

“Stand and live”: Tropes of Falling, Rising, Standing in Robert Lowell’s *Lord Weary’s Castle*

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Tropes of falling, rising, and standing recur frequently in Robert Lowell’s poetry from *Lord Weary’s Castle* (1946), whose title-page illustration depicts Abel falling backwards in a field after having been assaulted by Cain, caught leaving the scene of the crime, to *Day by Day* (1977) and to poems left unpublished at the time of Lowell’s death in 1977.¹ I wish to draw attention here to their centrality in *Lord Weary’s Castle*, where they are connected with the volume’s overarching theme of life restored. My close readings focus on how the tropes collaborate with verse form, allusion, and intertextual metamorphoses to project fictions of life restored, and on how journeying, buildings, and apocalyptic scenarios incorporate the tropes within religious, historical, and autobiographical frames of reference. While ultimately wedded to a Christian hope in life restored, the tropes undergo perilous trials during the course of a journey from the initial poem, “The Exile’s Return,” to the final poem, “Where the Rainbow Ends,” which bids the poet himself “Stand and live.”

1.

In “The Exile’s Return,” first published in *The Nation* on February 23, 1946, tropes of falling, rising, and standing frame a prophetic vision of life restored in Germany after World War II. When readers encountered it at the outset of *Lord Weary’s Castle*, published in December, it was still a very contemporary poem, and was the first of many poems in the volume that alluded to wars in Europe from the Middle Ages to

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the twentieth century, and in North America from King Philip's War to the Civil War:

The Exile's Return

	There mounts in squalls a sort of rusty mire,	<i>a</i>	
	Not ice, not snow, to leaguer the Hôtel	<i>b</i>	
	De Ville, where braced pig-iron dragons grip	<i>c</i>	
	The blizzard to their rigor mortis. A bell	<i>b</i>	
	Grumbles when the reverberations strip	<i>c</i>	
	The thatching from its spire,	<u><i>a</i></u>	(sestet)
	The search-guns click and spit and split up timber	<i>d</i>	
	And nick the slate roofs on the Holstenwall	<i>e</i>	
	Where torn-up tilestones crown the victor. Fall	<i>e</i>	
10	And winter, spring and summer, guns unlimber	<u><i>d</i></u>	(quatrain)
	And lumber down the narrow gabled street	<i>f</i>	
	Past your gray, sorry and ancestral house	<i>g</i>	
	Where the dynamited walnut tree	<i>h</i>	
	Shadows a squat, old, wind-torn gate and cows	<i>g</i>	
	The Yankee commandant. You will not see	<i>h</i>	
	Strutting children or meet	<u><i>f</i></u>	(sestet)
	The peg-leg and reproachful chancellor	<i>i</i>	
	With a forget-me-not in his button-hole	<i>j</i>	
	When the unseasoned liberators roll	<i>j</i>	
20	Into the Market Square, ground arms before	<u><i>i</i></u>	(quatrain)
	The Rathaus; but already lily-stands	<i>k</i>	
	Burgeon the risen Rhineland, and a rough	<i>l</i>	
	Cathedral lifts its eye. Pleasant enough,	<i>l</i>	
24	<i>Voi ch'entrate</i> , and your life is in your hands.	<i>k</i>	(quatrain)

"The Exile's Return" marshals a sequence of *where-when-where-where-when* subordinate clauses attended by an accretion of *and* additive elements to structure its configurations of space and time. One begins to realize after reaching line 6 that Lowell's iambic pentameter verse paragraph is not blank verse but a systematically built edifice for which sestets and quatrains also serve as building blocks. The *abcbcadeed* rhyme scheme of the first sestet+quatrain unit, with a trimeter introduced to conclude the sestet, recurs in the second sestet+quatrain unit's *fghgfhijji* rhymes, the sixth line again being a trimeter. The "extra" final quatrain (*kllk*) solidifies the base on which the

whole rhyming structure stands. Lowell's incorporation within the verse paragraph of the ten-line stanza that Matthew Arnold used for "The Gipsy Scholar" is thematically allusive, insofar as Arnold's stanzaic poem recounts the self-exile of one "Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door, / One summer-morn forsook / His friends, and went to learn the gipsy lore, / And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood." Unlike Lowell's exile, he "returned no more" (335). In *Lord Weary's Castle* Lowell makes repeated use of the "exile" stanza, including at the end in "Where the Rainbow Ends," another rendition of the exile returned theme.²

In a poem rife with religious and literary allusions, a link is forged with the stoning of St. Stephen, alluded to in the epigraph to *Lord Weary's Castle*, when falling "torn-up tilestones crown the victor," with a pun on "crown" (enhanced by "Stephanos," Greek for "crown" or "garland").³ There is no outright pun on "Fall" at the end of line 9, but after a late caesura "Fall" lingers for a split second as an appendage of the line's semantic thrust ("Where torn-up tilestones crown the victor. Fall"), even as it fulfils the line's delayed metrical aspirations. Perched at line's end, it also pledges rhyming allegiance with the preceding line. The "Holstenwall / Fall" rhyme lodged within a quatrain (*deed* in the ongoing rhyme scheme) echoes Humpty Dumpty's wall / fall, leaving us with a pun, after all, on "Fall." Lowell was given to making odd connections of this sort through wordplay, rhyme, dead metaphors, jaded idioms, and unlikely allusions.

Without naming the city alluded to in "The Exile's Return," Lowell scatters clues in the form of phrases from the H. T. Lowe-Porter translation of Thomas Mann's novella "Tonio Kröger."⁴ Insofar as Tonio intertextually slips into the role of the "you" addressed, he becomes the "exile" who returns to Lübeck, his North German birthplace, which he had left to pursue a vocation as a poet, initially in Italy and then in Munich. In his novella, Mann draws on his own leaving of Lübeck for Munich in 1894, and directly uses his brief revisiting of Lübeck in 1899 while on the way to Denmark. Tonio very briefly returns, after thirteen years' absence, while on his way to Denmark.

During the war an exile in America, where he became an American citizen in 1944, Mann broadcast addresses to the German people via the BBC from his Pacific Palisades fastness in California. In them he defended Allied firebombing of Germany, which began in 1942 with the bombing of Lübeck, about which he expressed sorrow a few days afterwards; but he asked his fellow Germans the stark question, “Hat Deutschland geglaubt, es werde für die Untaten, die sein Vorsprung in der Barbarei ihm gestattete, niemals zu zahlen haben?” (*Politische Schriften und Reden* 223) [“Did Germany believe that it would never have to pay for the misdeeds which its lead in barbarism enabled it to commit?” (*Listen Germany!* 85)]. Lübeck’s most famous son returned to receive an award of honorary citizenship in 1955, the year of his death, in a ceremony that took place before the same *Rathaus* (i.e., town hall) referred to in Lowell’s poem.⁵ For his part, Lowell condemned Allied firebombing of German cities, and sentenced in October 1943 to a year and a day as a conscientious objector, he became an exile of sorts within his own country.⁶

“Not ice, not snow” (l. 2) gives an intertextual game away that associates “The Exile’s Return” with “Tonio Kröger.”⁷ The Lowe-Porter translation of Mann’s novella begins, “The winter sun, poor ghost of itself, hung milky and wan behind layers of cloud above the huddled roofs of the town. In the gabled streets it was wet and windy and there came in gusts a sort of soft hail, not ice, not snow” (76). Lowell’s “the Holstenwall” picks up a reference to it in “Tonio Kröger”: “‘All right; let’s go over the wall,’ [Tonio] said with a quaver in his voice. ‘Over the Millwall and the Holstenwall, and I’ll go as far as your house’” (86).⁸ Search-guns replace machine saws, when Mann’s sentence “Hans’s people had owned for some generations the big woodyards down by the river, where powerful machine saws hissed and spat and cut up timber” (88) becomes in the poem “The search-guns click and split up timber / And nick the slate-roofs of the Holstenwall” (ll. 7-8).

“The Exile’s Return” also assimilates nostalgic memories of the Lübeck to which Mann’s Tonio Kröger returned in a kind of reverie:

"he looked at everything: the narrow gables ... the Holstenwall... . Then he ... went through the squat old gate, along the harbour, and up the windy street to his parents' house... . The garden lay desolate, but there stood the old walnut tree where it used to stand, groaning and creaking heavily in the wind" (108, 111, 113). The poem accords Tonio another opportunity to return to Lübeck decades later, after its destruction in World War II. Although dynamited as if in a wilful attempt to fell it, the walnut tree continues to stand, and its resistance even to dynamiting crows the Yankee commandant.⁹ An emblem of survival, it stands imposingly enough to shadow the gate. Tonio's youthful self-consciously poetical verses about the walnut tree that Mann writes of with ironic humor (94) are an additional element in Lowell's intertextual game. He takes up where the versifying young Tonio left off, but in an altogether different manner, and accords the walnut tree, a new emblematic significance of stoic survival. By contrast, "your gray, sorry and ancestral house" alludes dourly to the Kröger family home and covertly, perhaps, to Lowell's own "ancestral house."

At a dream-logic level, Lowell transforms and transfers other motifs, giving them contemporary historical resonance. Tonio's father, for example, who twice reproached him for his low grades at school, is recurrently described as wearing a wildflower in his button-hole, a motif that Lowell transfers to "the peg-leg and reproachful chancellor / With a forget-me-not in his button-hole." The conflated father/chancellor's being made "peg-leg," injuring him but rendering him in a way more ominous, associates him with a traditional depiction of the devil as lame, and might be taken as a way of intimating that the old, conservative-patrician class, of which Tonio's father is a representative, must bear their share of the blame for the Third Reich. One also recalls that Goebbels, the most diabolical of Hitler's henchmen, did not sport a peg leg but had a bad limp, a clubfoot, and his right leg was shorter than his left. Historically, the only chancellor in question is, however, "forget-me-not" Adolf Hitler himself, who after being named Chancellor of Germany by Hindenburg in January, 1933,

appointed Goebbels his Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.¹⁰ Read within German historical contexts, the “reproachful chancellor” you “will not meet” can be taken as a wisecracking allusion to Hitler’s not being around to reproach the Lübeckers for their inglorious capitulation, he having committed suicide in his Berlin bunker on April 30, 1945, full of reproach toward his “Volk” for having failed him. For their part, the “strutting children” of Lowell’s poem resurrect the children, Tonio among them, who are walking home from school at the outset of Mann’s novella, but I suspect that some 1946 readers associatively superimposed on Lowell’s “strutting” image familiar newsreel and movie images of marching Hitler Youth groups and, more direly, the goose-stepping German soldiers that a generation of German children became.

An adversative “but” (line 21) heralds a switch to a visionary mode, and as the poem shifts its gaze from northern, Protestant Lübeck southwestward toward the Catholic Rhineland Marian floral symbolism blossoms as “lily-stands / Burgeon the risen Rhineland.” There life is flourishing, and a resurrection graced by two religious associations of the lily has already occurred: the spray of lilies that the angel Gabriel holds in his hand when he appears before the Virgin Mary to announce that she is to be the mother of the Christ child, and the lily as a floral emblem of the Resurrection. Lowell also makes “burgeon,” normally intransitive, function as a transitive verb when the lily-stands, themselves risen and burgeoning, “burgeon” the “risen Rhineland.” Marian associations proliferate insofar as after the angel’s presentation to her of the lily, Mary herself “burgeons,” pregnant with the fruit of her womb, Jesus. Lowell does not sever the hyphenated compound noun “lily-stands” (“stand” in the sense of a group or growth of small trees or plants), but in collaboration with “risen” the verbal force of “stands” asserts itself. The blizzard that the gargoyle dragons gripped to their “rigor mortis” at the outset of the poem is no more, and a rough cathedral that “lifts its eye” stands in place of the apocalyptic “rough beast” of Yeats’s “The Second Coming,” which seeing “its hour come at last, / Slouches toward Bethlehem to be

born."¹¹ In his own "second coming" poem of return and rebirth, Lowell adopts the biblical topos "to lift one's eyes," as in Psalm 121:1, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help," and Psalm 123:1, "Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens."

Lowell's pentameter responds to the visionary burgeoning with a trochaic substitution that foregrounds "pleasant" and initiates a rhythmically pleasing choriamb, "Pleásant enóugh." The preceding syntactic full-stop after three iambs ("Cathédral lífts its eýe. Pleásant enóugh,") confers a pause, as if the "eye" were given a moment to see, and as if the prospect it surveys were indeed "Pleasant enough." Lowell's genial obiter dictum is followed up by a revocation of the initial portion of a line from Dante's *Inferno*, "Lasciati ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate" (iii: 9), "Abandon every hope, ye that enter" (Sinclair translation). Quoting only the "ye that enter" portion of it, Lowell in effect emends Dante's inscription, making "Pleasant enough" its first half as if offering assurance that things are not so bad as all that. Hope need not be abandoned: "Pleasant enough, / *Voi ch'entrate*." After all, it is not Hell that "you" are being bidden to enter, which would be an inferno more lasting than the one Lübeck became in the firebombing of March 28, 1942 during the night before Palm Sunday, when Christ entered Jerusalem.¹² The postwar prospect that the cathedral's lifted eye surveys is perhaps no land of milk and honey, but as a token of divine forgiveness and of life restored the vision is indeed pleasant enough. The sentence's elliptical syntax also allows for the option of entering the cathedral itself, an indubitably pleasant enough alternative to entering the gate of Hell. Ironic understatement is followed by a codicil that serves as a vademecum, "and your life is in your hands." Much difficult journeying lies ahead, before the author, casting himself as exile in "Where the Rainbow Ends," enters a counterpart of the "rough / Cathedral."¹³

2.

Perilous journeying in *Lord Weary's Castle* is regularly figured in tropes of falling and sinking, as in "The Blind Leading the Blind" (64) with its allusion to Matthew 15:24, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." And fall they do in Brueghel's "The Parable of the Blind," which gave Lowell a visual point of departure for a poem employing the "Scholar Gipsy" stanza. "The Slough of Despond" (63) alludes to the episode in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in which Christian sinks into the Slough of Despond but rises out of it thanks to a figure called Help. No such "Help" comes to the rescue in Lowell's version, which begins, "At sunset only swamp / Afforded purse-y tufts of grass ... these gave, / I sank," and ends with a "rising" that debases the traditional Christian sun/son punning association of the risen Son with the risen sun, "All the bats of Babel flap about / The rising sun of hell." In "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" (59-60) a yet more dire "perilous sinking," that of a condemned soul, is likened to the sinking of a spider "thrown into the bowels of fierce fire: / There's no struggle, no desire / To get up on its feet and fly— / It stretches out its feet / And dies." The spider's supine passivity—it has no wish to "stand and live"—is one of several textual occasions in *Lord Weary's Castle* when tropes of falling, rising, and standing are appropriated by sin, despondency, and death.

Lowell also employs falling tropes in his clandestine association of himself with Cain in "Rebellion" (32), which he originally thought of calling "The seed of Cain" or "The blood of Abel" and making the climax a four-poem sequence titled "The Blood of Cain; a New England Sequence."¹⁴ "Rebellion" restages as parricide an incident when Lowell, nineteen years old, enraged by his father's efforts to terminate a supposedly unsuitable engagement, struck his father, knocking him down.¹⁵ Lowell's hapax legomenon "hove backward" to denote his father's falling backward, like Abel in the illustration, comically alludes to his father's career as a naval officer by as it were "reversing" the nautical locution "hove to."¹⁶ Ramming against his "heirlooms" as

he falls backward, the father brings about the fall of the “house” of Lowell, and curses his son: “You damned / My arm that cast your house upon your head / And broke the chimney flintlock on your skull” (ll. 5-7). This mayhem has the makings of a scene out of *Laurel and Hardy*, ending with something falling on Hardy’s head. A flintlock, a symbolic relic of New England’s revolutionary past, indeed falls from its display place over the chimney and itself breaks when it falls on the father’s head. At the end of the poem we learn that the flintlock gave as good as it got, “When the clubbed flintlock broke my father’s brain” (l. 22).

Another “falling” action occurs in a dream which the speaker relates, addressing his brained and presumably dead father:

Last night the moon was full:
I dreamed the dead
Caught at my knees and fell:
It was well
With me, my father... . (8-12)

Meter contracts from the iambic pentameter of lines 1-7, first to iambic trimeter, then iambic dimeter, before returning to iambic trimeter with initial stress on “Caught” as if a clenched ballad stanza were taking shape. In end-line position and followed by a colon “fell” acquires additional weight, also as the terminus of what would seem to be a hysteron proteron, “I dreamed the dead / Caught at my knees and fell.”¹⁷ Rhyming with “fell,” “It was well” terminates anything resembling ballad stanza metrical procedures or rhyme scheming. Already teamed with “full” in a frame rhyme (i.e., CVC), “fell” is given a seal of approval by full rhyming “well.” “It was well / With me, my father” evokes the satisfaction of a crazed serial killer, and the plural “the dead” indeed anticipates a fantasized doing away with “our mighty merchants” of New England (ll. 12-14). Given the poem’s Cain-figure compositional strata, “It was well / With me, my father” might also be heard as an ironic riposte to the Lord’s use of “well” in addressing Cain, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door” (Genesis 4:7).

The son-father confrontation in a room with a fireplace is followed by a son-mother rematch in "Mother and Son," the first of four sections of "Between the Porch and the Altar" (44-47), each written in frequently enjambed iambic pentameter couplets.¹⁸ The mother, an altogether more imposing figure than the father in "Rebellion," instead of falling rises, whereas by the end of their twenty-six line confrontation the son is reduced to crawling. Mellifluous *m*-alliteration at the beginning embellishes her presence:

Meeting his mother makes him lose ten years,
 Or is it twenty? Time, no doubt, has ears
 That listen to the swallowed serpent, wound
 Into its bowels, but he thinks no sound
 Is possible before her, he thinks the past
 Is settled. It is honest to hold fast
 Merely to what one sees with one's own eyes
 When the red velvet curves and haunches rise
 To blot from the pretty driftwood fire's
 Façade of welcome. Then the son retires
 Into the sack and selfhood of the boy
 Who clawed through fallen houses of his Troy,
 Homely and human only when the flames
 Crackle in imagination... . (ll. 1-14)

The scene, drenched in Freudian implications, combines a confrontation of the male with the overwhelming figure of the mother rising to greet him, seductively, and the motif of the hero's return after long absence to a hearthside, welcomed by the female. Odysseus was away ten years at the siege of Troy, plus as many more wandering before his return to Penelope. The "driftwood" ablaze in the fireplace signifies that this hero's wandering is now over. No flintlock above the fireplace is ready to fall, as in "Rebellion," nor is there any threat of the son, now facing the mother, becoming rebelliously rambunctious. Ten years, or is it a full Odyssean twenty, of separation from the mother instantaneously dissipate in "meeting" her, which leads to infantile regression. First, the son's mock-epic heroic status is solidified by an allusion to the *Aeneid* accompanied by what Yenser detects

(46) as a play on sack, as in the sack of Troy but also the amnion sac. The "fallen houses of his Troy" takes up the fallen house of Lowell theme in "Rebellion," where the father was symbolically killed. In "Mother and Son" the Freudian family romance takes a new turn, with the mother's "Body presented as an idol" (l. 16) effusing sexual allure: Crawling before "a mother and a wife," the son regresses into the realm of Oedipal fantasy. Why should he ever rise and stand?

A portrait of his maternal grandfather seems to direct him to do precisely that:

The forehead of her father's portrait peels
 With rosy dryness, and the schoolboy kneels
 To ask the benediction of the hand,
 Lifted as though to motion him to stand,
 Dangling its watch-chain on the Holy Book—
 A little golden snake that mouths a hook. (ll. 21-26)

The "hand/stand" rhyme reactivates the "stands/hands" rhyme in "The Exile's Return," in a parody of a religious confirmation/initiation rite in which the kneeling "schoolboy" is bidden to "stand."¹⁹ The painted, peeling, superannuated adult male before whom he kneels is no real match for the mother-wife "painted dragon" (l. 18), and the symbolic summons to join a community of males is in any event suspect. The dangling of the golden watch-chain on the Holy Book symbolizes emblematically the liaison of Calvinism and commerce that fostered the rise of the same New England mercantile class whose destruction the son fantasized in "Rebellion."

The Minuteman statue at Concord, the most cherished icon of New England's heroic past, "stands guard" at the outset of "Adam and Eve" (45), section two of "Between the Porch and the Altar," but the farmer thus restored to life is, unfortunately, melting down on a particularly hot day in modern-day Concord:

The Farmer sizzles on his shaft all day.
 He is content and centuries away
 From white-hot Concord, and he stands on guard.
 Or is he melting down like sculptured lard? (ll. 1-4)

Lowell's description of the statue and of how the farmer "stands guard" necessarily brings to mind the canonical description of the statue, Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Hymn Sung at the Completion of the Concord Monument, April 19, 1836," which generations of American schoolchildren could recite, beginning with an account of how the valiant farmer-militiamen "stood" in the first military engagement with the Redcoats, on April 19, 1775: "By the rude bridge that arched the flood, / Their flag to April breeze unfurled, / Here once the embattled farmers stood, / And fired the shot heard round the world."²⁰ The poem, ostracized from recent editions of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, concludes with the raising of the "shaft" ("But Time and Nature gently spare / The shaft we raise to them and thee") on which the farmer of Lowell's poem continues to stand, at least until he melts away while standing guard.

The first-person speaker in "Adam and Eve," none other than the son in "Mother and Son," takes on the role of an adulterer who has come to Concord not to do a bit of historical sightseeing but for a tryst with his mistress, who plays Eve to his Adam. Presumably the Minuteman, no longer standing on guard against the Redcoats, will guard the pair from Peeping Tom intruders. His meltdown proceeds apace even as the guilty lovers in the last lines of the section "fall":

You cry for help. Your market-basket rolls
 With all its baking apples in the lake.
 You watch the whorish slither of a snake
 That chokes a duckling. When we try to kiss,
 Our eyes are slits and cringing, and we hiss;
 Scales glitter on our bodies as we fall.
 The Farmer melts upon his pedestal. (ll. 26-32)

Lowell's lines may bring to mind the theological proposition, rejected in *Paradise Lost*, that sex was a consequence of the Fall, but what Lowell is really doing in this transformation of the lovers into snakes is adapting Milton's vivid account of how, after the Fall of Adam and Eve, Satan and the other fallen angels are transformed into snakes (X: 504-84). When Satan returns to Hell to inform his followers of his

splendid achievement in bringing about the downfall of Eve and Adam, all the applause he gets is "A dismal universal hiss" (X: 508). They who had already fallen from Heaven into the depths of Hell undergo a yet more humiliating fall, as they find themselves involuntarily falling to the ground, converted into snakes, hissing, hissing, hissing. Lowell provides a kiss-rhyme for the hissing-instead-of-kissing Adam and Eve, who, falling to the ground, become serpents. In "Katherine's Dream," section 3, it is no longer a farmer who "stands on guard" as if to shield the lovers but nuns who "stand on guard" before a church where penitents enter. Finding herself incapable of joining them, Katherine, the fallen Eve of "Adam and Eve," speaks in dream-recording present-tense, "I stand aside." She ends up falling, however, once again, "I run about in circles till I drop" (l. 32).

In the final section, "At the Altar," Katherine's partner in sin also falls again:

I sit at a gold table with my girl
 Whose eyelids burn with brandy. What a whirl
 Of Easter eggs is colored by the lights,
 As the Norwegian dancer's crystallized tights
 Flash with her naked leg's high-booted skate,
 Like Northern Lights upon my watching plate.
 The twinkling steel above me is a star;
 I am a fallen Christmas tree... .

(ll. 1-8)

Lowell later identified the locale of the opening lines as "a Boston night-club in which there is an ice-skating floorshow," which the speaker is watching with Katherine alongside him (see Staples 88). Given the title "At The Altar," the "gold table" may be read as a sacrilegious allusion to the table at the altar fashioned for the Temple by Solomon: "And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shewbread was" (1 Kings 7:48).²¹ The speaker's giddiness turns to silliness, and Old Testament to New Testament sacrilegious allusion, as he conflates Easter, the Star of Bethlehem, a star on top of a Christmas tree, and the children's verses, "Twinkle, twinkle little star / How

I wonder what you are. / Up above the world so high, Like a diamond in the sky."²² As "a fallen Christmas tree," he is, in the colloquial phrase, "lit." Or, to choose another idiom, "falling down drunk."

The "fallen Christmas tree" promptly resurrects itself to become a drunk driver who sets out on a hell-bent journey through the seven deadly sins ("Our car / Races through seven red lights"). It ends fatally when the car crashes into "a Gothic church," and stones fall:

... I am dying. The shocked stones
 Are falling like a ton of bricks and bones
 That snap and splinter and descend in glass
 Before a priest who mumbles through his Mass
 And sprinkles holy water; and the Day
 Breaks with its lightning on the man of clay,
Dies amara valde... . (ll. 18-25)

These stones are "shocked" by the impact of the car crashing against the church, but no victor is "crowned" by stones falling as in "The Exile's Return."²³ The priest celebrates a Requiem Mass, during which holy water is sprinkled on the deceased (see Staples 88). An orthographic pun on *Dies* / "dies" accompanies what becomes, heralded by line-ending "Day" (l. 23) capitalization, the Day of Judgment (*dies amara valde* = "day bitter above all [others]"), when God will come to judge the world with fire.²⁴ A denouement situates the protagonist in Hell, where his bier also serves as a baby carriage. Standing in as a babysitter, Lucifer as if in a Bosch painting of the tortures of the damned turns the bier/baby carriage and its occupant on a spit: "Here the Lord / Is Lucifer in harness: hand on sword, / He watches me for Mother, and will turn / The bier and baby-carriage where I burn."

3.

The reference to the Day of Judgment toward the end of "At the Altar" is one of several incidental Judgment Day references in *Lord Weary's Castle*, which together presage the two apocalyptic poems that

conclude the volume, "The Dead in Europe" and "Where the Rainbow Ends." A third, "As a Plane Tree by the Water" (49), comes somewhat earlier, and introduces tropes of falling, rising, and standing in an apocalyptic scenario set, as in "Where the Rainbow Ends," in Boston. The biblical verse cited in its title, from Ecclesiasticus 24:14, is hardly foreboding, "I was exalted like a palm-tree in Engaddi, and as a rose-plant in Jericho, as a fair olive-tree in a pleasant field, and grew up as a plane-tree by the water," but little is left of the rose-plant in desiccated Boston, "where the Virgin walks / And roses spiral her enameled face / Or fall to splinters on unwatered streets," recalling the splinters/falling imagery of "At the Altar." In stanza 2, Boston is conflated apocalyptically with Babylon, and the devil's golden tongue "Enchants the masons of the Babel Tower / To raise tomorrow's city to the sun." The tropes mount a counter-action in stanza 3, initiated by St. Bernadette's vision of "Our Lady standing in the cave," followed by an evocation of the falling walls of Jericho, and culminating in a communal hymn, "Sing for the resurrection of the King," which expresses a yearning "for" as much as a celebration of Christ's resurrection.

A plea for Mary's benevolent intervention on "Rising-day" is yearningly voiced in "The Dead in Europe," the poem in *Lord Weary's Castle* most closely connected with Lowell's refusal to serve in World War II after the fire-bombing of Hamburg in August, 1943. First published in the July 12, 1946 issue of the Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, it grants voice to those, the young especially, who fell "hugger-mugger in the jellied fire."²⁵

The Dead in Europe

After the planes unloaded, we fell down	A
Buried together, unmarried men and women;	b
Not crown of thorns, not iron, not Lombard crown,	a
Not grilled and spindle spires pointing to heaven	b
Could save us. Raise us, Mother, we fell down	A
Here hugger-mugger in the jellied fire:	x
Our sacred earth in our day was our curse.	x

Our Mother, shall we rise on Mary's day	A
In Maryland, wherever corpses married	b
Under the rubble, bundled together? Pray	a
For us whom the blockbusters marred and buried;	b
When Satan scatters us on Rising-day,	A
O Mother, snatch our bodies from the fire:	x
Our sacred earth in our day was our curse.	x
Mother, my bones are trembling and I hear	A
The earth's reverberations and the trumpet	b
Bleating into my shambles. Shall I bear,	a
(O Mary!) unmarried man and powder-puppet,	b
Witness to the Devil? Mary, hear,	A
O Mary, marry earth, sea, air and fire;	x
Our sacred earth in our day is our curse. (68)	x

Lowell formally alludes to a traditional stanza whose rules he proceeds to break, lending declamatory force to the central tropes of falling and rising. A seven-line stanza initially rhyming *abab* evokes the canonical seven-line stanza of English-language poetry, variously referred to as the Chaucer or *Troilus* stanza or rhyme royal, whose rhyme scheme is *ababbcc*. After the *abab* introductory rhymes of Lowell's first stanza, the fifth line "ought" to sound another *b* rhyme, to go along with the weak rhymes (i.e., on unaccented terminal syllables) "women / "heaven." Instead, the "we fell down" of line 1 is repeated word for word, "we fell down." The expected *ababb* rhyming pattern thus undergoes a sea change, and thanks to the "we fell down" refrain emerges as *AbabA*. A further rupture in the canonical rhyming program occurs in lines 6 and 7, which fail to rhyme with any preceding lines or with each other to form a prescribed *cc* couplet. One is left instead with *AbabAxx*, and with "fire" and "curse" raging alone. Their autonomy is reinforced by their eschewal of the [n] consonance terminating lines 1-5: "down," women," crown," "heaven," "down."

The "Lombard crown" that sounds the medial *a*-rhyme in stanza 1 might be glossed as a coin, but an allusion to the Lombard crown, an icon of European Christian unity, takes precedence. Its iron band, which might account for the "iron" in line 3, was said to have been

held together by a nail from Christ's cross, which made the crown also a relic of the crucifixion. In the poem's scheme of things, neither Christ's crown of thorns, nor his crucifixion, nor Charlemagne's Lombard crown, nor "grilled and spindle spires pointing toward heaven" (suggesting Gothic church spires) proved sufficient in the most recent European war to preserve the unity of Christian Europe, much less the lives of those who "fell down." Hence the agitated plea, "Raise us, Mother," making her more than merely an intercessor on "Rising-day."

In stanza 2 the "day" A refrain rhyme, "Mary's day" / "Rising-day," switches from foregrounding a trope of falling to one of rising, and renders "Mary's day" and "Rising-day" synonymous. The "married" / "marred" contribution to the poem's Marian wordplay incorporates the god of war, Mars, and invents a participial form for the occasion. A grisly allusion to the colonial New England practice of "bundling" is buried in "married / Under the rubble, bundled together," which suggests a yet closer uniting of bodies than that granted unmarried New England couples.²⁶ The "fire / curse" non-rhyming *xx* conclusion of stanza 1 is repeated in stanza 2, creating a litany-like refrain repeated again at the end of stanza 3. They who perished in "the jellied fire" implore Mary to save them from the fire next time—from the apocalyptic fire that will consume the world, and from the everlasting fire to which the damned will be eternally sentenced on Rising-day, which brings with it the Day of Judgment.

"Where the Rainbow Ends" brings closure to *Lord Weary's Castle* by involving the poet himself in a divine promise of life restored. Tropes of "descending" and "rising and descending" participate in a cosmic drama in stanzas 1 and 2, but in the concluding stanza everything is scaled down to actions the speaker himself performs, or is bidden to perform, climbing altar steps, kneeling, and standing.

Where the Rainbow Ends

I saw the sky descending, black and white,
Not blue, on Boston where the winters wore
The skulls to jack-o'-lanterns on the slates,

And Hunger's skin-and-bone retrievers tore
 The chickadee and shrike. The thorn tree waits
 Its victim and tonight
 The worms will eat the deadwood to the foot
 Of Ararat: the scythers, Time and Death,
 Helmed locusts, move upon the tree of breath;
 The wild ingrafted olive tree and root

Are withered, and a winter drifts to where
 The Pepperpot, ironic rainbow, spans
 Charles River and its scales of scorched-earth miles.
 I saw my city in the Scales, the pans
 Of judgment rising and descending. Piles
 Of dead leaves char the air—
 And I am a red arrow on this graph
 Of Revelations. Every dove is sold
 The Chapel's sharp-shinned eagle shifts its hold
 On serpent-Time, the rainbow's epitaph.

In Boston serpents whistle at the cold.
 The victim climbs the altar steps and sings:
 "Hosannah to the lion, lamb, and beast
 Who fans the furnace-face of IS with wings:
 I breathe the ether of my marriage feast."
 At the high altar, gold
 And a fair cloth. I kneel and the wings beat
 My cheek. What can the dove of Jesus give
 You now but wisdom, exile? Stand and live,
 The dove has brought an olive branch to eat.

In "Where the Rainbow Ends" the poet who throughout *Lord Weary's Castle* had flayed Boston and New England culture as enervated, mercenary, and hidebound stages an exile's return of his own, the venue now being northern, cold, Yankee Boston in place of northern, cold, Hanseatic Lübeck. The "Pepperpot" of stanza 2 is in popular parlance Longfellow Bridge, which connects Boston with Cambridge. Echoes of "The Exile's Return" abound, however, beginning with "I saw the sky descending, black and white, / Not blue," which returns the reader to "The Exile's Return" and its "mounting" opening lines, "There mounts in squalls a sort of rusty mire, / Not ice, not snow." Verbal links between the two poems (I give line numbers parentheti-

cally) include "slates" (3) [i.e., early New England slate gravestones with their engraved skulls] and "slate roofs" (8); "thorn tree" (5) and "walnut tree" (13); "The Chapel's sharp-tinned eagle shifts its hold / On serpent-Time" (19-20) and "braced pig iron dragons grip / The blizzard" (3-4); "exile" (29) and "The Exile's Return." A "rough / Cathedral" becomes a church with a high altar, and an olive branch confirms the vision of postwar peace in "The Exile's Return."

Biblical echoes also abound, beginning with the "I saw" prophetic formula that Allen Ginsberg employs to begin his "Howl" ("I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical naked"). Lowell uses it twice, "I saw the sky descending" in the first stanza and "I saw my city in the Scales" in the second, where it evokes Revelations 21:2, "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." The mystic bridal theme takes on personalized form in stanza 3, "I breathe the ether of my marriage feast," even as the speaker undertakes a role-change from self-proclaimed apocalyptic visionary ("I am a red arrow on this graph / Of Revelations") to a ritual victim, to a participant in a marriage feast.

One may take "the victim" who "climbs the altar steps" as the speaker's reference to himself in the third person, an abrupt switch after his declamatory "I saw," "I saw," "I am." This objectification of himself in the role of victim suggests a ritual role he will play in a sacrifice willingly undertaken, as he climbs the altar steps, singing. An analogy with Jesus as the "victim" who undergoes an "unbloody sacrifice" in the Roman Catholic Mass, in a re-enactment of Christ's "bloody sacrifice," suggests itself.²⁷ One might also read the speaker's assumption of the role of "the victim" in a broader, inclusive sense, however, as a ritualized assumption of a transpersonal, communal identity. The "victim" in *Lord Weary's Castle* is a collective role, initially enacted in the illustration by the biblical first victim, Abel, then by Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who is alluded to along with all subsequent Christian martyrs in the liturgical source of the epigraph (see notes 1 and 3). Both Abel and Stephen are typologically linked

with Jesus, the victim whose redemptive sacrifice is reenacted at the altar. If one includes Lord Wearie's wife and child in the ballad that Lowell's title alludes to, four victims (discounting Lamkin, who is executed) have so to speak died before the reader has reached the first poem. Poem by poem, war by war, homicide by homicide, the number of victims increases. Massacres of the innocent begin with the second poem, "Holy Innocents," which spans biblical times to the present: "Still / The world out-Herods Herod; and the year, / The nineteen-hundred forty-fifth of grace / Lumbers up the clinkered hill / Of our purgation."²⁸ 1945, still very much in the minds of 1946 readers of *Lord Weary's Castle*, had included a continuation of Allied firebombing of German cities (Dresden being just one), continued firebombing of Japanese cities and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and revelations of unspeakable massacres of the innocent in Nazi concentration camps carried out to the very last. The twentieth century, with its massacres of the innocent on an unprecedented scale, had become the worst century for humanity on record.

Still and all, a tonal transformation occurs in stanza 3 which Albert Gelpi summarizes aptly, "The liturgical decorum of the scene surrounds and tempers and mediates 'the furnace-face of IS,' and the sequence of shorter sentences, fitted into verses with more end-stops than usual, contributes to the air of serene and ecstatic assurance" (64). Subtle modulations in the rhyme scheme also occur, as when at the beginning of the stanza the "sold/hold" rhyme of the preceding stanza turns "cold" before becoming transmuted to "gold." The *c*-rhyme "beast/feast" consolidates into the *d*-rhyme "beat/eat." Such incidental rhyming events need not be over-interpreted, or even interpreted at all, but they serve to suggest something important is going on, transformation is taking place. Meter is also affected. Instead of the line-six iambic trimeter that the "Scholar Gypsy" stanza predicates, one encounters a six-syllable line whose four final syllables require three heavy stresses, "At the hígh áltar, góld." Scan it as you will, call it an Iconic (minor) followed by an iamb if you must, the line cannot possibly be read as iambic trimeter. The following line also

begins with a pyrrich followed by a spondee, "And a fáir clóth." Quietly expressing wonder, with "fair" echoing Shakespearean diction, the sentence fragment jettisons the declamatory rhetorical mode of the poem thus far to render in something like *erlebte Rede* the private, internal speech of the protagonist-poet.

"At the high altar, gold" brings to mind the gold at the altar built by Solomon for the Temple, alluded to in "At the Altar" (see above, p. 41). Lowell now alludes to his own allusion, shriving it of its earlier sacrilegious application. The locution "the furnace-face of IS" evokes God's self-declaration to Moses from the burning bush Exodus 3:14, "I AM THAT I AM," Lowell substituting a furnace for a bush, as it were. Associatively more to the point is the burnt sacrifice to God on an altar of a male animal (or Isaac, until Abraham is told to desist), which is rendered in Hebrew by "'olah," meaning "that which goes up." The *'olah* was consumed by fire, causing smoke to rise.²⁹ In biblical Greek translation *'olah* becomes *holokauston* ("that which is completely burned"), hence modern English Holocaust. Many prefer "Shoah" (Hebrew, "calamity") as it avoids the implication that the Jews who "went up in smoke" in concentration camp crematoria were sacrifices to a furnace-face god requiring burnt sacrifice. Lowell did not write directly of the Holocaust, but associations with both the victims who died "in the jellied fire" and those who died in concentration camp crematoria are stirred as the victim who climbs the steps to the altar sings his hymn, praying for deliverance. The following line, "I breathe the ether of my marriage feast," attests that the furnace-face of IS has been (to paraphrase Gelpi) tempered through mediation. The victim, who like Isaac is spared, in the simplest and most basic life-giving act "breathes." As he breathes in, the smoke and smell of human sacrifice on an altar to a furnace-face god are replaced by the ether of a mystic marriage feast.

In another transposition, a dove supersedes the winged "lion, lamb, and beast" and awakens associations with the dove that descended from Heaven at Christ's baptism, "the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him" (Matthew 3:16). Addressing himself as

an exile, the kneeling protagonist asks "What can the dove of Jesus give / You now but wisdom, exile?"³⁰ No longer a self-styled doomsday prophet, he self-ironically acknowledges his lack of wisdom as if he were belittling it, whereupon he hears a voice bid him "Stand and live," an injunction that echoes in a different tone and grammatical mood the "and your life is in your hands" concluding advisory in "The Exile's Return." What the poet-protagonist hears now is a voice pronouncing the biblical formula that Christ utters in Mark 5:41, "And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Tal-i-tha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." The very words Jesus speaks to the girl whom he restores from death are preserved in Aramaic in the Greek text, and in the King James English translation. Luther and other German translators use "Stehe auf" for the vernacular gloss on the Aramaic, which conveys the straightforward literal meaning "stand" or "stand up" that English translators commonly render "arise" or "rise up," as in Acts 3:6: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The voice addressing Lowell, if one will in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, prefers plain-style "Stand and live."³¹

Switching from the imperative to the indicative, the sentence continues on, into the final line of the poem: "The dove has brought an olive branch to eat." The speaking voice, also continuing, conflates the dove of Jesus conceived of as the Holy Spirit, dispenser of wisdom, and the dove bearing an olive branch signalling to Noah the end of the Flood (Genesis 8:11). The voice thus annuls the protagonist's doomsday allusion to the Flood proclaimed in stanza 1, "The worms will eat the deadwood to the foot / Of Ararat." Within the poem's autobiographical frames of reference, the olive branch symbolizes a peace to be struck, in a newly found spirit of wisdom, between the poet and the Boston/New England culture he had excoriated throughout *Lord Weary's Castle* and in the initial stanzas of "Where the Rainbow Ends." In Roman Catholic sacramental terms, the olive branch also serves as a Eucharist which the poet is bidden "to eat."

Lowell had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1941/2, but his faith waned during the years following the publication of *Lord Weary's Castle*. No longer imbued with a Christian promise of resurrection, recurrent tropes of falling, rising, and standing manage nonetheless in Lowell's later poetry to affirm capacities of human endurance. In "Skunk Hour" they culminate after tropes of falling and climbing in the figure of the poet, mentally and spiritually battered, standing: "I stand on the top / of our back steps and breathe the rich air" (192). Lowell no longer proclaims "I breathe the ether of my marriage feast," and he records no quasi-mystical experience. Only a capacity to endure. He did find one occasion, however, to quote directly from "Where the Rainbow Ends." Incised on his father's gravestone is "Stand and live / The dove has brought an olive branch to eat."

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NOTES

¹The illustration is reproduced in Lowell's *Collected Poems* (3), on which my quotations from Lowell's verse are based. In the 1946 first edition the illustration appeared at the center of the title page, between "Lord Weary's Castle" and "Robert Lowell," where it emblematically inaugurates a master trope of the book. Viewed exegetically, it portends a Christian transfiguration of Abel. Lines radiating from his head register the impact of his fall, but also inscribe a type of halo that often adorns statues of saints or of Jesus himself. The slightly twisted body recalls depictions of Christ's body after the deposition from the cross, but the distortion of perspective and seemingly inverted position of the "upside-down" body also bring to mind the martyrdom of Saint Peter, traditionally portrayed as an inverted crucifixion, as in Rubens's altar painting in Saint Peter's Church in Cologne, Germany. A determinedly exegetical reading of the title page might include the cross-like design formed by "Lord Weary's Castle," "Robert Lowell," and the illustration. A reader would have found initial help with the provenance of the title in a note on a subsequent page where Lowell quotes the opening stanza of "an old ballad": "It's Lambkin was a mason good / As ever built wi'stane: / He built Lord Wearie's castle / But payment gat he nane ..." (5). An anonymous Scottish ballad titled "Lamkin" proves to be the source which a diligent first-edition reader could have found in Child's *The English and Scottish*

Popular Ballads (2: 320-42, with alternate versions). The stonemason Lamkin, spelled "Lambkin" in Lowell's note, is, like Cain, a murderer. When Lord Wearie refuses to pay him for building a castle, he revenges himself by killing Lord Wearie's wife and son. Lamkin is subsequently executed, after Lord Wearie "returned from o'er the sea." Lord Weary makes a subliminal appearance, accompanied by Abel, in "Shako" (41), an adaptation of Rilke's "Letzter Abend" which features a "falling" with no equivalent in Rilke's sonnet: "Wearily by the broken altar, Abel / Remembers how brothers fell apart." On the following day, the Battle of Waterloo in Lowell's adaptation, "brothers" will fall apart and become enemies, and in a grisly literalization will also "fall apart" on the field of battle. Lowell's "the broken altar" is a virtual quotation of the initial line of George Herbert's "The Altar," "A broken Altar, Lord, thy servant reares." Herbert's analogy of a broken altar and a broken heart casts the Lord in the role of master stonemason: "A Heart alone / Is such a stone, / As nothing but / Thy pow'r doth cut." The poet as the Lord's apprentice stonemason "reares" (rhyming with his "teares") a poem in the visual form of an altar, in the Christian hope "That if I chance to hold my peace, / These stones to praise thee may not cease."

²Lowell employs the stanza at greatest length in "In Memory of Arthur Winslow" (23-25), a sequence of four poems, each composed in two ten-line stanzas, and in "The Death of the Sheriff" (66-67), written in six ten-line stanzas. Some poems work minor variations, such as by retaining a pentameter in the sixth line or by altering the sestet's rhymes to *abcabc*. "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" (14-18), whose opening lines rhyme *abcbca*, makes inventive use of the stanza in sections IV and VI. Years later, Lowell humorously alluded to Arnold's poem (using American spelling) in the opening lines of "Soft Wood" in *Near the Ocean*: "Sometimes I have supposed seals / must live as long as the Scholar Gypsy" (370). I know of no other poet who has adopted the stanza, which Arnold himself used subsequently in "Thyrsis."

³An epigraph on a page otherwise blank in the first edition reads: "Suscipe, Domine, munera pro tuorum commemoratione Sanctorum: ut, sicut illos passio gloriosos effecit; ita nos devotio reddat innocuos," which the *Collected Poems* translates: "Receive, O Lord, these gifts for the commemoration of Thy saints, that just as their passion made them glorious, so may our devotion free us from sin" (1006). The *CP* identifies the Roman Catholic liturgical source of the epigraph as "the Secret of the Mass for the finding of the body of St. Stephen Protomartyr, celebrated August 3." Lamkin's trade as a stonemason associates him covertly with the stoning of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr: a stone said to have been used in his stoning may be viewed in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Halberstadt, Germany. In the biblical account of his martyrdom, Stephen falls to his knees in prayer: "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7: 60), echoing Christ's prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34). Typologically, Abel is a forerunner of both Christ and St. Stephen, a linkage supported by a Jewish tradi-

tion which records that Cain used a stone to kill his brother. Milton draws upon it in Book XI of *Paradise Lost* when Adam is accorded a revelation of postlapsarian human history, beginning with a murder: Cain “inly raged, and as they talked, / Smote him into the midriff with a stone / That beat out life; he fell, and deadly pale / Groaned out his soul with gushing blood effused” (ll. 444-47). On the tradition and Cowley’s use of it as well, see Fowler’s note on Milton’s lines. Milton no doubt intended “gushing blood effused” to be read as a typological anticipation of the crucified Jesus’s effusion of blood from his side. Lowell began his own account of human history in “History” (421), the opening sonnet in his massive sequence *History*, with a reference to Cain’s murder of Abel.

⁴The H. T. Lowe-Porter translation of “Tonio Kröger” was published in England by Secker and Warburg in 1936 and in America in 1945 by Knopf as part of Mann’s *Stories of Three Decades*. I quote from a paperback reprint of the American edition. “Tonio Kröger” was first published in Germany in 1903.

⁵See Prater 31, 497, 501 and *passim* for biographical details referred to in this paragraph.

⁶In his letter of September 7, 1943 to President Roosevelt, Lowell declared his grounds for refusing military service after the firebombing of Hamburg, the mining of the Möhne and Eder Dams, and the declaration of a policy of unconditional surrender (*Collected Prose* 367-70). On the firebombing of Hamburg, code-named Operation Gomorrah, and the massive firestorms it generated, see the 424-page study by the British military historian Martin Middlebrook, *The Battle of Hamburg: The Firestorm Raid*. In a 1969 interview, Lowell recalled: “It was a time when Churchill, Brendan Bracken and Roosevelt met and said: we intend to burn something, and ruthlessly destroy, and we’re saturating Hamburg and the northern German cities, the civilian population. They announced their policy of unconditional surrender. It seemed to me we were doing just what the Germans were doing. I was a Roman Catholic at the time, and we had a very complicated idea of what was called ‘the unjust war.’ It is obviously a possibility that there may be two kinds of wars and one merges into the other. But this policy seemed to me to be clearly unjust. So I refused to go to the army and was sent to jail. I spent about five months in jail and mopped the floors. Then I was paroled and free to write. After that I felt that you weren’t getting beyond your depth in protesting unjust wars” (“Et in America Ego” 143). For further material on Lowell’s conscientious objection and a discussion of several poems related to it in *Land of Unlikeness* (1944), *Lord Weary's Castle*, and others published in magazines during World War II, see my 1999 essay.

⁷Staples first noted, briefly, a connection with *Tonio Kröger* (34, 93).

⁸Readers of Lowe-Porter’s translation of Mann’s “Ja, wir gehen nun also über die Wälle” as “All right; let’s go over the wall” would mistakenly assume that “die Wälle” was a wall, and that Tonio and Hans climbed over it. David Luke’s 1970 translation makes a better job of it: “Well, then, let’s go round along the

promenade!" Similarly, and correctly, Luke has "Along the Mühlenwall and the Holstenwall, and that'll take us as far as your house, Hans" (153).

⁹Lowell indulges in poetic license by making it "cow the Yankee commandant." Lübeck was taken and occupied by the British. For a first-hand British account of the liberation/occupation of Lübeck in 1945, see Arthur Geoffrey Dickens. The British were indeed regarded as liberators, as Lübeck was taken and occupied by them rather than the Russians (81-82 and *passim*). The Rathaus, before which in Lowell's poem the "unseasoned liberators" ground arms, was the seat of the British military government (32). Dickens, a distinguished historian fluent in German and a devotee of Mann's novels, does not record the fate of the walnut tree, but he notes that the Mann family house, fictionalized in "Tonio Kröger" and *Buddenbrooks*, "like many another fine patrician residence, consists of nothing more than a pathetic baroque façade" (32).

¹⁰On his deformity and his career, see Shirer 123-29.

¹¹If understood as seen at a distance, the Rhineland cathedral "roughly" envisioned that one immediately thinks of is the lofty Cologne Cathedral, whose outline one sees against the horizon as one approaches Cologne from afar. It survived pretty well intact "the night of the thousand bombers" and succeeding raids on Cologne; used for targeting orientation, it was precious. On Allied bombing of Cologne, see Grayling (his index directs one to extensive coverage).

¹²On Lübeck's selection as the first German city for firebombing, Grayling comments: "Because Bomber Command's primary focus was now the 'enemy civilian population,' the Air Staff was eager to experiment with a bombing technique using a high proportion of incendiaries. For this purpose the old Hanseatic city on the Baltic coast was chosen, because it contained many timbered buildings dating from medieval times... the RAF's experimental bombing of the wooden city of Lübeck, suggested that bomb load should consist entirely of incendiaries" (51, 119). In summer of 1942 Arthur "Bomber" Harris warned German civilians "We are bombing Germany, city by city, and ever more terribly, in order to make it impossible for you to go on with the war. That is our object. We shall pursue it remorselessly. City by city; Lübeck, Rostock, Cologne, Emden, Bremen, Wilhelmshaven, Duisburg, Hamburg—and the list will grow longer and longer" (qtd. by Grayling, 50; from Probert 252).

¹³Yenser speaks of a "journey" completed in "Where the Rainbow Ends," but notes that the term "might give a false impression of the organization of this volume, for the concluding poem is hardly different in outlook from 'The Exile's Return.'... The journey might be thought of as circular ..." (80). Not explicitly invoking journeying as a metaphor, Axelrod foregrounds a pattern of contested movement leading ultimately to life restored: "In a pattern characteristic of his later books, *Lord Weary's Castle* moves through death to life, through pain to wisdom, affirming finally, after bitter testing, the value of experience and the necessity of survival" (73).

¹⁴On the textual evolution of the poem (in manuscript versions a Cain-like speaker addresses his victim as "Brother"), see Axelrod 65-68. Although Lowell discarded "The Blood of Cain; a New England Sequence" as a sequence title, "Rebellion" still follows "Salem," "Concord," and "Children of Light" and "accurately reveals his underlying notion that the history of colonial (Puritan) and modern (Protestant) New England in some sense parallels Cain's murder of Abel. Lowell's use of the metaphor is complicated by the fact that it enacts one of his deepest contradictions: his sense of himself as both sinner and sinned-against. Intellectually, Lowell may abhor Cain's violent rebellion, which he identifies as Satanic ..., but emotionally he identifies himself *with* Cain... . Lowell thus brings to his poems on New England history a deep division within his own mind" (64-65).

¹⁵In a March 4, 1937 letter to his father, Lowell wrote: "one cannot get away with striking his father or for that matter using violence to anyone. I am sorry and wish to be forgiven" (*Letters* 13).

¹⁶See *OED*, "hove," *v.*¹ l. b. "To lie at anchor," or to "heave," 20. c., "heave to," "to bring the ship to a standstill by setting the sails so as to counteract each other; to make her lie to."

¹⁷Presumably the falling occurred before the catching, and the dead in any event "fell" long before. Travisano provides, however, a classical foil for Lowell's tableau: "On this moonlit night, the speaker's dream seems to take him to a Vergilian underworld, where the dead reach out in supplication" (156).

¹⁸Williamson draws attention to the uniqueness of "Between the Porch and the Altar" in *Lord Weary's Castle*: "There is one remarkable poem ... that treats both the Catholic and the Protestant experiences, both Edwardsian melancholy and apocalyptic imagination, in a context of contemporary personal problems that are, presumably, in part autobiographical. It is also the first poem to hint at Lowell's disillusionment with Catholicism ... and [it] represents a break with earlier work, too, in its overt use of Freudian insights, and in its multiplication of perspectives: it employs the first-person voice of two of the characters, and, in the first section, an authorial third-person that can modulate into and out of the consciousness of the obsessed protagonist" (47). Lowell's title echoes Joel 2:17, "Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare thy people." It also recalls George Herbert's *The Temple*, with its two-part division "The Church Porch" and "The Church," which begins with "The Altar." Jean Stafford, Lowell's wife at the time, used the same title for her short story "Between the Porch and the Altar," which appeared in the June 1945 issue of *Harper's Bazaar* (reprinted in Stafford 407-11); Hobsbaum (37) notes a parallel between it and the "Katherine's Dream" section of Lowell's poem.

¹⁹Years later, Lowell used the "stands/hands" rhyme in "Near the Ocean," (394), "The hero stands / stunned by the applauding hands" (ll. 2-3) and in "Brunetto Latini" (414): "'O Son,' he answered, 'anyone who stands / still a

moment will lie here a hundred years, / helpless to brush the sparks off with his hands." By breaking his line at "stands" and thus semantically severing "stands still" for a moment, Lowell engineers a now-you-see-it, now-you-don't play on the antithesis stands/lie.

²⁰The shot was fired from a flintlock of the sort that the memorial Minuteman holds in his right hand; the flintlock that fell from above the chimney in "Rebellion" became a blunt weapon in a different New England rebellion. The militiamen acquired the sobriquet "Minutemen" as they were ready to take up arms in a minute in defense of liberty; hence much later the "Minuteman" missile. At a reading in 1955 Lowell confirmed (see Staples 88) that the object of the speaker's facetious remarks is the memorial statue, also referred to in "Concord" (30): "Ten thousand Fords are idle here in search / Of a tradition. Over these dry sticks— / The Minute Man, the Irish Catholics, / The ruined bridge and Walden's fished-out perch—" For a color photograph of the statue, see Concord's website, <<http://www.concordMa.com>>.

²¹Hobsbaum states flatly, though implausibly, that the opening locale is "a nightclub ironically called 'The Altar'" (37). One might simply read the title "At the Altar" as synonymous with "at a gold table" in line 1. This evokes the age-old controversy (implying more "Catholic," "Lutheran", or "Reformed" views of the Eucharist) as to whether the requisite accoutrement in a church should be called "table" or "altar" and where it should be placed.

²²The complete text of Jane Taylor's poem "The Star," generally known simply as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," is available online at <<http://www.kiddies.com/lyrics>>. The Mad Hatter's song in Chapter VII of *Alice in Wonderland* parodies it, and the Hatter's singing causes the Dormouse to sing in its sleep "Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle."

²³The "stones / bones" rhyme echoes the "stones / bones" rhyme in "Children of Light" (31), "Our fathers wrung their bread from stocks and stones / And fenced their gardens with the Redman's bones" (ll. 1-2), which echoes Milton's "stones / bones" rhyme in "On the late Massacre in Piedmont," "Avenge O Lord thy slaughtered saints, whose bones / Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold, / Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old / When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones" (ll. 1-4).

²⁴The *Collected Poems* notes that the Latin is from the Responory of the Mass on Ash Wednesday, and that in a Requiem Mass it appears not as part of the opening "Dies irae" sequence but in "Libera me" (1019).

²⁵Recipes for incendiary bombs included magnesium, phosphorous, and petroleum jelly, hence "jellied fire" (see Grayling 17). Anthony Hecht, although principally concerned with Holocaust victims among the dead in Europe, apparently alludes to the "jellied fire" of Allied bombing in "Words for the Day of Atonement," section IV of "Rites and Ceremonies" in *The Hard Hours* (1946), which reads in part: "And to what purpose, as the darkness closes about / And the child

screams in the jellied fire" (*Collected Earlier Poems* 45). Allied firebombing of civilians explicitly identified as Germans is linked with devotion to Mary in "The North Sea Undertaker's Complaint" (36), and the bombing of Hildesheim is alluded to in "The Blind Leading the Blind" (64). In my 1999 essay I discuss additional poems on Allied bombing of civilians that were published in *Land of Unlikeness* and separately in magazines during the war.

²⁶See Dana Doten, *The Art of Bundling* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1938), available online at <<http://www.threeriverms.com/bundlingartcontents.htm>> and Patricia Cummings, "Bundling: A Courtship Ritual With Ancient Roots" at <<http://www.quiltersmuse.com/bundling.htm>>.

²⁷In the liturgy with which Lowell as an ardent convert was familiar, the priest who has climbed the altar steps will utter at the consecration of the Host Christ's words, "Hoc est enim Corpus meum" ["For this is my Body"] and at the consecration of the wine "Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis mei, novi et aeterni testamenti, mysterium fidei, qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum" ["For this is the Chalice of my Blood of the new and eternal covenant; the mystery of faith, which will be shed for you and for many unto the forgiveness of sins"]. There follows, in the official formulation of the bilingual *Saint Joseph Sunday Missal* (published 1953), "the offering of the victim" and the offering up (to quote the English translation) of "the pure Victim, the holy Victim, the all-perfect Victim."

²⁸Lowell echoes Hamlet's instruction to the players, "it out-Herods Herod, pray you avoid it" (III.ii), which alludes to the ranting mass murderer of medieval mystery plays.

²⁹See the entry "Sacrifice" (599-616) in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* on the eleven types of sacrifice and, specifically, on the "burnt offering" (601-02).

³⁰Yenser maintains that "the 'exile' of this poem is surely that of the first poem, this arrival at the altar must be intended to conclude the journey begun in the first poem" (80); similarly, Hobsbaum writes, "'Where the Rainbow Ends' ... is a vision of Boston at the end of its tether as seen by, quite explicitly, the protagonist of 'The Exile's Return'" (35). I prefer to speak of linkage rather than unitary identity; one also needs to distinguish between "the protagonist" of "The Exile's Return" (to some degree Tonio restored to textual life) and the speaker, unless one wishes to read the entire text as an interior monologue of a fictively resurrected Tonio (or Mann). One might read "exile" as a direct object, along with "wisdom," of "give," a possibility not considered by Yenser, Hobsbaum, or Axelrod (73); while I find such a reading forced, it remains latent within the text, ready for the reader to activate it as a witty equivocation. The voice that the protagonist will hear dissolves any pretence to wittiness: there are more serious things at stake.

³¹Donne himself voices the "arise from death" formula in Holy Sonnet VII, followed, however, by his metamorphosis from a declamatory, apocalyptic visionary

to a subdued lyric self. In the Petrarchan octave he is a self-appointed impresario of a spectacular vision of a rising-day like that summoned up in "The Dead in Europe," but in the sestet he abjures eschatological theatricality, humbling himself in the here and now on "lowly ground":

At the round earths imagined corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of soules, and to your scattered bodies goe,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom warrs, death, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
Shall behold God, and never taste deaths woe,
But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace,
When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood. (343-44)

Lowell is not writing a Petrarchan sonnet, but the rhetorical strategy and structural proportions of his poem are roughly analogous, two stanzas of the sort of ego-inflation attendant upon casting oneself in the role of biblical doomsday prophet, followed by muted internal speech. Lowell's ending, in which a reassuring voice is heard, is more Herbertian (e.g., the ending of "The Collar") than Donnean. It was, however, Milton's uses of tropes of falling, rising, and standing in *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere (*Lycidas*, sonnet on his blindness, etc.) that worked most powerfully on and in Lowell's literary imagination. In my 1999 essay I discuss a striking example in *Land of Unlikeness*.

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