the M.F.H. launching into a violent diatribe against socialists. In the growing darkness of the marquee where he had sought refuge from his own cowardice, the tutor, sick with despair, sees finally the full horror of Fascism triumphant:

Darkness pressed in upon him once again, lifted him. Horror of the future alone supported him, kept his consciousness alive. He would be gassed, bayoneted in the groin, slowly burned, his eyeballs punctured by wire barbs. Yet it was not the thought of these physical agonies that really horrified him. He was unable to imagine them vividly enough. And such extremes of torture could not last long, could not compare in persistence with the other slower horrors which he *was* able to imagine. The death of all poetry, of all love, of all happiness. Never more to be allowed to use his brain. But perhaps this stage would come first, would precede the war; perhaps it had come already. It had come, it was here, was in the marquee. They were mobilizing. Gone for ever was his hope of making friends, of establishing contact with human beings. There were no more human beings. He was isolated among brutal slaves (pp. 188-189).

His vaguely political personal distaste for the Parkins having climaxed in this nightmarish triumph of tyrannical bestiality, the tutor stumbles from the marquee. Outside, however, he finds himself once again reduced to the "icy vacancy" of his vulnerable self, and so, resignedly, he turns back towards the marquee "To make a final

effort to identify himself with those people. Surrender all his romantic demands, become a hopeless slave" (p. 196).

At this point the tutor's instincts revolt against his craven intellect and render him incapable of movement:

. . . he could not shift his left foot an inch. A glacial panic tightened round his heart. He could not do anything at all, could not even move his eyelids. He was done for, paralyzed, a hopeless failure. He had become insane. Suddenly he surrendered, gave up trying to move. An infinite relief, a blissful vacancy, expanded within him. . . . Now nothing existed. But out of nothing something was born. A noise, a voice. Ghostly and distinct, it came from high up among the fir trees. It spoke into his left ear (p. 119).

In this state of near-suspended animation, the tutor can no longer suppress that part of his psyche that perceives reality. Earlier in the novel this alter ego had sought to break through his fears, notably in the steam roller incident, but repeatedly and deliberately the tutor had thrust it back down into his unconscious, diminished it to an occasional faint buzzing in his left ear. Now, unimpeded, it floods his consciousness and, echoing the voice heard in "Sunday" and "The Island", it furnishes him at last with the "new technique" that he has so fruitlessly been seeking. Like his predecessor in "The Colleagues", the tutor gains from his final delusion an insight into reality, but this revelation, unlike that of Mitchell, introduces no ambiguities of meaning.

The newly-released alter ego, after reviewing at considerable length the tutor's recent behaviour, concludes that he travelled to the very border of sanity because, out of cowardice, he tried, against his better nature, to substitute daydreams for realities:

. . . You ought to learn first of all that your problems cannot be solved in the mind alone. Nor can they be solved in the heart, in the emotions. They must be dealt with in the external world, because they have their origin in that world. You must take action—living practical action (p. 203).

And such action must be taken in the name of the workers' movement, which will demand of the tutor a complete revolution of thought and behaviour:

You will have to move out of the region of thinking and feeling altogether, to cross over the frontier into effective action. For a short time you will be in an unfamiliar country. You will have taken your so-called 'plunge in the dark'; but it will not be in the dark for very long. Out of action your thinking and feeling will be born again. A new thinking and a new feeling (pp. 219-220).

Accepting these dicta, the tutor regains control of his senses and at once begins

to see the life around him in clear light of revealed Marxism. For the first time he sees things as they truly are: "The huge white marquee had been a fake, but the reality upon which the fake had been based was something more than a small grey tent. It was an ordinary medium-sized refreshment tent" (p. 223). His unfamiliarity with the new perspective does, as his alter ego had warned, allow some doubts to rise in his mind, especially when he encounters a young engineer indifferent to the workers' movement and when the race track crowd exults over the victory of the M.F.H.'s horse. But such doubts disappear when the tutor sees the local curate. To the Marxist convert, the curate personifies the quintessence of the enemy, for he is the "intransigent popularizer of a reversed, twisted picture of the world" (pp. 245-246). Indulging his new Marxist zeal, the tutor denounces to himself the principle of resignation: "England need no longer be a land of poverty and of tragedy. Men had mastered nature, and the requisite conditions now existed for creating—not a heaven on earth, but a society in which every man and woman would at least have the chance to be normally happy" (p. 246). Realizing that he is once more day-dreaming rather than acting, he collapses into doubts and fears. A relapse into delusions threatens him. Then, "While his mind fumbled, his body seemed already to have solved the difficulty" (p. 248), and guided once more by his unconscious, he moves through the crowd until he finds Mr. Parkin.

"He had come back", he thinks to himself as he confronts his employer, "to where he had started from, to the situation which had faced him in the dining-room this morning" (p. 250). Only now he sees Mr. Parkin as he really is, and he knows precisely what he must do; so, with only the slightest hesitation, he announces that he will not return to the house until next day. Having asserted himself at last and finding himself not over-surprised at Parkin's sniggering acquiescence, the tutor makes his way purposely towards the neighboring town to put himself in touch with the local workers' movement, to ally himself completely with Marxist reality.

Journey to the Border, then, is a psychological political novel: it traces the psychological progress of a sensitive but highly insecure young man through a hallucinatory hell to the political "truth" of Marxism. The tutor's grasp of reality, already shaky at the outset of the novel, loosens entirely. Among the Parkins, he is only ill at ease and disdainful; but in the marquee among the likes of Ewan, Mavors, and the M.F.H., his uneasiness grows into terror and his disdain crumbles into deep despair. For instance, upon first entering the marquee, he senses an ominous unreality: "What luxury there was here was only an improvisation . . . and he saw a frayed black overcoat hanging from a corner of one of the hampers. Or did he see it?" (p. 129). By the time the M.F.H. arrives, these details have assumed the

monstrous proportions of political terrors: "The bowls had an evil look, like objects in a devil temple. They were something more than quaint ornaments; they had definite connection with the nasty ritual which was being performed at the other end of the marquee" (p. 184). Similar disintegration occurs in all of his actions as long as he refuses to accept the Marxist truth about himself and his world. When, for example, he tries to force himself, against his better nature, to act upon Mavors' philosophy of unreason by winning the love of a young woman whom he meets in the marquee, his high hopes soon fade when he finds himself being toyed with by a sexual machine, and the whole affair becomes a hideous mockery of his desperate passion when she dismisses him with the remark: "You poor little swine" (p. 183). Only after he has explored, psychologically, attitudes ranging from pastoralism to fascism, and reached a dead end, does the tutor permit himself, of sheer necessity, to hear the truth.

Psychologically, the novel creates a vivid image of a mind almost destroying itself through a reluctance to face political truth; the tutor, out of cowardice and egotism, comes close to landing permanently in Hearn's mad Mortmere. And politically, at least from the point of view of Marxism, the novel meets the requirement so often, according to Upward's "Sketch", unmet by modern novels: "it recognizes, more or less, both the decadence of present-day society and the inevitability of revolution." Aesthetically, however, the novel founders before the end: after depicting brilliantly a mind journeying towards madness, it suffers from a jolting and bathetic descent from subtle fiction into *Tendenzpoesie*. The alter ego's lengthy Marxist discourse resembles too much an extended footnote that Upward affixed to his obliquely political psychological novel to make absolutely sure that the reader did not miss the point. Similarly, the facts that the tutor hears first a buzzing, then the voice of his Marxist alter ego only in his *left* ear and that it is his *left* foot that he cannot move towards the marquee seem at best crudely symbolic in contrast to the subtlety Upward employs elsewhere in the novel. Such blatancy both insults the reader's intelligence and wounds his aesthetic sense. Being a completely committed Marxist, however, Upward had to tell what he considered to be the whole truth about the dominant forces at work in the modern world, and this required a climactic recognition by his hero not only of the necessary choice of Marxism but of the full implications of that choice. Political necessity, therefore, drove Upward into blatancy and prevented him from finding the new literary form that would permit a truly satisfactory union of his Mortmere gift and his Marxist faith.

V

Unlike his more famous contemporaries and friends, Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis, all of whom either began as or soon became at best reluctant fellow travellers in the New Country, Upward dedicated himself wholly to Marxism. As late as the early 1940's, in the essay "The Falling Tower"¹⁹ and in the short exhortation "New Order"²⁰, he did not swerve from the path he had chosen. And, as a result, he paid the high price of maiming his artistic gift on the monolithic demands of his political faith. As Lehmann wrote regretfully in his autobiography, Upward gave "evidence of an imaginative gift . . . the fate of which one will never cease to mourn, slowly killed in the Iron Maiden of Marxist dogma."²¹ The recently published novel, however, provides new hope that Upward may yet find the artistic wholeness he sought unsuccessfully in that decade of political delusions, the decade of the thirties.

NOTES

1. *Gog and Magog* (London, [1933]), p. 171.
2. *World within World* (London, 1951), p. 102.
3. *The Whispering Gallery* (New York, 1954), p. 195.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
5. Spender, p. 133.
6. "A Conversation on Tape", *The London Magazine*, New Series, I (June, 1961), 45-46.
7. *New Writing in England*, Critics Group Pamphlets No. 12 (New York, 1939), p. 43.
8. "Foreword" to "The Railway Accident", *New Direction in Prose and Poetry: Number Eleven* (New York, 1949), pp. 84-116.
9. *Lions and Shadows* (Norfolk, Conn., 1947), pp. 173-174.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
11. *The Mind in Chains: Socialism and the Cultural Revolution*, ed. C. Day Lewis (London, 1937), pp. 41-55.
12. "Marxism and the Literary Critic", *Encounter*, XI (November, 1958), 33-34.
13. Stanley Hyman, in *The Armed Vision* (New York, 1948), p. 193, disinters Upward's essay and derides it as "probably the most stupid single piece of Marxist criticism ever written, an argument that the way to become a good writer is to become a good Marxist. . . ." Conveniently and unjustly, Hyman ignores Upward's qualification that "Having become a socialist, however, he will not necessarily become a good writer. The quality of his writing will depend on his individual talent, his ability to observe the complex detail of the real world" (p. 52).
14. Foreword to "The Railway Accident", p. 85.

15. *New Country*, ed. M. Roberts (London, 1933), pp. 174-82.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-89.
17. *The Left Review*, I (January, 1935), 104-110.
18. *Journey to the Border* (London, 1938).
19. *Folios of New Writing*, ed. John Lehmann (Spring, 1941), pp. 24-29.
20. *Penguin New Writing*, ed. John Lehmann. No. 14 (July-September, [1942]), pp 9-11.
21. *The Whispering Gallery*, p. 244.

CHRONOLOGY

Gerald N. White

Pulsing along
 In monotonous iambic pentameter,
 Dividing itself into neat little six-line stanzas,
 That is your clock and mine,
 And the rhythm of the minute.

Morning compiles
 An anthology of tradition-bound hours
 In cadences dead as a dirge from a ghost-locked attic
 Where bone-fingers thud
 On some antiquated spinet.

Dull it will seem
 To a poet fond of metrical digression,
 But time is constrained by the beat of the past and present,
 And its future controlled
 By the rhythm of each minute.