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Wrider/Espider: The Consul as Artist in *Under the Volcano*

Patrick A. McCarthy

Abstract

The plight of the artist is central to Malcolm Lowry's fiction; *Under the Volcano* contains numerous references to artists and artistic figures. Lowry establishes the Consul's role as artist in several related ways: the Consul's identification with writers or literary characters; his simultaneous involvement with and isolation from the world (with its consequent fragmentation and dissolution of the self); and his meagre writings -- a poem, an unmailed letter, and the unwritten book. The unwritten book highlights Lowry's theme of the instability of language and its failure as a means of salvation. The association of writing with death and entrapment is also a recurrent theme: the Consul's solipsistic reading of the world dooms him to isolation. In Lowry's view, any art not founded on the capacity to love is doomed to failure: the Consul therefore fails as an artist.

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