

Masculinity and Isolation in the Self-Portraits of L.S. Lowry

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Abstract

The 2013 Tate Britain exhibition *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life* argued that L.S. Lowry (Laurence Stephen Lowry) was primarily “a painter of the industrial city and its working class”. I nuance this social-realist narrative by analysing Lowry’s self-portraits with regard to understandings of masculinity, in particular the “Manchester Man” ideal. This article argues that, through his self-portraits, Lowry negotiated the contradiction between his ambition to paint and the pressure to earn a wage as the household breadwinner. These conflicting identities—understood by Lowry especially through the writings of French philosopher François de La Rochefoucauld—had repercussions for his physical and mental health, as portrayed in his self-portraits of the 1930s and later metaphorical self-portraits. Overall, I argue that his paintings provide emotionally complex perspectives on his inner life and self-fashioning as an artist, in light of shifting expectations around masculinity, and his experience of isolation in twentieth-century Britain.

Introduction

The exhibition *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life*, held at Tate Britain in 2013, sought to reassess the reputation of Laurence Stephen Lowry (1887–1976). The exhibition’s curators, T.J. Clark and Anne Wagner, argued that although Lowry had enjoyed critical acclaim during his lifetime, his standing in art history frequently settles to a position of “‘popular’ artistic value”, with his career symbolic of a hopeless lower-class striving for the elite art world.¹ By analysing his cityscape paintings through a social-realist prism of class that drew upon understandings of nineteenth-century French urban scenes, Wagner and Clark hoped to restore and reinvigorate Lowry’s status within art historical scholarship.²

Although it resituated Lowry within broader art historical narratives, the exhibition’s overwhelming focus on his cityscapes endorsed popular conceptions of Lowry as “The Industrial Artist” (the title of a 1977 documentary): an artist who painted working-class life in north-west England during a period of de-industrialisation.³ The exhibition catalogue reaffirmed that “the common conception of Lowry, as *essentially* [emphasis added] a painter of the industrial city and its working class, is right”.⁴ Meanwhile, the press release declared that “without his pictures

Britain would arguably lack an account in paint of the twentieth century working class”.⁵ The concept of Lowry as *the* painter of working-class lives was therefore reaffirmed. This article presents a different Lowry to extend upon the valuable earlier analyses offered by Clark and Wagner rooted primarily in class. When speaking about his industrial scenes, Lowry explained them in strikingly personal terms:

My mood ... is over the people in all my scenes. I could not, I did not want to, paint them as they appear. The truth is that I was not painting them. I have been called a painter of the Manchester workpeople. But my figures are not exactly that. They are ghostly figures which tenant these courts and lane-ways which seem to me so beautiful, they are symbols of my mood, they are myself.⁶

The “Manchester workpeople” are representations of the artist himself. His paintings are inherently subjective, and it is here that Lowry construed his vision of the world. Julian Spalding argued that “it is not for factual accuracy that we value Lowry; but for the independence and imaginative truth of his outlook”.⁷ Through his art, Lowry portrays his own experience as a lower-middle-class man working in north-west England during an extended period of industrial decline. The inherent subjectivity of his paintings—represented symbolically by “ghostly figures”—can be interpreted throughout his oeuvre. In fact, one could go so far as to argue that, in a metaphorical sense, all paintings by Lowry are self-portraits.⁸ In *Lowry: A Visionary Artist* (2013), Michael Howard relates the artist’s interest in self-representation to his adoration of the French philosopher François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680). Howard explains that Lowry owned a copy of La Rochefoucauld’s *Maxims and Essays* (London, 1884), which he annotated in detail, and it was these maxims that offered him a set of values to shape his life.⁹

La Rochefoucauld crafted his aphorisms based on his lifelong observation of people in seventeenth-century France, and they illuminate the performative nature of human behaviour.¹⁰ Howard argues that Lowry responded through his art to an idea contained within the maxims, that “the schism between one’s private self and the public world needs to be managed”.¹¹ Accordingly, this article responds to the social-realist class-based interpretation advanced by Clark and Wagner, by recognising that Lowry was astutely aware of the need to craft his artistic identity for different audiences. For instance, he concealed his career as a rent collector from the Royal Academy—a secret he guarded so thoroughly that, even after Professor Maurice Collis had spent two days with the artist wandering the streets of Pendlebury to undertake research for a biography, he was unaware of Lowry’s full-time job.¹²

Lowry navigated both his private and public self through his work. In this understanding, class is studied in relation to gender to illuminate the precarious nature of Lowry’s own social identity, with significant repercussions for the interpretation of his art.¹³ Thus—and departing from Howard—Lowry’s preoccupation with self-representation can be complicated through a consideration of masculine identity. Within gender studies, the terms “crisis” and “crises” describe situations in which men experience a threat to their appearance or performance of hegemonic masculinity.¹⁴ The contradictions and obstacles that men face as they struggle to achieve the hegemonic ideal are understood to induce anxieties.¹⁵ The concept of crisis is useful when applied to the context of the “schism” identified by Howard, based on the writings of La Rochefoucauld, and expressed in Lowry’s paintings during the twentieth century.

To explore the intersection of these identities—characterised through the private and public nature of masculinity—this article focuses primarily on self-titled self-portraits by Lowry, as key to interpreting his entire oeuvre. This approach resonates with that of La Rochefoucauld, who assessed his own identity through self-portraiture. He begins his maxims with a self-portrait,

wherein he explains: “That, in plain terms, is what I believe I am like from the outside, and I think it will be found that my own opinion of myself in this respect is not far from the truth”.¹⁶ Here, he establishes his fascination with the relationship between outside appearance and interior reality, which then provides context for his observations of others. Thus, explicitly self-titled self-portraits represent a direct attempt to craft one’s appearance for the outside world. The inherent subjectivity of portraiture was outlined by John Berger, who deemed the genre “to underwrite and idealize a chosen social role of the sitter”.¹⁷ Portraits can be read as social creations: a negotiation between the artist and sitter, which—in the case of self-portraiture—is an overt attempt to reconcile exterior appearance with the internal reality of the artist. Through his self-portraits, Lowry negotiated the contradiction between his ambition to paint and the pressure he faced, as a middle-class man, to earn a wage as the household breadwinner. Influenced by societal norms and his mother’s expectations, Lowry recognised ideals of hegemonic masculinity that created tension in his dual identity as an artist and full-time rent collector. This article argues that his negotiations are most fully expressed through the theme of isolation, and can be interpreted as “crises” that illuminate the often-contradictory nature of masculinity in twentieth-century Britain.

The Manchester Man

The “Manchester Man” was a Victorian stereotype given form in 1876 by Mrs. G. Linnaeus Banks in her novel of the same title, which follows a man on his journey to economic prosperity in industrialising Manchester. Such trading men were popularly understood as “self-reliant, [with] dogged energy”, and imbued with “*manliness*”—figures who had typically “built up great houses of businesses”.¹⁸ Although the “Manchester Man” was situated within the historical context of industrialisation, Lowry gave it pictorial form in *The Manchester Man* (1936) (fig. 1). In this painting, the subject meets the eyes of the viewer with an assured gaze. He wears a tie and bowler hat, and sports a well-groomed moustache. His neatly shaven face and furrowed brow—created with clean and definite brushstrokes—suggest a man who is in control. He is presented as a figure who oversees workers rather than as a victim of arduous working-class physical toil. His smart self-presentation attests to his class and masculinity, an observation reinforced by the title of the painting. The portrait purportedly depicts Lowry’s father’s boss, John Earnshaw. As a portrayal of a senior figure—indicated through the artwork title, subject, and formidable appearance—*Manchester Man* manifests the distinctions of workplace hierarchy in visual terms.¹⁹

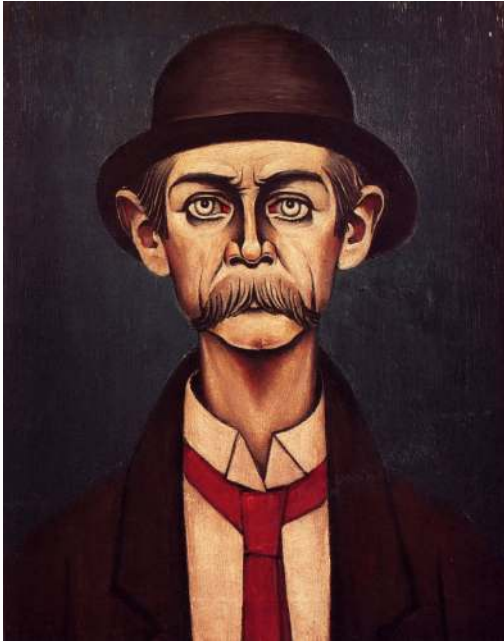


Figure 1

L.S. Lowry, *The Manchester Man*, 1936–37, oil on canvas, 53.3 × 43.2 cm. Private collection. Digital image courtesy of the Estate of L.S. Lowry (all rights reserved, DACS 2023).

Lowry's recognition of this stereotype reflects its currency within his own family. Most importantly, the "Manchester Man" encapsulated qualities admired by his mother, Elizabeth. Her adherence to middle-class ideals of entrepreneurialism and masculinity is significant to the identity Lowry negotiated through his art. Various Lowry scholars have attested that "his relationship with his mother was the determining factor in his life".²⁰ This relationship materialised as a theme in his work: *Mother and Child* (1954), for instance, depicts this intimate familial bond (fig. 2). The haunting and direct gaze of the son is softened by the comforting body language of the mother. As Lowry portrayed his younger self on several occasions, it is reasonable to suggest that the boy in the painting represents his own intimate connection with his mother, captured in paint after her death.



Figure 2

L.S. Lowry, *Mother and Child*, 1954, oil on panel, 9 × 8 cm. Private collection. Digital image courtesy of the Estate of L.S. Lowry (all rights reserved, DACS 2023).

Elizabeth's upbringing reflected essentially Victorian conceptions. Her expectation of masculinity was shaped by the middle-class background of her parents, and her father who could be described as a "Manchester Man".²¹ Accordingly, she endeavoured to uphold the appearance of an educated middle-class household.²² Her determination, despite financial difficulties, to live in the affluent area of Victoria Park and to send Lowry (against his wishes) to an expensive private school speak of her plight to maintain a middle-class appearance.²³ As the artist spent his long teenage years (from the age of nine until twenty two) in Victoria Park—home to esteemed members of Manchester's cultural scene, as well as industrialists and politicians—it is likely that he perceived himself as middle class.

A key part of the middle-class masculine ideal was the nationwide bourgeois aspiration towards the breadwinner model, in which a male head was defined by his capacity to earn money and sustain his family while his wife fulfilled a maternal role at home.²⁴ The emergence of this model reflects the challenges that economic changes—specifically, industrialisation—posed to older conceptualisations of masculinity from late-eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth-century Britain.²⁵ John Tosh writes that "the codes of masculinity observed by the middle and upper classes were modified in accordance with the requirements of an entrepreneurial, urbanising society. In an economy committed to the free market, the work ethic, the cultivation of the domestic sphere, and the curtailment of interpersonal violence, all had their place".²⁶ Thus, "a gendered concept of class" emerged, as manifested in the breadwinner ideology, and expressed through the household wage.

Lowry would have been influenced by and aware of these Victorian conceptions. Upon being made redundant in 1910, Lowry's mother told him "You can't just do nothing", perhaps because of her own chronic unemployment.²⁷ Moreover, in the twentieth century, the breadwinner model continued to hold cultural significance for British society at large despite the increasing

emancipation and employment of women. After the Second World War Britain idealised the home and a specific role of masculinity within it through legislation associated with reconstruction.²⁸ A type of masculinity rooted “in part, in the home, as husband, father and breadwinner” was imagined.²⁹ However, this specific type of masculinity was unstable, and had to be constantly negotiated.

Indeed, from an early age Lowry was aware that this vulnerable identity had to be maintained, or lost. This recognition is suggested by his preoccupation in the 1960s with depicting lone figures.³⁰ *A Beggar* (circa 1965) is a painting of a pitiful man isolated from his surroundings (fig. 3). The characteristic white background extracts him from his own history, presenting him to the viewer as a figure alienated from society. Lowry lamented on several occasions how the social standing of individuals could diminish: “There’s a tragedy for you. What a terrible thing. To see a man once so rich and now so poor”.³¹ His reference to wealth suggests an awareness of class permeability, yet this also had gendered connotations. As British masculinity revolved around independence and dependence, failure to sustain a household had repercussions on masculine and class-based identity. In contrast, the forthright positioning of the figure depicted in *The Manchester Man* suggests a masculinity associated with strength. In contrast to the cowering beggar, the latter subject is authoritative and confrontational. The direct gaze proffers a lasting impression, which suggests the embeddedness of the stereotype on his psyche, due to his mother. I am arguing that it was through his art—and his self-portraits in particular—that Lowry idealised these stereotypes, with repercussions for his artistic identity.



Figure 3

L.S. Lowry, *A Beggar*, circa 1965, oil on board, 19 × 11.5 cm. The Lowry Collection, Salford (F9-1981/145). Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford (all rights reserved).

Artist vs. the Man

The central crisis that Lowry negotiated was the contradiction between his ambition to paint and the pressure to earn a wage, a mark of middle-class status constructed through an engagement with gendered patterns of employment as idealised in *The Manchester Man*. Based on empirical research from the late twentieth century, R.W. Connell suggests that “in relation to production, masculinity has come to be associated with being a breadwinner. This definition will come under pressure when it becomes impossible for men to win the bread”.³² Moreover, John Tosh argued that to be “head of a household”, and visibly so, within the Victorian middle class “was essential to masculine status, and the man who could not keep domestic order counted for little among his fellows”.³³ These definitions can be posited against Lowry's unconventional status as a lifelong bachelor conditioned into a culture wherein marriage was a precondition for hegemonic masculinity.³⁴

Lowry's desire to pursue a career as an artist conflicted with bourgeois expectations of middle-class masculine respectability for two primary reasons. Firstly, it was not until 1945 that Lowry began to make a profit through his art.³⁵ That Lowry could earn a sufficient wage was important for Elizabeth, with whom he lived until her death in 1939. According to Lowry's biographer, Shelley Rohde, his mother had desired a daughter — she “wept beyond reason” upon discovering that her baby was a son, and was only persuaded to accept Lowry by a suggestion that he would be able to provide greater financial support in her old age.³⁶ However, the earning capacity of Lowry's art was diminished in the eyes of his mother, who denied that he was an artist, calling his creative pursuits “a hobby”. When a woman visited the Lowry household with the intention of purchasing some artwork, Elizabeth told her: “Don't be silly. Laurie will give them to you”.³⁷ To pursue a hobby at the expense of household independence conflicted with masculine expectations of self-sacrifice and self-control.

The humiliation of failing to live up to such standards is manifest in *Discord* (1943) (fig. 4).

Made to stand while the wife-figure sits at the table, *Discord* is a portrait of masculine ineptitude. It was painted during a period of economic depression, and is likely inspired by similar scenes Lowry faced during his rounds as a rent collector in post-industrial working-class Manchester. Lowry was well aware of the discord and humiliation experienced by a male head of house who fell short financially, likely with repercussions for his own perception of masculine self-worth.



Figure 4

L.S. Lowry, *Discord*, 1943, oil on board, 42.5 × 52.5 cm. The Lowry Collection, Salford (F1-1995). Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford (all rights reserved).

Secondly, the bohemian lifestyle of some male artists invited effeminate characterisation in the public eye. Members of the Pre-Raphaelite group, for example, were believed to imbue “the very antithesis of the masculine professional identified by his thrift and punctuality, the regularity of his habits and habitat”.³⁸ Male artists and their associated bohemian lifestyles were especially suspect in terms of sexuality—a risky connotation due to the criminalisation of homosexuality until 1967 in England, and one to which Lowry was vulnerable, owing to his status as lifelong bachelor.³⁹ Andrew Stephenson argues that “the nature of modern [late-nineteenth-century] masculinity carried profound implications for contemporary male artists whatever their private lives and sexual preferences might be”.⁴⁰ The press contributed to the shaping of public artistic personas in relation to sexuality: for example, reports of Oscar Wilde’s scandals noted his “gross indecency”, and described him as “the paradigmatic example for an emerging public definition of a new ‘type’ of male sexual actor: ‘the homosexual’”.⁴¹ Thus, artists had to negotiate their public identity within a society suspicious of effeminate bohemian stereotypes.

In this context, Lowry carefully negotiated and constructed his own masculinity. He frequently denied his artistic identity: “I am not an artist, I’m just a man who paints”.⁴² By saying this, Lowry presented his full-time rent-collecting job as his primary vocation; one that was concurrent with respectable masculinity rather than that of an effeminate dandy. Dress was integral to portraying this identity since the assessment of one’s masculinity was based on image.⁴³ This sentiment is especially apparent in *Self-Portrait* (1925) (fig. 5) and *L.S. Lowry* (1938) (fig. 6). Both self-portraits resist a bohemian artistic identity, albeit in quite different ways. The sartorial self-presentations suggest the precariousness of class whilst affirming the masculine worker as cardinal. The dull earthenware tones of his flat cap and overcoat in *Self-Portrait* resonate with that of working-class men. His later self-portrait, *L.S. Lowry*, features bolder colours—such as the coral of his shirt—yet the tie and collar conform with bourgeois masculine respectability, perhaps notating his own maturity. The differences between these portraits are also striking in terms of stature and composition, with the bloodshot eyes and intense expression of the later work suggestive of a more complex crisis, which is further

affirmed by its contemporary *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)* (1938) (see fig. 8). First, however, the sartorial presentations provide important context in terms of class and masculine status.



Figure 5

L.S. Lowry, *Self-Portrait*, 1925, oil on board, 57.2 × 47.2 cm. The Lowry Collection, Salford (1959-635). Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford (all rights reserved).



Figure 6

L.S. Lowry, *L.S. Lowry*, 1938, oil on canvas, 53.5 × 43.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG L224). Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L.S. Lowry (all rights reserved, DACS 2023).



Figure 7

Roy Spencer, *L.S. Lowry in His Studio at Home*, 27 February 1961. Digital image courtesy of Daily Herald Archive, Science Museum Group collection / SSPL / Getty Images (all rights reserved).

Lowry was aware of the unstable nature of class through his experience of various jobs, first as a clerk in a firm of chartered accountants, then at General Accident, and finally during his lifelong career as a rent collector. Julia Twigg, in her study of masculine dress, found that the close coding of clothes was important in terms of how men performed their masculinity in conjunction with class identity. She suggested that details in the clothing, such as “the buttons, quality of fabric, colour or cut” were interpreted by male peers to signify social status.⁴⁴ Elaborating upon this idea, studies have shown that hegemonic masculinities are upheld both institutionally and through group identity, including in workplaces.⁴⁵ The offices frequented by Lowry are therefore significant as settings to inculcate, navigate, and perform a type of respectable masculinity, which could, in part, be communicated sartorially.

His flat cap in *Self-Portrait* denies any artistic associations and instead resonates with the workers depicted in his paintings of Manchester. This was a self-representation distinct from what Stephenson describes as “the Whistlerian Francophile model”, associated with a “dandified performance” and “elaborate grooming”.⁴⁶ When reporting the economic success of his Lefevre exhibition in 1953, the *Daily Herald* introduced him as “a Manchester man, born and bred. He looks it, too. Straggly grey hair, a slight wispy moustache, a rather haggard face, he has the marks of one on whom the tyranny of industrialism has not sat lightly”.⁴⁷ The regional identity of a Manchester worker fashioned by Lowry was also conveyed by his sense of humour. He once told Harold Bloom that he would “invite dealers from the soft south into his icy sitting-room and, apparently forgetting to put on the electric fire, watch with interest to see how long it took before their noses turned blue”.⁴⁸ This self-fashioning contrasted with perceived Francophile and cosmopolitan artistic decadence at the beginning of the twentieth century. The simplicity of the

worker identity, apparent in his 1925 self-portrait, resonates with related demands by domestic art critics for a national artistic culture rooted in the distinct British experience.⁴⁹ Similar self-fashioning was apparent in Lowry's painting attire. Geoffrey Shryhane reported that Lowry "always wore a black tie saying it saved him from having to make a sartorial decision".⁵⁰ This idea resonates with the "quasi uniform" nature of male dress. The avoidance of a "sartorial decision" enabled Lowry to refrain from participating in fashion—a cultural field associated with women. In the many photographs that depict Lowry working he always wears a suit (fig. 7). The juxtaposition of artist and suit is striking, suggesting the reconciliation of two separate identities within a singular self-presentation. Moreover, this was not merely styled by Lowry for the photographer and public, but a private choice. Art historian and critic T.G. Rosenthal described his first encounter with Lowry: on an unexpected visit to Lowry's house, he found him dressed in a "paint-spattered, dark three-piece suit ... Lowry grumbled at us for not having warned him of our arrival, complained that we had caught him unawares in his painting clothes".⁵¹

Lastly, as the photograph shows, Lowry produced art within his home. Yet, both self-portraits have plain backgrounds devoid of artistic or domestic associations. The breadwinner ideology—with its separation between public and private space—posed a challenge for practising male artists at home during this time, given the contentious nature of domesticity. This sentiment is apparent in the work of contemporaries; for example, *Three Self-Portraits with a White Wall* (1957) by the artist John Bratby is argued by Greg Salter to express "anxieties about masculinity that related both to the home and to his professional status as an artist".⁵² Whereas Bratby chose to express his anxieties by representing his domestic setting—adding to the chaos of his identity—Lowry chose to censor any references to domesticity in his self-portraits. He once corrected a comment made by a visitor who referred to his studio: "Not studio—workroom, sir".⁵³ This comment—reflected in the self-portraits—suggests that Lowry was keen to resolutely redefine and reassert his domestic art studio as a "workroom", in keeping with notions of respectable petty-bourgeois masculinity.

Portraits of Crises

Whereas *Self-Portrait*—with its soft brushstrokes and muted tones—is pleasant to view, the portraits produced after the death of Lowry's father in 1932 took on a new stylistic character. These were produced during a period of intense stress. His father, Robert, had accrued a huge amount of debt; a shameful fact that only transpired after his death. Lowry now had to contend with the financial pressures of sustaining an independent household whilst looking after his bedridden and demanding mother. This difficult period comprised the pinnacle of the contradiction between his identities as a son, breadwinner, and middle-class male; and his desire to paint.

The physical effects of these crises are manifest in *L.S. Lowry* (fig. 6) and *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)* (fig. 8), both produced during this time. These self-portraits provide insight through visual representation of his own internal crisis. Devoid of ornamental decorations, the figures are painted with harsh tones and precise brushstrokes. In *L.S. Lowry*, the eyes immediately demand attention. Their inner corners are emphasised by the red notes elsewhere in the painting: in his hair, hollowed cheeks, and shirt. The stature and composition are also startlingly direct, especially in contrast to the gentle and conventional half-turned pose used in the 1925 self-portrait. The overall effect of *L.S. Lowry* is an inner pain conveyed through the unsettlingly direct glare of the eyes.



Figure 8

L.S. Lowry, *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)*, 1938, oil on canvas, 50.7 × 41 cm. Private collection. Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford (all rights reserved).

Although disconcerting when viewed in isolation, the artist's demeanour appears composed in *L.S. Lowry* when compared to his other portrait of the same year. The figure portrayed in *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)* has deep-set lines and dark shadows under his eyes. He is unshaven. His blue irises, framed by red-rimmed edges, fixate on the viewer with an unsettling effect. His choppy and jagged hair appears to be dishevelled, suggesting his inability to cope with his present situation. Overall, the chaotic and suffering figure portrayed is the antithesis of the figure in his earlier portrait, *The Manchester Man*.

It is significant that Lowry avoids the title "self-portrait" for *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)*. Lowry explained its creation: "I started a big self-portrait and then I thought 'What's the use of it. I don't want it and nobody will'. I turned it into a grotesque head, I'm glad I did, I like it better than a self-portrait". Although Lowry distinguishes it from a self-portrait, he explained how "In all those heads of the late thirties I was trying to make them as grim as possible. I reflected myself in those pictures".⁵⁴ In other words, it was an attempt to negotiate his own identity — as La Rochefoucauld did in his "Self-Portrait" — but in Lowry's case, the result was so horrific that he chose to disassociate himself from it. It was so horrific, in fact, that one viewer, upon seeing the painting, admitted to Lowry that it frightened them, to which Lowry replied, "It scares me too".⁵⁵ The crimson tone, which verges on the colour of fresh blood, creates the impression that Lowry was pained by an internal crisis. The explicit reference to the redness of the eyes in the title emphasises their significance. When describing the portrait, Lowry explained: "It was just a way of letting off steam, I suppose".⁵⁶

Indeed, all three self-portraits — *L.S. Lowry, Self-Portrait*, and *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)* — are images of himself that represent his various masculine performances, with internal reality manifesting in varied degrees. In this regard, a passage by La Rochefoucauld marked by Lowry

is especially pertinent: “There are many different kinds of men as there are different kinds of animals [...] How many crocodiles, who pretend to weep in order to devour those who are touched by their tears! And how many animals live in subjection, because they know not their strength”.⁵⁷ The types of men—including their weaknesses and strengths—are described by La Rochefoucauld, and Lowry’s fascination with automata and the performance of roles—a theme explored in his industrial scenes—suggests entrapment in roles that one must navigate in life. Through these portraits, Lowry creates a mirror to look at and to assess oneself, with special attention to how exterior appearance can deceive internal reality. In the case of *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)*, when faced with a mirror of this performance, the reality was terrifying. Self-awareness of his entrapped position and physical dishevelment speak of the crises of lower-middle-class men: the role he was expected to perform and the difficulty of transposing it into a healthy reality.

Masculinity and Isolation

Whereas the figure depicted in *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)* experiences internal trauma—the crimson tone of his nose and bloodshot eyes suggesting held back tears—his rigid posture and mask-like expression are the product of emotional control. The significance of emotional control to British masculine identity in the mid-twentieth century is highlighted by Martin Francis, who argues that uncontrolled emotion transgressed a British national identity marked by self-restraint.⁵⁸ As a man socialised into a middle-class literate community, these ideas were well known to Lowry, who again found them articulated in the philosophical writings of La Rochefoucauld, evidenced by his annotation of a particular maxim: “All my passions are sufficiently mild, and under control; I have scarcely ever been known to be angry”.⁵⁹ During a period of post-industrial economic depression and international insecurity—both in terms of the dissolution of the British Empire and conflict abroad—such archaic messages of self-control perhaps reverberated as an attractive bulwark.⁶⁰ Yet, when put into practice, this inevitably fell short of an ideal.

In *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)*, the scarf wrapped around the subject’s neck alludes to the suffocating state endured by the artist, whilst its tone and definition recalls flayed skin, indicating a torturous state. Yet, this physical pain is accompanied by a quiet acceptance—as indicated by the pursed lips—suggestive of the repressive nature of masculinity towards the goal of self-control amid chaotic circumstances. However, the more common way that Lowry expressed the painful procedure of masculine emotional control was through the repetitive motif of haunting eyes. In both *L.S. Lowry* and *Head of a Man (with Red Eyes)*, the piercing eyes of the subject glare back at the viewer with terrifying effect. In contrast, the overall facial expression is mute: the mouth is tightly shut, and the eyebrows are fixed in a straight line. His eyes, wrought with emotion, however, suggest a high level of mental pain. The motif can be found elsewhere in his works. For example, in *Discord* (1943) (see fig. 4) the male figure is the only person in the painting to stare directly at the viewer. None of his family look at him, and the woman whom we presume to be his wife even sits with her back to him. Yet, despite the awkward situation, his facial expression is mute. His mask-like face seeks the viewer, unable to express the isolation he experiences, which is instead conveyed through his eyes and the disjointed family composition. Lowry was astutely aware of the relationship between loneliness and his subjective vision of the world: “Had I not been lonely, I should not have seen what I did”.⁶¹ His self-portraits of 1938 visually represent his internal crisis. With his father deceased and having left behind a large debt,

Lowry was left to reconcile his masculinity with dual roles as both an artist and the sole wage earner in a lower-middle-class household, all in the eyes of his demanding mother. Following his mother's death in 1939, Lowry's expression of isolation took on a more abstract form. This can be seen in *Seascape* (1945) (fig. 9), which should be viewed in tandem with the painting *July, the Seaside* (1943) produced just a couple of years before. Whilst *July, the Seaside* depicts a heavily populated beach in the style of his industrial landscapes, *Seascape* is concerned not with human others but, rather, an abstract state. The endless waves, interrupted only by the horizon, convey in pictorial form how Lowry perceived a "Battle for Life" in the ocean: "It's all there. It's all in the sea. The Battle for Life is there. And Fate. And the inevitability of it all. And the purpose".⁶² Clark and Wagner interpreted these battles as arising from class contentions, specifically the scenes of poverty on the streets of Manchester.⁶³ However, my suggestion is that Lowry related this "Battle for Life" to a more personal struggle which — whilst necessarily intersecting with class — is constituted by and constitutive of masculinity, situated within the wider complex psychological state of the artist. The expression of isolation through landscape was developed more fully in his later seascape self-portraits of the 1960s and this earlier manifestation in 1945 provides an important developmental context.



Figure 9

L.S. Lowry, *Seascape*, 1945, oil on canvas, 35.5 × 45.6 cm. Private collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L.S. Lowry (all rights reserved, DACS 2023).

Familial scenes suggest that the isolation experienced by the artist was an emotional rather than literal experience. In *Father and Two Sons* (1950), Lowry portrays the complex psychological relationships within a male lineage (fig. 10). Despite the intergenerational gaps between the members, the figures share the same emotional expression. Apart from the bowler hat and more confident gaze of the father, suggestive of a completed transition to manhood, all figures bear the same sartorial style and haunting eyes. The faces of the men are almost transparent in that they mimic the tonal background behind them. The grimy pale greens and violet-blue that run throughout the painting suggest a family shaped by and reflective of their lurid environment.



Figure 10

L.S. Lowry, *Father and Two Sons*, 1950, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 101.6 cm. Private collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L.S. Lowry (all rights reserved, DACS 2023).

The consistency of individual representation despite generational differences during a period of profound change within *Father and Two Sons* further lends credence to the emotional detachment between the figures depicted. Oblivious to familial warmth, they are emotionally disconnected and gaze outward rather than at each other. Lowry once described his father, Robert, as “a queer chap in many ways ... Nothing moved him. Nothing upset him, Nothing pleased him. It was as if he had got a life to get through and he got through it”.⁶⁴ The blinkered vision described in this quotation—especially in the context of the overspending and debt hidden by Robert from his immediate family—resonates with the emotional isolation of the figures depicted in *Father and Two Sons*.

The inability to express emotion speaks to a much wider theme of isolation that runs through Lowry’s oeuvre. The consistency of his artistic language—characterised by white backgrounds and abstracted human forms (often described as “matchstalk men”)—reflect the artist’s loyalty to a vision of the past amid profound social change. In a later painting, *Suburban Figures* (1961), the drab, shapeless black clothes worn by the subjects do not speak of the new liberalising modernity but rather of an internal mood rooted in the late Victorian and early Edwardian past (fig. 11). The nostalgia of these works appeals both on a popular level to a market intrigued by disappearing British industrial life, whilst revealing the complexities of an individual psychology reliant on historical standards and sources to navigate a transformed society.



Figure 11

L.S. Lowry, *Suburban Figures*, 1961, oil on board, 27 × 22.6 cm. Private collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L.S. Lowry (all rights reserved, DACS 2023).

In 1966 Lowry painted four seascapes entitled “self-portrait”. He had mused prior to their creation: “I think one day I’ll paint a self-portrait; I’ve an idea. A tall straight pillar standing up in the middle of the sea, waiting for the sea of life to finish it off”.⁶⁵ *Self Portrait as a Pillar in the Sea* (1966) is the most abstract of this series (fig. 12).⁶⁶ The waves and sky merge into one, and the canvas is visible between the brushstrokes, with the overall effect of grey whiteness. Against this, the pillar is black and imposing, highlighting the stark emptiness of the sea surrounding it.



Figure 12

L.S. Lowry, *Self-Portrait as Pillar in the Sea*, 1966, oil on board, 52 × 28.5 cm. Private collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L.S. Lowry (all rights reserved, DACS 2023).

The 1966 self-portraits differ from *Seascape* (1945) (see fig. 9 and a similar work of 1950, which were both marked by complete absence. In contrast, the symbolic nature of the lone pillar under the auspices of a “Self-Portrait” suggests an attempt to represent personal experiences of isolation. Sonya Rose describes the hegemonic “temperate masculinity” during the Second World War as characterised by a tension between the rejection of the “hyper-masculine” with its associations of Nazism, and the embrace of stoicism and “emotional reserve”.⁶⁷ Many people who knew Lowry described him as unemotional and unwilling to discuss his feelings. Harold Riley, commenting on Lowry, stated that “He could never confide in his emotion”.⁶⁸ Lowry himself announced: “I’m a cold fish. It’s how I am”.⁶⁹ However, the emergence of emotional self-reflection among men in the late 1940s and 1950s, inspired by popular psychology, provides an important context for the introspective nature of such self-representations.⁷⁰ Unlike his earlier works of 1925 and the 1930s, the symbolic nature of his seascapes meant that Lowry could avoid human figuration altogether, with immense emotional impact. The resultant paintings express identity—and in particular, performances of masculinity—as ambiguous self-reflections rather than scripted social roles.⁷¹

The isolation experienced by Lowry, made manifest in his seascape self-portraits, provides a wider perspective on a facet of the modern-day male experience. F.A. Whitlock found that suicide in England and Wales during 1959–63 was more prevalent among men from affluent classes and that, particularly in older age groups, it was associated with feelings of isolation.⁷² Despite his increased income from the commercialisation of his art—and especially following the death of his mother after his first solo exhibition at Lefevre Gallery, London in the same year—Lowry continued to articulate his personal isolation. His self-representations convey emotional distress, and these should be interpreted in relation to his more popular depictions of

alienation and isolation, as represented through the working-class crowds of post-industrial Britain.

Conclusion

Lowry eventually gained an invitation to become a Royal Academician in 1955. Although his unconventional style had been somewhat recognised early in his artistic career, the Manchester art scene had mocked his work as primitive—a childish association which was effeminising and ignorant of his twelve years training in life drawing.⁷³ Yet, the affirmation received from the Royal Academy recognised his creative independence and grouped him as a “great artist” together with the other predominantly male members.⁷⁴ In 1964 he was subsequently named a “Grand Old Man of English Art” when he was included in a special exhibition held in Eccles along with other esteemed artists, such as Ben Nicholson and Henry Moore.⁷⁵ To announce the news of his retirement, one headline in the press declared: “No More Work From Lowry. The Master Has Laid Down His Brushes”.⁷⁶

Despite the masculine and class-based advancement that the Royal Academy awarded Lowry, he lamented that “It all came too late for my mother to know of it”.⁷⁷ It is apparent that Lowry continued to judge his success through the standards set by his mother. While Elizabeth was alive, Lowry’s precarious class position conflicted with his desire to paint as it threatened the hegemonic masculine ideal that she held in such high regard. He was socialised into a household where respectability was a cardinal value—articulated through the “Manchester Man”—and where sartorial and behavioural standards were recognised and upheld. The ensuing negotiation of the breadwinner model as a mark of masculine middle-class identity, with its physical and mental implications, are given form through Lowry’s self-portraits.

Lowry’s awareness of the performance of masculinity and class—an understanding sharpened for contemporary times by his study of La Rochefoucauld—perhaps influenced his decision to conceal from the Royal Academy his career as a rent collector. The necessity for Lowry to work full time to support his mother and settle the remaining debts threatened his acceptance into the professional institution. This was a justified deception by Lowry, especially given Rosenthal’s realisation: “It was only many years later that I discovered that there were senior Royal Academicians who considered him an amateur, a ‘Sunday painter’”.⁷⁸ The derogatory label of “Sunday painter” echoed those earlier sentiments expressed by his mother, who relegated his art to a hobby rather than a career. Despite the official recognition of his professional artistic practice, Lowry still had to negotiate his identity upon retirement from his rent-collecting job, suggesting the constant instability of identity.

Through his artwork, Lowry offers glimpses into his emotionally complex outlook on life during a tumultuous period of shifting class and gender relations in the mid-twentieth century. As the popularity of his work grows, reflected in the increasing prices that his art generates at auction, a reassessment of his paintings—far from the simplistic “matchstalk men”—can provide valuable insight into lived isolation.⁷⁹ In conversation with Monty Bloom, Lowry explained: “Getting to the truth in painting is getting near to life ... All my life I have done what I wanted to do. It’s very funny really; isn’t it odd? It’s all so true to life”.⁸⁰ The pursuit of truth—a lifelong vocation for Lowry—was a process bound to himself and his experiences of isolation. His self-portraits evidence this gradual realisation, and it is this reading that illuminates the apparent paradox between the sensation of being in a crowd and simultaneously experiencing loneliness.

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About the author

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Footnotes

1. T.J. Clark and Anne M. Wagner, *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013), 16–18.
2. Clark and Wagner argued for a reassessment of Lowry through the lens of class and urban pastoralism. They argued that Lowry was a painter of modernity—as evidenced by large-scale urban landscape paintings in the exhibition—and of working-class lives. Clark focused on issues of class to analyse paintings by the artist, while Wagner emphasised the relationship between economic processes and social rituals in relation to scenes of football matches, protest marches, and evictions. Clark and Wagner made these arguments through references to French impressionism, although the historiography of English twentieth-century art has more traditionally regarded English modernism in isolation from the continent. This article shows that certain connections between Lowry and other twentieth-century artists working in England—including members of the Camden Town Group—nuance a reading of his art from those interpretations emanating from social realism and its connection to French impressionism. See David Cottington, “The Formation of the Avant-Garde in Paris and London, c.1880–1915”, *Art History* 35, no. 3 (2012): 600, DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8365.2012.00899.x.
3. Philip Thompson (director), *L.S. Lowry: The Industrial Artist* (1977), British Film Institute, <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-ls-lowry-the-industrial-artist-1973-online>.
4. Clark and Wagner, *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life*, 18.
5. James Merlin, “L.S. Lowry: London”, *The Burlington Magazine* 155, no. 132 (2013): 636.
6. Maurice Collis, *The Discovery of L.S. Lowry* (London: Alex Reid & Lefevre, 1951), 51.
7. Julian Spalding, *Lowry* (London: The Herbert Press, 1987), 9.

8. Spalding also recognised this extended form of self-portraiture, suggesting that Lowry “confronted an image of himself in various guises—as a bearded lady, a monument in a crowd, or a carriage going over a hill”. See Spalding, *Lowry*, 19.
9. Michael Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist* (Salford Quays: Lowry Press, 2000), 35–37. Lowry wrote page references on the title page in different inks, suggesting notations over time. The copy owned by Lowry (François de La Rochefoucauld, trans. Lieut.-Col. A.S. Bolton, *Maxims and Essays* (London: Remington & Co., 1884)) contains 521 annotations in black biro, 142 in blue biro (solid line), and 83 in blue biro (dotted line), along with many more pencil annotations. His annotations consist of passages underlined and specific numbered passages marked out. Unpublished notes kindly lent by Michael Howard.
10. Leonard Tancock, “Introduction”, in François de La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims / La Rochefoucauld; Translated with an Introduction by Leonard Tancock* (London: Penguin, 1959), 7.
11. Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist*, 36.
12. Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist*, 16.
13. Since the mid- to late-1980s, the inextricable nature of gender and class has been advanced in the social humanities. For a brief history of this historiographical movement, see Jeanne Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis”, *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (2008): 561, DOI:10.1111/j.1468-0424.2008.00537.x . For the utility of intersectionality pertaining class and gender, see Stephen Brooke, “Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain During the 1950s”, *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 4 (2001): 776. For the intersectionality of gender with other identities, including class and race, in the context of competing types of masculinities, see R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
14. The schism between concealed despair and the outward appearance of manhood is described by H.D. Thoreau (1854): “A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of manhood ... It appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left”. H.D. Thoreau quoted in Ronald F. Levant, “The Masculinity Crisis”, *Journal of Men’s Studies* 5, no. 3 (1997): 221, DOI:10.1177/106082659700500302. Note that masculinity “crises” can also be understood as arising from an altered expectation of what masculinity entails. In this article, however, the masculinity crisis is understood through Pleck’s (1995) concept of the “discrepancy strain”: the idea that a person experiences anxiety when they fail to achieve the ideal of masculinity that they have internalised. See Judith Worell (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender Vol. 2* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2002), 722, for a more precise definition of the “discrepancy strain”. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the discrepancy strain and the masculinity crisis, see Levant, “The Masculinity Crisis”, 221.
15. Ava Baron, “Masculinity, the Embodied Male Worker, and the Historian’s Gaze”, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 69, no. 1 (2006): 144, DOI:10.1017/s0147547906000081. Ben Griffin located these anxieties in “the gap between the theory and practice of hegemonic masculinity”. See Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 186.
16. La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims / La Rochefoucauld; Translated with an Introduction by Leonard Tancock*, 25. Note that La Rochefoucauld’s *Self-Portrait of the Duc de La Rochefoucauld* was

- also included in the edition owned by Lowry. See Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist*, 36.
17. John Berger, *The Moment of Cubism* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1969), 43.
 18. Rev. J.T. Slugg, "The Manchester Man", *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* (November 1889): 818–22.
 19. Shelley Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry* (London: Book Club Associates, 1979), 48.
 20. Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist*, 14. Also, Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 4, 22.
 21. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 5–6. Lowry was expected to assume household responsibility following the death of his father in 1932. Thereafter, he had to contend with a huge sum of unforeseen debt whilst attending to his demanding and bedridden mother.
 22. Howard concludes that "Every aspect of the family's domestic life was governed by the need to preserve appearances by dint of careful and even frugal household management". Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist*, 15.)
 23. Rohde, *A Private View of Lowry*, 28–29.
 24. For an exploration of the idea that the hegemonic masculine ideal has always revolved around the "traditional breadwinner and housewife paradigm", see Ali Haggett, *A History of Male Psychological Disorders in Britain, 1945–1980* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 71.
 25. Moreover, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argued that the male breadwinner model was central to the definition of the British middle class during a period of changing economic relations (1780–1850). Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 2003), 30.
 26. John Tosh, "Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: Britain, 1800–1914", *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 342, DOI:[10.1086/427129]<https://doi.org/10.1086/427129>).
 27. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 54.
 28. Martin Francis argues that social reconstruction following the Second World War focused on the consolidation of family life. Within this, the returning male head of the family had to "take up the sober responsibilities of the male breadwinner, patient father, and considerate husband" (644). Francis also shows how this version of "reformed masculinity" was insecure (645). Martin Francis, "The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity", *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 3 (2002): 644–45, DOI:10.1017/S0018246X02002583.
 29. Gregory Salter, *Art and Masculinity in Post-War Britain Reconstructing Home* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 10, DOI:10.4324/9781003084686.
 30. Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist*, 195.
 31. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 57. Clifford Openshaw to author.
 32. Connell, *Masculinities*, 90.
 33. John Tosh, *A Man's Place* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 60–61.
 34. For the argument that marriage was integral to notions of masculinity in late-nineteenth- to early-twentieth-century Britain, see Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861–1913* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1.
 35. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 221.
 36. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 20, 22.
 37. Geoffrey Shryhane, *L.S. Lowry Artist of the People* (Wigan: Red Rose Reprints, 2007), 23.
 38. Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (London: Routledge, 1993), 84.
 39. Brady describes the precarious position of bachelors in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British society: "men who did not fulfil social and cultural expectations of masculinity in the period, such as young bachelors, risked being marginalised and considered

- not fully masculine”. Also, British institutions—including national newspapers, medicine, and the legislature—placed much emphasis on these masculine expectations. Although Brady was writing about an earlier period, these norms would have had implications for Lowry as an individual socialised by his domineering mother. Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861–1913*, 26.
40. Andrew Stephenson, “Precarious Poses: The Problem of Artistic Visibility and Its Homosocial Performances in Late-Nineteenth-Century London”, *Visual Culture in Britain* 8, no. 1 (2007): 73. Also, Stephenson identifies “a growing sense of anxiety associated with modernization in men’s sense of their own sexuality and surrounding the artistic representation of modern masculine performance”.
 41. Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 1–2, quoted in Michael R. Doylen, “Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis*: Homosexual Self-Fashioning on the Other Side of Scandal”, *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (1999): 547, DOI:10.1017/S1060150399272208.
 42. Quotation in Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 62. Nationally, the male artistic identity was threatened by wider developments in Edwardian Britain: an idea elucidated upon by Andrew Stephenson in regard to the Camden Town Group. Stephenson discusses the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895 and its resultant impact on the artist Walter Sickert as he endeavoured to distance himself from a dandified male artistic type which, to Edwardian conservative critics, represented “an affront to bourgeois English manly norms”. Andrew Stephenson, “Questions of Artistic Identity, Self-Fashioning and Social Referencing in the Work of the Camden Town Group”, in Helena Bonett, Ysanne Holt, and Jennifer Mundy (eds.), *The Camden Town Group in Context* (London: Tate Research Publication, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/andrew-stephenson-questions-of-artistic-identity-self-fashioning-and-social-referencing-in-r1104367>.
 43. In the context of late-nineteenth-century England, Christopher Breward argues that the sartorial decisions of men from all classes was implicated by considerations of gender identity, in particular, the anxious association of the “bachelor dandy” image with feminised manhood. Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion, and City Life 1860–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). Griffin’s study of clothing and its importance for constructing hegemonic masculinities within the British Parliament is also interesting in this regard. Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain*, 189–94.
 44. Julia Twigg, “Dress, Gender and the Embodiment of Age: Men and Masculinities”, *Ageing & Society* 40, no. 1 (2020): 107, DOI:10.1017/S0144686X18000892.
 45. R.W. Connell, “Masculinities and Globalization”, *Men and Masculinities* 1, no. 1 (1998): 5, DOI:10.1177/1097184X98001001001.
 46. Stephenson argues that Walter Sickert distances himself from “the Whistlerian Francophile model” in his *The Juvenile Lead (Self Portrait)* (1907), and also in *The Juvenile Lead*, which portrays the artist in “an urbane business suit with bowler hat of the type popular with the Edwardian professional and business classes”. Stephenson describes this self-presentation as part of the “requirement to modify any extrovert performance of artistic masculinity to English conservative tastes”. Similar to Lowry, Sickert uses self-portraiture to assert a certain type of masculinity distanced from disreputable forms of artistic identity. Stephenson, “Questions of Artistic Identity, Self-Fashioning and Social Referencing”.
 47. Bernard Denvir, ‘Lonely Genius’, *Daily Herald*, 2 October 1953, 4.
 48. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 264.

49. Stephenson, "Questions of Artistic Identity, Self-Fashioning and Social Referencing".
50. Shryhane, *L.S. Lowry Artist of the People*, 46.
51. T.G. Rosenthal, *L.S. Lowry The Art and the Artist* (London: Unicorn Press, 2016), 12.
52. Salter, *Art and Masculinity in Post-War Britain*, 28.
53. Rohde, *A Private View of Lowry*, 62.
54. Spalding, *Lowry*, 33.
55. Michael Howard, *Lowry: Djanogly Art Gallery* (Nottingham: Djanogly Art Gallery Press, 2012), 8.
56. Mervyn Levy, *Painters of Today: L.S. Lowry* (London: Studio Books, 1961), 10.
57. La Rochefoucauld, trans. Lieut.-Col. A.S. Bolton, *Maxims and Essays*, 242.
58. Martin Francis, "Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951–1963", *Journal of British Studies* 41, no. 3 (2002): 358, DOI:10.1086/341153.
59. La Rochefoucauld, trans. Lieut.-Col. A.S. Bolton, *Maxims and Essays*, 38.
60. For overviews of social, political, and economic change in twentieth-century Britain, see Roderick Floud, Jane Humphries, and Paul Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain: Volume 2, Growth and Decline, 1870 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and Andrew Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Of relevance, the front cover illustration of the Cambridge textbook is of a mill painting by Lowry.
61. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 268.
62. Juliet Horsley, *L.S. Lowry in the North East* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, 2010), 66.
63. Clark and Wagner claim that his debut exhibition in Manchester (1921) was "truly a map of the whole class struggle: working-class poverty and indebtedness, religious observance, street quarrels, the drifting search for employment". Clark and Wagner, *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life*, 62.
64. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 128.
65. Horsley, *L.S. Lowry in the North East*, 65.
66. Another contemporary artist associated with environmental symbolism is Paul Nash (1889–1946). Paul Gough argued that Nash understood trees to be "an extension of his own body (cf. Gough 2010)". Paul Gough, "'Cultivating dead trees': The Legacy of Paul Nash as an Artist of Trauma, Wilderness and Recovery", *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 4, no. 3 (2011): 325–26, DOI:10.1386/jwcs.4.3.323_1. Also, A.P. Duffy argued that Nash's seascape *Dymchurch* series, produced during his post-war nervous breakdown in the 1920s, expressed the artist's belief in "the idea that it was within the natural world there could be found those elements needed to express the modernity he had experienced". His residence at the coastal town of Dymchurch represented a liminality for him (much like Lowry's visits to coastal towns such as Berwick-upon-Tweed) where he could work through his emotions in artistic form. A.P. Duffy, "'We are Making a New World' (Paul Nash) Part 2", *The British Art Journal* 12, no. 1 (2011): 12.
67. Sonya O. Rose, "Temperate Heroes: Concepts of Masculinity in Second World War Britain", in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 179.
68. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 219–20.
69. Shryhane, *L.S. Lowry Artist of the People*, 22.

70. Michael Roper, "Between Manliness and Masculinity: The 'War Generation' and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914–1950", *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 360, DOI:10.1086/427130.
71. Autobiography studies have discovered that male members of the lower middle class in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods often had to navigate various class identities through the hegemonic masculine ideals that constituted them. A. James Hammerton's autobiographical study of the lower-middle-class man, Alfred Coppard, explores how he held many different jobs and read widely, including classic literature and drama, whilst also appreciating music and art. Hammerton explains how Coppard, along with other men of his economic and social position, chose his identity based on the sphere in which they were operating (e.g. the streets or work). These various identities, for Hammerton, "underline the inherent ambiguity that must always be at work in the process of identity formation" (316). A. James Hammerton, "Pooterism or Partnership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870–1920", *Journal of British Studies* 38, no. 3 (1999): 314–16, DOI:10.1086/386196.
72. F.A. Whitlock, "Suicide in England and Wales 1959–63: Part 1. The County Boroughs", *Psychological Medicine* 3, no. 3 (1973): 362–65, DOI:10.1017/S0033291700049655.
73. Edwin Bowes, *Painting a Lowry: Coming from the Mill* (Salford Quays: Lowry Press, 2002), 7.
74. Gill Perry, "Part 2 Gender, Genres and Academic Art in the Eighteenth Century: Introduction", in *Gender and Art*, ed. Gill Perry (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 87.
75. Howard, *Lowry: A Visionary Artist*, 44.
76. Shryhane, *L.S. Lowry Artist of the People*, 95.
77. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 143.
78. Rosenthal, *L.S. Lowry The Art and the Artist*, 16
79. There are many examples of Lowry paintings selling for high prices at auction. For example, in 2011 *The Football Match* (1949) sold for £5.6 million at Christie's. The painting was originally purchased for £250 in 1951. Paul Britton, "LS Lowry Painting *The Football Match* Sells for a Record £5.6m", *Manchester Evening News*, 26 May 2011, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/ls-lowry-painting-the-football-match-861687>. Also, Lowry paintings are attracting attention in China. A Lowry exhibition was held at the Nanjing University of the Arts in 2014. See John Sudworth, "Why China sees itself in Lowry's Paintings of Industrial Britain", *BBC News*, 7 December 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-30248214>. This is the first solo exhibition of Lowry outside Britain, suggesting a growing international audience and awareness of his works. "Matchstalk men" was a term especially popularised by the song "Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs" by Michael Coleman and Kevin Parrott. The song was number one in the UK charts for three weeks in 1978. To clarify, "Matchstalk" refers to the pronunciation of "matchstick" in north-west England.
80. Rohde, *A Private View of L.S. Lowry*, 247.

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