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Rising with One's Community: Socialist Theory and Bildungsroman in Lewis Jones

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ABSTRACT: This article analyses theoretical and ideological tensions in the fictional work of Welsh miner-author Lewis Jones. It surveys its treatment of standard categories in the Marxist-Leninist canon and pays particular attention to the shaping role of collective formations in the development of individual consciousness. It further explores the articulation of abstract and concrete expressions of collective identity by assessing the relative status of notions such as "class" and "community", placing both in a teleological frame of reference in which "History" functions as an absolute horizon of sense validation.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Communism, class consciousness, community, miners.

RESUMEN: Este artículo traza un recorrido por diversos aspectos teóricos e ideológicos en la obra del autor minero galés Lewis Jones. En primer lugar, se analiza su aplicación de categorías clásicas del canon marxista-leninista, prestando especial atención al papel formativo desempeñado por las identidades colectivas. Por otro lado, se estudia la imbricación de formas abstractas y concretas de dichas identidades (evaluando, por ejemplo, la relación de conceptos como "clase" y "comunidad") al tiempo que se las sitúa en un marco de referencia teleológico en el que "la Historia" funciona como horizonte absoluto de validación de sentido.

Palabras clave: Bildungsroman, comunismo, conciencia de clase, comunidad, mineros.

The characterisation of Lewis Jones' novels as *Bildungsroman* is customarily based on a sub-generic distinction between the middle-class or bourgeois "formation novel" (canonised as prototypical of the genre as such), in which the charting of particular individual destinies translates a set of inherited anxieties (of the religious-transcendental type) into a new, secularised and bourgeois, discourse (Jameson, 2006), and those specific incarnations of the *Bildungsroman* whose ideological stakes lie in a more collectively-inflected political culture. According to Rolf Meyn (2000: 129):

> Both [proletarian and bourgeois *Bildungsroman*] share protagonists who are set apart from their peers by some traits – sensitivity, intelligence, the determination to gain deeper insights and, though not always, physical appearance. Both forms contain a story of apprenticeship, a transformation from ignorance (of self) to knowledge (of self), and at the same time a transformation from passivity to action. In a proletarian *Bildungsroman*, however, the protagonist's knowledge (of self) in never an end in itself, but part of a totalizing "truth" in the form of political values, and ideology or doctrine; in other words, the proletarian form is far more deeply embedded in the structure of a *roman à these* or ideological novel.

Lewis Jones' novels *Cwmardy* (1937) and *We Live* (1939) trace the development of protagonist Len Roberts from early life around the turn of the century to premature death in the Spanish Civil War – and thus, thematically, from initial access, in childhood, to the symbolic horizon of his industrial community (governed by the coalfield and the social structures associated with it), to a full-circle completion of his, and his community's, journey to class-consciousness. The novels are articulated around a dual pattern of "knowledge" and "ignorance" – or, in the specific political coordinates of Jones' discourse, of "spontaneity" and "consciousness". The narrative continuum formed by the two novels displays a developmental structure of *maturation* avowedly connecting the two terms as opposing ends. The progress to "consciousness" charts a sequential unfolding of events in which self and community become inseparable constituents of a unitary process. "Consciousness" signifies in this context an actualisation of historical transcendence (the *meaning* embodied in the "forces of History") over and against the radical contingency of particular existence. Individual agents may bear the traces of this consciousness, in budding or full-blown fashion, but it is only the domain of the group, the community or collectivity of individuals – namely, the *class* – which can effectively circulate it throughout individual consciousness*es*. In this sense, the panorama which Lewis Jones – the writer, but also the Communist Party councillor from Glamorgan – presents in *Cwmardy* (and then in its sequel, *We Live*), is a collective trajectory of ideological training couched in the narrative shaft of individual growth.

In point of fact, the character binomial with which the first novel opens – formed by Len and his father Big Jim – rehearses, in a nutshell, the root trends displayed by the community as a whole: trends which will only acquire their precise social significance when articulated as class-relevant figures.

The opening scene of *Cwmardy* sets down a contrastive pattern opposing the legendary evocations of the landscape – the picturesque mountain-tops of a quasi-mythical Wales – to the tangible obscurities of actual History as locally embodied in Cwmardy and its human destinies. If a link to this romanticised past is effectively maintained through Big Jim's residual attachments (to the primeval, to the "natural" state predating rampant industrialism), the overall effect regarding the pit and the historical "situation" it represents is nevertheless quite distinct from the stock assumptions of earlier social-problem fiction. Len Roberts emerges from the very first as a naturalised denizen of this material reality, with no aspirations or observable intentions of cancelling the valences of this world. In other words, the material conditioning of his lived experience (from cradle to grave) is coextensive with its identity: living the life of a miner *makes* a miner and a miner's community. Should the community pre-exist the miner – should the miner be born into the community –, the latter can only revoke it at the price of self-destruction.

Unlike his father, who could more or less reasonably claim an alternative source of affiliation, Len is the material product of a shaping community experience whose stakes and credentials are industrial through and through. This original positioning of Len Roberts vis-à-vis his "objective conditions" of existence defines a life and sense trajectory which commences with a "spontaneous" affinity ("[he was] always eager to get near the pit that stood at the top end of the valley"; "the thought of working in the pit sent ripples through his flesh and made him anxious to grow up quickly" (*Cwmardy*: 7-8)), and culminates in an actively "conscious" intervention in the name of *class* qua conceptual extension and realisation of the local collective experience.

The pattern drawn by Jones allays sublimation as the prevalent relational mode vis-à-vis industrial reality. "Nature" is only peripherally accounted for in a universe whose ontological buttresses are all the more complicit with social History. Indeed, this situation generates the moulding shafts in which a specifically modern brand of social subjectivity is forged – one which contrasts with the hinted dimension of myth and legend associated in the opening passage with that primordial and Arcadian Wales of Cymric kings and phenomenal landscapes.

In clear contradistinction to his father, Len is a character inhabiting *ab initio* the material side of History and, as a result, embodying the ethos and social cast of subjectivity adumbrated by single-industry communities. As Raymond Williams has pointed out: "in these working communities it is a trivial fantasy

to suppose that these general and pressing conditions are for long or even at all separable from the immediate and the personal" (Williams, 2005: 222). It is therefore no exaggeration to conceive of the universe defined by *Cwmardy* as structurally determined (or overdetermined) by a set of material conditions which – far from remaining purely circumstantial – become active and productive matrices in a trans-individual process of subjective genesis. In that sense, the mine constitutes a symbolic locus of definition and adscription articulating individual "forms" of consciousness with their collective "contents": in other words, it is an integrative framework upon which social and individual modes of being converge. The pit ceases to function metaphorically or allegorically against a foreground of autonomous interpersonal actions (which would be the tenor of more traditional industrial fictions), in order to occupy a central position as the signifying guarantor of existing sociality – as the place where class is actualised and community is rendered socially intelligible.

Len's urge to embrace adult working life is thus to be interpreted, not as a fanciful or sentimental concession on the part of the narrative, but strictly, as a programmatic statement of belonging, as a wilful determination to predicate the terms of self-fashioning upon trans-individual factors. Being is, by definition, under this "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1961: 64-65), being-*in*-community (and, at a further stage of political "consciousness", as we shall see, being-*for*-community). The apparent boldness of this statement is not only justified by a presumed political outlook or agenda – which an author like Lewis Jones is undoubtedly equipped with – but even more so by the structural prominence of the communitarian dimension as the inescapable regime of sense validation – as the fundamental "ideologeme" (Jameson, 1981: 76) of this brand of working-class discourse.

The collectivist horizon which informs Jones' fictional elaboration of the socialist project is to some extent pre-figured by a native (Welsh) ecclesiological tradition of Nonconformity. The *gwerin* (a notion which often departed from its original sense of transcendental egalitarianism, placing all men, capitalists and proletarians, managers and miners alike, on the same footing before God's infinite judgement) became, in the radical interface between Welsh politics and theology, a virtual instantiation of the militant community, of the *class* taken in its politically conscious and organised disposition (Pope, 1997: 4).

By no means alien to this "unconscious" framework of South Walian political culture, Jones' novel pulsates from the start with a communal vitality of its own, thriving upon those moments of alliance or fusional intimacy at which a specific group identity surfaces. In addition to the more obvious profile of workers' organisations, a strong sense of collective subjectivity transpires from the micro-political formations which underpin Cwmardy's community life: school, chapel and pit, for example, display analogous structures of solidarity

and mutuality. In effect, Len's first taste of truly *social* life beyond the closed circuit of the family is associated with school. This is significantly characterised as a strict disciplinary apparatus whose primary function is to reproduce a given set of ideological determinants whilst repressing the spontaneous flows and dispositions of pre-social existence. In effect, this characterisation of school as an Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus both secures a theoretical profile for the (bourgeois) State itself as an instrument of class domination and social reproduction, and delineates an early pattern of resistance which will then condition subsequent narrative and ideological developments.

The unchecked apparatus of state authority meets young Len in the guise of punishment and public humiliation for truancy. Injustice takes the shape of an awakening to the casual brutalities of life, which are often signified (as experience will progressively show Len) through the depredations of physical violence. Yet this burning sense of injustice before tyrannical power is accompanied by a fresh attentiveness to the possibilities of collective action – to the plausibility of a co-ordinated response to exploitative conditions. Thus, for example, the headmaster's measures elicit an unexpected reaction from Len's young classmate (and future comrade-cum-wife) Mary Jones, who responds with a fully fledged outburst heartily endorsed by the rest of the pupils:

> The children's laughter died as suddenly as it had started. Each of them watched with increasing childish horror the flash of the quivering cane as it rose, to fall in quicker and heavier slashes. Mary rose to her feet and shouted, 'Stop it, you coward! Hit someone as big as yourself.'
> After the first unexpected blow on his face, Len bent his head, only to feel the back of his neck burn with the next slash of the cane […] In the pain of the blows he failed to see Mary fling an ink bottle at Mr Vincent. It caught him behind the ear, and the ink spattered all over his face and collar. Spluttering with anger, the master stopped chastising Len, and slowly wiping his hand over his face, looked around at the class. Every pupil sat motionless and every eye looked straight in front […] Immediately the master had left the children jumped on the seats and desks, singing and shouting, and it was a considerable time before the harassed teacher could restore quiet. (*Cwmardy*: 33)

This early emphasis on mutual aid and the co-operative principle already announces Len's commitment to a certain ideal of social organisation which is largely a reflection of the "real" politics sustained by his elders. A political outlook with a markedly radical character is instilled in Len through a combination of subjective experience (climaxing in his sister Jane's death, as a figural and, as it were, pre-rational expression of social injustice and inequality) and an objective acquisition of ideological expertise under the decisive tutelage of Mary's father and miners' leader, Ezra (in whose characterisation some telling

features of the South Wales syndicalist tradition, and notably, of its historical leaders, are detectable).

Misfortune – which Jane's unfathomable death rehearses for Len's childish imagination with the utmost cruelty – is gradually invested with a causal structure, rooted in a social web of relations which he manages, in the passage from childhood to adult age, to extricate from the seemingly providential dimension in which his "pre-symbolic" (and in that sense, eminently "pre-political") mind had hitherto accommodated it. His perception of social evil is therefore theorised, set against a notional backdrop of interacting dynamic forces, rather than fossilised under the sign of a Manichean disjunctive. An obvious evolution has taken place between the moment of his "childish" construction of hierarchical distinctions in the mine – which he misrepresents as a function of his personal tragedy in the situation leading up to Jane's death (namely, her having been impregnated by the son of a colliery official) – and the growingly mature "understanding" of hierarchical and then social difference in terms of class antagonism:

> He pondered long over the distinction between officials in the pit and workmen. It struck him as monstrously unfair that this distinction in status should break up his home life and make his people sad. The hatred he felt for Evan the Overman's son slowly diffused itself into a hatred of all those classed as officials. He began to regard them as enemies. He was too young and immature to appreciate the subtle divisions deliberately developed between the colliery staff of officials and the workmen and came to believe that all officials had, of necessity, to be cruel. (*Cwmardy*: 70-71)

Len's progress towards "consciousness" (his awakening to the secret logic of social dynamics in the light of an increasingly appealing "subject called socialism") motivates his indignant response to what he perceives as an exasperatingly widespread complacency with the current state of affairs. His instinctual reaction to the abject destitution which his parents have submissively learnt to accept as "natural" ignites in him a combined sense of fury and dismay:

> For one thing, he did not want his family to be indebted to Ron's father, but the main cause of his worry was the fact that, after working for more than three years, he was unable to meet the financial emergency of an illness. The books he had been reading, in addition to improving his vocabulary had also explained why the family could not meet the obligations […] (*Cwmardy*: 168)

His encounter with socialism has the precise effect of a radically transforming experience, landing Len's youthful mind not just on a wholly novel set of principles and values, but also on a radically antithetical relational mode (vis-à-vis his community, family and social conditions). Len's theoretical grasp

of this injustice – the monstrous fact of his parents' permanent state of need – compels him to aim his protest at them, expecting a common understanding, a shared opposition to the blatant enormity of their "objective" reality. Yet the conspicuousness of a lifelong exposure to ideological "false consciousness" can yield no positive response: "Ho, ay. That's just how it be in this old world, boy bach. It have always been the same ever since I can 'member, and it always will be the same". Startled by the matter-of-fact acquiescence of his father's reply, Len attempts to draw his parents' attention to the falling trajectory of their hard working lives. Having toiled at the pit for endless years, Big Jim has not only failed to rise from poverty, but has sunk ever deeper in it: "'You once said, dad', turning to his father again, 'that when you came to the pits first you had five golden sovereigns in your pockets. Since then you have spent a hard life and have given your wonderful body to the pit. And now, after all these years, instead of having five sovereigns in your pocket we owe five for food and rent." (*Cwmardy*: 169). Mortgaging one's "fine" body seems to be the only option left to the worker, whom the system draws into a consuming and never-ending spiral of material dependency and subjection. Len's theoretical leap is consummated precisely at the moment in which injustice ceases to function as an absolute cipher and is heuristically inserted in a system of contingent relations, in a genuinely *political* discourse. This apparently incidental conversation between Len and his parents holds the key to the former's awakening to "consciousness" and, consequently, to a fresh start for the narrative itself under the framework of a new ideological enlightenment.

Len enjoys a strategic position in *Cwmardy*, not only as the subjective vehicle required by the realist diegesis and the generic form of the *Bildungsroman*, but also as a pioneering ideological ground-breaker or vanguard referent embodying the more advanced ideas charted by the novel. This is not to say that Len reproduces, from a monistically-centred standpoint, Victorian (i.e. bourgeois "high realist") epistemologies of consciousness and subjectivity. On the contrary, subjectivity is here reformulated around a community of work and suffering which in turn becomes the ontological pre-condition for Len's authorised voice. This enlightened consciousness of his is but the actualisation of a latent content, of a dormant knowledge activated by the dialectical confrontation of lived experience (qua miner, qua working-class individual) with theoretical intelligence. Both discursive and experiential knowledges are engendered within the bounds of a class situation which is, by definition, inimical to nominalistic distinctions between the individual and the collective.

Len's character registers an index of reflexivity – of self-consciousness regarding the socio-historical determinants of his (and his community's) working life – which offers a formal counterpoint (rather than, strictly, a motor force or inspiration) to the spontaneous politics of the other miners. In effect, these two

poles of "spontaneity" and "consciousness" constitute, according to Katerina Clark (1997: 29),

> the fundamental dialectic in the Leninist appropriation of Marxism, with spontaneity standing for those forces, groups or individuals which as yet are not sufficiently enlightened politically and might act in an undisciplined or uncoordinated way […] and with consciousness standing for those who act from complete political awareness, in a disciplined manner and, in all probability, following Party policy or directives.

The miners' "spontaneity" is given an increasingly programmatic (or overtly ideological) inflection by Len, who acts as an unwitting – and in that sense, open, elastic or rhizomatic[1] – mediator between the empirical reality of his working-class community and the transcendent dimension of History. The relation between Len and his fellow workers is to be interpreted dialectically rather than hierarchically, in a way which contrasts with the High Stalinist myth of the "Great [proletarian] Family":

> At the center of all conventional Stalinist novels will be found the saga of an individual's struggle for self-mastery, a struggle which stands in for society's own reaching out toward self-realization in a state of consciousness. As in much traditional myth, the individual (or son) is assisted in his struggle by a father figure who helps him win through in his quest, to combat the "spontaneous" forces […] that assail him from within and without. (Clark, 1997: 30)

Len's ideas arise from a *lived* intersection of theoretical understanding and direct experience, which the actively trans-individual nature of his subjective development (qua miner in a mining community) inscribes in the absolute horizon of class. In that sense, the presumptive ideological fostering of Len by the miners' leader (or, to a much lesser extent, by his former schoolmate, Ron) is preceded and framed by a totalising identification with a collective sphere. It is the community at large – with its nodal points of material solidarity and inter-subjective bonding (ranging from the homestead to the coalface) – which actualises class *as* experience, rendering industrial life intelligible beyond (bourgeois-liberal) sense reductions to monadic subjectivity.

Len's leadership works as a functional or even a structural cover which merely concretises a latent potential for collective agency:

> He [Len] looked around the perturbed men before him. They were all thinking hard and hoping someone would tell them what to do. Len glanced at the fireman and saw

1. In the sense popularised by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980).

> the triumphant smirk on his face, and for some reason or other the sneer gave him the counter-move to the fireman's threat. Turning sharply, he shouted: 'Go round the other barriers, Will, and tell the men to come down by here. Tell them there be a dispute on and that Shenkin have ordered us out because we 'on't work without timber.' […] He [the fireman] grew alarmed. If the agitation spread there was every likelihood of all the men in the pit going on strike, and rather than face this possibility he gave way with a bad grace. (*Cwmardy*: 177)

Class consciousness is fully realised through the power effect achieved by collective agency – by the demonstrative capacity of co-ordinated workers' direct action. Political (class) awareness is effectuated in a material process in which leadership (as impersonated by Len) merely punctuates the latent possibilities of an already existing collectivity. For leadership is not, in this context, a positive end in itself – it is not the pole in which the Universal contents of proletarian emancipation are actualised, but a structural means in that process of actualisation. In fact, the symbolic attributes of strength and determination (which Len is paradoxically portrayed as being scantily endowed with) are bestowed on the mass of workers, often synecdochically through the gigantic figure of Big Jim.

The element of power which Len's organisational ingenuity sketches is rendered concrete in the pulsating rhythms of the trans-individual "body" of workers (whether it be at work, in striking or in mourning). The fatal underground accidents suffered by Shoni 'Cap-Du' or Bill Bristol, for example, compounded with the reactions they elicit from the community, exemplify actual syntheses of instinctual or spontaneous wisdom and strength which, rather than passively awaiting "enlightenment" (as seems to befit the High Stalinist paradigm of socialist realism), engender through their own dynamics the conditions for a genuine political awakening.

Ezra Jones emerges in this context as a figure of symbolic stature, complementing, with intellectual and organisational attributes, the "instinctual" archetype represented by Big Jim. In a sense, these two characters come to emblematise the component forces upon which Len's ego ideal is gradually founded. If his father epitomises the untrammelled magnificence of natural strength, Ezra, for his part, condenses those elements of character and "intellect" which stand him as an inspirational source for Len's nascent ideological journey:

> Listening to the instances of Ezra's staunchness and loyalty related by Big Jim, Len was thrilled, for he was now of an age when his vague ideas were beginning to find a coherence. Although very emotional, he yet had a capacity for deep thinking, and what he now needed was someone who could inspire him, a person whose words

> and actions would serve as a focus for his thoughts, a man he could look up to as an example. (*Cwmardy*: 197)

Despite the suggested hero-worship temptation on the part of a young and "very emotional" Len – the risk of a canonical socialist-realist enactment of the aforementioned father-son dialectic – Ezra's character impersonates a prototype of leadership and organisational rationality engendered by the South Wales coalfield and its heritage of federative action. Probably modelled on the historical figure of Noah Rees, a major actor in the Cambrian Combine Strike of 1910-1911 (which Lewis Jones recycles into the first organised dispute in the novel), Ezra is clearly steeped in the South Walian (especially Rhondda Valley) culture of syndicalism (see Knight, 2005). This often ranged from the more radical overtones of Marxist-inflected positions and anarcho-syndicalist approaches (those emblematised by such "charismatic and inspirational figures" as Noah Ablett and A.J. Cook),[2] to the milder intensities of many "[Labour Party] senior district officials [who] had little sympathy with the district's more radical policies." (Howells, 2002: 107). Ideological and thematic tensions in *Cwmardy* and in *We Live* stem directly from this internal set of dissonant strategies and sensibilities. The dynamic nature of the South Wales coalfield constituted in itself a productive matrix of political (and often conflicting) identities which the Len-Ezra axis tries to capture in its breadth and complexity, from an initial – and more or less programmatically neuter – idealisation of trade union activity and leadership, to these two characters' eventual fall-out over party, and generally opposing ideological, loyalties.

Lewis Jones is bound to have received, as a thirteen-year-old collier, the shock-wave of what was perhaps the first internationally-resonant industrial dispute to come out of the Welsh Valleys (with its culminating point at the Tonypandy riots in November 1910, and its most remarkable outcome in the publication – also in Tonypandy – of the famous pamphlet *The Miners' Next Step* in 1912).[3] In Dai Smith's (1982: 12) words "[m]id-Rhondda was a centre for the 'advanced men' of the coalfield. They were sometimes identified as 'syndicalists', sometimes as 'industrial unionists', always as 'socialists'".

This oscillation between moderate or compromising stances and more radical or revolutionary positions is inscribed in the complex relationship

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2. "By 1910 there existed a cadre of activists within the miners' union imbued with a deep sense of class consciousness, absorbing a developed Marxist critique of capitalism […] and belief in the mission of the organized working class to overthrow capitalism" (Lewis, 2000: 100).
3. It has been pointed out, however, that one of the decisive influences upon the political consciousness of the mining valleys came with the waves of Spanish immigration "from 1907 onwards". Many of these Northern miners brought with them some of the "more 'advanced' ideas of socialism and particularly syndicalism" (Francis and Smith, 1980: 13).

between Len and Ezra. In a way, the structural role accorded to the miner's leader as both Len's and the novel's initial focus of political inspiration is gradually shifted, as the process of maturation or *Bildung* follows its course, to the latter. Thus Len comes to embody a set of values which he nominally inherits from Ezra, and which he then fashions into a coherent and autonomous outlook. The father-son dialectic is formally retained to the extent that their ideological rupture is signified in generational terms. In that sense, Ezra's disillusionment and faltering, the gradual weakening of his previous ardour, is implicitly attributed to the desuetude of his old-style trade-unionism – a road paved with compromises and self-betrayals which, despite its local or partial successes, cannot meet the demands of genuine historical transformation. Ezra's insight, in spite of its accredited depth and pedagogical value, cannot live on in the shape of timid reformism, but must, on the contrary, define a course of action which may adequately deal with the universal validity of its own assumptions:

> Right has always been, and always will be, determined by might. There can never be one law that is at once good for the tiger and the lamb. Neither can there be one law that binds together the interests of workmen and owners. No one can blame the tiger for using his claws and teeth to destroy his victim. Nor can anyone blame the company for using the means at its disposal to safeguard its interests. That is what both claws and batons exist for. (*Cwmardy*: 231)

Such a graphic disquisition on the class struggle, about halfway through the novel, is effectively hard to reconcile to Ezra's own justification of intervention – and generally, of the liberal political system – at the outbreak of World War I, some one hundred pages later:

> I am on this platform today not because I believe in war but because I believe in right. When right is threatened, then we are justified in using might to protect it […] I cannot stand aside and see all the democratic traditions for which men have died being trampled underfoot by unscrupulous rulers of other nations. If the people of these nations cannot see how they are being misled, and take up arms at the behest of their rulers, then our reply must be sharp and emphatic. (*Cwmardy*: 343)

As the novel draws to a close, a sharper profile of the initially indistinguishable positions and ideological inflections begins to surface. With Ezra embracing an increasingly moderate or "class-collaborationist" position, and with the "reformist" or "gradualist" approach being accordingly exposed, Len is irreversibly steered in the direction of revolutionary politics, which the novel begins to associate with the very essence of the community's core beliefs and of Ezra's own initial convictions. Thus Len is symbolically summoned as the rightful heir to Ezra's emblematic status as a leading figure in Cwmardy's labour

movement: a succession or "departure" from his root position in the father-son dialectic which is overlaid with the properly collective – as opposed to narrowly familial – nature of his individual experience as worker and activist:

> He felt confidence and a determination welling up in him. The feeling was something new. Always, in the past, when he had been unable to answer arguments or solve problems he had capitulated either to Ezra or to Mary. Now he began to question earnestly whether he had been at fault in blindly following the opinions of others. (*Cwmardy*: 357)

In effect, his progress to revolutionary socialism is compounded with a rejection of the personalist temptations of his primitive militancy under Ezra's guidance. With the cementation of an autonomous ideological position and of a genuinely revolutionary sense of class loyalty, Len attains his definitive commitment to a cause which transcends the limitations of individual agency and the perils of fetishistic leadership. The acknowledgement of History's "open" structure is finally set in direct contrast with the complacent acquiescence of a self-defeated miners' leader who cannot but fail to capture the dynamic essence of collective action. Upon hearing the sounding of the hoot which calls miners to their nightly shift, Ezra betrays his past thinking and deeds by submitting the final decision over his people's lives and destinies to "fate". Len's rebuke, in which he is joined by Mary, announces the shape of things to come:

> 'Fate, fate? What is that? Do you say that fate tore that boy's arm out this morning? Was it fate that blew our men to bits in the explosion? Did fate smash Bill Bristol to a pulp? No; I can't believe that, Ezra. It wasn't fate that brought us into the strike or into the war. You did the first and the capitalists did the other. […] 'I agree with Len,' she said. 'We are ourselves responsible for what happens. The pity is that we follow events instead of trying to determine and mould them. Our fate is in our own hands. Take Russia, for instance. In spite of all that the papers say, I would like to see how those people are shaping their future. Whether they succeed is another matter, but at least they will have made the attempt, which is more than we are doing'. (*Cwmardy*: 400-401)

Len's adscription to revolutionary politics – what we have called his "Leninist stance" – turns precisely on this rejection of historical determinism, which, in the pre-World War I intellectual context of the Second International (from which Leninism itself represents a major break), came to be associated with gradualism (= Labour), on the one hand, and with "vulgar" orthodoxy (Kaustky), on the other.

The passage from *Cwmardy* to *We Live* has been characterised, from opposing camps of the critical spectrum, both as a progress from residual

bourgeois sentimentality to political maturity, and as a fall from acceptable social realism to sheer Stalinist *agit-prop*.[4] Whatever the ultimate assessment of both ideological acuity and aesthetic achievement, an evident shift of emphasis is observable. For one thing, Len's *Bildung* appears, at the opening of the second novel, as a virtually completed process which will only register various degrees of intensity or orientation throughout the diverse conjunctures charted by the narrative. On the other hand, the great ideological awakening of the novel affects his old friend and then wife, Mary Roberts. She will undergo a major transformation, going from an initially instinctual – more or less "spontaneous", in the binary terms we have proposed – commitment to the miners' cause, as channelled and monopolised in the first novel by her father and miners' leader Ezra, to a final impersonation of the revolutionary prototype. Mary's character evolves towards a position which synthesises the coalfield's most advanced political strategies. The tentative – and in that sense "open" – structure of Len's ideological and personal *Bildung* in *Cwmardy* gives way, in *We Live*, to a discursive identification of subjective consciousness (as the symptomatic actualisation of a latent collective potential) with the Communist Party rather than with the community figured *as* class. In a sense, the internal logic of Leninism – here understood as a specific discursive construct of the Bolshevik Party under Stalin – is fully explored in the passage from *Cwmardy* to *We Live*: class, initially signified as a dialectical interpenetration of "conscious" and "unconscious" forces within the collectivity, is ultimately positivised in the Party qua *real* expression of its universal vocation. The flexibility and formlessness of Len's intuitive socialism in *Cwmardy* benefitted from the radical immediacy of class *experienced as* concrete community. This is nowhere to be found in its "evolved" or fully mature version: Party socialism – i.e. Communism – is necessarily fixed and pre-determined as a static mediatory function between the "universal" dimension of History and the "particular" collective subject (the working-class).[5] This medial position pre-empts the protean redistribution of revolutionary energies and affects as rehearsed under the "unripe" ideological conditions described in *Cwmardy*.

The consolidation of political doctrine – the blooming of class consciousness, in the stricter Leninist idiom – has its direct correlate in the fictional exercise: community is replaced by Party, as collective agency is hemmed in by the strategic imperative to postulate a political avant-garde. In this new arrangement, Len's constitutive attachment to the community makes him unsuitable for

4. See, for example, Carole Snee (1979); Frank Kermode (1987); Rolf Meyn (2000).
5. For a brilliant reading of the "dialectical" structure of the Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism series, see Slavoj Žižek (2000: 159).

effective leadership. In his stead, Mary will emerge as a charismatic complement to the blunter *éminence grise* of the local Party secretary, Harry Morgan; she will impersonate the prototype of revolutionary intelligence that can transcend the radical immanence of community-bound class instinct and remain, at the same time, contextually linked to the real experience of exploitation.

It is well-nigh impossible to evaluate the real achievements of Jones' writing outside of this gradient of political "consciousness" and without clear reference to a pre-established template of Communist identification. Even if it seems indisputable that the narrative sequence tends to favour this unravelling of ideological orthodoxy – this progressive construction of a "true" revolutionary stance – it is more dubious that this may be achieved without unforeseen consequences. In other words, for all of Jones' endorsement of the Party agenda and his well accredited adherence to the latter's conceptualisation of political struggle (in general terms, a vision that contradicts the more rhizomatic elements of Len's stance), community bonds remain the controlling or validating test for class loyalty. In effect, *Cwmardy*'s detailed spelling of community makes the articulation of class consciousness indissoluble from it, in a way which even gravitates upon the sterner textures of ideological outlook in *We Live*. The latter novel in fact ends on a symptomatic note of communitarian retrieval, both reactivating the earlier undercurrent of unmediated political passion and indirectly revoking (despite the formal encomium) the bureaucratic strictures of an increasingly Stalinised Communist Party. Len's death at the Spanish battlefront is immediately preceded by a poignant letter to Mary – a declaration of principle and a confirmation of love: the personal, in Len's final outcry against exploitation, *is* in effect the political. And the political is inseparable from its concrete embodiment in the collective, in the community, in the conscious class:

> The men who are dying don't seem to be strangers, but our comrades as we know them at home […] this is not a foreign land on which we are fighting. It is home. Those are not strangers who are dying. They are our butties […] You are with me wherever I go, whatever I do. And never forget, whatever happens, we were brought together because we belong to the people and it is only the cause of our people can ever part us.
> If that should happen, if that becomes necessary, then don't grieve too much, because belonging to the people, you will always find me in the people. (*We Live*: 876-877)

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