

Malcolm Lowry:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Lowry, Malcolm, 1909-1957
Title:	Malcolm Lowry Collection
Dates:	1940-1956
Extent:	3 boxes (1.26 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Malcolm Lowry Collection consists of a manuscript for <i>Under the Volcano</i> and related correspondence, 1940-1956. It is divided into two series: I. Works, circa 1944 and II. Correspondence, 1940-1956. This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog but has been recataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-02566
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases 1967 (R3425), 1970 (R5413); 2010 (2010-12-11-P)
Processed by:	Katy Hill, 2008; Stephen Cooper, 2011
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Clarence Malcolm Lowry was born in Cheshire, England, on July 28, 1909, to cotton broker Arthur Osborne and Evelyn (Boden) Lowry. His early life was marked by distance from his parents, and the alcoholism that would afflict him for the rest of his life began when he was just a teenager. As a young boy he was sent to private boarding schools and was expected to enter the family business after completing college. After finishing boarding school, he worked on the British freighter S. S. *Pyrrhus* for five months in 1927 before returning home and entering Cambridge in 1929.

A year after graduating from Cambridge, Lowry published his first novel, *Ultramarine* (1933). The book received poor reviews and later Lowry himself described it as "an altogether unmentionable early novel." In April of 1933, while on a trip to Spain, Lowry met Jan Gabriel. Less than a year later they were married in Paris.

Lowry and Gabriel's relationship was rocky, and soon after the marriage, Gabriel returned to her home in New York, leaving Lowry in Paris. He followed her to New York in 1935, where his drinking problem was treated in Bellevue Hospital's psychiatric ward. The two moved to Mexico in 1936, and a year later, Gabriel once again left Lowry, and returned to the United States. During the remainder of his time in Mexico, Lowry sank further into depression and alcoholism and began working on a draft of *Under the Volcano* (1947), which would become his most recognized work.

In 1938, Lowry returned to the United States where he met former actress Margerie Bonner. They moved to Canada upon the expiration of Lowry's U. S. visa, and after securing a divorce from Gabriel in 1940, Lowry married Bonner. Following the destruction of their home by a fire in 1944, Lowry and Bonner moved in with their friends, Gerald and Betty Noxon, where Lowry completed *Under the Volcano*. The book was published two years after its completion in 1945.

Lowry found it difficult to produce new work after *Under the Volcano* and traveled with his wife frequently to find new inspiration. In 1949, after returning to Canada, Lowry briefly worked on a screenplay of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*.

Despite continued efforts, Lowry never published a novel after *Under the Volcano*. Several of his unfinished works and collections of his short stories were published posthumously, edited primarily by his wife Margerie.

After the termination of his contract with Random House, in 1954 Lowry and his wife began travelling in Europe. They rented a cottage in England in February 1956, where Lowry lethally overdosed on alcohol and barbiturates and died on June 27, 1957.

Sources:

"(Clarence) Malcolm Lowry." *Contemporary Authors*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com> (accessed 16 April 2008)

"Malcolm Lowry." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com> (accessed 16 April 2008)

Tiessen, Paul. *The Letters of Malcolm Lowry and Gerald Noxon*. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1988.

Scope and Contents

The Malcolm Lowry Collection consists of a manuscript for *Under the Volcano*, a screen adaptation typescript for F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*, and related correspondence, 1940-1956. It is divided into two series: I. Works, circa 1944 and II. Correspondence, 1940-1956. The bulk of this collection was previously accessible through a card catalog but has been recataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project. The *Tender is the Night* screenplay was added through a 2010 acquisition.

The Works series consists of a manuscript of *Under the Volcano* (1947), Lowry's most notable work, and a screenplay of his adaptation of *Tender is the Night*, which he co-authored with Margerie Bonner. The *Under the Volcano* manuscript includes handwritten, typed, and composite pages, as well as Lowry's handwritten edits. Due to its fragile condition and inconsistent pagination, the manuscript has been velobound into four volumes.

Series II. contains Lowry's and his wife Margerie Bonner's correspondence to Gerald Noxon and James Stern. Some of the letters detail Lowry's works, while many document his personal life. Both sides of the correspondence with Noxon have been combined and arranged in chronological order. These materials have been published in *The Letters of Malcolm Lowry and Gerald Noxon* (1988), which includes an item number for each piece of correspondence. These numbers are noted in the folder list to aid in locating letters transcribed in that work. Correspondence to and from James Stern is also arranged in chronological order. One notable letter from Lowry to Stern states that one line from *Under the Volcano* was taken from a letter written earlier by Stern.

Related Material

The Ransom Center also holds a folder of letters from Margerie Bonner Lowry to Richard Hauer Costa, 1964-1974, regarding Costa's biography of Malcolm Lowry, published in 1972. Additional materials related to Malcolm Lowry can be found in the following collections: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; Nancy Cunard; Hugh Kenner; *London Magazine*; and William A. Bradley Literary Agency. Other Lowry-related materials are also found in the Art Collection, the Photography Collection, and the Vertical File Collection.

Index Terms

People

Lowry, Margerie Bonner

Noxon, Gerald

Stern, James, 1904-

Subjects

Authors, English -- 20th century

Document Types

Postcards

Christmas cards

Series I. Works circa 1944

Under the Volcano (1947), composite handwritten and typed manuscript with extensive handwritten notes and revisions, 491 leaves, undated. Inscribed by the author "Original MS Under the Volcano by Malcolm Lowry presented to Gerald Noxon and Betty Lane in sincere gratitude and friendship by the author Christmas 1944."

Container
1.1-2.2

Tender is the Night, typescript screen adaptation, 457 leaves in three volumes, undated.

Container
4.1

Series II. Correspondence 1940-1956

Lowry/Noxon, 1940-1952 (items 1-80)

Container 3.1

Lowry/Stern, 1940-1956

Container 3.2