"I AM NOT I," YOU ARE NOT ME, WE ARE NOT US: ADDRESSIVITY AND THE STATUS OF REFERENCE IN MALCOLM LOWRY'S *HEAR US O LORD*

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"Hear us, O Lord, from heaven Thy dwelling place." The phrase, from the first five bars of the Manx fishermen's hymn reprinted at the beginning of Malcolm Lowry's posthumously published collection of stories,[1] sets up beautifully the conflict between narrative desire and linguistic representation which the text enacts. As Robert Kroetsch has put it:

> We as readers become eavesdroppers on an address to the sacred. We hear Lowry addressing God. We hear the writer addressing the deafness of God in the only way possible: by narrating the deaf God into the story as hearer. And then, the hero made hearer, we, as readers, find ourselves written out of all innocence, into complicity, into the violence of the telling. (163)

Addressivity—the role of the receiver of a message—abounds within *Hear Us O Lord*. From the strains of the Manx fishermen's hymn to the refrain of "Frère Jacques" that echoes through the text, addressivity problematizes conventional diegetic boundaries and signals Lowry's ongoing questioning of the relation between notions of self and other within narrative. And, as Kroetsch indicates, it forces *us* (for we too are implicated in Lowry's use of the collective pronoun), as readers, to re-examine our assumptions about the stability of narrative and language as modes of self-reference.

I

The two major theorists of addressivity are Gérard Genette and

M. M. Bakhtin. While Genette claims that the implied reader is in principle undefined in narrative discourse, he nevertheless acknowledges that this "obviously cannot change the fact that a narrative, like every discourse, is necessarily addressed to someone and always contains below the surface an appeal to the receiver" (260). Indeed, Genette assumes that the addressee, or the "narratee" as he calls it, is always implied: "Like the narrator, the narratee is one of the elements in the narrating situation, and he [/she] is necessarily located at the same diegetic level; that is, he [/she] does not merge *a priori* with the reader (even an implied reader) any more than the narrator necessarily merges with the author" (259). Thus, an intradiegetic narrator implies an intradiegetic narratee and an extradiegetic narrator implies an extradiegetic narratee. (For Genette the extradiegetic narrator is *outside* the narrative s/he is narrating and the intradiegetic narrator is *inside* the narrative, narrating the story to the extradiegetic narrator at a meta-level, or "second degree.") This last mode, according to Genette, can merge with the implied reader.

Such a discourse typology, as outlined by Genette, is extremely useful on an abstract theoretical level, but, when applied to the stories in *Hear Us O Lord,* it begins to break down. To be sure, we can identify the various narrators in a story as complex as "Through the Panama" easily enough: the anonymous editor/compiler of Sigbjørn Wilderness' Journal is the extradiegetic narrator; the intradiegetic narrators are both Sigbjørn Wilderness and his fictional character, Martin Trumbaugh (the latter of whom is perhaps better identified as the intra-intradiegetic narrator). But who are the narratees? Moreover, what do we make of Sigbjørn's apparently trans-diegetic addresses throughout the text? On more than one occasion, for example, Sigbjørn, having literally been-pushed from the centre of the story to the margins by Martin, seems to address the extradiegetic narratee, or the implied reader:

> (I am constrained to mention that the majority of the information in this commentary I have obtained from the diverting book I hold in my hands, lent us by the 3rd mate of this vessel and called *The Bridge*
>
> All in all though, gentlemen, what I would like to say about the Panama Canal is that finally it is a work of genius—I would say, like a work of child's genius—something like a novel—in fact just such a novel as I,

> *of Water* by Helen Nicolay, published by, etc. etc. And I mention this because strange though it may seem I have never read a book about the Panama Canal before.)
>
> Sigbjørn Wilderness, if I may say so, might have written myself—indeed without knowing it am perhaps in the course of writing. (62)
>
> Probably neither have you. (55)

Later in the story, specifically in that excerpt of his Journal labelled "Dec. 6," Sigbjørn makes a number of parenthetical comments which seem to be addressed to his intradiegetic narratee, Martin:

> (indeed it seems so intangible how can you discuss it?) (77)

and:

> (though you personally can be drunk as a cock on blackberry brandy for all I care, albeit your chances of equilibrium, unless you are a veritable Paracelsus, become increasingly fewer in that state) (78)

and:

> Oh shut up. Shut up. Shut up. (78)[2]

All these examples indicate that Genette's categories of intradiegetic and extradiegetic narration can be easily transgressed, which leads us to question their usefulness in an assessment of Lowry's stories.

Genette would respond in part by claiming that these instances of addressivity comprise a category known as "narrative metalepsis." He defines this term as any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe or vice versa, or the "telling as if it were diegetic something that has nevertheless been presented as metadiegetic in its principle or origins" (236; see note 2). Genette, however, finds these narrative anomalies to be ontologically distressing: "The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis, that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic, and that the narrator and his narratees—you and I—perhaps belong to some narrative" (236). All of this points to the fundamental limitations of Genette as applied to Lowryan narratives and suggests the necessity of constructing another theoretical model. For Lowry's narratives, especially those collected in *Hear*

Us O Lord, succeed precisely because they collapse what were hitherto regarded as stable and fixed narrative posts and because they repeatedly question uniform notions of reality.

Bakhtin's *Speech Genres* provides the basis for a model of addressivity more responsive to the complexities of Lowry's narratives. Bakhtin claims that all language is made up of individual concrete *utterances.* Moreover, he cites addressivity as "an essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance" and defines addressivity as an utterance's "quality of being directed to someone" (95 ff.). Each separate utterance is individual—*a speech act*—but spheres of language often develop relatively stable types of utterances—*speech genres* (60).

In the remainder of this essay Bakhtin expands on these "constitutive features" of utterance. For Bakhtin, an utterance is comprised of both addresser and addressee. Indeed, addressivity is seen to be the most important of these features: "Thus addressivity, the quality of turning to someone, is a constitutive feature of the utterance, without it the utterance does not and cannot exist. The various typical forms this addressivity assumes and the various concepts of the addressee are constitutive, definitive features of various speech genres" (99).

For Bakhtin, speech genres cannot be defined in purely linguistic terms. For this reason, he attempts a meta- or translinguistic approach to the issue in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language.* The one constant in his analysis remains the central importance he assigns to addressivity, which he defines here as the "otherness" (or "othering") of language, the *quid pro quo* relationship established between dialogic partners:

> The *word is oriented toward an addressee,* toward *who* that addressee might be. . . . [W]ord is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee.* Each and every word expresses the "one" in relation to the "other." I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared

> by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his [/her] interlocutor. (85-6)

Here we begin to see the connection between addressivity and notions of self and other. For Bakhtin the self/other distinction is the primary opposition on which all other differences are based.[3] But, as the above citation indicates, Bakhtin emphasizes not so much the gap at the centre of human existence as how that gap might be bridged. This finds expression in his notion of addressivity, which implies that our relation to each other, and to the world, is essentially communicative, that behind communication is the structuring force of dialogism: self and other in dialogue.

II

In my application of Bakhtin's theories to *Hear Us O Lord*, I kept returning to the "I" of the stories (the addresser) rather than "to" the "you" (the addressee). This is somewhat understandable given the prominence afforded the addresser in many of Lowry's stories. Consider, for example, "Through the Panama," which evolves, for the most part, in the first person. We are immediately tempted to read the various "I"s in the story as authorial, autobiographical or rhetorical representations of Lowry himself. And yet the "I" almost certainly belongs to Sigbjørn Wilderness, the keeper of the Journal mentioned in the story's subtitle and Lowry's chief protagonist, his super-persona as it were. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say, as Matthew Corrigan does, that the "I" in this story is on its way to "becoming" Wilderness. For, as Corrigan points out, "Through the Panama" "richly suggest[s] the way in which Lowry passed, almost phenomenologically, through his own experience in search of fictive possibilities" (433). Indeed, in this particular instance Lowry's fictional self, Sigbjørn Wilderness, has created his own fictional self, Martin Trumbaugh (who is ostensibly only the protagonist of Sigbjørn's novel-in-progress, but who nevertheless repeatedly challenges his progenitor's claim to exclusive rights over the pronoun reference "I"). And, as Sigbjørn's dream of "death" and "dissociation" suggests, the various selves in "Through the Panama" are not always that easy to distinguish from each other:

> I am not I, I am Martin Trumbaugh. But I am not Martin Trumbaugh or perhaps Firmin either, I am a voice, yet with physical feelings, I enter what can only be described—I won't describe it, with teeth, that snap tight behind me: at the same time, in an inexplicable way, this is like going through the Panama Canal, and what closes behind me is, as it were, a lock: in a sense I am now a ship, but I am also a voice and also Martin Trumbaugh, and I know I am, or he is, in the realm of death. (39-40)

The "I" in this passage would certainly seem to be subscribing to a phenomenological world-view, privileging a "lived-world" of experience, which has its own *felt* reality, over any objective scientific world. In *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Edmund Husserl expands upon this notion of *Lebenswelt*:

> I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly, and in time becoming and become, without end. I am aware of it, that means, first of all, I discover it immediately, intuitively, I experience it. Through sight, touch, hearing, etc., in the different ways of sensory perception, corporeal things somehow spatially distributed *are for me simply there*, in verbal or figurative sense "present" (101; emphasis, mine).[4]

For Husserl what is "present" is necessarily intentional, just as consciousness is intentional in that it represents accessibility to reality. Moreover, his emphasis on sensory perception and corporeal "things" implies a return to the spoken word as an expression of a particular reality experienced by a particular speaker. The phenomenological "I" is therefore that being which is comprised of both "the things themselves" and his/her interactions with them.[5] And the things themselves are everything which is the world, including the perceiving consciousness which speaks them.

It is interesting to contrast Husserl's phenomenological conception of the relation between individual consciousness and the world with Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, which is defined in *The Dialogic Imagination* as "The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance," that "set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a

meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (428). In *Desire in Language*, Julia Kristeva has identified modern linguistics' debt to both Bakhtin and Husserl. Yet Kristeva departs from her predecessors in that she reinterprets many of their theories from a psychoanalytic perspective. Whereas Bakhtin sees the multiple voices of a text as a function of a complex and variegated world, Kristeva sees them as constitutive of the conscious and unconscious experiences of the speaking subject. And whereas Husserl insists that all acts of signification are governed by the "transcendental ego," Kristeva posits the "semiotic" as chief signifying practice within the perceiving subject, "the actual organization, or disposition, within the body, of instinctual drives as they affect language and its practice" (18). In "Through the Panama," however, Lowry appears to side with Husserl. For an appeal to the phenomenological heavens would seem to be implicit in the interrogative, and typographically centred, address located on page 47 of the text:

"—Who am I?—"

This provides a useful theoretical context for Lowry's own particular obsession not only with the phenomena of perception, his own lived life and how art (at least *his* art) imitates life, but also the very landscape of language itself, which emerges as process, part of the mysterious lived world which forever manifests itself as immanent in his ongoing experience. In "Through the Panama" Lowry's phenomenological "I" (his practised paranoic *eye*) looks both inward to the "insatiable albatross of self" and the "absurd abyss of self" and outward to "the abomination of desolation," to a place (a "holy place" perhaps) which will (e)merge into/with the energy of language through his immediate articulation of his perceptive engagement with it as it occurs (31, 51, 67).

Of course, in a phenomenological universe the traditional linguistic division between subject and object becomes obsolete. For example, the "reception-theory" expounded by Wolfgang Iser claims that both the subject (distinguished as the reader in this equation) and the object (the text being read) are in a process of mutual becoming.[6] Given the peculiar inter- and intratextual quality of Lowry's narratives, particularly one as richly packed as "Through the Panama," such an approach to text and sign would

seem appropriate. (Indeed, Sherrill E. Grace has clearly demonstrated the multi-layered intertexts of this story in her essay "'A Strange Assembly of Apparently Incongruous Parts': Intertextuality in Malcolm Lowry's 'Through the Panama.'") Recall once again the aforementioned instance of direct address in which Sigbjørn, both marginally and parenthetically, comments upon "the diverting book" by Helen Nicolay which "I hold in my hands" (55). Reading this particular passage (i.e. reading Lowry writing Wilderness reading Nicolay *and* addressing *me*, and with Martin calmly monitoring the proceedings from his apparently central position), I cannot help but *feel* a part of the process (or the "productivity," to put it in Barthesian language), both in terms of texts merging (including the texts I, as reader, bring to Lowry's text) and arbitrary linguistic signs disintegrating (i.e. to whom exactly do the pronouns "I" and "you" refer in this passage?).

The intertextual references in "Through the Panama" can also be seen as the locus of a further theoretical dimension to the "I" of the story, one that is particularly illuminated by considering Lowry in a postmodern context. In the postmodern construction of the pronoun, the "I" is itself a text, a text, moreover, that is always already written. Hence the peculiar postmodern paradox that all discourse is necessarily characterized by duality, governed by two selves; that is, the present "I" and the past, re-constructed "I." The text (i.e. *the bounded text*) can then be seen as a rhetorical structure, a mapping out or "re-presentation" of the distance and space between these two "I"s. In "Through the Panama," as elsewhere in his oeuvre, Lowry is profoundly conscious of the fact that he is writing himself as well as being written. For example, in the Journal entry for "Dec. 3," Sigbjørn discusses, with some anxiety, his writerly influences:

> Commandant, meaning well, hunts out old American magazines for me. Old *Harper's*. Terrifying ancient brilliant article by De Voto on later work of Mark Twain. (Mem: Discuss this a little: problem of the double, the triple, the quadruple "I".) Almost pathological (I feel) cruelty to Thomas Wolfe. Would De Voto like to know what I think of him, in his Easy Chair, lambasting a great soul—and why? because he is a man—who, as N. might say, cannot answer? Mem: quote Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger*. And then on top of this obsession with Wolfe's weakness to come across a

> whom? Coming from De Voto it's almost enough to make you hate Joyce. And indeed I do sometimes hate Joyce. (73)

As Kroetsch so aptly puts it, for Lowry, "Self abounds in its own othering. . . . The writer's 'I' multiplying out" (170).

This crisis of "re-presentation," this quest for self-legitimation on the part of Lowry (the I-writer), is certainly compatible with many of the ideological tenets of postmodernism, which defines itself against an immediate past (hence "post") as well as theories of knowledge and art that project evaluative criteria based on authority, "truth" and convention (hence "modernism," of which Joyce is perhaps the most commonly cited practitioner in terms of literature).[7] Or, to put it another way, if modernism is defined as an epistemological theory of de-contextualization wherein external events ("the things themselves") disintegrate in the wake of what is perceived to be the random contingency of human phenomena, then the response to a split in subject on the part of the writer would be a complete effacement of personality, as in a fictive *persona* (such as T. S. Eliot's Prufrock or Ezra Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley).

This, however, is not the case with Lowry in "Through the Panama." Rather than an effacement of persona there is a substitution of personae, a stacking of "the double, the triple, the quadruple 'I'" along a vertical axis of spatial, metaphorical representation. The writer's "I" (Sigbjørn's, Martin's, even Lowry's) is thus multiplied out. This would seem to correspond to the ontological alternative offered by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition.* Lyotard argues for a de-totalization of hierarchical systems of knowledge, an avoidance of stasis by emphasizing different levels of reality. Specifically, he posits "narra- tive knowledge" as an alternative to scientific knowledge, claiming that the posts or speech acts intrinsic to narrative are organized in such a way as to promote a common bond, while at the same time ensuring constant change. The role of the narrator/addresser, for example, is based on the fact of having at one time occupied the post of narratee/addressee, as well as having at one time been positioned as the diegetic frame of reference in another narrative (21). This shifting of narrative posts is a particularly Lowryan trope. Sigbjørn Wilderness, the "I" in "Through the Panama," in addition to keeping a journal, is writing a novel with a protagonist

named Martin Trumbaugh. Yet, ironically, the protagonist of this novel (*Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid*) will eventually become Wilderness himself, the writer writing himself and being written.

III

In a rather cursory way, Lyotard brings us back to Genette's discussion of the narrator and the narratee and their respective diegetic functions. Certainly he brings us back to Bakhtin. For the positing of a fragmented and heterogeneous self finds significant expression in dialogism, where the addresser's identity is always measured against that of his/her addressee. And it seems to me that in "Through the Panama," and elsewhere in his fiction, particularly in this collection, Lowry is struggling to come to grips with this notion. As Michael Holquist indicates in his essay "The Irrepressible I," Lowry's use of the pronoun "I" is perhaps the starting point for this investigation but it is by no means the end:

> "I" is the ground of all other indices in language, determining the difference between here and there, and now and then. More important, the first person pronoun marks the fundamental distinction between "I" and "you." As Bakhtin never tires of reminding us, consciousness of self is possible only if it is experienced by *contrast*. This is not merely a phenomenological speculation, but one of the prime characteristics of language itself. (34)

Or, as Emile Benveniste puts it,

> I use *I* only when I am speaking to someone who will be a *you* in my address. It is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of *person*, for it implies that reciprocally *I* becomes *you* in the address of the one who in his [/her] turn designates himself [/herself] as *I*. . . . This polarity of persons is the fundamental condition in language, of which the process of communication, **in which we share,** is only a mere pragmatic consequence. (125-26; emphasis mine)

If Lowry tends to privilege the addresser, the pronoun "I," in "Through the Panama," then it would seem that he privileges the addressee in the next novella-length story of the collection, "Elephant and Colosseum." Curiously, however, all of the "you"s in this story are gendered as female. Kennish Drumgold Cos-

"Elephant and Colosseum." Curiously, however, all of the "you"s in this story are gendered as female. Kennish Drumgold Cosnahan, an American writer, in Rome to inquire about the status of the Italian translation of his most recent novel, addresses his trans-Atlantic wife, Lovey, by correspondence, his dead mother through "mute" prayers, and the elephant Rosemary in the form of two instances of extraordinarily poetic apostrophe, both beginning "Ah, Rosemary" (168, 172).

These apostrophes suggest an almost mystical (certainly a Muse-like) connection between addresser and addressee, Cosnahan validating himself both against and alongside the elephant. But a psychoanalytic connection can also be made. A Lacanian reading of "Elephant and Colosseum" would locate the apparent valorization of the gendered "you" at the centre of Cosnahan's unconscious desire to return to the pre-Oedipal stage of the mother-infant dyad.

Many of Jacques Lacan's ideas on the formation of the self are derived from Freud's earlier theorizing of the Oedipus complex. Lacan, however, goes a step further in linking the formation of the unconscious with the acquisition of language. For Lacan the child's "symbolic" entrance into the realm of language coincides with a loss of the "imaginary" desire for the mother and the suppression of this desire into the unconscious. The agent of this loss is the father, in his metaphorical representation as authority-figure, and in his possession of the privileged signifier, the phallus: "The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of logos is joined with the advent of desire" (Lacan 287).

Lacan's privileging of the phallus reflects his general tendency (post-Saussurean) to privilege the signifier over the signified. He relates the former to the function of metonymy and the latter to the function of metaphor, claiming that language catches us "in the rails—eternally stretching forth towards the *desire for something else*—of metonymy," the process of word-to-word, rather than word-to-image, linguistic association (167, 156), where desire is defined as "neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (*Spaltung*)" (287). This splitting is represented in both the psychoanalytic division between self and other and the linguistic

division between subject (the authorial, phallic "I") and object (the gendered "you"). Language is thus characterized by a constant deferral of meaning as well as a constant desire to return to the pre-symbolic realm of the mother. In this sense Cosnahan's quest to find his Italian publishers in order to ascertain the current status of the translation of his book (and his subsequent discovery of the fact that he has already been translated) masks his desire to communicate once again with his dead mother, whom he addresses directly: "That was the reason I couldn't write you, dearest Mother, why I couldn't find time to send a word . . ." (124).

An interpretation of the function of the addressee more responsive to its use in "Elephant and Colosseum," however, emerges from Teresa de Lauretis' "Desire in Narrative." De Lauretis acknowledges the existence of repressed or embedded desires (de Lauretis accepts, if only for the sake of argument, that narrative is governed by an "Oedipal logic"), but she writes about these desires from a *relational* rather than a *hierarchical* perspective, privileging figurative metonymies over metaphor. While her essay focusses primarily on cinematic narrative, de Lauretis correctly asserts that no theory of narrative can do without the critical contributions made by film theory. In this particular instance she concentrates on the "imaging" of subjectivity within film narrative, contrasting the masculine "gaze" with feminine "spectatorship," and arguing that there can be no single "primary, or purely imagistic identification" within narrative, but rather multiple "figural-narrative relation[s]" (149). For de Lauretis it is possible to theorize a system of textual production which is based not *on* lack, or the gap at the centre of discourse and signification, but *around* a space of difference and deferral. It is a system in which there is no single authoritative view, no proprie-tary or authenticating signature, but many voices. It is a system which allows for the linguistic co-existence of both Lacan's "imaginary" and Kristeva's "semiotic." And it is a system whose chief signifying practice depends upon a heterogeneously en-gendered subjectivity.

Just as there is a stacking of the multiple addressers in "Through the Panama" along an axis of linguistic representation, so in "Elephant and Colosseum" there is a layering of multiple addressees within a matrix of narrative contiguity. Recognizing

himself in his (m)other (both Mother Drumgold and the elephant Rosemary), who functions as his addressee, Kennish Drumgold Cosnahan undergoes a process of doubling (recall that in his conversations with himself on pp. 115, 139 and 158 he functions as both addresser and addressee) which is central to his acquisition of the subject position, the role of the addresser, the status of the "I-referent," as well as to his "translation" "into a conscious member of the human race" (173):

> For was not Rosemary like a signal *from* his mother, nay, was it not almost as if his mother had herself produced Rosemary or at least guided his steps to her, his meek and impossible elephant, to a meeting in its gently buffoonish manner nearly sublime. . . . And what was a further motive of this signal, this meeting, this guidance? Why to tell him that by accepting his mother's death, and now he had for the first time fully accepted it, he had released her. (170-1)

Once again it is Bakhtin's theory of dialogism which provides us with the most useful linguistic paradigm in this situation. For Bakhtinian speech act theory privileges utterance over sentence, enunciation over articulation, and is founded upon the reciprocal relationship between addresser and addressee. As a result, the traditional linguistic split between subject (the "I" of a sentence) and object (the "you" of a sentence) is negated: in being guaranteed the possibility of responding to an utterance the addressee becomes the subject of his/her own utterance. As Julia Kristeva points out in *Desire in Language*, the text is thus returned to its "con*text*":

> The addressee, however, is included within a book's discursive universe. . . . He thus fuses with this other discourse, this other book, in relation to which the writer has written his own text. Hence horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. . . . The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*. (66)

This would seem to explain the double-voiced discourse evident throughout "Elephant and Colosseum." Indeed, Cosnahan functions as both addresser and addressee. Ironically, by focusing on

the latter we must inevitably come back to the former. For, as Grace demonstrates in "'A Sound of Singing,'" "in this gentle little story, Lowry thematizes the problematics of ontology and epistemology and comes to the conclusion that the 'I' or self is heterogeneous, multiple and polyphonic" (134).

IV

Bakhtin, in introducing the term "polyphonic" into narrative discourse in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, acknowledges his debt to music theory, whence the term derives:

> The image of polyphony and counterpoint only points out those new problems which arise when a novel is constructed beyond the boundaries of ordinary monologic unity, just as in music new problems arose when the boundaries of a single voice were exceeded. (22)

The final story in Lowry's collection (and the focus of my final section of analysis in this essay), "The Forest Path to the Spring," likewise employs a musical metaphor: the narrator's attempts to compose a jazz opera. And although this story is filtered through a single normative consciousness (and narrated, like "Through the Panama," in the first person), it nevertheless brings together the disparate voices circulating throughout the text. In connection with this, the narrator comments as follows on the organization of his opera:

> It was partly in the whole-tone scale, like *Wozzeck*, partly jazz, partly folksongs or songs my wife sang, even old hymns, such as Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place. I even used canons like Frère Jacques to express the ship's engines or the rhythms of eternity; Kristbjorg, Quaggan, my wife and myself, the other inhabitants of Eridanus, my jazz friends, were all characters, or exuberant instruments on the stage or in the pit. . . . The opera was called *The Forest Path to the Spring*. (271)

A kind of unity is established, to be sure (if only in the *intra*textual references to songs and names found in other stories in *Hear Us O Lord)*, but one that is open and polyphonic, recognizing within it the multiplicity of different voices.

The many instances of direct address located throughout

"The Forest Path to the Spring" indicate that this story is as fully dialogized as "Through the Panama." Whether it be with his wife, or with a mountain lion met along the path to the spring, or with the implied reader, the narrator is in constant communication with someone or other. Indeed, on more than one occasion the "I" of the story speaks directly to "us" in the form of the pronoun "you" (the latter of which, in this instance, I am considering in its plural form, i.e. as synonymous with the French pronoun *vous*), as in the long passage near the opening of the story which begins: "If you can imagine yourself taking a pleasure steamer down the inlet from the city some afternoon . . ." (218). Thus, by virtue of our status as "second party" addressees within "The Forest Path to the Spring," we become active participants in the dialogue of the text.

Of course, it is not just to "second party" addressees (the "you" of a text) that the narrator of Lowry's final story speaks; he also speaks to a "third party" superaddressee (the "Thou" of his text). For Bakhtin, the concept of the superaddressee is another "constitutive feature" of the whole process of utterance. He claims that the author/speaker of an utterance never surrenders his/her whole self to the complete and final will of a second party addressee, but presupposes some higher "responsive understanding" from an invisibly present third party that stands above all the participants in the dialogue. According to Bakhtin in *Speech Genres*, this superaddressee is not necessarily a mystical or metaphysical being, although he admits it can be: "In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this superaddressee and his [/her] ideally true responsive understanding assume various ideological expressions (God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science, and so forth)" (126).

Similarly, in this story, the desire for spiritual recognition is almost audible in the Manx fishermen's hymn which serves as the title of this collection and which is repeated as an accompanying refrain to "Frère Jacques" throughout the text. And a higher authority is certainly being appealed to in the italicized prayer found at the beginning of section VII in "The Forest Path to the Spring." The emphasis on the "exhilarating Word of God" in that prayer echoes not only Bakhtin but also the opening verse of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word. . . ."

The "I-you" dichotomy inherent in the text is thus transformed into an "I-Thou" dichotomy. Yet, leaving aside any tangible notions of God-head which the latter pronoun pairing might imply, I believe the important point in the Bakhtinian concept of the superaddressee is the idea of "responsive understanding." In *Speech Genres* Bakhtin states that the word "always wants to be *heard*, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely). . . . It enters into a dialogue that does not have a *semantic* end" (127). This emphasis on hearing, on being heard, is undeniably important where Lowry is concerned. "Hear us, O Lord, from heaven Thy dwelling place": the superaddress clearly represents an attempt on Lowry's part to bridge the gap between self and Other.

Yet, according to Jonathan Culler, it is important to stop and "question the status so far granted to the *thou* of the apostrophic structure and reflect on the crucial though paradoxical fact that this figure which seems to establish relations between the self and the other can in fact be read as an act of radical interiorization and solipsism" (146). Indeed, by replacing the "you" (itself a subject position because of its capacity to author its own utterance) of an address with an objectified "Thou" (something which cannot be empirically defined as "you"), the "I" effectively eliminates the possibility of any response. Such a distinction between the "you" and the "Thou" of address would seem to correspond to Meir Sternberg's categorization of the "hearer" in discourse as both "dialogic receiver" and "monologic perceiver": "the hearer is not just the speaker's dialogic counterpart . . . . Called a receiver, he [/she] operates in fact as a silent perceiver, just like the seer, only he [/she] perceives words rather than the immediate world of things" (298-9). Dialogism is thus present even within monologism.

"Hear us, O Lord, from heaven Thy dwelling place": we hear in this apostrophe, according to Robert Kroetsch, "the terror of a double distance. . . . The apostrophe is addressed quite possibly not to God the Father but to the gap itself, the gap that separates the speaking voice from the listener, the mouth from the ear, the spoken word from the longed for signification" (164). The fissure between self and other thus remains, and any attempt to bridge the gap between the two would necessarily result in their mutual

negation as stable referents. Ironically, it is this state of apparent ontological arrest that propels Lowry's narratives forward. Hence the appropriateness of his use of the apostrophe/superaddress, a device which, according to Culler, "makes its point by troping not on the meaning of a word but on the circuit or situation of communication itself" (135). Paradoxically, Lowry's "Thou" implies not the end of all discourse but the possibility of all discourse, which is itself inherent in the multi-voicedness of all utterance. The circuit of communication in "The Forest Path to the Spring" brings us back to the "I" of the story (just as it did in "Elephant and Colosseum"), to an "I" that is once again multiple, heterogeneous and polyphonic. And it brings us back to the "you" of the story, against which this "I" is defined.

In *Hear Us O Lord*, the word that is dual for Bakhtin (spoken by an addresser; oriented toward an addressee) *becomes* paradoxical in the hands of a writer like Lowry (at once bridging and distancing the gap between the two). In recognizing that the communicative triad of the addresser (speaker/author/sender), the addressee (listener/reader/receiver) and the referent (object/hero) is the primary organizing structure of narrative, Lowry acknowledges that the three are necessarily bound up together in a complex network of highly variable interrelationships, and that the signification of the separate identity of each can only be accomplished by someone who is other—and, moreover, can only be accomplished within the artificial constraints of language (i.e. through pronoun designations like "I," "you," etc.). For Lowry the author-scriptor is to the text as the self is to consciousness *and* as language is to narrative. Far from implying that *Hear Us O Lord* is at its heart monologic, this statement points to the text's inherent polyphonic quality. For Lowry posits each factor in the equation as variegated and heterogeneous. Indeed, within the three stories examined in this analysis there exist multiple *texts*, *selves* and *systems of language*:

"Hear us [*I, you, me, he, she, we, us*], O Lord, from heaven Thy dwelling place."

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NOTES

[1] *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987). I will be focussing on three stories from this collection: "Through the Panama," "Elephant and Colosseum," and "The Forest Path to the Spring."

[2] The issue is further complicated in this case because the identity of the narrator is itself ambiguous. In this regard, it must be pointed out that the passages cited only constitute examples of *direct address*. In a number of the parenthetical asides found on pp. 75-78 of "Through the Panama" Martin is also referred to in the third person, suggesting that, despite the clear typographical demarcation within the text of a dated entry in Sigbjørn's journal, the extradiegetic narrator might in fact be intruding upon the "metadiegetic" narrative.

[3] See, for example, Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, especially "Authoring as dialogue: The architectonics of answerability," pp. 149-81.

[4] Of the bold "I" Husserl further states: "I experience myself here in the first instance as 'I' in the ordinary sense of the term, as this human person living among others in the world" (13).

[5] I borrow this term from William A. Luijpen. See Luijpen, *Phenomenology and Humanism: A Primer in Existential Philosophy*, pp. 20-21.

[6] See especially Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: a phenomenological approach."

[7] My understanding and use of postmodernism in this context is derived from Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*. See especially the "Foreword" by Fredric Jameson, pp. vii-xxi, and pp. 18-23 and 71-82.

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