A QUEST FOR THE MAGNA MATER

A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SEARCH FOR LOVE

IN MALCOLM LOWRY'S UNDER THE VOLCANO

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English

by

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ABSTRACT

A QUEST FOR THE MAGNA MATER

A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SEARCH FOR LOVE

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This study examines the psychological meaning behind the addiction to alcohol of Geoffrey Firmin, the hero of Malcolm Lowry's novel, Under the Volcano. The investigation centers on the motives which lead Firmin on a compulsive search for drink on the day he meets his death. My thesis is that behind the search for alcohol is a quest for love, specifically, a quest for maternal love, whereby Firmin, through his alcoholic bottle, seeks to re-establish the loving relationship he once knew with his mother, both in the nursing situation and in the womb. Support for this thesis is drawn from two principle sources: (1) Mythological and archetypal criticism, which claims that the
quest motif derives from man's eternal search for reunion with the mother, who was his first object of love; (2) Psychological principles, mainly Freudian, which attribute alcoholic addiction to the need to regress to a state of childlike dependency whenever love and comfort are desired. Building my analysis upon opinion expressed by these authorities, I attempt to show that Geoffrey Firmin, through his quest for alcohol, is in effect seeking an incestuous union with his mother, in order to realize the ultimate love experience.

Conspicuous among the many archetypal and mythological allusions in the novel which lend support to the thesis that Firmin's addiction is symptomatic of his yearning for maternal love are those having reference to the magna mater cults of ancient culture. These allusions tend to suggest that Lowry's hero, in seeking to find maternal love through alcohol, is participating in the drinking rites required of an initiate into worship of the Great Mother. Firmin's quest for love through the mother is thus not only substantiated, but given larger meaning, in being portrayed as a quest for divine love through reunion with a maternal deity. I interpret this exalted reunion as implying that, in a world torn by war, love among mankind will be restored through reconciliation to God. Firmin's sacrificial death, brought on by his assumption of the blame for his brother's misdeed, is cited as
evidence that Lowry’s hero has, indeed, learned the lesson of love, a circumstance which augurs well for mankind.

In the course of the study I discuss the implications of the incestuous union on psychological and archetypal levels, as well as in terms of its application to events of the modern world (World War II). The themes of ambivalence, self-destruction, return-to-the-womb, the life-death-rebirth cycle, the Fall, punishment, purgation, and recognition are among those that receive attention. A major conclusion reached by the investigation is that Firmin revisits the maternal womb, a site to which he regresses by means of drink, for the purpose of learning about love and life from their source. In psychological terms, this involves confrontation with the truth of his incestuous wishes. Recognition of the truth dissolves his incestuous guilt and enables him to experience feelings of purgation and renewal. Through his rebirth—whose perpetual occurrence is implied—Firmin takes his place in the psychological history of man.
INTRODUCTION

Writing in 1939 under the shadow of an erupting World War II, Malcolm Lowry uses the archetype of the quest to make a statement in Under the Volcano about the lapse of love which war represents. As his main character he chooses an alcoholic who, having abused the gift of love through the love of drink, is required to make amends. To restore himself to divine favor and recover the ability to love, the fallen hero, an English ex-consul named Geoffrey Firmin, must return to the source of love, the maternal womb, a site which can only be revisited through death. Firmin's death is punitive, analogous to the punishment by war that Lowry implies a corrupt world has brought upon itself. The author suggests that by a sacrificial death, Firmin can affirm his love for God and humanity, and so be purged of sin; likewise, Lowry implies, it is through the sufferings of war that the world may be purged of evil, and love among mankind restored.

The quest motif is suggested by Lowry through his hero's behavior on the last day of his life. Throughout this day Geoffrey Firmin is dominated by one obsession—where to find his next drink. His search
for alcohol impels the novel, leading him on a round of bar-hopping which has been likened by a number of critics to the archetypal quest. Both David Markson and Richard Costa see a parallel to the travels of Odysseus.\(^1\) The latter labels Firmin’s wandering a quest for identity. Daniel Dodson asserts that it represents a quest for atonement.\(^2\) William New, remarking on the quest theme in *Under the Volcano*, cites Lowry’s admission in a letter that Jung’s concept of "man in search of a soul" is influential in his work.\(^3\)

I believe that Geoffrey Firmin is searching for his mother, driven by a need for love which takes the form of a persistent craving for drink. This reading is suggested by psychological interpretation of his chronic alcoholism. According to Ernst Simmel, the compulsion to drink has its roots in incestuous love for the mother:

> Ultimately, the unfulfilled infantile instinctual urges derive from the oedipal conflict which [alcoholics] are still striving to gratify in their adult lives. . . . The alcoholic feels anxious because unconsciously he is haunted by incestuous guilt and


fear of castration ... Alcohol dissolves the anxiety ...

William J. Browne concurs. He believes the orality of alcoholism stems from an attempt to repeat the nursing situation, in particular, to recapture the feeling of solace induced by the nirvana-like sleep which follows feeding:

Drinking embodies a re-enactment of a complex of oral, aggressive and sexual conflicts ... Every alcoholic ... drinks a fluid, not infrequently from a bottle, which produces a warm pleasurable feeling. The desired end-point is of euphoria, which if attained is usually followed by a stuporous sleep--a nirvana. This drinking sequence directly parallels the experience of the infant at the breast or bottle where oral satisfaction induces sleep. (p. 423)

Other psychological opinion confirms these views.

On the basis of psychological opinion, then, it may be inferred that the Consul (as Firmin is more frequently called) is driven to drink out of a compelling need for maternal love and assurance, such as he enjoyed in infancy. This need arises out of an unresolved Oedipal conflict which continues to demand relief from guilt and anxiety.

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over incestuous wishes. His dilemma tends to become self-perpetuating, for the attainment of pleasure and consolation by means of drinking only serves to develop more guilt, since drinking itself represents enjoyment of the mother, and consequently furnishes cause for additional anxiety simultaneous with giving solace. Alcohol affords the Consul but temporary relief from tension, and even this momentary respite dissipates ever more quickly with his growing insight into his profound need to seek love by this means alone, as time after time he repulses the overtures of his wife in favor of the alcoholic bottle.

In time, the Consul's distress becomes so acute that regression to the oral stage does not yield sufficient satisfaction, and he is pressed to regress still further, to the original site of shelter (which is a site, too, of pleasure), the maternal womb. This regression to the womb is symbolized by the ravine which receives the Consul's dead body at the end of the novel. His murder is brought about, in large part, by his own actions, which stem from self-destructive impulses which also account for his drinking. His tendency to self-destruction is an unconscious recognition that his quest for love can never come to a successful conclusion until he has accomplished a sexual union with his mother, for which he must suffer the punishment of death. The consummation of this love therefore threatens that he
shall reach the ultimate stage of nirvana, the eternal sleep of death.

Yet while he lives, the Consul can never find peace. His Oedipal conflict dooms him to endless pursuit of an elusive love. It is this internal unrest which sets the quest in motion.

Lowry adds another dimension of meaning to the Consul's struggle against alcohol by placing it within a traditional framework. By using the quest, an archetypal form, to dramatize a personal search, Lowry bestows his hero with universal importance. This not only increases the Consul's stature, but emphasizes the traditional influences which have gone into creating him as an individual. In this manner, Lowry implies that the psychic forces which determine the Consul's present behavior have grown out of his heritage from the past. The extent to which Lowry draws on this heritage to account for his hero's motivation can best be understood by examining some relevant aspects of the archetypal quest.

The Archetypal Quest. Critics have long recognized the psychological basis of the quest. They frequently interpret it as a search for the mother because of the Oedipal implications surrounding the object, which is usually a bride or a fertility symbol. Northrop Frye explains how the quest is related to the search for the female by pointing out the similarities between ritual and psychology:
The quest-romance has analogies to both rituals and dreams, and the rituals examined by Frazer and the dreams examined by Jung show ... remarkable similarity in form ... Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from ... anxieties ... Translated into ritual terms, the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the wasteland. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine ... the union of male and female. The precious objects brought back from the quest ... sometimes combine the ritual and the psychological associations. The Holy Grail, for instance ... is related to or descended from a miraculous food provider like the cornucopia, and, like other cups and hollow vessels, it has female sexual affinities ... 7

Frye labels the quest-romance a wish-fulfillment dream (p. 186). He calls attention to the Oedipal meaning behind the triangle often found in myth, which typically involves a young hero who sets out on a perilous journey to slay the dragon and win his lady love (p. 193).

Joseph Campbell believes that all mythology is inspired by the mother, the single sex object whom man constantly seeks. 8 He attributes the universality of the quest to the necessity to renounce the mother, both as protectress and sexual object, upon initiation into adult life. Because this forced renunciation deprives the male of his first-known love relationship, he seeks to re-establish it throughout the whole of life, via constant fantasies:


We remain fixated to the unexorcised images of our infancy, and hence disinclined to the necessary passages of our adulthood. In the United States there is even a pathos of inverted emphasis: the goal is not to grow old, but to remain young; not to mature away from Mother, but to cleave to her. And so, [he] husbands] are worshipping at their boyhood shrines...[all their lives], still on the search for love—which can only come from...dreams...or...under the make-up of the latest heroes of the screen. (pp. 11-12)

Renunciation of the mother is reflected in the prohibition against incest. In the archetypal quest, the prohibition is implied by the number of obstacles the hero must overcome in order to marry the lady of his choice. The series of trials, ostensibly to prove his worthiness, represent the hero's continual need to show himself a more deserving lover than his father, his formidable rival for the mother's love. At the same time, the trials symbolize the punishment the hero must suffer for desiring a forbidden love. The quest sometimes involves performance of an "impossible task" as a type of incest barrier.

Oliver Evans and Harry Finestone observe that "the hero who does not overcome an obstacle and return victorious...[may be] doomed...propelled toward his destruction by a force over which he has no control [so] that...unconsciously, he may be seeking his own destruction...[this is] an example of the Return to the Womb." The death-wish is a variation of the Mother-Search archetype, these

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critics state, occurring in cases where the individual seeks to re-
gress to a condition of prenatal security:

\[\text{The return-to-the-womb archetype}\] refers \ldots to
the situation where an individual feeling himself inade-
quate to the life-challenge, longs either
consciously or unconsciously \ldots for a state of
peace and security resembling that of the foetal
condition, where he enjoyed the protection of the
maternal womb and had no obligations or fears. \ldots
The womb metaphor is peculiarly appropriate to
this regressive pattern of behavior. (p. 505)

Evans and Finestone name Freud's "instinct towards death" as prevail-
ing in such instances. They cite alcoholism among the neurotic mani-
festations of this urge (p. 505).

Maud Bodkin sees regression to the womb as an important prelimi-

nary to rebirth, within the cycle of life-death-rebirth.\(^\text{10}\) She writes
that there is first an "element of sinking down towards quiescence, as
in the womb of the mother. The pattern then includes \ldots a return
from that state, renewed and changed" (p. 69). She derives this con-
cept from Jung and Freud, both of whom have described alternating
urges towards life and death (pp. 68-72). Jung, in particular,
stresses the process of growth which evolves from this cycle.

In the archetypal pattern, mythological figures experience growth
by descent to the underworld (a metaphor for the womb, as well as for

\(^\text{10}\) Maud Bodkin, \textit{Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological
Studies of Imagination} (1934; rpt. London: Oxford University Press,
the mind), where they acquire knowledge. Bodkin cites Aeneas, Dante, Ulysses, Orpheus, and Faust (pp. 125, 147-8, 191, 201, and 215) as heroes who undertake such quests. She points out that they are frequently guided by females, often mothers who furnish information which allows them to succeed in their missions. Consultation with the mother in the underworld is analogous to return to one's origins to find basic truth. Discovery of truth is also implied by the equivalence between visitation to the underworld and exploration of the depths of the unconscious mind.

In the underworld journeys described by Bodkin, the setting of the scene in forests and caverns, as well as on rivers, tends to suggest both womb and mind. The presence of darkness aids the image, too. The association between womb and mind implies that the heroes are questing not only after self-knowledge, but carnal knowledge. This is confirmed by Frye, who notes that forbidden treasure is often sought in the quest. He recognizes in the threatening imagery, the rivalry between father and son for possession of the mother:

Often the dragon guards a hoard; the quest for buried treasure has been a central theme ... The lower world ... inside or behind the guarding dragon ... is a place of oracles and secrets ... Mutilation or physical handicap ... is often the price of wisdom or power ... the reward of the quest usually is or includes a bride. This bride-figure is ambiguous: the psychological connection with the mother in an Oedipus fantasy is ... insistent ... She is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place ...
and she is, of course, often rescued from the unwel­
come embraces of another and generally older male, or
from giants or bandits or other usurpers. (pp. 192-193)

Punishment is demanded of the hero who gains secret knowledge.
The mutilation which Frye mentions has reference to castration. Some-
times the quest itself is a form of punishment, with the hero being
cast out of society and forced to wander in a labyrinth or a wilder-
ness. His wandering carries the connotation that he is lost in a
moral sense, as well as being mentally confused. Typically, says
Frye, "the hero travels perilously through a dark labyrinthine under-
world full of monsters" (p. 190). The monsters, of course, represent
not only the father, but the hero's guilt. Banishment for acquiring
forbidden knowledge dates from the prototypic wanderer, Adam, who is
"cast out of Eden . . . and wanders in the labyrinth of human history"
(Frye, p. 191).

Besides punishing the hero, exile affords him an opportunity for
contemplation of his sin. This encourages the development of psycho-
logical insights which enable the hero to find his way out of the wil-
derness. A vision or revelation is often experienced. This is sym-
bolically equivalent to the recognition that he must give up his in-
cestuous wishes in order to be readmitted into society.

In the mythological scheme, redemption and restoration usually
follow recognition. As a reward for finding true knowledge, the hero
is often allowed to found a new ancestral line through settlement in a new homeland. Frye notes that "Moses and the Israelites wander through a labyrinthine desert, after which ... the conquest of the Promised Land is achieved" (p. 191). The Israelites' passage from barren desert to fertile land illustrates the role of the quest in bringing about what Frye calls the "victory of fertility over the waste land" (p. 193).

The victory of fertility is often accomplished by reunion with a maternal goddess. Frazer discusses at great length the rituals involving initiation into the mysteries of the various Earth Goddesses, among them Demeter and Persephone. The formula generally includes entrance into a sacred temple, with ceremonial eating, drinking, and celebration over the planting of seed. Though the incestuous implications are evident, Frazer explains the significance in larger terms: "Above all, the thought of the seed buried in the earth in order to spring up to new and higher life readily suggested a comparison with human destiny, and strengthened the hope that for man too the grave may be but the beginning of a better and happier existence in some brighter world unknown" (I, p. 90).

Lowry incorporates into *Under the Volcano* all the features which characterize the archetypal quest. The search for the mother, descent into the underworld for knowledge, wandering in the labyrinth, ceremonial eating and drinking, reunion with the mother, the planting of seed, and punishment by death may all be identified in the work. By use of these universal motifs, Lowry enlarges the meaning of his hero's quest. What begins as a quest for personal fulfillment, to satisfy an inverted type of love, culminates in an act of self-sacrifice showing that love is being directed outward, towards humanity. The Consul's symbolic union with Mother Earth through his entry into the ravine is suggestive of an act of fertilization whose purpose is to nourish mankind. Lowry implies through this action that pursuit of love to its ultimate source, the maternal womb of the earth, will result in the Consul's transformation. Instead of feeding off his mother (through the alcoholic bottle) and giving nothing in return, the Consul will in the future nourish others and himself become a source of love.

Frazer reports that rituals concerned with the resurrection of Osiris, a vegetative god, have a similar purpose: "at the great festival of sowing in the month of Khoiak (November) the priests used to bury effigies of Osiris made of earth and corn. When these effigies were taken up again at the end of the year . . . the corn would be found to have sprouted from the body of Osiris, and this . . . would be hailed as an omen . . . of the growth of the crops. The corn-god produced the corn from himself: he gave his own body to feed the people: he died that they might live" (II, p. 90).
Lowry draws upon urges which are universal to mankind to provide his character with convincing motivation for action. This is why the Consul's behavior, idiosyncratic though it may be, yields to interpretation on both individual and archetypal levels. Lowry exploits the universal urge to return to the mother—a psychological urge which Campbell says underlies the archetype of the quest (see p. 5, above)—to supply his hero with the impetus to set out on a quest for love.

Lowry's conception of the Consul as an alcoholic makes his motive for seeking the mother even more compelling, since his addiction, symptomatic of an internal need to seek the love and assurance of a mother, places the Consul under a continual compulsion to drink. The incestuous implications of this wish to be reunited with the mother adds further universal meaning to the Consul's struggle, besides supplying the ingredient of conflict for dramatic purposes. Even his destructive tendencies have their roots in a universal urge—the death instinct is shared by all, according to Freud. 13 Lowry uses the wish of the alcoholic to find total security by return to the prenatal womb to depict

the universal instinct towards death. It is this common wish to die, in order to be reborn, which Lowry uses to advantage to supply the Consul with motivation to return to his maternal beginnings. By utilizing the meaning of return to fundamental truth implicit in return to the source of life, Lowry is able to imply that completion of the Consul's quest will uncover some hidden truths about love. These discoveries involving the Consul's selfish abuse of love are used by Lowry to reveal the source of the hero's addiction, as well as to point to the source of illness in the world. Lowry is able to address this larger question through the actions of the Consul because the latter's motives are psychologically consistent with those of all men.

The Alcoholic Quest. Exploration of the Consul's addiction from a psychological point of view offers insight into the forces which motivate his quest. Freud's theories of how love first develops enable us to understand the Consul's persistent need to return to the mother to satisfy his craving for love. Freud states that loving involves not only receiving satisfaction from the object, but incorporation of the object into oneself, or more accurately, into the ego: pp. 119-121). The interrelationship between the life and death instincts becomes apparent in the alcoholic, who, responding to the life instinct, seeks to obtain pleasure from alcohol, a substance which gratifies his death instinct. It is the seemingly paradoxical operation of these opposing instincts which generates the quest.
We define loving as the relation of the ego to its sources of pleasure . . . Under the dominance of the pleasure principle . . . in so far as the objects which are presented to the ego are sources of pleasure, it takes them into itself, 'introjects' them . . . If . . . an object turns out to be a source of pleasure, it is loved . . . incorporated into the ego . . . (Instincts and Their Vicissitudes, pp. 136-137)

On the basis of this theory, drinking is analogous to an act of love, a repetition of the original introjection of the contents of the maternal breast, the infant's first love object. 14 Hence, the Consul's pressing need for drink attests to his craving for maternal love. The loss of both his mother and his step-mother at an early age lends support to this contention. It is further substantiated by his inability to form a mature loving relationship with Yvonne, which confirms that the early losses resulted in the arrest of his developing capacity for loving, as would occur had he retained an unnatural attachment to his mother:

In the normal course of events, an individual, having first formed a loving attachment to his mother, later learns to transfer his affection to other love objects. It is this ability to redirect his cathexis 15 which makes him capable of establishing mature love rela-

14 The reader is referred to Melanie Klein for explanations by leading authorities on how the emotions of love and hatred are developed (New Directions in Psychoanalysis [New York: Basic Books, 1955]).

15 Cathexis is defined by Charles Brenner as "the amount of psychic energy which is directed toward or attached to . . . a person or
tionships in adulthood (Brenner, p. 28). This capability is described in terms of the libido \(^\text{16}\) by Ellmann and Feidelson:

> It is only when someone is completely in love that the main quantity of libido is transferred on to the object and the object to some extent takes the place of the ego. A characteristic of libido which is important in life is its mobility, the ease with which it passes from one object to another. This must be contrasted with the fixation of libido to particular objects, which often persists through life. (p. 566)

The alcoholic resists separation from his first love object. So completely does he incorporate the mother into his own ego, he cannot transfer his feelings of love to others, to the detriment of later love relationships. Simmel notes that "the alcoholic has only pseudo-libidinous relationships with people, his drink increasingly representing his only external object. In his struggle for and against abstinence, he fights an endless, indissoluble object fixation and conflict" (p. 21). The alcoholic remains fixated at an infantile level of development, the oral stage at which he first knew pleasure at his mother's breast.

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\(^{16}\) Calvin Hall defines libido as "the form of energy which is used by the life instincts" (A Primer of Freudian Psychology [New York: New American Library, 1954], p. 59). He says that "in his earlier writings, Freud used the term 'libido' to denote sexual energy; but when he revised his theory of motivation, libido was defined as the energy of all the life instincts."
In addition to orality, Simmel sees in the strong tie of the alcoholic to his mother a desire to return to the womb. His interpretation of alcoholism echoes that of Bodkin with respect to the quest—both writers view the return-to-the-womb feature of each as symbolic of rebirth, proceeding out of a nirvana-type death, as part of the life-death-rebirth cycle:

Identification with the mother... by drinking... the physical introjective prototype of incorporation. By drinking her, as it were, he becomes one with her and thus approximates psychologically a return to the womb. Death has a great attraction to his unconscious; it signifies Nirvana, pre-existence in the woman's womb, complete oneness with her... The alcoholic drinks himself into oblivion, the mental state of prenatal Nirvana; emergence from this stupor is a rebirth, with mother in attendance ready with milk to nurse him back to love. (p. 21)

Similarly, Michael Balint sees in alcoholism a means of achieving the ultimate union with the mother, through regression to the maternal womb. He draws a parallel between the intoxicated condition and the prenatal state of harmony:

Prior to birth self and environment are harmoniously 'mixed-up', in fact, they penetrate each other. In this world... there are as yet no objects, only limitless... expanses... This environment is... undifferentiated... (pp. 36-37)

This sort of primitive relationship... is provided us by... alcoholics... the first effect of intoxication is invariably the establishment of a feeling that all is well between alcoholics and their environment. (p. 28)

The alcoholic is motivated by the desire to recapture this harmony, to re-establish the undifferentiated state in which there was no boundary between himself and his environment, and where the outside world does not exist. Like the foetus or young infant who does not distinguish himself from his mother, the alcoholic exists in a state of narcissism, loving only himself, and his mother, as part of himself. He therefore identifies strongly with his mother. Because the association has resulted in fixation, the alcoholic stubbornly resists breaking the maternal tie. His compulsive need for the security offered by his mother's love prompts him constantly to seek a reunion.

Because the alcoholic will accept no other love but that which he knew as a foetus or as an infant, he must continually regress to these early stages whenever the need for love and comfort arises. He is therefore under a constant compulsion to seek solace through drink. Browne notes Freud's belief that the instinctual compulsion to repeat experiences has its basis in the presence of unresolved conflicts (p. 424). When these are repressed, the psychic forces continue to operate to demand their resolution. The unresolved conflict to which alcoholism owes its origin derives from the alcoholic's inability to renounce his attachment to his mother in favor of an appropriate substitute. Though he finds temporary pleasure in alcohol, which allows
him to regress to the oral stage at which he is fixated (or even furs-
ther, as Simmel and Balint suggest, to the prenatal stage of the
 womb), the basic conflict remains, as his compulsive behavior indi-
cates. Because his incestuous instincts are repressed, they remain
essentially unsatisfied, and so the quest for the mother, in the form
of another drink, proceeds indefinitely.

Hatred, the instinct opposite to love, likewise plays an impor-
tant role in alcoholism, also as a result of repression. There is
little argument among authorities that the alcoholic's tendency to
self-destruction is indicative of his hatred of himself. These im-
pulses undoubtedly owe part of their origin to guilt over incestuous
wishes, an interpretation particularly convincing if the ingestion of
alcohol is viewed as symbolic of a sexual union with the mother for
which the individual feels the need of punishment. Self-hatred has
other sources, as well, one of them originally experienced as hatred
for the mother, perhaps the result of either her rejection or her ab-
sence. Simmel relates, "All my alcoholic patients had deeply-seated
hatred for their mothers. This hatred is deeply repressed as an im-
pulse to incorporate, to destroy by devouring the mother" (p. 20).
The alcoholic, forced to repress his feelings of hatred towards the
mother, turns them inward against himself, where they reënforce the
feelings of self-hatred he already harbors over incestuous guilt. These later assert themselves as destructive impulses. The Consul, having lost his mother and step-mother early in life, undoubtedly feels deserted by their deaths, a factor which would encourage feelings of hatred towards them. He also has reason to hate Yvonne for deserting him, though it is his alcoholism which forces her to leave. Since these feelings of hatred cannot be expressed openly, especially in view of Yvonne's return and offer of love, they are introjected, resulting in the Consul's self-hatred.

A discussion by Edith Weigert of the detrimental effects of repressed finds application to the Consul, who experiences the narcissism, masochism, passivity, and impotence Weigert lists as resulting from hatred which is turned inward out of fear of losing the mother's love. These four characteristics, common to the alcoholic, adversely affect his ability to love objects other than himself or his mother:

The fear of loss enhances love ..., [of the object of the] fixation, and the aggression, which the child dare not turn outward, for fear of provoking loss of love, is turned inward. In accepting punishment, the child seeks to secure the love of the strict mother ..., identifying itself with the bad mother who punishes. Thus the masochistic mechanism of depression begins, a mechanism that can go so far that

the child dare not love actively, in order not to lose. There results the ... passive demand of love, which can only take, and not give--characteristic of the narcissistic neurosis. This narcissistic development ... conserves the dependence on the mother, and provides very poor conditions for the mastery of the Oedipal complex. The ... individual aims his libidinal desires at ... an aim which is unattainable. (p. 340)

Simmel, also recognizing that the alcoholic is consumed with self-hatred and hatred of the introjected mother, comments upon his chronic disposition to depression and suicide. The manic-depressive attitudes Simmel describes can be recognized as reflections of the ubiquitous conflict between love and hate which plagues the Consul:

The feelings of guilt and despair which torment the alcoholic after he has become sober [are due to] ... depression (melancholia) which follows the alcoholic mania ... [He] has introjected a disappointing object of love (basically his mother) and tends to attack and destroy the introjected object within himself. ... to draw life (love) from his mother by devouring her; to murder the one person on whose very existence his only hope for security depends. ... The unconscious conflicts of the wish to destroy the mother ... and the need to hate when he wants to love, are of the deepest significance ... By his alcoholism he tortures those who care for him, tending to destroy them, and with them, himself. His addiction is to chronic murder and chronic suicide. (pp. 20-21)

The Consul's deep depression on the morning after his drinking spree with Dr. Vigil conforms to the pattern outlined by Simmel. Yvonne's return that same day, awakening his feelings of both love and hatred, heightens his impulse to destroy himself, and her, as well. Because she threatens, by reforming him, to break his alcoholic tie to his
mother, he is alarmed. He therefore seeks to re-establish the maternal tie more resolutely than ever.

Through his hero's strong desire to seek maternal love, Lowry calls attention to the need for a return to love by all mankind. His choice of an archetypal format to portray the theme of the need for love in the world places the Consul's quest and conflict within the experience of all humanity. For this reason, the archetypal and mythological allusions in the story offer important clues to the psychological basis of the Consul's alcoholism. The underlying motive for his addiction, the wish to be reunited with his mother in a loving relationship, is the subject of my study. I plan to explore this topic in terms of the archetypal quest. Myths which feature reconciliation to the maternal element are used to supplement the investigation.
Chapter I

JOURNEY BY WATER

Prominent among the symbols which Lowry employs to hint at the Consul's wish for reunion with his mother is water, traditionally associated with the womb. Since water is also a common symbol for the unconscious mind, its omnipresence during the Consul's quest suggests a return to the womb by psychological means. This may occur through memory of past events or through psychological regression. The womb/mind combination allows water to hint, too, of sexual wishes being entertained in the mind. Because the remoteness of both the unconscious mind and the womb allows these wishes to be thought of as

19 This usage derives from the amniotic fluid which surrounds the foetus. In explaining the use of water symbolism to signify rebirth, Frye states: "The myth of the birth of the hero ... is often associated with a flood, the regular symbol of the beginning and the end of a cycle. The infant hero is often placed in an ark or chest floating on the sea ... Psychologically, this image is related to the embryo in the womb, the world of the unborn often being thought of as liquid" (p. 198).

20 The use of water to denote the psyche has been observed by Evans and Finestone, who state that "Jung has called water the commonest symbol for the unconscious" (p. 506). Though these critics do not cite the source of this convention, it no doubt stems from physiology, having reference to the cerebrospinal fluid which circulates around the brain.
repressed, incest is suggested. In addition, there is in the womb/mind combination the intimation that rebirth may permit recovery of these wishes from repression. By its varied symbolism, water in effect relates the story of the Consul's quest for love.

Water signals the Consul's passage through the climactic events of the life cycle by assuming different forms. For example, when water in the form of a rainstorm rages violently at the climax of the work, it signals the Consul's death. When the rain later changes to a light shower, purgation and rebirth are indicated. Evans and Fine-stone note that such symbolic usage is a literary convention: "Water... is a traditional literary symbol for death and also, paradoxically, for life—indeed for the whole birth-death-resurrection cycle" (p. 506). This paradox arises, of course, from the nature of water, which is responsible for death as well as life, a fact which Lowry uses to advantage. Alcohol, the major liquid symbol of the novel, is similarly contradictory, in that it brings the Consul both love and death. Lowry uses other liquids in forms more distinctly negative or positive in connotation to announce either his hero's fall or his restoration. Liquor, blood, storms, floods, strychnine, lava, and poison are among those liquids which variously portend his death, allude to his crime of incest, or take note of his punishment by exile or self-
abuse. On the other hand, liquids in the form of rain, milk, rivers, streams, waterfalls, pools, and showers connote purity and fertility, suggestive of the Consul's purgation and rebirth. Lowry's manipulation of these water symbols by different combination conveys endless nuances of meaning, yet the basic message remains the same—the Consul's wish to return to the womb.

Water symbolism is so much in evidence in Under the Volcano that the Consul's quest, though it takes place over land, might be likened to the archetypal sea voyage. The analogy is suggested by literary convention, which has long used the sea voyage to indicate transport to the unconscious, as well as to the womb. Through these associations, the sea voyage has come to symbolize a quest for truth, for reasons related to the womb and mind, respectively: Implicit in the return to the womb is the concept of getting to the essence of things, or discovering fundamental truth; likewise, exploration of the mind involves the acquisition of insight, or discovery of self-truths. Thus, the sea voyage metaphor is useful in communicating the purpose of the Consul's quest, which is, at base, to determine the truth of his search for love, i.e., the discovery of his incestuous love for his mother. Moreover, the sea voyage, because of its isolation, serves to emphasize the Consul's alienation. This alienation enables
his period of wandering to be viewed as a type of exile or punishment for harboring forbidden desires. Since alienation carries connotations, too, of psychological separation from reality, as well as psychological confusion, the Consul by his aimless wandering recalls the archetypal sea voyager who has lost his way.

The sea voyage resolves conflict by returning the sailor home. In the Consul's case, he is returned home to the womb/mind, where he becomes consciously aware of his heretofore repressed feelings of love towards his mother. In the process of recognition, he is cleansed of incestuous guilt, and thereby experiences a psychic rebirth. This striving for rebirth is a major concern of the novel, with purgation and/or punishment by death a necessary preliminary step. The reader is constantly reminded of these goals through the liquid symbolism.

The Consul's addiction to alcohol makes the sea voyage metaphor eminently suitable, inasmuch as alcohol is his chosen mode of travel. Alcohol permits the Consul to quest for love by an interior route, through his psyche. Deep in the alcoholic stupor, he is able to voyage to the past, to seek reunion with his loving mother through memories of childhood and infancy, and to regress, ultimately, to the prenatal state. Ironically, while alcohol conveys the Consul to the womb to satisfy his desire for love, it punishes him for having done so, in
recognition of the incestuous nature of this achievement. Hence the Consul has reason to both desire and dread alcohol, for it both mitigates and aggravates his dilemma. Initially alcohol gives the Consul a certain sensual pleasure analogous to incestuous satisfaction. It has a soothing effect, too, for it eases his fear of punishment for this enjoyment by dulling his awareness, so that he is able to escape confrontation with the true meaning of his act. Paradoxically, at the same time that alcohol relieves his guilt by blotting out conscious reality, it has a tendency to relax the Consul’s inner defenses. This causes his hidden desire for incestuous love to creep more readily into his conscious mind, where it must then be recognized. Guilt and self-punishment result. The paradox sets up a cyclical pattern, whereby more and more alcohol is required to still the fears which arise from this growing awareness, with the repetitions gaining in momentum until the craving for alcohol dominates all other desire.

Incestuous Guilt. The Consul is shown caught up in this dilemma on the morning that Yvonne returns home, intent on helping him fight his addiction in hopes of repairing their marriage. Having just sobered up from an alcoholic binge of the night before, the Consul finds his guilt over indulgence so oppressive that he feels the need of solace—just one drink to keep his defenses intact. Yvonne’s appearance
at this point is entirely unwelcome, for reform would deprive him of
drink and thus sever the maternal tie on which he depends. To further
complicate matters, resumption of marital relations with Yvonne, who
has a motherly concern for his welfare, risks reminding the Consul of
the incestuous nature of his craving for love. There is the threat, in
this event, that his defenses would break down altogether.

In their first attempt at sexual relations, the Consul finds him-
self impotent, a self-punishment for having sneaked a drink while his
wife was napping. His guilt is shown by the rapidity with which he
again turns to alcohol after this failure: "And then the whiskey bot-
tle: he drank fiercely from it."21 Other liquids which appear in
connection with this event, though unobtrusive, nonetheless reiterate
the womb motif, as when the Consul, after apologizing to Yvonne for his
impotence, "shut the door behind him and a small rain (italics mine) of
plaster showered on his head" (p. 90). More ominously suggestive of
his return to the womb (and his awakening knowledge of the need to be
punished for this desire) is the foreshadowing of his death by the hal-
lucination which occurs directly after he drinks the whiskey: "he sat

... waiting for the object shaped like a dead man and which seemed to

21 Malcolm Lowry, Under the Volcano (1947; rpt. New York: New
American Library, 1971), p. 90. All subsequent references are to this
edition.
be lying flat on its back by his swimming pool . . . to go away" (p. 91). Even Yvonne's tears--"Behind him in the room he heard Yvonne crying" (p. 90)—may be interpreted as a reference to the womb. Her tears may be viewed as external evidence of the Consul's feeling of guilt over the failure at reunion, as well as his guilt over incestuous desire.

Abuse of Love. Water symbolism identifies love as the missing ingredient in the Firmins' marriage. At first glance, it would appear that a deficiency of water points out the fault, for the ruin and decay of Quauhnahuac bespeak sterility, neglect, and lack of care or love. Closer examination of the text, however, reveals that there is water in abundance, but it is both wasted and improperly channelled, suggesting that the barrenness of the Consul's life is due to a misuse of love, rather than its lack. The distinction appears to be a commentary upon the Consul's abuse of marital love through his exclusive pursuit of maternal love, as represented by his love of alcohol.

Lowry uses water symbolism to allude to the Consul's abuse of love in the opening pages of the novel, which proclaim that "Quauhnahuac . . . boasts . . . no less than four hundred swimming pools, public and private, filled with water that ceaselessly pours down from the mountains," and yet, "No one ever seems to swim in the magnificent Olympic
poor. The springboards stand empty and mournful... [There are] deserted pools scattered everywhere" (pp. 3-4). In Chapter II, Yvonne observes:

> The grass, she thought, wasn't as green as it should be at the end of the rains: there must have been a dry spell, though the gutters on either side of the road were brimful of rushing mountain water... (p. 58)

Though mountain water suggests purity, this image is defiled by the word gutter. Because gutter evokes an image of the womb, the combination hints of sexual desecration.

The concept of defilement becomes more insistent when water symbolism is used in stronger form, as in "The blood ran down the gutters" (p. 99). This line, which on a literal level is a reference to conditions in Quauhnahuac during the Mexican Revolution, illustrates the multiplicity of meaning which Lowry is able to communicate from the interplay between the words blood and gutters. Gutters alone implies depravity, being associated with filth and refuse. Through its invocation of womb imagery, gutters hints broadly, too, of evil related to sexual acts. By the addition of the word blood, with its genetic connotations, these acts are identified as incestuous. Womb imagery is reinforced through association with menstrual blood, and with the flow of blood occasioned by childbirth. Because the word blood ominously hints of revenge, there is even allusion to punishment. Mention of
blood in connection with the Mexican Revolution calls attention to the Nazi horrors taking place in Europe, implying that the Consul's incestuous deed is likewise a crime against humanity. Lowry in this manner links together past and present, and in so doing, carries the meaning of the Consul's sinful relationship with his mother beyond the individual level and places it within the history of man. Lowry makes use of the same line to supply his novel with internal continuity. He accomplishes this by using the line to portend later events. The words "The blood ran down the gutters" (p. 99) not only predict that the Consul's blood will be spilled, but identify his gravesite, since the word gutter has reference to the barranca into which the Consul's body will be thrown.

The frankly sexual descriptions of both gutters and barranca leave little doubt that they are allusions to the womb. In addition, the foul state of both carry strong connotations of incest. The association of the barranca with sexual perversion may be inferred by its meandering, deviant course. The meager supply of water, too, suggests impurity:

The Malebolge was the barranca, the ravine which wound through the country, narrow here . . . trees . . . grew down into the gulch, their foliage partly obscuring the terrific drop. From the bottom came a faint chuckling of water. (p. 100)

Fertilization. The chuckling water theme occurs on page 68 in
quite another context, yet still reiterates the theme of return to the womb. Here it symbolically describes the process of fertilization:

"Immediately below them the small chuckling swimming pool was still filling from a leaky hose connected with a hydrant, though it was almost full." The common reference serves to connect the concepts of incest or death with that of rebirth, and in this way suggests that death/incest is necessary before rebirth can occur. By this use of water to allude to the death/rebirth sequence of the life cycle, Lowry is able to foreshadow the events of the story.

The image of the leaky hose filling the swimming pool is used on several occasions to announce that the Consul, despite his seeming impotence, effects fertilization. On page 68, this concept is supported by positive water imagery in close proximity to mention of the hose. The Consul's housekeeper, tellingly named Concepta, implies restoration of the Consul's powers by remarking, "'So there is hot water for you, which is a miracle!'" (p. 67). Mention of the sea repeats the notion of regeneration: "On the other side of the house the view suddenly spacious and windy as the sea" (p. 67). The theme of rebirth is sounded again by water symbolism on the preceding page, this time with mention of "a pretty little ship lying at anchor" and "[a] flood" (p. 66). Behind the word flood, however, is implied destructiveness,
which portends a tragic event in connection with the rebirth.

On the other occasion in which the image of the faulty hose filling the swimming pool is used to symbolize fertilization by the less-than-virile Consul, spouting fountains predict rebirth. There appears to be a hint, too, that the process of rebirth will see Hugh emerge as the new Consul:

The Consul saw himself again... gazing down at the swimming pool below... Thou art the grave where buried love doth live... Fresh mountain water trickled into the pool, which was almost overflowing, from the cracked broken hose whose length was a series of small spouting fountains. Then Yvonne and Hugh, below, were swimming in the pool... (pp. 143-144)

Once more, concealed in the optimistic allusion to rebirth is a darker note, with the words grave and buried implying that death must occur before rebirth can take place. These terms may also be interpreted as references to the womb, with "buried love" an allusion to incest. The charge of incest may be leveled against both the Consul and Hugh, the latter by virtue of his love affair (actual or fantasized) with his sister-in-law, Yvonne.

Identity Crisis. The interchange of roles between the two brothers, besides designating Hugh as the Consul's heir, seems to imply a certain confusion over identity on the part of the Consul.²² Because

²² Lowry himself admits to an intent to scatter the identity of the Consul among the other characters (Selected Letters of Malcolm...
the role switch and rebirth imagery are repeated with Jacques Laruelle, the impression is conveyed that the Consul is searching for a lost identity, a corollary to his quest for his mother. The multiple identities are symptomatic, too, of the Consul's split ego, described by Hans A. Thorner as common to cases of internal persecution. The alcoholic has a tendency to paranoia, the result of self-persecution over repressed hatred of the mother, as well as over incestuous guilt. Torn by a conflict which rages over good and bad impulses (corresponding to love and hatred of the mother), the alcoholic solves his problem by a disavowal of his wicked self. This takes the form of a loss of identity or a split ego. Lowry dramatizes this concept through the motif of exile, whereby the Consul's wicked self, in the person of Hugh, is forced to wander the seas, presumably for sexual indiscretions with Yvonne, who is a maternal symbol.

Lowry stresses Hugh's alienation from society by casting him in the role of a perpetual voyager. Hugh, a former seaman, speaks of himself as homeless: "No home. A piece of driftwood on the Indian


Ocean" (p. 153). He identifies with the Jews, "themselves the cast-out, exploited, and wandering of the earth, even ... once, as he" (p. 171). Exile is once more indicated by the name of the British cargo steamer on which Hugh sails as a youth, the *Philoctetes*. By pairing the *Philoctetes* with a sister ship, the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the information is conveyed that Hugh has been exiled in punishment for the crime of incest.

The pervasive sea imagery which surrounds Hugh is a constant reminder of his maternal longings. His announcement to Yvonne that he is returning to the sea contains mention of Vera Cruz, a possible clue that incestuous desire is the "true cross" that Hugh bears. This interpretation is supported by sexual imagery in the fantasies which follow this statement, coupled with recognition of the need for purgation. Rebirth is implied, too:

"As a matter of fact I'm going back to sea for a while. If all goes well I'll be sailing from Vera Cruz in about a week" ... But now Hugh was standing at the wheel ... below him the foredeck ... lay over in the blue trough and spray slowly exploded ... Hugh's heart was lifting with the ship, he was aware of exhilaration, the limitless purification of the sea--(pp. 102-104)

Hugh's return to the sea (a metaphor for return to the womb) permits him to be purged of incestuous guilt, in preparation for rebirth. His frequent swims in the Consul's pool are to the same purpose. The notion that Hugh will be reborn as the Consul receives confirmation in
a passage which repeats the words baptism and rebirth while somewhat blurring the identities of the two men. This is accomplished by juxtaposing the background conversation between Hugh and Yvonne with the Consul's reading of a tourist folder, while labeling of the speakers is omitted:

"... If I could only get out! If I only knew where you could get to!"

OCTOTELULCO

In this town near Tlaxcala existed, long back, the Maxixcatzin Palace. In that place, according to tradition took place the baptism of the first Christian Indian.

"It will be like a rebirth." (p. 301)

It is significant that a substantial portion of the positive water symbolism, which is allusive of birth, rather than death, occurs in Chapter IV, which is narrated from Hugh's point of view. The association of Hugh with birth implies that the Consul's reincarnation will take place through his younger brother, Hugh's interest in the guitar, often a womb symbol, supports this conclusion:

Nor did it strike me as any less than an unexpected and useful compliment that Phillipson, the artist, should have troubled to represent me, in a rival paper, as an immense guitar, inside which an oddly familiar infant was hiding, curled up, as in a womb--

(p. 177)

The association is strengthened by a later passage which buries reference to this instrument in water symbolism alluding to the womb and birth:
They were in a town once more, a town of one long street, a cul-de-sac, and many paths, that converged upon a small lake or reservoir ahead, in which people were swimming, beyond which lay the forest. . . .

From a doorway came the plangent chords of a guitar, and at hand was the refreshing sound of rushing water, of a falls. (p. 252)

As if in illustration of the Consul's split ego, or perhaps his confusion over identity, equally persuasive evidence may be found to support the Consul's reincarnation in the person of Jacques Laruelle. This new identity is likewise revealed through water symbolism denoting rebirth. In some respects, Jacques' claim to the Consul's role is even stronger than that of Hugh, since Jacques' actions parallel the Consul's behavior more closely, particularly on his last day of life.

When Jacques retraces the Consul's footsteps through the town of Quauhnahuac on the first anniversary of his friend's death, the action seems designed to call attention to the similarity between the two men. Jacques' long walk in itself imitates a quest, for as he rambles, he reminisces about the murder and ponders the elements in the Consul's past which contributed to his downfall.

A more striking correspondence can be recognized in Jacques' visit to the Cervecería XX cantina, where he finds the Consul's letter to Yvonne hidden in a book of Elizabethan plays. The incident closely resembles the Consul's discovery of Yvonne's lost letters while drinking at the Farolito. Not to be overlooked, either, is the fact that
Jacques appears to be developing a fondness for drink, for he struggles, as did the Consul, against the inclination to consume beverages of gradually increasing potency. The mocking label of his anis bottle seems to foreshadow a similar fate, for it mirrors an identical portent made just hours before the Consul's death:

M. Laruelle poured himself another anis. . . . A deep flush had suffused his face, and his hand trembled slightly over the bottle, from whose label a florid demon brandished a pitchfork at him. (p. 4)

The Consul took stock of his surroundings. . . . There was a tall voluted bottle of Anis del Mono, on the label of which a devil brandished a pitchfork. (p. 338)

Jacques' drinking of the deadly liquid seems almost ceremonial, as though his imitation of the Consul's drinking habits, engaged in on the anniversary of his death, is a sign of his acceptance of the Consul's mantle.

The most decisive evidence that Jacques is on this occasion being reborn as the new Consul is the thunderstorm which rages outside the cantina. As if in continuation of the events of the preceding year, when a thunderstorm was gathering momentum as the Consul was approaching death, the storm in Chapter I erupts with renewed fury, seeming to proclaim Jacques as the Consul's successor:

M. Laruelle listened to the water booming down the gutters beneath one jalousie door of the Cerveceria XX which opened into a sidestreet in the far left-hand corner. A sudden thunderclap shook the whole building and the sound echoed away . . . (p. 28)
The Chief of Rostrums pushed the Consul back out of the light, took two steps forward and fired. Lightning flashed ... The Chief fired twice more, the shots spaced, deliberate. Thunderclaps crashed on the mountains ... (p. 373)

The theme of Jacques' rebirth is echoed, too, in Chapter VII, where he is shown taking a shower in the presence of the Consul. His position as the Consul's heir is further implied by the coupling of this episode with reference to Jacques' usurpation of the role of lover to Yvonne (pp. 206-207).

There is a further suggestion of rebirth in the resemblance of the cantina to a womb-like enclosure. Like the cinema next door, the cantina is secretive and dark (the lights having gone out during the storm), offers protection to its inhabitants from the raging elements outside, and serves as a source of pleasure. The fact that the pleasure comes from a bottle, in liquid form, reinforces the maternal motif.

The Mamma Mater. Yvonne is the major maternal figure of the novel. She is the single love object to which all three men are drawn, and is appropriately associated with water, symbol of the womb. Because she represents the Consul's vision of future happiness, Lowry surrounds her with water symbolism fittingly optimistic. In Chapter IV, where Yvonne speaks to Hugh of a future home in Canada with her husband, references to Pineaus Lake, Fish River, and Onion Lake appear on pages 120-121. Mention of wet woods, choppy waters, the open sea,
ice crystals, and "water from the well" are also to be found in close proximity (p. 122). These landmarks are an echo of the scene the Consul imagines of their future, as revealed in the unposted letter to Yvonne in Chapter I:

I seem to see now, between mescal visions of a new life together . . . our house is built on an inlet . . . and we are standing, happy in one another . . . looking over the water. (pp. 36-37)

Despite the Consul’s conscious desire to find happiness with his wife, however, he retains an unconscious yearning for his mother, as revealed in other passages. His desire is betrayed by the choice of water symbols used to describe India, the country of his birth. The symbols used are similar to those employed in describing Canada. Purity and gentleness are characteristic in both cases: "And by degrees they reached the briny sea . . . Whereupon the lake was lapping . . . the waterfalls were playing . . . the snow was white" (p. 125).

It is a tribute to Lowry’s skill as a writer that, by gradually changing the tranquil mood of the liquid landscape to one of restlessness, he is able to communicate the Consul’s growing frustration and his realization that he cannot find happiness with Yvonne. Through allusion to the Canadian lakes associated with Yvonne, Lowry implies that she is unable to satisfy the Consul:

... and he was still thirsty. Then the snow was not glistening ... and he was thirstier than ever.
Then the lake was blowing, the snow was blowing, the waterfalls were blowing... he was blowing away himself, whirled by a storm of blossoms into the mountains, where now the rain was falling. But this rain, that fell only on the mountains, did not assuage his thirst... He was standing, among cattle, in a stream... He was lying face downward drinking from a lake... Yet his thirst still remained unquenched. (p. 125)

It is noteworthy that the Consul is blown away from the lake and towards the mountains. This suggests that the Consul is being directed towards his mother, an interpretation supported by clues to her mountain residence in his early history:

His mother had died when he was a child, in Kashmir, and, within the last year or so, his father, who'd married again, had simply, yet scandalously, disappeared... One day he had walked up into the Himalayas and vanished, leaving Geoffrey, at Srinagar, with his half-brother, Hugh, then a baby in arms, and his step-mother. Then, as if that were not enough, the step-mother died, too, leaving the two children alone in India. (p. 19)

This passage seems to imply that upon her death, the Consul's mother was taken up into a heavenly abode in the mountains, to which her husband followed her. We may assume that the Consul's step-mother, in dying, in turn followed her husband. This interpretation is particularly convincing in view of information from Weigert that in certain cultic religions which worship the Magna Mater, the dead are thought to return to her habitation in mountains and caves (p. 304). It is no wonder, then, that the Consul is drawn to the mountains (as well as to the breast-like twin volcanoes of Parían) in an attempt to satisfy his
thirst. His fantasies reveal that he still lusts after maternal love, though professing a wish to start life anew with Yvonne.

**Death/Rebirth.** The loud thunderclap which interrupts the Consul's reverie seems almost a punishment for entertaining forbidden thoughts: "The Consul had an inconceivable anguish of horripilating thunderclapping about his skull" (p. 126). The thunder serves to pretend his death, an allusion to the "Thunderclaps" which "crashed on the mountains" (p. 373) just as the Consul is shot.

Yvonne's death is signalled by the same storm, described in similar terms in order to convey the fact of the near-simultaneity of the two deaths: "All at once the rain fell more heavily. . . . lightning struck through the trees with a savage tearing and roar of thunder that shook the earth" (p. 334). Lowry's employment of corresponding water symbolism to describe the couple's joint death/rebirth would seem to suggest that the sexual union which fails in Chapter II is finally achieved; even the triggering of Yvonne's death by that of the Consul has sexual implications. In the ferocity of the storm, however, there is the suggestion that the union may be an incestuous one. The similarly strong terms used to describe Jacques' rebirth---"M. Laruelle could hear the thunderclaps crashing on the mountains behind him. . . . The rain was falling in torrents" (p. 24)---advance the possibility
that Jacques in his new role represents the product of an incestuous coupling. There is evidence, after all, that he is likely to become an alcoholic like the Consul, and can be expected to likewise ruin himself in time.

Hugh's observation that "behind the volcanoes themselves he saw now that storm clouds were gathering" (p. 124) is an early hint of his own similar fate. The same motif occurs later, when Hugh accompanies Yvonne on her journey towards death, with mention of "ever mounting black clouds" (p. 318). Because Yvonne is in the company of Hugh on this occasion, this warning of punishment seems to have been provoked by their flirtation. At the same time, both the blackness of the imagery and its constant repetition throughout the novel--

... black clouds climbing the sky from the north-east, a temporary ominous darkness that lent a sense of evening, thunder sounded in the mountains... (p. 276)

The massed black clouds were still mounting in the twilight sky... (p. 323)

... black clouds were boiling up again, there was a distant breaking of thunder. (p. 347)

--seem allusive of a deeper evil, such as incest.

Yvonne's need for purgation, therefore, results not just from her sexual indiscretions, first with Jacques, and later perhaps with Hugh, but because she, as the maternal figure in the Oedipal triangle, also desires an incestuous relationship. The need for purgation before a
pure union with the Consul can take place may explain why her death is recorded in Chapter XI before that of the Consul, though it takes place as a result (the shot frightens the horse into running wild) of his murder. Furthermore, this sequence is consistent with Simul, who observes the murderous impulse of the alcoholic towards his mother (see p. 21, above).

The rebirths themselves are marked by almost identical descriptions in chapters XI and XII. The Consul's murder is preceded by the words "It was raining softly" (p. 373), while "It began to rain softly and a sweet cleanly smell rose from the woods" (p. 333) appears shortly before Yvonne's accident. Yvonne's rebirth is anticipated earlier by water symbolism suitably mild and pure. As she and Hugh make their way towards Parian, setting out on a quest of their own for the Consul, the mood of the water is almost hopeful, as if in promise of success:

"The sound of the falls behind was not lost in that of the cascade ahead. The air was full of spray and moisture. . . . one might have heard things growing as the torrent rushed through the wet heavy foliage" (p. 317).

Lowry's use of the life-death-rebirth scheme places emphasis on the continuity of life, with the result that the lives of his characters are woven into an historic context. This is undoubtedly the au-
Jacques dominates as the persona, is in the nature of a rebirth, having occurred, chronologically, after the remaining eleven chapters, which comprise a single flashback. This circumstance permits certain conclusions to be drawn about the sequence of events in the story. Since the water symbols of Chapter I are echoed in later chapters (on occasion, in almost the same words), we may infer a causal relationship. Jacques' rebirth as the Consul may be viewed as proceeding out of the latter's quest, which must have had as its purpose the finding of an heir. Reading the Consul's return to the womb as procreative in aim finds support in Frazer (see fn. 12, p. 12, above), who observes the same purpose in the ritual burial of an effigy of Osiris made of corn. Jacques' rebirth is a testimony to the fertility of the Consul, an affirmation that the quest for love has been successful—the production of an heir, after all, implies an exchange of love, as opposed to the taking of love implied by the Consul's addiction to alcohol.

The fact of Jacques' rebirth is evidence, too, that the Consul's

24 Lowry comments upon the importance of this structural element to an understanding of the novel (Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry, p. 88). In a letter to his publisher, he says, "The book should be seen as essentially . . . a wheel, so that, when you get to the end, if you have read carefully, you should want to turn back to the beginning again."
incestuous sins have been forgiven. On the archetypal level of interpretation, forgiveness comes from a deity. It is the result of the Consul's sacrificial death, symbolic of an act of love towards humanity. In psychological interpretation, the Consul forgives himself. By conscious recognition of his feelings towards his mother, he frees himself of incestuous guilt. This enables him to love not only himself, but others. By such means as these does Lowry intimate that love and forgiveness are unifying elements, responsible for the perpetuation of life on both individual and universal levels.

Water symbolism further aids the concept of continuity by carrying connotations of flux. Through the association of water with flow, and with the cyclicity implied by the use of water to symbolize life and death, Lowry once more reiterates his hero's position as a man traveling within the ongoing stream of history.
Chapter II

SLAYING THE DRAGON

The omnipresence in *Under the Volcano* of menacing father figures invests the Consul's quest for maternal love with Oedipal overtones. Because authority figures consistently seem to appear whenever the Consul tries to find love through relations with others, their presence suggests that he feels guilt over these contacts. The spies who stalk the Consul throughout the novel may therefore be interpreted as personifications of his paranoia, symptomatic of the need for self-punishment he continually feels because of his incestuous wishes. The demons, internal and external, who plague the Consul as he quests for love are analogous to the dragons of myth who thwart the young hero as he attempts to win his lady's love.

Though paternal dragons predominate in the novel, there exists, too, sufficient paternal figures of benevolent mien to suggest that hatred is not the only emotion the Consul feels for his father. Indeed, it is love for him which brings about the Oedipal rivalry. Freud explains that the young boy admires his father and identifies
with him. This makes him want to take the father's place with the mother. The result is ambivalent feelings towards the father:

At last . . . the little boy notices that his father stands in his way with his mother. His identification with his father then takes on a hostile colouring and becomes identical with the wish to replace his father in regard to the mother . . . Identification, in fact, is ambivalent from the very first; it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal. It behaves like a derivative of the first oral phase of the organization of the libido, in which the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated . . .

Roots of the Consul's Paranoia. Both the identification and the hostility of which Freud speaks are dramatized in the novel by the incident at the Hell Bunker hole of the golf course located near the Taskerson home. This proximity seems to suggest that Mr. Taskerson is present during his surrogate son's sexual activities in the bunker with a girl companion. The information that the fifteen-year-old Geoffrey "was devoted to old Taskerson" (p. 19) encourages the inference that young Geoffrey is imitating an admired father model by these actions. At the same time, parental disapproval of Geoffrey's behavior is indicated by the appearance of Jacques and a girl friend, who take the role of censuring parents with their interruption of the

adolescent love-making by derisive laughter. This parental interference with a son's assumption of his father's role hints broadly of Oedipal rivalry. It is the presence of these symbolic parents, coupled with the threat of punishment implied by the Taskerson residence nearby, which gives an incestuous import to the Consul's early efforts at sexual expression.

Interpretation of the incident as having incestuous connotations is encouraged, also, by the condition of the bunker, whose sterile sand carries implications of wrongdoing. Another possible clue to incest is contained in the name Hell Bunker, which hints at punishment for a wrongful act. Too, the description of the bunker has sexual overtones which evoke womb imagery, and, not coincidentally, recall the barranca in Quauhnahuac:

The bunkers were usually full of sand, but they were windproof, and deep; none deeper than the "Hell Bunker." The Hell Bunker was a dreaded hazard, fairly near the Taskerson house, in the middle of a long sloping eighth fairway. It guarded the green . . . The abyss yawned in such a position as to engulf the third shot of a golfer like Geoffrey . . . (pp. 20-21)

The sense of menace evoked by this description reinforces that implied by the presence of the Taskerson house and the spying parents. All reflect the Consul's guilt over his sexual experience in the bunker, guilt which can be traced to incestuous desire.

Geoffrey's inability to sustain a relationship with a girl his own
age without the presence of incestuous guilt shows his inability to transfer his affections from his mother to an appropriate love object. The incident illustrates his fixation at an infantile level of development, where he is so bound in love to his mother that other love relationships are precluded. The Hell Bunker failure at this point in his quest for love is significant because it occurs at an important stage of Geoffrey's development, in adolescence, when even the strong sexual drive characteristic of this period is not powerful enough to free him from maternal bondage.

The same episode illustrates how Geoffrey seeks love through other avenues, after the effort with a girl his own age fails. Having been caught in a forbidden act, the discomfitted Geoffrey tries to make amends by courting parental love. Hoping to please his symbolic father and mother through imitation of his surrogate parents, the beer-loving Taskersons, he invites his friends to the nearest bar, boldly ordering drinks for all. To Geoffrey, alcohol represents love. By presenting his parents with this beverage, and drinking it himself, Geoffrey both offers and receives love, and thereby relieves his guilt over his indiscretion. At the same time, the sudden impulse to drink is indicative of Geoffrey's fury at the interruption, which denies him love. He is here carrying out the oral response to anger earlier
suggested by Freud, i.e., he is following a compelling urge to vent his outrage at his parents by consuming them in drink.

But Geoffrey's love/hate instincts are fated to be frustrated, for he encounters another disapproving parent in the bartender who refuses to serve the underage youngsters. This leads the boy to experience a feeling of betrayal at the hands of his beloved Mr. Taskerson, whom the bartender, in his association with alcohol, represents. The mixture of love and hate contributes to the development in Geoffrey of ambivalent feelings towards father figures. Primarily, however, there is a feeling of resentment, for by his refusal to admit the adolescent boy to manhood by serving the drinks, the bartender exposes Geoffrey as an imposter who would usurp the father's place. The humiliation is all the greater because of the implication that Geoffrey is an impotent child incapable of emulating his father in a sexual relationship with the mother. He can only rage in vain against the father's superior powers. As a result of his failure to find love by subduing the "dragon," Geoffrey harbors feelings of anger, mingled with fear, against authority figures all his life. Wherever love is concerned, he is especially apprehensive of retribution.

This constant fear leads to paranoia, whose foundation has been laid by Mr. Firmin's desertion of the boy some years before, when he
inexplicably disappeared into the Himalayas. This desertion is undoubtedly interpreted by Geoffrey as a punishment for desiring maternal love. It may also have been construed as a fulfillment of the wish to see his rival dead. This furnishes additional cause for guilt, and increases the burden of his already oppressive feelings of the need for punishment. With the Hell Bunker events, the punitive father again threatens retaliation for Geoffrey's attempt to displace him, and the experience serves to fix more firmly the boy's paranoid tendencies. Geoffrey begins to associate love and sex with punishment, and with spies whose vigilance thwarts the expression of these instincts.

Because Jacques is perceived in the role of a spying father on this occasion, he earns Geoffrey's enmity: "Alas, their friendship did not for some reason survive these two sad, though doubtless providential, little frustrations" (p. 21). It is from this experience that Geoffrey learns to distrust male friendship, which, like the other relationships, does not prove to be a source of love. Forgiveness does not occur until many years later, when it is implied in Chapter I by Jacques' assumption of the Consul role. Even then, it is possible for this event to be interpreted as an act of revenge, since being the Consul may be considered more of a curse than a blessing.

The Hell Bunker episode strengthens Geoffrey's distrust of women,
too, and makes him more fearful than ever of the open admission of love. Having been betrayed in childhood through the deaths of his mother and his step-mother, he is vulnerable to rejection. He interprets the denials of love at the golf course and the bar as confirmations of his unworthiness. Diminished in self-worth by repeated withdrawals of love, Geoffrey develops feelings of hatred towards himself, and women, too. This hatred carries over into his later relations with Yvonne, whom he punishes for her recent desertion of him by being impotent at their reunion. His continual drinking on that fatal day serves to punish Yvonne further for deserting him.

The Consul's impotence with his wife is traceable to the public display at Hell Bunker on another account, stemming from the public nature of marriage, an institution sanctioned and overseen by public authorities. Because of the fear of ridicule implanted by the laughter of his friends, the Consul feels intimidated in his relations with Yvonne, his wife in the eyes of the public. By contrast, the interlude with Maria, the prostitute at the Farolito, is private, and the Consul, after assuring himself that there were "no voices . . . no one listening" (p. 348), is able to function sexually in the safe seclusion of the darkened room. Additional evidence that the Consul, after being caught making love to a girl in public, never ceases to be
haunted by the fear of being spied upon by authorities during the performance of an intimate act, is found in a newspaper excerpt which appears later in the text: "grave objections have been made to the immodest behavior of certain police chiefs . . . performing their private functions in public" (p. 181). Though the roles of performer and audience are here reversed, the allusion to the Hell Bunker incident is clear. The Consul can only enjoy a secret, forbidden love, such as that provided by incest. He is inhibited from participating in a peer relationship by the sneering, watchful eye of public authorities.

**Denial.** Because the Consul fears detection by the watchful father whenever he seeks love, he adopts a defense of denial. This denial takes the form, on occasion, of hiding behind the identity of Hugh. The Consul's attempt to shift the blame for incestuous desire to Hugh is illustrated in a passage which portrays the flirtation between Hugh and Yvonne. As the couple take a walk, they are observed by the watchtowers of the prison and the binoculars of the police:

They ambled up the lane, accompanied by two foals, which had followed their mothers out of the paddock . . . The watchtower, nearer, taller, bloomed above a wood, through which they just made out the high prison walls . . . The prison was now behind them and he imagined themselves jogging into enormous focus for the inquisitive binoculars of the police . . . those dreadful creatures that seemed to shadow his brother everywhere. (p. 106)

Hugh has reference to the pariah dogs as the dreadful creatures
who stalk his brother. In this passage, because of their association with the police, they assume an identity as watchdogs, in keeping with the theme of persecution. There is a vague implication in these lines, in the mention of mothers and woods, that the police and the dogs are guarding against the occurrence of incest between Hugh and Yvonne as they watch the blossoming romance. Lowry very cleverly underscores the fact of the Consul's incestuous guilt by using Hugh, rather than the Consul himself, to dramatize the persecution motif. This switch of identity suggests that the Consul is so guilt-ridden that he must deny his own personality and assume that of Hugh in order to engage in sexual pursuit of Yvonne, whom he perceives as a maternal figure. The spying police whom the Consul so fears are actually self-created, externalizations of the internal demonic fathers who continually stand guard lest the Consul commit the crime of incest.

Fear of punishment from the father so intimidates the Consul that he is unwilling to openly show love, even when incest is not involved. It is fear of reprisal from the police which prevents the Consul from extending brotherly love to the injured Indian dying by the roadside when the bus carrying Yvonne, Hugh, and the Consul to Tomalin stops to investigate his plight. The conflict aroused in the Consul by the incident is shown by the differing attitudes of the two brothers. Hugh
may be viewed as symbolic of the Consul's compassionate nature as he strives to aid the Indian. It is he who "had seen a man, whom they'd narrowly missed, apparently lying fast asleep under the hedge on the right side of the road. Neither Geoffrey nor Yvonne . . . had seen him. . . . Hugh leaned forward to call out, hesitated, then tapped the driver on the shoulder" (pp. 240-241). It is Hugh who tries to reach out to the Indian, and the Consul who restrains him, out of fear of the authorities:

As nobody made a move at all Hugh grew impatient . . . He looked at the Consul expectantly: he'd been in the country long enough to know what should be done, moreover he was the one among them most nearly representing authority. Yet the Consul seemed lost . . . Suddenly Hugh stepped forward impulsively and bent over the Indian . . . "You can't touch him—it's the law," said the Consul sharply . . . "Otherwise you might become an accessory after the fact." (pp. 242-243)

The Consul's deliberate repression of the impulse to love his fellow man under threat of punishment from a vengeful father is even more clearly demonstrated in Hugh's struggle with the police:

"Come on, Hugh . . . you'll only get hauled into goal and entangled in red tape . . ." Then the policeman pushed Hugh towards the bus; Hugh pushed back. The policeman . . . began to fumble with his holster . . . With his other hand he gave Hugh another shove . . . Hugh would have jumped down only the Consul, exerting his strength, held him pinned to a stanchion. (p. 247)

The Consul encounters another threatening father in the person of his neighbor, Mr. Quincey, against whom he has sinned by neglect of
his garden, thereby disobeying the precept to "Love thy neighbor."

The accusing demeanor of the Godlike Mr. Quincey seems to charge the Consul with loving his liquor more, and indeed, his ruined garden, symbolic of his ruined marriage, is the result of his addiction to alcohol. The Consul's fear of having been observed by Mr. Quincey as he sneaks a drink from a tequila bottle hidden in the underbrush (p. 129) reveals his anxiety over having satisfied his incestuous desire under the watchful eye of the Oedipal father. The incestuous import of his act is suggested by the dark and menacing character of the sexual imagery occupying the Consul's thoughts as he afterwards surveys the decay around him:

But the Consul . . . realized he . . . had almost fallen into the barranca . . . the ravine curved sharply down here . . . bisecting the public garden . . . Ah the frightful cleft, the eternal horror of opposites! Thou mighty gulf . . . I seem . . . to fall into thy chops . . . a two-hundred-foot sheer drop . . . (p. 130)

Incest is even more clearly indicated by the Oedipal allusion as the Consul talks to Mr. Quincey's cat: "--Hullo-hullo-look-who-comes-hullo-my-little-snake-in-the-grass . . . hello-pussy-my-little-Priapusspuss, my-little-Oedipusspusspuss" (p. 134). Though ostensibly a reference to the flirtation between Hugh and Yvonne, the words may be applied to the Consul, who is in the habit of assuming the identity of Hugh in order to deny his incestuous love for his mother. The Consul's
incestuous guilt is indicated by the accusing presence of Mr. Quincey, who promises him that death will be the punishment for his deception:

As the Consul denies his culpability by fibbing, "'Yes, I'm on the wagon now,'" Mr. Quincey replies, "'The funeral wagon, I'd say, Firmin!'" (p. 133).

The threat of death as the punishment for loving is so awesome to the Consul that he even denies having love for his father. In fact, his role as the son in the Oedipal triangle causes him to frequently wish his father dead. Mr. Firmin's disappearance during the Consul's childhood may be viewed as symbolic of the boy's wish to eliminate his rival for the mother's love. The mysterious disappearance of the officers of the German submarine during the Consul's World War I naval service repeats the same theme. The Consul's responsibility is more strongly indicated in this case by his being accused of having burned the officers in his ship's furnaces, an act suggesting triumph over the father by an Oedipal murder. Even Jacques' comment on the event—"during those later months when drunk . . . he suddenly began proclaiming not only his guilt in the matter, but . . . he announced the single-handed accomplishment himself of the deed" (p. 33)—echoes Freud's description of the primal murder. 26 The imagery of phallic submarine

26 Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *The Standard Edition of The*
and womblike sea seem also to hint of Oedipal rivalry as the reason for the Consul's deed.

Ambivalence. In addition to revealing the Consul's hatred of his father, the submarine incident shows evidence of his love for him, in accordance with the ambivalence towards the parent reported by Freud. Before the disappearance of the officers, the Consul rescues them from the captured submarine, an act symbolic of an offer of love to his father. Moreover, the Consul is loved by his father in return, as shown in his receipt of the Distinguished Service Medal for this feat.

The contradiction with which Lowry invests this incident reflects the internal conflict the Consul suffers over his ambivalent feelings towards his father. These play a part in his later emotional conflict over love. Though he is finally acquitted of the murder of the German officers, he never ceases to suffer guilt on this account: "He was acquitted . . . Yet . . . despite his award . . . [there was] his lost honour, his secret . . . stigma . . . [that] would cling to him . . .

throughout his whole life" (p. 33). His inability to rid himself of guilt is evidence of his culpability, not only in the symbolic murder of his father, but with respect to incestuous wishes. He therefore has continuing reason to fear the punitive father, despite his love for him.

The Consul's ambivalence towards father figures is apparent even in a basically friendly relationship, such as that with Dr. Vigil, who takes the role of a benevolent father. Though the doctor is a close friend, his very name reveals the Consul's residue of fear. Paradoxically, Dr. Vigil's name has reference to his duty as the Consul's physician to watch that his patient does not overindulge in alcohol, yet the doctor is, in fact, one of the Consul's most fervent drinking buddies. Their rapport is indicated by a silent communication intended to deceive the piercing eye of Mr. Quincey, who is symbolic of the father in his punishing aspect:

... there passed between himself and the doctor a barely perceptible exchange of signals, a tiny symbolic mouthward flick of the wrist on the Consul's side as he glanced up at his bungalow, and upon Vigil's a slight flapping movement of the arms extended apparently in the act of stretching, which meant (in the obscure language known only to major adepts in the Great Brotherhood of Alcohol), "Come up and have a spot when you've finished," "I shouldn't, for if I do I shall be 'flying,' but on second thoughts perhaps I will" ... (p. 139)

Despite the Consul's seeming success in finding love through
friendship with Dr. Vigil, the fundamental destructiveness of their
drinking alliance is not to be overlooked. It is almost as though Dr.
Vigil were leading the Consul to his death, intent on punishing him
for his incestuous relationship (through drink) with the mother. Dr.
Vigil's underlying purpose in encouraging his patient's drinking hab-
its is chillingly apparent in his solicitous commiseration with the
Consul:

"Salud: I hope you are not as sick as I am. You
were so perfectamente borracho last night I think
you must have killed yourself with drinking. I
think even to send a boy after you this morning to
knock your door, and find if drinking have not
killed you already." Dr. Vigil said. (p. 143)

Ironically, Dr. Vigil is at the same time acting the role of
pimp, for by feeding his addiction so that the Consul might die the
sooner, he is bringing him closer to reunion with his mother. This
double function as both friend and enemy finds echoes in Campbell, who
says that "the father ... was the guide and initiator into the mys-
teries of the unknown. As the original intruder into the paradise of
the infant with its mother, the father is the archetypal enemy; hence,
throughout life all enemies are symbolical (to the unconscious) of the
father" (p. 155). Here irony develops out of the reference to un-
known mysteries, which, in mythology, are generally allusions to the
mother's sexuality.
Another paradoxical situation prevails in the case of Dr. Guzman. In order to deter the Consul from drinking alcohol, the doctor prescribes strychnine, which in larger doses is a poison (pp. 116-117).

It would seem that the Consul loses either way, for whether he takes the cure or suffers the disease, he is brought closer to death. Dr. Guzman, in his role as the Oedipal father, is thus subtly easing his rival, the son, from the competition for the mother's love; yet in so doing, he ironically promotes the incestuous union he strives to prevent.

Cervantes is another example of paternal pimp. He shows his willingness to aid the Consul in his quest for maternal love by serving him mescal at the Salón Ofélia. Cervantes' function as a panderer is underscored when he leads the Consul to a religious statue of the Virgin, an act accompanied by phallic symbolism and performed under circumstances which suggest a clandestine meeting for sexual purposes:

Cervantes led the way behind the bar, ascended two steps, and pulled a curtain aside. . . . The Consul made the steps with difficulty. One small room occupied by a huge brass bedstead. Rusty rifles in a rack on the wall. In one corner, before a tiny porcelain Virgin, burned a little lamp. Really a sacramental candle, it diffused a ruby shimmer through its glass into the room . . . the wick was burning low. (p. 288)

The Consul's purpose in visiting the Salón Ofélia is identified as incestuous, not only by the name of the establishment, which has
allusion to the incest motifs in *Hamlet* but by the thoughts which are provoked by sight of the porcelain Virgin. The Consul recalls "last night's debauch . . . with Dr. Vigil," when he visited a church and prayed to a statue of "the Virgin for those who have nobody with . . . and for mariners on the sea" (pp. 288-289). Mention of the sea, a womb symbol, in connection with a night of debauchery and a visit to the Virgin strongly implies sexual wrongdoing. The Virgin's position as a maternal figure suggests that incest is involved. The words of Cervantes also appear to add an incestuous meaning to the Consul's quest for love. His remark, "'Si, hombre,' he went on, as they descended to the bar again, 'as I told you, I obey my grandfather. He tell me to marry my wife. So I call my wife my mother!'" (p. 289), seems to imply that despite the different women in a man's life, they are all variations of his mother. Behind Cervantes' allusion to his mother lies the true meaning of the Consul's cordiality towards him—the Consul, though seeming to experience love in friendly relations with a father figure, is, in fact, exploiting the relationship in order to reach his true goal, his mother.

Significantly, the most sinister father figures in the novel appear after the Consul has realized his incestuous desire, which is symbolized by his intimacy with Maria, the prostitute at the Farolito.
After the act is consummated, evil-appearing men seem to stalk the Consul, as if to exact payment for his having indulged in forbidden behavior. Immediately after the Consul leaves Maria, he is waylaid by an "incredibly filthy man" who inquires "you like Maria?" (p. 352), as though expecting to be paid for his services as panderer. This is followed shortly by confrontation with a policeman, who accuses the Consul: "'They say there ees trouble about you no pay,' he said, 'you no pay for--ah--Mexican whisky. You no pay for Mexican girl. You no have money, eh?'" (p. 356).

The Consul attempts to avoid paying for this crime, and the others with which the police charge him, by denying his identity. In the past, he has eluded his accusers by assuming the identity of Hugh. Now, when they mistake him for Hugh and accuse him of crimes presumably committed by his brother, the Consul insists he is not Firmin, but William Blackstone (p. 358). He even tries to conceal his identity behind dark glasses (p. 362). The insistence of the police on his guilt, no matter what his name or what the crime (there is some doubt--it may concern the affair of the Indian, or another political matter involving Hugh), is a reflection of the Consul's own feeling of culpability. It is at this point he realizes he can no longer hide the truth from himself, as he has before, through assumption of differ-
ent identities, but must acknowledge his rightful identity as the betrayer of his father. His murder at the hands of the police symbolizes his acceptance of punishment on this account, i.e., his willingness to come to terms with the fact of his desire for incest. In so doing, he in effect slays the dragon/father who plagues him.

By deliberately confusing the identity of the accused, as well as the nature of the crime, Lowry broadens the application of his message. The ambiguity enables him to accuse all mankind for crimes against humanity, and to suggest that World War II, which is just erupting, is in the nature of a punishment sent by the gods. The Mexican police who demand satisfaction from the Consul thus assume larger importance, becoming angry deities who demand retribution from the wayward race of man.

It is an ironic twist on the mythic pattern that on the literal level in Under the Volcano, it is the dragon/father who slays the hero, and thereby returns him to the womb/ravine, in fulfillment of his quest. In depicting the victory of the father over the son, Lowry seems to be stressing the inescapable influence of the past on the present, and, indeed, the future. The firm hold of the father on the son, from which the latter never escapes, is reiterated elsewhere in the novel, when the Consul observes two generations of Indians, both
weighted down by the burden of history:

Bent double, groaning with the weight, an old lame Indian was carrying on his back, by means of a strap looped over his forehead, another poor Indian, yet older and more decrepit than himself. He carried the older man and his crutches, trembling in every limb under this weight of the past, he carried both their burdens. (p. 280)

Because the Consul's crime of incest is that of Everyman, he must take his rightful place in history and accept, and perpetually pay for, his Oedipal burden. As implied by the Indian above who aids his fellow, payment is exacted in the form of love.
Chapter III

DESCENT TO THE UNDERWORLD

During the course of the Consul's quest for love, his thoughts journey back to the past in an attempt to discover the reasons which have brought him to his loveless state. This psychological journey is analogous to the descent to the underworld of the archetypal hero, who travels underground to confer with the dead, usually parental figures, in order to gain the necessary wisdom to complete his task. Bodkin characterizes the underworld journey of the mythical hero as symbolic of an "introversion of the mind upon itself and upon its past--a plunging into the depths, to gain knowledge and power over self and destiny" (pp. 124-125). According to Campbell, it is through psychological regression that repressed knowledge is brought back into conscious awareness, and thereby exorcised: "if anyone undertakes ... the perilous journey into the darkness by descending ... into the crooked lanes of his own spiritual labyrinth [there occurs] ... the 'purification of the self' ... this is the process of dissolving, transcending, or transmuting the infantile images of our personal
past. In our dreams . . . we may see . . . the clue to what we must
do to be saved" (pp. 100-101).

Clues to the Consul's salvation are to be found in the many mes-
sages he encounters during his journey through the underworld. Trans-
mitted by means of letters, posted signs, works of literature, etc.,
these messages invariably direct him to the maternal element as the
source of love and salvation. While the celestial references in these
messages seem to imply divine aid, the allusions to hell suggest that
deliverance will occur in the underworld. There are also hell-and-
womb combinations which pointedly hint of incest as the means by which
knowledge pertinent to his delivery will be imparted. His persistent
refusal to acknowledge the latter communications is symbolic of the
Consul's success in maintaining a psychological defense against recog-
nition of his incestuous wishes. The gradual encroachment of their
message upon his consciousness indicates the breakdown of his defenses,
and his growing willingness to come to terms with his hidden desires.
The backward and downward imagery which accompanies these messages re-
iterates the theme of visitation to hell and/or regression to the womb
as the key to resolution of his quest. The Consul's recognition of the
downward path he must follow to find love is disclosed in Chapter X,
when he recalls his prayer to the Virgin for those who have nobody
with: "I have sunk low. Let me sink lower still, that I may know the truth. Teach me to love again, to love life" (p. 289).

The Fall. The descent to hell itself hints of the truth the Consul may find there by being symbolic of a moral fall, in addition to representing psychological regression. Theodor Reik identifies the truth which awaits the Consul's discovery according to psychological opinion: "All analytic explanations agree that the nature of the original sin is incest with the mother." Reik offers as typical of the psychological rationale, the argument of Otto Rank, who sees the Biblical story as having been reversed, in order to disguise its true meaning:

[Rank says] there are three such reversals in the Genesis myth: (1) Eve is not created out of the rib from Adam's body, but Adam emerges from the opened body of Eve, who appears as the primal mother of man (Mother Earth); (2) Eve does not present the apple to Adam, but the man gives the fruit to the woman, seduces her.

[3] The serpent or dragon appears as the guardian of the tree.

Rank comes to the conclusion that the core of the original Fall story is incest of Adam with his mother Eve, from which mankind originated. (pp. 95-96)

In Under the Volcano, incest plays a major role in the hero's fall. Incest furnishes the means whereby the Consul returns to the womb, where he experiences the rebirth necessary to his salvation.

This is preceded by a purification through death at the same site, in punishment for the sin of incest.

The Consul's downfall is foreshadowed from the start. The novel begins with the words "Two mountain chains . . ." and then proceeds downward in its description of the topography. The descent from the mountains to the ruins of Quauhmahuac implies a fall from heaven into hell. The sharpness of the drop is made even more salient by the contrast between the lofty majesty implied by these opening words and the degradation implied by the words which close the novel, " . . . down the ravine."

Clues to the maternal cause of the hero's fall are provided in the first paragraph, with mention of "two mountain chains" and "twin volcanoes" apparent references to the maternal breast. In fact, the configuration of the landscape throughout the story appears to argue in favor of the mother's involvement, for the ravines, gulfs, barrancas, mountains, and volcanoes which stalk the Consul on his quest bear a conspicuous similarity to the homes of the mother goddesses of ancient culture, whom Weigert says inhabited "mountain peaks and caves of the earth" (pp. 306-316). The Consul, in being drawn downward to the underworld, as well as upward to the heavens, seems to display the ambivalence of emotion which Weigert states is typically associated
with worship of the Great Mother. Incest, which gives rise to conflict over reward and punishment, would, of course, account for the dichotomy. The incestuous implications in Weigert's description are only too apparent:

Sharply contrasting emotions are aroused by this goddess of mountain peaks and caves of the earth, of procreation and birth, and none the less, of death and destruction... She protects burial places, the dead return to her... She is the mother of dreams and prophecies, it is she who robs men of their sanity, who sends the dizzy rapture of orgasm. She alone can heal the mad, she alone can forgive sin. The Great Mother is the founder and protectress of cities;... but she destroys [the city] walls herself in the frenzy of love,... The mother... begets the very phallic spirits who fructify her in turn,... In her service the phallic dactyles of the mounts of Ida mine the ore in the deeps of the earth... (pp. 304-305)

The Great Mother's destruction of city walls "in the frenzy of love" seems to suggest a tearing down of the incest barrier. It is therefore highly significant of the Consul's incestuous relationship with his mother that the town of Quauhnahuac is shown in a state of ruin, and further, that mention is made of its walls. Incest may even be inferred from the Great Mother's other attributes, for while these seem to provide the Consul with motivation other than incest for wishing to visit his mother, a relation can be established: His own Great Mother can forgive the Consul's sin (of incest), heal his madness (from guilt over incest), and prophesy his future (death, the punishment for incest).
Dea Ex Machina. There is a hint of the healing role of the mother goddess in the descent imagery of the opening passages of the novel. The approach to Quauhnahuac from above, as if in an airplane, is a reminder of Yvonne's homeward flight in the "little red mail plane" (p. 40) the previous year, when she returns in the role of descending angel, or dea ex machina, to rescue her husband from his losing battle with alcohol. Her heavenly origins are implied in the words "Yvonne felt her spirit ... had flown to meet this man's" (p. 46), "Good God" (p. 46), and even more telling, "Out of the heavens, a swan, transfixed, plummeted to earth" (p. 70). Like the goddess of myth who meets the hero in the underworld to impart knowledge crucial to his success, Yvonne travels to the lower regions of Quauhnahuac to effect the Consul's salvation by providing him with vital information about love. Yvonne's communicative purpose is implied by her means of transportation, the mail plane. Yet the Consul, for the greater part of the novel, consistently ignores her communications, consistent with his deliberate effort to suppress incestuous knowledge.

In Chapter I, however, the Consul openly admits his need for Yvonne in a letter addressed to her which Jacques Laruelle finds hidden in a book of Elizabethan plays. The discovery of the letter in a Renaissance work strongly implies that information relative to the
Consul's own renaissance, or rebirth, is being communicated. An excerpt from the letter intimates that by dying, or returning to the womb, the Consul will be reborn:

Lift up your eyes unto the hills, I seem to hear a voice saying ... [as I am] dying in bed ... I think you will be on ... that plane ... and will have come to save me. Then the morning goes by and you have not come. But oh, I pray for this now, that you will come ... But for God's sake, Yvonne, hear me, my defences are down, at the moment they are down—come back ... I am dying without you. For Christ Jesus sake Yvonne come back to me ... if only for a day ... (pp. 40-41)

Repetition of the word dying, especially as in the phrase dying in bed, seems intended to emphasize the sexual meaning of the verb die prevalent in the Renaissance period. Sexuality is also implied by the Consul's repeated plea to Yvonne to come back.

Repression. The sexuality is suspect as inherently incestuous because of the need for its repression which the Consul evidently feels—"it was indeed a letter of sorts, though one that the writer undoubtedly had little intention ... of posting" (p. 35). Mailing the letter would signify that the Consul has overcome his defenses and faced the import of its contents. His reluctance to descend to the underworld of his mind and confront the truth is betrayed even by his handwriting: "the words themselves slanting steeply downhill, though the individual characters seemed as if resisting the descent, braced, climbing the other way" (p. 35). The recovery of the letter in the cavelike can-
tina, Cervecería XX, "which abutted on the cinema without sharing its
frontal (italics mine) shelter" (p. 25) suggests that it has been re-
trieved from repression in the unconscious. The fact that it is com-
posed in the similarly secluded Farolito, whose meaning in English is
lighthouse, calls attention to its contents as a revelation, the re-
sult of the psychological insight which the Consul gains upon direct
confrontation with his feelings towards his wife/mother.

The Consul's backward journey towards the womb, prior to this mo-
ment of recognition at the Farolito, is recorded in the eleven suc-
ceeding chapters of the novel, which in themselves mark the hero's
fall/regression by forming a single flashback. These chapters show
the Consul's constant battle to keep incestuous knowledge under re-
pression, symbolized by his stubborn resistance to the pressures of
letters, phone calls, and reading material to acknowledge love.

To escape these insistent communications (which can only direct
him to the womb as his sole source of love, fixated, as he is, to the
mother), he retreats into a psychological withdrawal, aided by the
mind-dulling effects of alcohol. Paradoxically, while alcohol deadens
his sensitivity to the external world, it puts him in closer communi-
cation with his internal world by relaxing his defenses. Further, by
simulating the satisfaction he receives from maternal love, alcohol
draws him closer to the womb. The destructive effects of alcohol likewise bring him closer to death, symbolically synonymous with return to the womb. There is an added irony in his psychological retreat, for by "withdraw[ing] his libido from the external world" (Saltint, p. 40), he denies himself the very love he seeks.

The contradiction is illustrated in his first meeting with Yvonne upon her return. The Consul's first words upon seeing her—"Good God" [sic]—seem to imply that he recognizes in Yvonne a salving mother goddess. Yet "he made no move towards her" and instead turns to alcohol: "Have a drink?" (pp. 46-47). His actions may be explained by his perception of Yvonne. Since he sees her in the role of mother, rather than wife, the Consul views contact with her as incestuous. To relieve his incestuous guilt, he seeks the comfort of alcohol.

In another instance, the Consul reveals his fear of an incestuous meeting with Yvonne through a psychological block, by means of which he avoids an appointment in Mexico City:

You didn't keep it.

That was because I couldn't remember the name of the restaurant at the last moment. . . . I went into all the restaurants in the Via Dolorosa looking for you and not finding you I had a drink in each one. (p. 88)

Though guilt and fear prevent the Consul from directly confronting his mother, as represented by Yvonne, he betrays his underlying wish for
incestuous union by seeking her through drink. His inability to find Yvonne reaffirms that his actions are motivated by incest by implying that he is lost, in a moral sense. There is a hint, too, of punishment on this account. Because the incident takes place in Mexico City, known for its high altitude, we may assume that this city symbolizes heaven. The Consul's failure to locate his wife here suggests that he and Yvonne have been evicted from heaven for a sin against God. Based on the testimony of Rank and other psychoanalysts regarding the sin of Adam, we may assume that the Consul is being evicted from heaven for the sin of incest.

A similar conclusion may be inferred from the misdirected postcard the Consul receives from Yvonne. Besides indicating the fact that the Firmin marriage has gone awry, the devious routing of the card is undoubtedly intended to emphasize the wandering theme. This is an allusion to Adam's enforced wandering after his fall and expulsion from Eden, and suggests that the Consul has suffered a similar fate for a like crime. The travels of the card from the heights of Mexico City to the depths of hell-like Quauhnahuac also call attention to the Consul's fall: "Originally addressed to Wells Fargo in Mexico City, it had been forwarded by some error abroad, gone badly astray, in fact, for it was date-stamped from Paris, Gibraltar and even Al-
geciras, in fascist Spain" (p. 193). Hell is suggested by the card itself, which pictures a highway traveling over a desert (p. 193), instead of the water symbolism which usually characterizes the Consul's search for love. The card conveys the message that the Consul's marriage is barren because he has misdirected his efforts to find love. Instead of cultivating a loving relationship with his wife, he insists on clinging to his mother for emotional fulfillment. Given this fixation, love can only be found by following the pathway to hell. Implicit in this reading of the card's significance is the assumption that a meeting with the mother in hell can free the Consul to love others by cleansing him of incestuous guilt. There is in the card's message the intimation of a more fruitful union with Yvonne after purification in hell. The Consul's refusal to heed the message when the card finally reaches him in Quauhnahuac shows that he is still maintaining a strong defense: "he took the postcard he'd just received from Yvonne and slipped it under Jacques' pillow" (p. 201). The gesture illustrates his use of a projective defense--one in which he passes the blame on to Jacques--in the attempt to deny his own guilt. At the same time, ironically, it reveals his determination to sever communications with the outside world in order to withdraw internally, so as to make the descent to his unconscious mind, where knowledge of
his incestuous love awaits him.

Regression. There is another meaning to be gleaned from the Consul's communicative difficulties. His unwillingness to read his mail may be interpreted as evidence of his regression to childhood and infancy, when he has not yet learned to read. Certainly, his frustration over use of the telephone recalls the struggles of a toddler: "He'd already forgotten the number . . . he held [the receiver] the wrong way up . . . he could not hear . . . 'God!' he shouted, hanging up. He would need a drink to do this" (p. 208). After answering a call on another occasion, "He hung up the receiver the wrong way" (p. 76). Later, with the unconcern of a young child, the Consul turns away from the phone altogether: "'No, let it ring,' the Consul said as Hugh started back. It went on ringing . . . then it stopped" (p. 186). His lack of interest in the call, of course, masks his fear of the message it will bring, i.e., that maternal love is beckoning him to hell, and to death.

Other communication problems likewise allude to his retreat towards the womb. The numerous references to babbling suggest the early efforts of a baby towards speech. Accompanying clues reinforce this concept. On page 11, hints of sexuality are introduced by veiled reference to the female and male anatomy, from which we may infer the be-
ginnings of Oedipal rivalry, when, as a young child, the Consul apparently observes the love-making of his parents:

( . . . one could see those . . . young builders . . . standing erect, their trousers flapping hard, legs planted wide, firm) . . . on the round hill . . . the dust-darkened hills by the lake like islands in the driving rain. The Consul, whose old house M. Laruelle now made out on the slope beyond the barranca, had seemed happy enough too then, wandering around . . . the "Toilet" and the "Harem," and climbing the ruined pyramid later, which he had proudly insisted was the original Tower of Babel. How admirably he had concealed what must have been the babel of his thoughts! (p. 11)

Some passages use babbling in combination with drinking to create the childhood imagery. When the ingredient of love is added, or a maternal figure, incest is implied as the reason for the regression. Implicit in his letter of confession to Yvonne is the notion that the Consul is reaching out to her, his mother goddess, for the love he remembers from childhood: "Alas, what has happened to the love and understanding we once had: . . . I reach out babbling for the glass of mescal, the drink that I can never believe is real" (p. 40). The Consul experiences a moment of insight into the incestuous cause of his addiction in another passage which features an elevated mother figure:

"In how many glasses, how many bottles had he hidden himself, since then alone? Suddenly he saw [the] . . . Highland Queen, the glasses, a babel of glasses--towering . . . built to the sky, then falling . . . falling downhill . . . " (p. 292). Besides the speech problem
reflected by the babel, the Consul in falling shows motor difficulties, again characteristic of early childhood.

The Consul mimics a toddler just learning to walk when he attempts to climb the Calle Nicaragua after having had too much to drink. The childhood situation is recalled by his being helped to his feet after falling by a fatherly stranger whom he mistakes for Hugh:

The Consul was guiltily climbing the Calle Nicaragua. It was as if he were toiling up some endless staircase... Never had it seemed such a long way to the top of this hill... But suddenly the Calle Nicaragua rose up to meet him. The Consul lay face downward on the deserted street.

"Hugh, is that you old chap lending the old boy a hand? Thank you so much. For it is perhaps indeed your turn these days to lend a hand..."

"I say I say what's the matter there?... you were lying right down in the road..." (pp. 76-79)

The maternal element is introduced as the reason for his fall by mention of Trinity, the university, in the exchange which follows. This reference has allusion not only to the religious family unit, but to the Oedipal triangle. The growth of Oedipal rivalry is suggested by the Consul's changing perception of the man who helps him—he first sees the man as the friendly Hugh and later as a demon-like stranger who tempts him with drink. The Consul appears to accept paternal aid only as a means of reaching his mother, for after he takes a nip from the stranger's bottle, he immediately returns home, where he is at
once surrounded by maternal symbols. These beckon him to the womb, and to death: "The Consul sipped his strychnine . . . stared round mildly at pictures on the wall, mostly water-colours by his mother depicting scenes in Kashmir . . . the gorge, the ravine at Gugganvir . . ." (pp. 82-83).

Another instance where lack of motor control relegates the Consul to the role of child occurs when he finds himself too unsteady to shave. His cry to Hugh—"Help" (p. 173)—for assistance in the bathroom suggests a child dependent on his father for personal needs. These passages contain countless allusions to the Consul's infantile role—asses' milk and bathroom babel are mentioned, and the fact that "Hugh had assisted him back to his chair. 'I did that for you once . . . when you were an infant'" (p. 174). Even more telling are the words "the sea reversed," "regression" and "an immense guitar, inside which an oddly familiar infant was hiding, curled up, as in a womb" (pp. 176-177). These reveal that the loving ministrations of the father are not enough to content the Consul. To find love he must pass through childhood and infancy, and continue backward further still, until he reaches the womb. It is here he can re-establish a completely dependent relationship to his mother. The maternal dependency is demonstrated, too, by the fact that despite the show of love from Hugh
as his symbolic father, the Consul insists on taking a drink.

The Consul's regression to childhood, with a consequent loss of control, is again implied in his experience on the ferris wheel. The wheel unexpectedly revolves backward, in indication of his journey to the past, but not before it traps the Consul at the top, turning him upside down and emptying his pockets (pp. 221-222). His upside down posture is reminiscent of that of a newborn infant held by the feet by a doctor. It also suggests a child trapped in a highchair, powerless to get out without the aid of his mother. In addition, his helplessness invests his backward journey with a sense of fatalism. The Consul's destination is identified by the wheel itself, which can be seen as a womb symbol. The sense that he is trapped in the womb, deprived of freedom of passage, is conveyed by the fact that his passport is the only item not returned to him with the recovery of his other possessions (p. 223). The loss of the passport can be interpreted as representing the Consul's denial of a separate identity—in the womb, he becomes one with his mother, and shares her identity. His consistent use of the impersonal title of Consul, instead of his name, also argues for his reluctance to insist on his own identity. The failure to regain his passport may indicate, too, that he is about to receive a new identity. This interpretation may be inferred from a report by
Perle Epstein regarding the "ritual of the wheel," a rebirth rite which seems to echo the Consul's experience on the ferris wheel:

Ritual of the wheel—used for purification, freeing oneself from the wheel of birth; then on to penance, punishment. The initiate passes with eager feet over the ring, or circle, entering a sacred enclosure. In the highest rite, the man is given a new name and sinks into the underworld. His burial is regarded as a mystic marriage, from which he emerges anew. 28

The Consul is given a new name by the emergence of Jacques Laruelle in the role of Consul. Laruelle is tied to the ritual of birth described by Epstein by his repeated sightings of the ferris wheel as he ambles through Quauhnahuac on the first anniversary of the Consul's death (pp. 10, 12, 42).

The wheel alludes to incest as the instrument of rebirth, not only by its association with the womb, but through its name. Maquina Infernal (p. 221) implies that this womb/wheel is the vehicle which will transport the Consul to hell, where he has been banished for the crime of incest. Here he will presumably undergo punishment and purification in preparation for rebirth.

Elsewhere, allusion to the Infernal Machine helps reiterate the theme of incest by joining references to childhood, drinking, the

devil, and love in a babel of innuendo:

He . . . drank down all the drinks in sight. . . .

It was Jean Cocteau's La Machine Infernale. "Oui, mon enfant, mon petit enfant," he read, "les choses qui paraissent abominable aux humains . . . elles ont peu d'importance." . . . "The gods exist, they are the devil," Baudelaire informed him. . . . No se puede vivir sin amor, were the words on the house. . . . They walked a while without speaking, listening to the babel of the fiesta which grew still louder as they approached the town. . . . M. Laruelle . . . now seemed even taller than he was, and beside him, below, the Consul felt a moment uncomfortably dwarfed, childish. (pp. 208-209)

The messages which seemingly conspire to exhort the Consul to yield to his incestuous desires are explainable as reflections of his own thoughts, thoughts which have been formed by material newly emerging from his unconscious mind. The literary fragments represent rationalization—they have been selectively chosen to excuse the weakening of his defenses against incest. From these lines we may infer that the Consul reasons that though his goddess may be a devil, he needs her love, and indeed, cannot live without it; and besides, he argues, incest is not such an evil thing, of little importance, really. By shrinking to the size of a child, the Consul reveals he is beginning to heed the entreaties of his mother, which urge him, from within, to return to the womb.

Determinism. Evidence that the Consul is being driven from within to seek his mother is found in the scene where he visits the garden behind his house to sneak a drink of tequila. His unconscious motiva-
tion for drinking is revealed by an internal voice which implies that he seeks to return to the womb, not only for incestuous love, but to prepare himself to accept love of a higher type. It would seem that the real purpose of the Consul's quest is here being revealed, namely, to teach him how to love:

"Do not be so foolish as to imagine you have no object, however" . . . He recognized the tone of one of his familiars, faint among the other voices as he crashed on through the metamorphosis of dying and reborn hallucinations . . . the voice went on severely, "you have to do something about it. Therefore we are leading you toward the accomplishment of this something." (p. 126)

Presumably, metamorphosis through death and rebirth will enable the Consul to find love through an appropriate love object, such as Yvonne. Since Yvonne is frequently identified as a goddess, the passage carries the suggestion that the Consul will be taught love for the divine, as well as conjugal love and love towards man.

The image of the deity leading the Consul implies that it is divine will, or fate, which controls the events which combine to reunite the Consul with his mother. This power is analogous to the psychic force which Freud calls determinism, 29 and which governs the Consul's actions, so that he is prevented from following any other course but

29 "In the mind . . . nothing happens by chance . . . Each psychic event is determined by the ones which preceded it . . . according to . . . the unconscious mental processes" (Brenner, p. 2).
that determined by his psychological constitution.

Because he is powerless to act otherwise, the Consul quite deliberately defies the warning posted by the false gods—"they weren't proper police" (p. 249)—of the underworld to tend the garden of his marriage:

¿LE GUSTA ESTE JARDÍN?
¿QUE ES SUYO?
¡EVITE QUE SUS HIJOS LE DESTRUYAN!

The Consul stared back at the black words on the sign without moving. You like this garden? Why is it yours? We evict those who destroy! Simple words, simple and terrible words, words which one took to the very bottom of one's being, words which, perhaps a final judgment on one, were nevertheless unproductive of any emotion whatsoever . . . (pp. 128-129)

Instead, he courts eviction by blatantly committing incest, symbolized by his drinking of the forbidden tequila: "Careless of being observed this time, [he] drank long and deeply" (p. 129). He nevertheless feels guilt over this incestuous act, disclosed in his awareness that "he had been observed too, by his neighbor Mr. Quincey" (p. 129).

Both his willingness to be punished for this indulgence and his helplessness in refraining from it are indicated in the words, "behind him, in the other garden, his fate repeated softly: 'Why is it yours? . . . Do you like this garden? . . . We evict those who destroy!''" (p. 129).

The Consul once more reveals that he wants to be evicted from the
garden (i.e., wants to terminate his marriage) in a conversation with Mr. Quincey:

Do you know Quincey, I've often wondered whether there isn't more to the old legend of the Garden of Eden . . . than meets the eye. What if Adam wasn't really banished from the place at all? . . . What if his punishment really consisted . . . in his having to go on living there . . . suffering, unseen, cut off from God . . . To hell with the place! (pp. 132-134)

Clearly, the Consul considers his marriage a punishment, and would much prefer to find love in a relationship with his mother, in the form of drink.

He shows his preference for his mother over his wife by the loving care he gives his tequila bottle, in contrast to the manner in which he neglects his garden: "In this garden, which he hadn't looked at since the day Hugh arrived, when he'd hidden the bottle, and which seemed carefully and lovingly kept, there existed at the moment certain evidence of work left uncompleted" (p. 128). His love for his mother is reciprocated, as shown in the explanation of why he drinks: "this opportunity . . . was . . . more like something else, an opportunity to be admired; . . . he could at least thank the tequila for such [an opportunity] . . . to be loved" (p. 129).

The Consul is well aware that drinking tequila drags him downward to hell. His deliberate wish to go there is disclosed by his choice of hiding place, for he conceals the tequila in the underbrush at the
fer end of his yard, "toward the bottom of his garden" (p. 126), a location which necessitates his travelling downward. He likewise pursues drink throughout the novel by journeying in a downward direction, guided by the divine mother who sends him messages from the underworld of his unconscious. The downward imagery which dominates Chapter VIII, in which the wounded Indian is discovered by the passers-by on the bus, is particularly strong in its insistence on travel to the lower levels of hell.

Incest Disguised. Chapter VIII is replete with sexual imagery. This imagery is, at times, so heavily imbued with dark and evil overtones as to imply that the Consul is driven to the very depths of hell expressly for the purpose of committing incest. Indeed, one passage which depicts the progress of the bus along the road may be interpreted as descriptive of the sex act itself, a presumably incestuous deed committed by the Consul within his imagination. Sexual activity is apparent in the allusions to erection (bong!), the Consul’s greed (pigs), the female genitalia (hedges, sunken road), and the sometimes awkward motions of the phallic bus. Incest is implied by references to the breaking down of the incest barrier (ruined walls) and the Consul’s guilt (Las Manos de Orlac). The fact that the Consul hands himself over completely to the will of the phallus, so lost in sensory
experience that outside responsibilities do not intrude (a circumstance, incidentally, which also occurs with his drinking), is also included:

--bong! suddenly snarled the bus. They thundered on, passing little pigs trotting along the road... ruined walls swam by... Las Manos de Orlac...

When there was a bad patch the bus rattled and sideslipped ominously, once it altogether ran off the road, but its determination outweighed these waverings, one was pleased at last to have transferred one's responsibilities to it, lulled into a state from which it would be pain to waken.

Hedges, with low steep banks, in which grew dusty trees, were hemming them in on either side. Without decreasing pace they were running into a narrow, sunken section of the road, winding...

Desviacion! Hombres Trabajando! [Detour! Men Working!]
(p. 240)

It is immediately after this sequence that the wounded Indian is discovered. The juxtapositioning of these events suggests that the Indian is wounded as a result of the sexual activity, as though he were a rival who has been physically injured or hurt emotionally. This concept is furthered by the Oedipal overtones given the incident by the words "alone in a sort of heap... lay a milk bottle" (p. 241), which implicate the mother in the crime and help identify the liaison as incestuous. The robbing of the Indian by the pelado adds to the impression that a son has usurped the rights of the father. Confirmation that Lowry is here depicting a symbolic version of the primal murder is found in the last words of the preceding chapter: "Es in-
evitable la muerte del Pala" (p. 230). Later events repeat the theme of father/son rivalry, for as a result of what takes place here, the Consul is murdered by the police, who act in their capacity as revengeful fathers.

The Consul's guilt over the affair of the Indian is proclaimed by repeated mention of the film whose blood-stained hands continually haunt him, Las Manos de Orlac (pp. 231, 252). Descriptions like "This man was apparently the devil himself, with a huge dark red face and horns, fangs . . . [with] an expression of mingled evil, lechery, and terror" (p. 233) likewise betray his guilt. These words may be interpreted as reflections of his own self-image, proceeding from the Consul's thoughts as he contemplates the dark deed of incest.

There is good reason for camouflaging the incestuous content of the events in Chapter VIII with descriptions having a nightmare-like distortion. The reason is suggested by the pervasive downward imagery, which seems intended to stress the fact that the events are taking place in the Consul's unconscious mind. While he is on the bus to Tomalín, his psyche is descending to its lowest level to relive the experience of incest, which has been repressed. At the point at which the Consul finds himself in Chapter VIII, he is not yet willing to face the incestuous import of his search for love, and the events which take
place on the trip are therefore disguised, as in a dream. This is in contrast to Chapter XII, where, through actual intimacy with Maria, the Consul is shown as having finally freed the incestuous information from repression, willing now to confront it on a conscious level.

Evidence for the Consul's repression on the bus trip is provided by the lack of communication between the passengers on the journey: "But communication between them all soon became again virtually impossible" (p. 236). And again, "'This is like driving over the moon,' he tried to say to Yvonne. She couldn't hear" (p. 237). Repression, guilt over incest, and patricide are implied by Hugh's appraisal of an old woman on the bus. Significantly, he makes the observation after the dying Indian is abandoned:

Hugh guiltily caught the eye of an old woman. Her face was completely expressionless . . . Ah, how sensible were those old women, who at least knew their own mind, who had made a silent communal decision to have nothing to do with the whole affair. . . . the communications cut off . . . They sat ranked now, motionless, frozen, discussing nothing, without a word, turned to stone. (p. 248)

There is evidence, too, that the Consul attempts to shift the blame for his crime to others, as shown by the distribution of his identity among the other characters. The Consul displays his love for his father through the person of Hugh, who shows compassion for the Indian. The Consul's hatred of his father is personified in the pelado, who robs the Indian of his money. The Consul may even be seen in
the person of the Indian, whose death foreshadows that of the Consul. Lowry aligns these two characters, making use of their deaths in common to add larger significance to his novel: "[The] man dying by the roadside . . . is . . . mankind himself . . . dying . . . in Europe . . . the Consul identified himself with him" (Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry, pp. 78-79). As if to hint to the reader that the Consul shifts his identity in this chapter, the pelado is shown wearing several hats at the same time (p. 238).

Acknowledgement. On the other hand, there are clues that the Consul is beginning to acknowledge his part in the theft, for Hugh observes that the pelado "was making now only this half-hearted effort to conceal [the money] . . . he was continually opening and closing his palm with the bloody silver and copper coins for anyone to see who wished. It occurred to Hugh he was not trying to conceal it at all . . . his possession of it was open and above board, for all the world to know about. It was a recognized thing" (pp. 251-252).

The Consul gains further self-knowledge at the Salón Ofelia in Tomalin. Through messages gleaned from the tourist folders, which speak of the "highlands" (p. 292), "the Church's . . . Baptismal Font" (p. 298), "a Sanctuary" (p. 299), and the "Virgin Mary" (p. 299), he is reminded that absolution of his sin requires that he continue to
seek rebirth through a maternal goddess. As the Consul drinks more
mescal in the effort to find this goddess, there is indication that
his defenses are beginning to break down, for he becomes markedly more
talkative, and communicates uninhibitedly with Hugh and Yvonne.

An important piece of information is communicated over dinner, in
the conversation about the Indian. Hugh's regret that "we did nothing
really to save the man's life" (p. 309) recalls a similar situation in
The Odyssey, in which burial, rather than the saving of a man's
life, is involved. In Homer, Odysseus' man, Elpenor, is left by his
companions to lie unburied after meeting his death by falling off
Circe's roof, having fallen asleep there while in a drunken stupor.
When Odysseus meets Elpenor later in the underworld, Odysseus is in-
formed by Elpenor that he must give him a proper burial before pro-
ceeding homeward (p. 187 [Bk. XI]). From the analogy we may conclude
that the Consul is being informed at dinner that he must bury his own
dead, in the person of the Indian who represents his father. That is
to say, he must rid himself of Oedipal guilt. To do this, he needs to
confront directly his incestuous desire for his mother. It is this
sudden realization, provoked by mention of the Indian, which compels

him to break away from the party and rush out to seek his mother in Parián. He knows that he must proceed through hell, continuing his quest for the mother, in order to be redeemed: "But now I've made up my melodramatic little mind . . . I love hell. I can't wait to get back there. In fact I'm running . . ." He was running too, in spite of his limp . . . he would take the path to Parián, to the Farolito. Before him the volcanoes, precipitous, seemed to have drawn nearer. They towered . . . into the lowering sky" (pp. 314-315).

The volcanoes carry a dual message, a promise of both destruction and salvation. Through their association with the maternal breast, they seem to offer the Consul comfort and nourishment. At the same time, they pose a threat by implying that they will one day spew their lava/milk on the Consul and destroy him. This is a reference, of course, to his destruction by alcohol. Too, by reaching upward towards the sky, they hint both of divine punishment and of salvation. Perhaps their most important significance is psychological, suggested by the purpose of the Consul's regression. Since the Consul can only resolve his psychological conflict by bringing unconscious knowledge into conscious awareness, the threatening presence of the volcanoes at the end of Chapter X seems to announce that repressed knowledge is about to erupt.
The complete breakdown of the Consul's defenses in the final chapter is signaled by such clues as "subterranean collapse" (p. 337), "shattered mines" (p. 339), and "the glacial rock crumbling" (p. 339). His determination to face the truth of his quest for love by descent to the unconscious is affirmed by "It was a tremendous, an awful way down to the bottom. But it struck him he was not afraid to fall either. He traced mentally the barranca's circuitous abysmal path back through the country . . . How long ago, how strange, how sad, remote as the memory of first love, even of his mother's death, it seemed" (p. 339).

At times, the Consul recognizes that his bond to the mother through drink has brought him to destruction—"why have I ruined myself in this wilful manner [?]'" (p. 341)—and he expresses a desire to free himself from this dependency. Yet he unconsciously knows that he must return to her in order to gain the freedom to love others. He implies having unconscious knowledge of this sort in an internal struggle at the bar:

The boy . . . slopped some mescal into his glass from the beautiful gourd . . . The Consul . . . made a mental note to order . . . his next drink . . . He argued absurdly with himself that it was necessary to remain for this alone. He knew there was another reason yet couldn't place his finger on it. Every time the thought of Yvonne recurred to him he was aware of this. It seemed indeed then as though he must stay here for her sake . . . his mind could not travel beyond that point—(p. 340)
Significantly, at such moments of weakness he is invariably reminded of his destination by communication from a maternal figure.

Soon after "he saw that the face of the reclining beggar was slowly changing to Senora Gregorio's, and now in turn to his mother's face" (p. 342), he is presented with "a fat package of envelopes" (p. 342), the letters from Yvonne he thought he had lost. His receipt of Yvonne's letters signifies that the Consul is now willing to face the truth. As he reads them, "he was not really surprised to find the old Tarascan woman of the Bella Vista" (p. 343), for she is another maternal figure who prods him to confront what has heretofore remained hidden. Yvonne's words "don't forget to bring in the milk" (p. 344) and "I send you all my love" (p. 345) hint loudly of his desire for maternal love, a truth he is now admitting to conscious recognition.

The moment of revelation is noted, appropriately, in a passage which features an electric light:

It was a fact he was losing touch with his situation . . . He was dissociated from himself, and at the same time he saw this plainly, the shock of receiving the letters having in a sense waked him . . . whether it was being in the Farolito, or the presence of the old woman in this glass-framed room where an electric light was burning . . . it was almost as if he were yet . . . in different circumstances, in another country . . . (p. 344)

Once the Consul gains insight into the messages from his mother which urge him to return to the womb, he turns to the prostitute,
Maria, as the means by which this may be accomplished. His lingering resistance to incestuous confrontation is overcome by the higher purpose of rebirth. In the passages which relate their intimacy, hellish imagery and references to the past contribute to the sense of incestuous violation:

... out of the evil-smelling gloom broke a sinister chuckle ... Then it struck him that some reckless murderous power was drawing him on, forcing him, while he yet remained ... somehow innocently unconscious. It was leading him queerly into the garden ... it reminded him queerly of his own house ... In fact it closely resembled his old room ... There were the same great doors ... Kashmir: The bed was disorderly and covered with ... bloodstains ... somehow ... cold strong logic cancelled the horror: he finished the bottle. Lightning silhouetted ... a face ... curiously like Yvonne's. "Quiere Maria" she volunteered again, and flinging her arms round his neck, drew him down to the bed. Her body was Yvonne's ... a calamity, a fiendish apparatus for calamitous sickening sensation; it was disaster, it was the horror of ... El Infierno ... the hugh dark well ... sinking into the soft disaster ... the silent trembling approach ... his steps sinking into calamity ... with Maria, penetrated, the only thing alive in him now this burning boiling crucified evil organ ... out of this suffering something must be born, and what would be born was his own death ... (pp. 348-349)

The sharp contrast between the explicitness of this interlude and the masking of the sexual events in Chapter VIII shows the psychological distance the Consul has traveled in overcoming his guilt over the desire for incest. The fact that he has consummated the sex act with Maria signifies that he has directly confronted his desire. The acknowledgement of culpability dissolves his guilt.
The Consul's thoughts of death immediately after this symbolic act reveal his willingness to accept punishment for the deed, symbolically equivalent to acknowledgement of his role as the Oedipal son who has deceived the father. His mention of death shows the Consul's acceptance of death at the hands of the father-authorities, the Mexican police, whom he unconsciously suspects await him. The Consul's willingness to receive punishment from the police, who mistake him for Hugh, suggests that the Consul has now learned the lesson of brotherly love. By depicting his hero as a Christ-like figure, who, by sacrificial death assumes the blame for another's crime, Lowry communicates to the reader the information that the Consul has been rendered capable of truly loving, in fulfillment of the real goal of his quest.
Chapter IV

RECONCILIATION

The entry of the Consul's body into the ravine at the conclusion of the novel is symbolic of an incestuous union with the maternal goddess whom the Consul has pursued throughout. The action signifies that his quest for maternal love has been fulfilled. This union is a variant of the archetypal theme in which the hero weds his bride after a triumphant return home. In psychological terms, the alliance represents the resolution of the hero's conflict.

The Consul's entry into Mother Earth implies resolution of his conflict over incestuous wishes by suggesting that he is, by this symbolic acting out of his desire, at last confronting his buried wishes directly. Moreover, since the action highlights the sexual meaning implicit in his wish to die, it hints at the incestuous meaning behind his alcoholic addiction, the form in which his tendency to self-destruction finds expression. The impulse to destroy himself arises, of course, from his feeling of a need to be punished for desiring a sexual relationship with his mother.
By his murder, the Consul is both punished for, and purged of, the contamination resulting from his sexual experience with the prostitute, Maria, who represents his mother in her evil aspect. Purgation by death allows the Consul to enter into a union with his divine mother in the requisite state of purity. Moreover, his pure condition allows the Consul to experience rebirth, an event verified by his reappearance in the person of Jacques Laruelle in Chapter I. By showing the Consul's rebirth through a troubled personality like the Consul himself, rather than through a change of personality on the part of the Consul, Lowry emphasizes the cyclical aspect of the concept of rebirth, in which a benevolent deity eternally forgives man for his inherent tendency to sin. This evidence of the Consul's rebirth, in being a sign of divine forgiveness, is further testimony to his reconciliation with the deity. In addition, propagation of the Consul role carries connotations of his fertility. Because reproduction involves an act of love, the Consul's rebirth as Laruelle suggests that the Consul has, indeed, learned the lesson of love.

Metamorphosis. Lowry dramatizes the psychological process whereby his hero learns love by indicating the internal changes through signs of change in the external environment. Into imagery predominantly allusive of death and hell, the author introduces signs of
life, as well as hints of heaven and salvation. Most telling of the Consul's metamorphosis is the altered aspect of the maternal figures, who undergo transformation from hellish witches into a heavenly goddess.

Lowry's portrayal of the Consul's mother as a deity accomplishes several aims. It raises the stature of his hero, thereby giving his plight a universal dimension. In addition, by setting the goddess in contrast with demon witches, Lowry emphasizes the depth of the Consul's conflict over ambivalent feelings towards his mother. The emergence of the goddess indicates that the Consul has conquered hatred and found love. Her presence represents the culmination of his quest, reunion with a loving mother.

To accomplish reconciliation with the exalted mother, the Consul must rid himself of the demon mother who plagues him by tempting him to commit incest, while at the same time threatening him with punishment should he do so. He must therefore purge himself of her influence. Psychologically, this involves bringing his repressed desire for incest into conscious awareness. This acknowledgement dissolves the internal conflict by reconciling the unconscious and conscious levels of his mind. Such a resolution is implied by Campbell, who explains the journey and return of the hero in terms of the reconcilia-
tion of the divine and human worlds:

The two worlds, the divine and the human . . . [are as] different as life and death, as day and night. The hero adventures out of the land we know into darkness; there he accomplishes his adventure . . . his return is . . . a coming back out of that yonder zone. Nevertheless . . . the two kingdoms are actually one. The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know. And the exploration of that dimension . . . is the whole sense of the deed of the hero. The values and distinctions . . . disappear with the terrifying assimilation of the self into what formerly was only otherness. . . . this loss of personal individuation can be the whole burden of the transcendental experience . . . The hero . . . discovers the hags converted into goddesses and the dragons into the watchdogs of the gods. (p. 217)

It is noteworthy that by his changed perception the hero is able to convert hags into goddesses. This suggests that the Consul, in addition to using alcohol to help him confront the truth, employs it in a contrary manner, to help conceal the truth. That is to say, he uses this mind-altering beverage to maintain a defense. By changing his perception, alcohol allows the Consul to perceive his mother as a comforting, loving goddess. He is in this way able to deny her evil aspect, and thus protect himself against acknowledgement of incestuous desire.

The Consul's use of alcohol for converting the evil hag into a loving goddess suggests that alcohol is used as a means of appeasement. Insight into the Consul's employment of drink for this purpose is provided by Weigert, who speaks of conversion of bad spirits into
Good as the motive behind the religious rites of worshippers of the Great Mother:

In the religion of the Great Mother . . . the fasts and purifying ceremonies . . . serve to keep off spirits and bad gods, and to overcome fear. . . . Sin is [considered] absence from god, which can be converted into the saving presence of the deity . . . by taking part in ritual. This religious attitude corresponds to the early stages of superego development in the individual before the mastery of the Oedipus complex . . . before the sixth or seventh year. Before this time, the child still acts according to the magic point of view . . . He strives to convert the bad or angry mother into a good mother, as primitive peoples tried to convert a bad spirit into a good one . . . (p. 324)

The Consul placates his internalized hag, the punishing mother (who personifies his superego, or conscience) by offering her wine. In this manner he transforms her into the benevolent mother who loves him.

The Consul's psychological development can be observed by following his encounters with women. These show him moving from temporary solution of his incestuous conflict, which he controls by means of denial or appeasement of the evil mother, to permanent solution, which involves the evil mother's total annihilation through direct confrontation in an incestuous meeting. When he first meets Yvonne on her return to Quauhnahuac, his incestuous temptation is made clear by such allusions to her status as a sex goddess as: "her volcanoes, her beautiful volcanoes," "a river of lapis where the horn of Venus burned
so fiercely," and "mountain piled on mountain . . . river flashing a

gorge winding darkly beneath, the volcanoes abruptly wheeling into
view" (pp. 44-45). To quiet his fears over incestuous guilt, he im-
mediately attempts to cloud his mind with drink, a move even Yvonne
recognizes as denial:

"God knows I've seen you like this before," her
thoughts were saying, her love was saying . . . "You
are denying me again. But this time there is a pro-
found difference. This is like an ultimate denial--
oh, Geoffrey, why can't you turn back? Must you go
on and on forever into this stupid darkness, seeking
it, even now, where I cannot reach you . . . "
(pp. 49-50)

Though the Consul denies knowledge of his incestuous desire by re-
jecting Yvonne, he betrays an unconscious wish to return to the womb
for this very purpose in a passage which hints of incest through the
use of sexual imagery, the presence of the inevitable hag, an expressed
preference for cantinas over his wife, and, perhaps most telling of
all, a slip-of-the-tongue in which he says regression instead of di-
gression:

"you misunderstand me if you think it is altogether
darkness I see . . . what beauty can compare to that
of a cantina in the early morning? Your volcanoes
outside? Your stars . . . Forgive me, no. Not so
much the beauty of this one necessarily, which, a
regression (italics mine) on my part, is not perhaps
properly a cantina, but think of all the other ter-
rible ones . . . that will soon be taking down their
shutters, for not even the gates of heaven, opening
wide to receive me, could fill me with such celestial
complicated and hopeless joy as the iron screen that
rolls up with a crash, as the unpadlocked jostling
jalousies which admit those whose souls tremble with
the drinks they carry unsteadily to their lips. All mystery, all hope... all disaster, is here, beyond those swinging doors. And by the way, do you see that old woman from Tarasco sitting in the corner...?" his love asked her, "How, unless you drink as I do, can you hope to understand the beauty of an old woman from Tarasco who plays dominoes...?" (p. 50)

Yvonne's suspicion that the Consul is determined this time to progress to a more definitive resolution of his problem is verified by the appearance of the old woman, who, like the other evil-appearing maternal figures in the novel, affirms that the Consul is embarked on a downward course towards the womb, fated to die as a result of his incestuous attachment to drink:

But Yvonne looked away. The old woman with her... dominoes chilled her heart. It was like an evil omen.

"Talking of corpses," the Consul poured himself another whiskey... "personally I'd like to be buried..." (p. 51)

At this point in his struggle, the evil, demonic mother is dominant over the pure and heavenly goddess. The Consul's incestuous guilt has yet to be conquered.

Indeed, a substantial portion of the Consul's anxiety is caused by the fact that his guilt increases as he nears the womb, a circumstance dramatized by an increase in the ferocity of the old women he meets as he proceeds on his quest. The hags increase in viciousness, too, as the Consul consumes beverages of ever-increasing potency, another reflection of his unconscious awareness that drink brings him
closer to the womb and incest. Senora Gregorio, of the Terminal Cantina El Bosque, is typical of the hags to tempt the Consul to stronger drink:

The widow appeared, a little old woman wearing an unusually long and shabby rustling black dress. Her hair that he recalled as grey seemed to have been recently hennaed, or dyed red, and . . . was twisted up at the back into a Psycho knot. Her face . . . evinced the most extraordinary pallor; she looked careworn, wasted with suffering, yet at the sight of the Consul her tired eyes gleamed . . . "Mescal posseibly," she said . . . She smiled almost slyly as she edged toward the mescal barrel.

"No, tequila, por favor," he said. (p. 226)

The scene with Senora Gregorio reflects the struggle against drink/incest occurring in the depths of the Consul's mind. His entry into the darkened El Bosque suggests penetration into the forbidden woods of both mind and womb:

The Terminal Cantina El Bosque, however, seemed so dark that . . . he had to stop dead . . . The Cantina was well named, "The Boskage." This darkness, though, was associated in his mind with velvet curtains . . . too dirty and full of dust to be black, partially screening the entrance to the back room, which one could never be sure was private. . . . The Consul groped his way forward. "Senora Gregorio," he called softly . . . (p. 225)

The Consul attempts to fight his dark fate (of an incestuous union with his mother through death) by rationalization. The choice of nightmare of which he speaks during this defensive posture is between the nightmare of life (with Yvonne, who constantly stirs his incestuous
guilt) and the nightmare of death (in an eternal incestuous union with his mother):

... he heard voices in his ears again, a single voice ... "Geoffrey Firmin, this is what it is like to die, just this and no more, an awakening from a dream in a dark place, in which, as you see, are present the means of escape from yet another nightmare. But the choice is up to you. You are not invited to use those means of escape; it is left up to your judgment ... (p. 226)

The irony is that the Consul has no choice, and he innately knows it—he is fated to return to the womb to expunge incestuous guilt. This awareness is revealed through Señora Gregorio, who speaks as the voice of his unconscious conscience. She tells him that he must find love, not through his wife, but through his mother:

"Remember," Señora Gregorio corrected him gently 
... It can't be helped, ... If you bar your wife you would lose all things in that love" ... Good God, what had come over him? For an instant he'd thought he was looking at his own mother. Now he found himself struggling with his tears, that he wanted to embrace Señora Gregorio, to cry like a child, to hide his face on her bosom. "Adios," he said, and seeing a tequila on the counter ... he drank it rapidly. (p. 229)

A similar blending of identity occurs at the Farolito, where "he saw that the face of the reclining beggar was slowly changing to Señora Gregorio's, and now in turn to his mother's face, upon which appeared an expression of infinite pity and supplication" (p. 324). The maternal images at the Farolito are both more insistent and more vile than elsewhere, since the Consul is closer to his goal of incest;
fittingly, he now drinks mescal instead of tequila. "The old Tarascan woman of the Bella Vista" (p. 343) has become more threatening: "Her stick with the claw handle hung, as though alive, on the edge of the table" (p. 343). As the climax of his journey approaches, both Yvonne and the old woman urge him onward. While he reads Yvonne's supplications—"I want your children, soon, at once. . . . I want your life" (p. 346)—he finds that "The old woman was plucking at his sleeve" (p. 346).

Again, identities overlap when the Consul makes love to Maria. He imagines in her face a resemblance to his wife: "Her body was Yvonne's too, her legs, her breasts, her pounding passionate heart" (p. 349). At the same time, the Consul's liaison with Maria implies a reconciliation to the Virgin Mary, not only because of the common name, but because the Virgin, like Maria, is associated with Yvonne. The association results from the Consul's prayers to both the Virgin (p. 289) and Yvonne (p. 41) for salvation. The presence of phallic, though sacramental, candles on both occasions of prayer to maternal figures suggests salvation through incest. The fusion of identity of the women in the Consul's life signifies that here at the Farolito, by intimacy with Maria, he has finally reconciled the evil and good mothers, rendering him fit at last to experience rebirth.
The Consul's rebirth is intimated during the interlude with Maria by words which seem descriptive of the birth process, as well as death and incest:

--the escape! . . . out into the cold walled cobbled city, past--the escape through the secret passage!--the open sewers in the mean streets . . . into the night, into the miracle that the coffins of houses . . . the escape down the poor broken sidewalks, groaning, groaning--and how alike, those of love, to those of the dying!--and . . . rounding the corner, safe . . . then, surprised once more he could ever have reached it, standing inside the place with his back to the wall, and his blanket still over his head . . . until the . . . dawn that should have brought death . . . (pp. 350-351)

The theme of rebirth is echoed by mention of "the Indian night watchman sleeping on the floor in the doorway" (p. 351). The imagery suggests a father waiting outside a hospital delivery room for the arrival of his child. The sleeping Indian recalls the wounded Indian of Chapter VIII, who is "apparently lying fast asleep under the hedge on the right side of the road" (p. 240). The two Indians suggest a parallel between the chapters, hinting, perhaps, that Chapter VIII also offers opportunity for rebirth.

The rebirth motif is sounded in Chapter VIII, during the Firmin party's outing on the bus, by a description more reminiscent of spring than fall: "leafy hedges full of wild flowers with deep blue bells. . . . Green and white clothing hung on the cornstalks outside the low grass-roofed houses. Here the bright blue flowers climbed right up to
the trees that were already snowy with blooms" (p. 236). Both the upward direction and the colors suggest hope and salvation, signs of benevolent influence or divine presence.

The impression of divine presence is increased by the line which follows---"To the right, beyond a wall that suddenly became much higher, now lay their grove of that morning" (p. 236)—which is an apparent reference to the sacred grove of the maternal divinities, the Eumenides, at Colonus, where Oedipus and his daughter, Antigone, find sanctuary. The Oedipal reference adds the element of incest to the passage, a concept reenforced by mention of the earlier grove, whose description is more frankly sexual: "On either side of the grove a low embankment sloped to a narrow ditch" (p. 115). The ditch recalls the barranca, symbol of the womb, and of the Consul's downfall. The Consul's admittance to the grove while on a symbolic bus ride to hell would seem to imply that his salvation lies through incest, committed under sanction of the gods.

The commentary by Edith Hamilton on Oedipus' visit to the sacred

31 Oedipus is told by a stranger that "the place is holy; it is forbidden to walk upon that ground. It is not to be touched, no one may live upon it; most dreadful are its divinities, most feared, daughters of darkness and mysterious earth" (Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus, in The Oedipus Cycle, trans. Robert Fitzgerald [New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942], pp. 83-84). Campbell describes similar idyllic spots, protected and sacred, as being symbolic of the mother's forbidden sexuality (pp. 111-112).
grove furnishes some insights into the factors responsible for the Consul's reconciliation with the maternal deity:

In the course of their desolate wanderings Oedipus and Antigone came to Colonus, a lovely spot near Athens, where the one-time Erinyes, the Furies, now the Benignant Goddesses, had a place sacred to them and therefore a refuge for suppliants. The blind old man and his daughter felt safe there, and there Oedipus died. Most unhappy most of his life, he was happy at the end . . . The oracle which once had spoken terrible words to him comforted him when he was dying.32

With the change of the Furies into the Benignant Goddesses (the Eumenides), we again see the witch or hag transformed into a benign deity. This transformation reflects an internal change which has taken place in Oedipus. Now blind and aged, he is no longer lustful—his blindness, self-inflicted, is symbolic of castration. Paradoxically, his blindness has given Oedipus an inner vision which enables him to find inner peace, as externalized in the quiet grove. Cleansed of incestuous wishes, Oedipus is, in effect, returned to a prenatal state of purity which permits his burial in the sacred grove of the Eumenides, a site analogous to the maternal womb.

like incestuous confrontation, purifies his vision, and thereby permits the unveiling of hidden mysteries and the dissolution of guilt. The Consul's statement while praying to the Virgin, "Where is love? Let me truly suffer. Give me back my purity, the knowledge of the Mysteries, that I have betrayed and lost. . . . Let us be happy again somewhere . . . if it's only out of this terrible world" (p. 289) may be interpreted as a request to be allowed to return to the womb to find love, even if it means paying the price of death. Through the process of purgation, the Consul is rendered fit for return to the womb/ravine, where the loving mother resides. Like Oedipus, he transforms the terrible words of the Oracle (his guilty conscience) into words of comfort from a Benignant Goddess. The transition is apparent in the final chapter, where, while the Consul makes love to Maria, the words "dirty prostitutes, the pimps, the debris . . . of the streets and the bottom of the earth" are juxtaposed with "He had reached his crisis at last . . . and what he saw might have been, no, he was sure it was, a picture of Canada. Under a brilliant full moon a stag stood by a river down which a man and a woman were paddling a birch canoe. This calendar was set to the future" (p. 351).

The clue to the Consul's reunion with his maternal goddess is in the word _Canada_, associated with Yvonne because of her expressed wish
to start life anew there with the Consul. Her role as a maternal goddess is given credence by the statement by Perle Epstein that "Worship of the northern region [is] connected with worship of [the] mother" (p. 224). Maria, by contrast, is associated with the evil mother of hell, through whom he hopes to find his benevolent goddess of the northern country:

... right through hell there is a path ... I seem to see it now, between mescalike visions of a new life together ... I seem to see us living in some northern country, of mountains and hills and blue water ... (p. 36)

Campbell tells why confrontation with the goddess is important to the quest: "The meeting with the goddess (who is incarnate in every woman) is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love" (p. 118). This meeting is often in the nature of a sexual conquest, since acquisition of knowledge during the quest is accomplished through "penetration to the source" (p. 193). He explains that "The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero's total mastery of life; for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master" (p. 120).

Evidence that the Consul has penetrated the mystery of life by acquiring incestuous knowledge is contained in the hints of salvation and rebirth amidst the predominantly negative imagery which prevails during his intimacy with Maria: "he was now penetrating ... the
calamity of his own life . . . waiting for the Infierno whose one lamp of hope would soon be glowing (italics mine) beyond the dark open sewers" (p. 350). This moment of union with the goddess has previously been portended by such clues of entrance into heaven and the divine womb as "The massive gate was still open" (p. 236), "the gates of heaven opening wide to receive me" (p. 50), and "that jewelled gate" (p. 89), generally used in association with Yvonne. Reference to these celestial gates is often juxtaposed with mention of the doors of the cantinas, whose 9:00 o'clock opening the Consul eagerly awaits. The close association suggests that the Consul's entry into heaven lies through drink. The omnipresent hags who encourage his drinking at the cantinas reiterate the same theme.

Initiation Rites. The Consul's drinking has the quality of ritual, an interpretation substantiated by Weigert. She relates that ceremonial eating and drinking form an important part of the initiation rites for admittance into the Great Mother cults:

The taking of this sacramental nourishment was the first act in the cult drama of the union of the worshipper with the maternal deity. In the Eleusinian mysteries, the quaffing of . . . a spiritous liquor made of barley corn turned mourning into joy, the pain of parting into the joy of reunion. . . . Thereafter, the initiate might be admitted to the temple's holy of holies, which was underground like the old cave sanctuaries. Here, in the bridal chamber of the goddess, he underwent the most sacred consecration. The climax of the initiation into almost all mysteries was marriage with the deity. . . . The initiate entered into the wedding chamber
of the goddess as one about to die. Darkness surrounded him. . . . He was actually buried—he had to go down into his grave. . . . (pp. 312-313)

Weigert adds that in some cults, rebirth is celebrated following the symbolic death, for after "descent into the Cthonic sanctuary . . . the initiate was feted as one reborn into eternity. He was given milk and honey, like a newborn babe" (p. 315).

The events at the Salón Ofelia at Tomalín seem to be a re-enactment of the ceremony which Weigert describes. The Consul is compulsively drinking mescal—"Oozing alcohol from every pore" (p. 284)—in imitation of the ceremonial drinking of barley corn liquor. As he imbibes, words like cemetery, corpse, and dead (p. 284) signal that he is nearing death. The stone toilet he visits bears resemblance to a tomb: "The toilet was all of grey stone, and looked like a tomb—even the seat was cold stone" (p. 294). The tourist folders he reads while at the toilet hint of a deity's sacred temple by mention of "the Church" (p. 298), "altars" (p. 298), "Gods" (p. 300), "The Royal Chapel" (p. 299), "a Sanctuary" (p. 293), and "Virgin Mary" (p. 299). Almost as if in echo of Weigert's description, the "Cave of the Winds" (pp. 289, 293) appears several times. Alongside allusions to death, the theme of rebirth appears, announced by "It will be like a rebirth" (p. 301) and repeated allusion to baptism. Fertility and regeneration are implied by frequent reference to eggs, which form a conspicuous
part of the party's meal (p. 291). It is immediately after this ritual meal that the Consul flees to the Farolito, where he participates in a sexual act with Maria, and soon afterwards is killed. Though his burial in the ravine is quite unceremonious, he is nevertheless permanently united with his mother, signifying the successful completion of his quest.

Eternal Dependency. The permanence of the union between mother goddess and son is affirmed by Yvonne's words, "my life is irrevocably and forever bound to yours" (p. 367). Weigert states that this is the purpose of the magna mater cults: "the Great Mother does not attain release from her; he rather strengthens and deepens the mother/child tie" (p. 321). The Consul's achievement in successfully completing his quest for love reflects fulfillment of the psychological motive of eternal dependency Weigert sees as the reason behind the cultic ceremonies: "In the worship of the magna mater, we see the longing of the worshipper to make certain of his relationship to a parent, to become by sacramental act the child of this Great Mother for the after life" (p. 312). Weigert stresses that there is no attempt to solve the Oedipal conflict. Instead, the son's desire for the mother is affirmed. Hence, the need for punishment by means of ceremonial death: "the sacrifice . . . was a penance for the sin of Oedipus" (p. 321).
It is because of the permanence of the bond between mother and son that certain vegetation myths, 33 Weigert says, require an annual penance (p. 321).

The concept of annual penance is implied in the novel in Chapter I, in which Laruelle mourns his friend's death and gives indication of following in his footsteps. In his acceptance of the same alcoholic role, Laruelle testifies that the maternal link has not been broken by the Consul's death, and that he, Laruelle, will now do his part to perpetuate the tradition of maternal dependency through drink. Lowry gives this concept further continuity by the lines "M. Laruelle learned much about Hugh: his hopes, his fears, his self-deceptions, his dispairs. When Hugh left, it was as if he had lost a son" (p. 8). Reference to Hugh as Laruelle's son suggests that Hugh will carry on the tradition of perpetually seeking the mother after Laruelle is gone. And in fact, Hugh's predilection for the sea, and his preference for married women older than himself (pp. 164, 172), give promise that the quest for the mother will continue.

33 See James Frazer (I, II) for an extensive discussion of the myths of Dionysus, Osirus, and Attis, vegetative gods upon whom Lowry undoubtedly patterns his hero. Frazer's citation of Firmicus Maternus as the Latin source of certain details (I, p. 13; II, p. 108) is especially provocative--the name easily suggests itself as the source of Geoffrey Firmin's name, as well as having allusion to the goal of his quest.
Conclusion. Instead of concluding Under the Volcano with a simplistic resolution of the Consul's conflict, Lowry chooses instead to have his hero pass on his conflict to those he leaves behind. This cyclic approach, perhaps more than any other device, elevates the stature of Lowry's work and gives it meaning beyond the idiosyncratic problem of a single man. By giving a cyclic meaning to the Consul's quest for love, Lowry reiterates the notion that the incestuous wishes which are inherent in all men are unifying elements, despite their potential for destruction. Universality is also emphasized by Lowry's use of myth. In having his hero die a sacrificial death which recalls the Osiris myth involving regeneration (see fn. 12, p. 12, above), Lowry implies that the Consul in dying, passes on his love as a legacy, too. Lowry thus puts his hero, who cannot escape either the good or the bad influences of the past, in the company of all mankind. In this way he suggests that all men are destined to endure the same struggle and fate as the Consul, and that the opening guns of World War II are signalling that man's inherent conflict over love and hate is once more reaching a crisis stage.

By using the background of World War II to portray one man being led by evil forces within him to commit the sin of incest, Lowry calls attention to the war as an evil which modern man has wrought. In hav-
ing the Consul meet his death in punishment for a sin against love, Lowry implies that modern man will suffer death for crimes against the love of mankind committed during the war. By allowing the Consul to fulfill his quest for love and become reconciled to his maternal deity, Lowry hints that modern man, too, will be forgiven, but only after punishment and purgation through the holocaust of war. There is the implication, in the Consul's sacrificial death, that modern man's forgiveness and rebirth may be brought about by heroic acts of sacrifice performed by individuals during the war. Lowry thus underscores the irony that the same set of circumstances, war, can bring out both the love and the hatred of which man is capable. The same irony is suggested in the case of incest.

Lowry makes use of the good and evil forces within all men to create the conflict which motivates his hero. For this purpose he selects the most fundamental of all conflicts in man's psychological history, that brought about by the Oedipal triangle. The love of the son for his mother, coupled with the need to repress this love, sets up a conflict against which all men struggle. Lowry intensifies portrayal of this struggle by choosing as his hero a man who is powerless --as symbolized by his alcoholic addiction--to fight successfully against the universal urge of man to love his mother incestuously. By
succumbing to his innermost wishes and achieving the reunion with the mother that all men seek, the Consul in effect performs the wish fulfillment function on behalf of readers of the novel which Frye states is the function of the quest-romance (see p. 6, above). In like manner, the Consul, by his sacrifice, purges the readers of feelings of guilt for having entertained forbidden wishes vicariously through his actions.

The emotional enrichment offered by following the Consul's struggle derives in no small part from the ability of Lowry to create his hero's complex emotionality out of instincts shared by all men. These common urges permit use of psychological principles to gain an understanding of the influences which have contributed to determination of the Consul's behavior, including both the influences which have derived from his personal psychological history and those influences which he has inherited from the psychological history of mankind. Lowry's portrayal of the Consul as an archetypal character enables us to fit modern man into the historical scheme, so that we are able to discover his kinship, and ours, with the heroes of the past. The author's reminder that "No se puede vivir sin amar" stresses the importance of love in linking past and present. By ultimately finding love, the Consul adds his contribution (and, vicariously, that of the
towards perpetuation of his tradition. Hero and reader alike share the emotional experience of fulfillment deriving from this achievement. Satisfaction is owed in no little part to feelings of love and assurance which result from the Consul's reconciliation to the magna mater.
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