

forth . . . It is a prophecy, a political warning, a cryptogram, a preposterous movie, and a writing on the wall." The critics gathered together in *The Art of Malcolm Lowry* cover most of these aspects—and more. The prefatory essay to this collection could well make this book a *succès de scandale* in Lowrian criticism. In a piece entitled "Malcolm—A Closer Look," Russell Lowry, the author's elder brother, sets about the biographers and puts straight the record with iconoclastic vigor. "Malcolm is no hero to me," he writes, "never was, never could be." Pointing to inaccuracies by the hagiographers and in Lowry's fiction, Mr. Lowry presents his brother as an inveterate liar. Underlying these reminiscences there seems to be a deliberate attempt to discredit Douglas Day's critical biography. However fascinating these fraternal memoirs may be as gossip, they have very little to do with the art of Malcolm Lowry.

If Lowry's work is acutely personal, it is never merely confessional. As in the most authentic subjective writing, the closer the writer comes to his own truths, the closer he comes to his reader's. Brian O'Kill, in a perceptive essay on style, tells us that Lowry had copied out Keyserling's dictum: "There live in every man, in some stratum of his being, all conceivable types of man." At one level, the story of *Under the Volcano* is almost naturalistic; at another, it has the archetypal resonances of myth. In an early version of the novel, the description of a dying peasant suggests this aspect of the fiction: "The Consul saw that this was not only a man dying, it was a nation, it was mankind. And he saw too that these were not merely men talking, they too were nations, nations that argued over trivialities while mankind perished from the face of the earth." If the Consul is Lowry, then the Consul is also Christ, Prometheus, Faust, and Everyman. The soul-sickness that Dr. Virgil diagnoses is a sickness unto death: this is hell, nor are we out of it.

Of the critical essays in this collection, George Woodcock's piece on "Lowrian Topography" is the most illuminating. The significance of place for Lowry—both in his life and in his work—is vividly demonstrated, and the function of the symbolic geography of *Under the Volcano*—where the vision of British Columbia offers a paradisaical alternative to the Dantesque hell of Mexico—is finely analyzed. Woodcock's short exploration of recurrent images associated with Dollarton is a blueprint for

further research into that most intimate of relationships, the life to the art.

Several of the contributors touch upon this relationship. M. C. Bradbrook quotes from a letter written by Lowry in 1950: "Is man a sort of novelist of himself who conceives the fanciful figure of a personage with its unreal occupations and then, for the sake of converting it into reality, does all the things he does?" In much of his imaginative writing, Lowry faced directly what Miss Bradbrook calls "his own psychic turbulence," and his autobiographical fictions explore surrogate worlds and alter egos, alternatives to life's narrative. In his later work, there exists an uncertainty as to whether the creative protagonists are indeed authors of their lives, or if they themselves are being written.

One tells lies, then, in order to be truer to one's self, in order to define the self. In this exploration there are truths beyond the facts of Clio and Mr. Russell Lowry. Although the projected novel-sequence, "The Voyage that Never Ends," was to remain only a dream, there is a sense in which all Lowry's writing represents an unceasing search for meaning and identity. How to discover and articulate that meaning was Lowry's quest. His fictions are that voyage: the journey not the arrival matters, and the best essays in this collection help the reader on that difficult journey to Lowry's difficult truths.

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GORDON S. HAIGHT, ED.
The George Eliot Letters, Vols. VIII and IX
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Professor Gordon S. Haight has "labored for more than forty years to establish a faithful text of George Eliot's letters," and one wonders if any other editor of a novelist's correspondence—or, for that matter, any other editor at all—has ever been more devoted and meticulous. As any

serious reader of George Eliot knows, the first seven volumes of *The George Eliot Letters* were published in 1954 and 1955 and have assisted critics in their efforts to re-establish George Eliot as a major world novelist. Now, nearly a quarter of a century later and on the eve of the centenary of George Eliot's death (1980), Professor Haight has added two volumes, which "are frankly supplementary, every item being linked to the original edition by volume, page, and line number." Besides the judicious documentation throughout both volumes, Volume IX contains thirty-one pages of "Addenda and Corrigenda," as well as a massive, revised "Index" (I, "Sources of Text," pp. 361-66; II, "General Index," pp. 367-539). The new volumes do not contain Lewes's letters to George Eliot (buried with her), nor significant caches of letters written by George Eliot to Mrs. Congreve and to Edith Simcox—letters which Professor Haight is convinced have been destroyed. The search, one assumes, is for all practical purposes complete.

The largest group of new letters written by George Eliot herself are the forty addressed to George Combe, the phrenologist; and these provide information, of moderate interest, about the founding and editing of the *Westminster Review*. More startling are the letters which George Eliot wrote to Herbert Spencer in 1852, particularly the passionate appeal made on July 16 (?): "I want to know if you can assure me that you will not forsake me, that you will always be with me as much as you can and share your thoughts and feelings with me. If you become attached to some one else, then I must die, but until then I could gather courage to work and make life valuable, if only I had you near me. . . . I have struggled—indeed I have—to renounce everything and be entirely unselfish, but I find myself utterly unequal to it. Those who have known me best have always said, that if ever I loved any one thoroughly my whole life must turn upon that feeling, and I find they said truly" (VIII, 56-57). Other letters of major interest include one to John Blackwood, which reads in part: "But I entertain what I think is well-founded objection against telling you in a bare brief manner the course of my story [*Adam Bede*]. The soul of art lies in its treatment and not in its subject" (VIII, 201). A delightful letter to Charles Bray (VIII, 12-15) should be read by anyone who thinks of George Eliot as being unflinchingly ponderous.

As Professor Haight pointed out in his original "Preface," ". . . one sometimes learns more from the letters to her than from her replies" (I, xii). Thus, the nine volumes contain a good deal of material written to George Eliot or about her (according to the publisher, the collection contains 4,060 letters, 2,371 by George Eliot and presumably 1,689 by other hands). Generally, I believe that Professor Haight's practice is wise: both the older and newly published volumes present glimpses of George Eliot from many different angles and also information about her milieu. For instance, two letters written by Emily Davies about George Eliot (VIII, 455-56, 465-66) seem more informative to me than much of the brief business and social correspondence of either George Eliot or Lewes; and letters written by two of Lewes's sons from Africa (the lively Thornie and the pathetic Herbert) help one understand personal problems at the Priory. More importantly, Volume IX contains, if I have counted correctly, fifty-three excerpts from Edith Simcox's *Autobiography* (some portions previously published in K. A. McKenzie's *Edith Simcox and George Eliot* and Professor Haight's *George Eliot*)—absorbing material, dealing generally with Edith's passionate, abnormal love for the aging George Eliot. Edith—an intelligent, sharp-eyed, sensitive woman, who called herself "half a man"—at times records unexpected judgments and emotions, dramatizes the last chapters of George Eliot's life, and preserves details, particularly from conversations, which otherwise would have been lost. It would be more difficult to explain the inclusion of other material, interesting though it may be, such as young Charles Lewes's letters to his mother, Agnes Lewes (VIII, 164-66, 190-92), and perhaps letters previously published in *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*.

All in all, the final volumes of *The George Eliot Letters* are welcome additions to their distinguished predecessors. But Professor Haight has not finished: with the completion of the *Letters*, as well as his biography of George Eliot and numerous other comments on her, he is now serving as General Editor of the Clarendon Edition (Oxford) of George Eliot's fiction. His dedication and knowledge deserve our greatest respect.

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