



PROJECT MUSE®

The Letters of Malcolm Lowry and Gerald Noxon, 1940–1952
ed. by Paul Tiessen (review)

Frances W. Kaye

Western American Literature, Volume 23, Number 4, Winter 1989, p.
386 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1989.0024>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/530322/summary>

town Texas. Whether his fiction is the better for it is a question yet to be answered. Despite Lich's healthy Texas chauvinism, it becomes clear that McMurtry works best not when glorifying Texas mythology, but when exploring a heritage lost—the painful contrast between myth and reality.

KATE ARNESON

Augustana College

The Letters of Malcolm Lowry and Gerald Noxon, 1940–1952. Edited and with an introduction by Paul Tiessen with the assistance of Nancy Strobel. (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1988. 163 pages, \$27.95 Can., \$22.95 U.S.)

The letters collected in this volume do not really shed much light on the rewriting of Malcolm Lowry's magnificent *Under the Volcano* (despite the publisher's blurb), except to establish that during their visits to each other during the early 1940s, Lowry and his old school chum, Gerald Noxon, worked very productively with each other on the revisions. What the letters do show is a three-way literary friendship between Lowry, Margerie Bonner Lowry, a former actress turned novelist, mystery writer, and eventually radio dramatist, and Noxon, a very successful radio writer and less successful poet and novelist. The letters also document a Lowry who was sober and happy, living with Margerie on the beach at Dollarton, B.C., anticipating and recapitulating Noxon's visits.

Lowry's letters are vintage Lowry prose, filled with notes on what to look for in "surrealist Victoria—. . . the delirious rosebushes, the angry totems, and Aristotle peeling among the lobelia . . ." and descriptions of the beach and the Lowrys' state of mind. Lowry also turns out to be a generous and meticulous critic of Noxon's work, while Noxon's kind of encouragement to Lowry can be surmised by his careful, admiring critique of Margerie's novel, *Horse in the Sky*. "Margie and Malc" in concert, the descriptions of their discussions of Noxon's poems and their variant readings and advice, show them as a small and mutually supportive writer's workshop, a correction to the usual idea of Margie as nurse and protector to her talented but unstable husband.

The conversations recorded in these letters were international in scope—*Under the Volcano* is set in Mexico and Noxon's *Teresina Maria* in Italy—rather than "western" or "Canadian," but their very breadth reminds us that the parish is always a part of the world all round.

FRANCES W. KAYE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln