

Aspects of a Dolphinarium :

Robert Lowell's Subjective Correlative

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T S. Eliot's notorious (though in context perfectly harmless) "objective correlative" was conjured out of the supposition that Hamlet's "emotion" was "in excess of the facts as they appear."¹ Lowell is Eliot's Hamlet's converse. For him, the "facts" outloom the ability to articulate their human content, their emotional meaning. In his poetry they encompass an I.R.A. bombing, the assassination of Robert Kennedy, moon-landings, Mao's China and the Spock sentences in Boston — as well as that perpetual event, Norman Mailer, whose preying omniverousness of journalistic immediacy married to genuine insight probably spurred the poet to fruitful emulation; another remarkable encompassing is that of the death from cancer of the young British athlete Lillian Board. Lowell seems actually to have encountered her, in one of those inspired Contingency Plans which seem sometimes to provide a substitute for a superannuated Providence:

Flipping the *Sundays* for notice of my new book,
I lost my place to a tall girl, a spine and ribs;
she bought every paper, even *News of the World* —
she had reason, her face on every front page:
Olympic runner, Lillian Board, and twenty,
told yesterday she is a cancer victim. . . .²

To be fair to the poet, the poem moves off less predictably from this honourable flatness, this poetically barren integrity (but note the macabre Dantesque concision of "a spine and ribs") where "the poetry does not matter"; but, as we can see in another poem tethered to an event (*My Lai*), the poem challenges us to ask for "poetry," creates its charge out of the awful way the speaker expresses him-

self as an integral part of its artistict effect. If we protest that this is not what I. A. Richards once called Art in Gothic letters,³ then Art in Gothic Letters is going to have to sit this one out:

It was at My Lai or Sonmy or something,
 it was this afternoon . . . We had these orders,
 we had all night to think about it —
 we was to burn and kill, then there'd be nothing
 standing, women, children, babies, cows, cats . . .
 As soon as we hopped the choppers, we started shooting.
 I remember . . . as we was coming up upon one area
 in Pinkville, a man with a gun . . . running — this lady . . .
 Lieutenant LaGuerre said, "Shoot her." I said,
 "You shoot her, I don't want to shoot no lady."
 She had one foot in the door . . . When I turned her,
 there was this little one-month-year-old baby
 I thought was her gun. It kind of cracked me up.

(*History*, p. 199)

This is the muse of decreation, which subordinates adequacy to authenticity, which has as much use for the inarticulate as the articulate, knows the resonance of the solecism. "It is with your own proper fictive covering that you hide their nakedness and make them wise."⁴ Or, if you don't like it, it is the Fallacy of Imitative Form.⁵

In "For the Union Dead"

Shows Hiroshima boiling

a commercial photograph

but

A savage servility
 Slides by on grease⁶

As Gabriel Pearson remarks, "the mass media's numbing of the horror vindicates the poet's role."⁷ Lowell's poetic persona, to adapt Eliot, is specifically that of a man who suffers, and is not simply that of the man who experiences. As he himself significantly says: "In truth I seem to have felt mostly the joys of living; in remembering, in recording, thanks to the gift of the Muse, it is the pain."⁸ The posited self of the poetry — a constant, a hard core at the centre of its kaleidoscopic and virtuoso capacity for stylistic self-metamorphosis — is the self aware of being

hemmed in and defined by a "global village," an electronic cell whose stock-in-trade is "horror and falsity and wrong," in Wallace Stevens' phrase.

It is easy to misunderstand the nature of his art, however: Lowell is not really a public or occasional poet; the reader must go elsewhere for his *vin Audenaire*. When he writes, for example, on Robert Kennedy

Doom was woven in your nerves, your shirt,
Woven in the great clan

the result is a little stilted and dutiful, like a reissue of the tired choric parts of *Murder in the Cathedral* or *The Family Reunion*.

If we look at a better example of his late art, "Mastodon," we will see that it is hardly a poem about mastodon, nor about Jews in concentration camps, but a confluence, a "complex of emotions" out of the reach of instamatic journalism, and as such a mirror of the mind and a much more powerful plea for a noosphere of increasingly aware humaneness. Man is irremediably cruel, and so is Nature, red in tooth and claw, and so is the cold economy of Art. But Ariel, the logos, is common, and the poet is any man of imagination.

They splashed red on the Jews about to be killed,
then ploughed them back and forth in captured tanks;
the wood was stacked, the chainsaw went on buzzing.
In the best of worlds, the jailors follow the jailed.
In some final bog, the mastodon,
curled tusks raised like trumpets to the sky,
sunk to their hips and armpits in red mud,

Good narrative is cutting down description;
nature sacrifices heightening
for the inevitable closing line.⁹

Conversely, the critique of the self that runs throughout his work is constant, and the quest for self-objectification shows more "enterprise/In walking naked" than ever did Yeats, Concomitantly, then, in *The Dolphin*, from which the above is taken, we have as lacerating a proscription of self-inflation as the doppelgänger section of *Little Gidding*.

One might characterize this collection by referring to its cunningly intermittent and calculatedly unsuccessful attempts to approximate to a novel: but, like the late B. S. Johnson, what he is not interested in is *fiction* in the most obvious sense: structured partly by his own life, the collection ushers us into the world of the poet — settling into his country house of Milgate, in Kent, with “Caroline,” his third wife — though he does refer to his first son, at whose birth we are present, as “our bastard” —

Little Gingersnap Man, homoform,
Flat and sore and alcoholic red;¹⁰

but nevertheless tormented by the continuing emotional presence of “Lizzie” (Elizabeth Hardwick) and his daughter Harriet. The jagged, profound sundering so amply registered by the poetry makes Jonathan Raban’s comment that “we hear the furies of America offstage”¹¹ combine insensitivity (if not cruelty) and critical ineptitude, dictated partly by his desire to present a certain flattering facile contrast of America and England. Indeed, this comment is on all fours with the earlier one on *Life Studies*: “Lowell used his own family, his own life, like pieces of litmus paper; he watched them colouring under the acid of contemporary history” (p. 26). A little metaphor is a dangerous thing. It is because the poet was once tempted to behave in this (very-Stephen-Dedalian) way, unable to see his parents for the litmus paper, that self-alienation abounds and the poetry is nothing if not a poetry of exorcism — of unsuccessful exorcism. Nor do we think less of the poet on account of his lack of success. Comparable effects abound in *The Dolphin*. “Records” (p. 31) appears to be an edited transcript of his second wife’s letter:

... I got the letter
this morning, the letter you wrote me Saturday.
I thought my heart would break a thousand times,
but I would rather have read it a thousand times
than the detached unreal ones you wrote before —
you doomed to know what I have known with you,
lying with someone fighting unreality —
love vanquished by his mysterious carelessness.

Dispensing with the scrupulous impersonality he went to school with in his Eliot days, Lowell nevertheless has the Jamesian cunning to leave his own response unembodied in a cloud of romantic rhetoric, the starkness reverberating in the noosphere. Lowell's ambition to annex the traditional preserve of the novelist with its ampler range, while maintaining the incandescence of poetry, is explicit, e.g. in a passage which continues the theme broached above:

My words are English, but the plot is hexed:
 one man, one woman, the common novel plot.
 what you love you are . . .
You can't carry your talent with you like a suitcase.
Don't you dare mail us the love your life denies;
do you really know what you have done?

(p.48)

I see the ideal reader of Lowell as a kind of schizophrenic one of whose halves is telling him that Lowell is splashing around in the late books in the freedom of a hard-earned Dolphinarium, and the other that he is a grizzled Orpheus performing on a lute without strings. With problems like these, he retorts, who needs solutions. I incline to oppose the latter, but I am aware of him, even if, in what follows, I seem to be cutting him out completely.

To return, then, to those great final lines of "For the Union Dead," that key poem, to define my *point de repère*: in a sense the "savage servility" which "slides by on grease" breathtakingly saves the poem: it, the servility, can no longer simply be identified with the "giant finned cars" which "nose forward like fish" — the lines qualify these phrases, but contain more. They are a psychic reality which ingests and transcends the actuality of the modern Boston they are partly intended to represent.

The game is a dangerous one. The symbolism of the poem leans very heavily indeed on the "contingency plan" in which the statue of Colonel Shaw, commander of a negro regiment in the Civil War, is "propped by a plank splint" while "dinosaur steamshovels" are "gouging" an "underworld garage." Colonel Shaw is the symbol of a tradition

embodying spiritual and humane values; modern Boston is "history is bunk" Ford and the common values of the market: as such, the presented diptych is open to the accusation of being as facile and arbitrary a dispenser of poetic injustice as T. S. Eliot has been accused of being in some of his dichotomising juxtapositions.¹² Jonathan Raban brings out the difficulty involved when he says of one line that "the orange girders of the modern vandals are 'Puritan-pumpkin-colored' — their colour is the only thing that is remotely Puritan about them" (p.176) — Yes, one feels, this is what the poet is implying — and the irony is too heavy to be supported by mere girders.

The earlier Lowell's poetic "problem" then, can partly be defined by pointing out the kind of control that the manner of T. S. Eliot had over his whole policy and proceedings, understandably enough. Eliot created technical problems for him, structural problems, that other poets did not. Textural reminiscence of other poets there is — but a controlled appropriation that only adds to his stature: Marianne Moore drifts into "For the Union Dead" in the Colonel's "angry wrenlike vigilance" as well as in his being "as lean/As a compass-needle"; then the same poet is transposed to accommodate the early Ted Hughes perhaps, as

yellow dinosaur steamshovels were grunting
as they cropped up tons of mush and grass
to gouge their underworld garage;

in "Near the Ocean" we have Marvell sieved through Auden (sprinkled with Joyce):

Sleep, sleep. The ocean, grinding stones
can only speak the present tense;
nothing will age, nothing will last. . . .¹³

while in "Norman Mailer" he negotiates the dangerous grandiloquence of Wallace Stevens, which can so easily turn into what Stevens would call a blubber of tom-toms:

The 9 a.m. man on the street is a new
phenomenon to me: he moves. He moves
in one direction up Fifth Avenue,
and up fifth avenue, simplex as pigeons. . . .¹⁴

while John Berryman, minimizing Lowell's indebtedness to others, selects "Fear/The yellow chirper, beaks its cage" as an outstanding example of the "original."¹⁵ But would they have taken the form they do without the precedent of Hopkins' famous lines on "The Caged Skylark"?

Objective correlatives and Lowell's problem are illuminated, I think, by Matthew Arnold's dictum that "Religion . . . has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it";¹⁶ in a sense poetry should also beware of "fact," as we have seen in "For the Union Dead." Eliot, history and correlative clump heavily together into its companion poem, "Salem":

Where was it that New England bred the men
Who quartered the Leviathan's fat flanks
And fought the British lion to his knees?

(p.36)

This is the poet as Burbank ". . . Who clipped the lion's Wings/And flea'd his rump and pared his claws?"¹⁷ Burbank has not on the whole fared well with the critics (Grover Smith said the poem was "in execrable taste"¹⁸). Even so, Eliot seems nimbler than Lowell here, and is not trapped, as the young poet was, into leaning against a cardboard facade of "history" in the textbook sense. His later concept of "history" has a more satisfactory subtlety (e.g. History is "what you cannot touch"¹⁹). History encompasses intimacy, and *History* (1973), that magnificent archaeological reconstruction from *Notebook* (1970), realises that. Besides, not only are intimate experiences "historicized," but conversely "history" is forced out of its normal meaning of "torture for schoolboys" and is made inward and intimate. Lizzie and Harriet and Caroline and "Sheridan splashing in his blue balloon tire" and Clytemnestra are one:

"After my marriage, I found myself in constant companionship with this almost stranger I found neither agreeable, interesting, nor admirable, though he was always kind and irresponsible. The first year after our first child was born, his daddy was out at sea; that helped, I could bask

on the couch of inspiration, and my dreams.
 Our courtship was rough, his disembarkation
 unwisely abrupt. I was animal,
 healthy, easily tired; I adored luxury,
 and should have been an extrovert; I usually
 managed to make myself pretty comfortable
 Well," she laughed, "we were both glad to dazzle."
 A genius temperament should be handled with care."
 (p.34)

Better a Clytemnestra "subjectively" reified out of personal relationships than an "objectivity" which takes its cue from third-rate Victorian translations.

Like "Salem," "Concord" can be accused of being a waste land myth, a "facile evasion" — though Jonathan Raban underestimates the poem: "Ten thousand Fords are idle here in search/Of a tradition." History-is-bunk Ford, the god of history in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* — the first really authentic *deus-ex-machina* — intensifies the search for a history he has abolished. I admit that "idle . . . in search" is a clumsy paradox. But why discuss Heraclitus on discord as Raban does (p. 17) when the tag used (referred to, rather) is the one about not being able to step twice into the same river²⁰ — a vital tag for the historiographer which Lowell uses (modified) in *Notebook* (1970), (p. 50)? But it is all perhaps too close to being a restatement of *The Rock*, say, — "modern secularism is self-defeating" — combined with a perhaps too-pat opposition to self-satisfied American drive and energy:

Mammon's unbridled industry, the lurch
 For forms to harness Heraclitus' stream!

There is textural density enough, and the queasy paradoxical flippancy of "unbridled" versus "harness" brings home the futility poetically enough — but the regulative concept, in Kant's sense, remains simple in that unsatisfactory, derivatively Eliotic way.

It may help simply to restate or redefine the earlier Lowell's "problem" as the occupational hazard of symbolism preying on realism. In a revision to his "Afterthought" to *Notebook* Lowell says that he "leans heavily to the

rational" but is "devoted to unrealism" — "*unrealism*" (p. 262) being a deliberate change from the earlier "surrealism": a tribute to his heavy battle-scarred involvement with "realism." One of the most satisfactory things about Lowell's poetry is the way in which it seems continually to be learning from itself. One can say of him, as Hugh Kenner said of Eliot, that the development of his work has reduced and reduced the possibility of misunderstanding²¹ — of the poet's own misunderstanding as well as that of others. He is supremely the poet who has presided over his own demythologizing, and in his powerful orbiting can leave a few demythologized fellow-poets in his wake as well. In "Central Park," for example, he sees "the lovers occupy/every inch of earth or sky," but, concomitantly

The stain of fear and poverty
Spread through each trapped anatomy

hence

All wished to leave this drying crust
Borne on the delicate wings of lust

but finally, along with all the other disquieting portents in the poem

Each landscaped crag, each cowering shrub
Hides a policeman with a club.

(*Near The Ocean*, pp. 23-24)

The structural similarity of Auden's version of overshadowed Love is obvious:

Do not turn, do not lift, your eyes
Toward the still pair standing
On the bridge between your properties,
Indifferent to your minding:
In its glory, in its power,
This is their hour.

Nothing your strength, your skill, could do
Can alter their embrace
Or disperse the Furies who
At the appointed place
With claw and dreadful brow
Wait for them now.²²

The strength of a definite locale, social context and social awareness of the younger poet makes Auden seem light-

weight and tinkling, and the power of his poem to *bode* also seems more usefully fulfilled than Sylvia Plath's thematically similar (and, for her, very accessible) poem in which "the students stroll or sit"

Hands laced, in a moony indolence of love —
 Black-gowned, but unaware
 How in such mild air
 The owl shall stoop from his turret, the rat cry out.²³

It would, I agree, be owlish to treat Lowell's last couplet realistically, checking off the number of New York policemen (and the number of clubs) available against the shrubs and crags of Central Park, in the solemn expectation of finding a one-to-one correspondence: of course the lines are intended to have a symbolic force, and, with this very effective poem on their back, they do: but the poet who goes so far to pick up the strength of "realism" cannot claim all the diplomatic immunity and non-accountability of the *symboliste*.

Lowell had to work hard for his great harvest of poetry. His early work still has an inflated reputation. It has what might be called an excess of style, too true to what the poet's friend Randall Jarrell would call its Alexandrian Age-of-Criticism origins, issuing in a short-circuit of contrived electrification:

Shall I wring plums from Plato's bush
 When Buna's and Bizerte's dead
 Must puff and push
 Blood into bread?²⁴

Too often it seems rather close to the deplorable but usefully gaff-blowing phrase used by Cleanth Brooks to justify the *procédé* of *The Waste Land*, that it was "an application of the principle of complexity."²⁵ Poems just don't happen in that way (as a result of such emptily formalistic demands), or at least they certainly shouldn't be encouraged to; a more genuinely psychic compulsion is required. Lowell summed things up beautifully in a lapidary inscription on his poetic generation in his 1961 interview: "Poets of my generation . . . write a very musical, difficult poem with

tremendous skill, perhaps there's never been such skill. Yet the writing seems divorced from culture somehow. It's become too much something specialized that can't handle much experience."²⁶ A very direct pointer indeed to the form gulping after formlessness of *Notebook*. Without experience the writer in any form is shadow-boxing, to use an appropriately Maileresque combative metaphor.

Again, "Colloquy in Black Rock," (*Poems 1938-1949*, p.15), for example, is nothing if not an ambitious-looking poem, and is (consequently) called "one of Lowell's greatest poems"²⁷ by Hugh B. Staples. It is, in fact, characterized by a strained and precious metaphysical hysteria. It has all the vulgarity of a massive technological *coup*, and seems to be striving for a kind of absolute velocity like a satellite going into orbit:

Black Mud, a name to conjure with: O mud
 For watermelons gutted to the crust,
 Mud for the mole-tide harbour, mud for mouse,
 Mud for the armoured Diesel fishing tubs that thud
 A year and a day to wind and tidal rust,
 The heart-skip and the quake that shakes my house
 To Jericho, a clay and trumpet death.
 My heart, beat faster, faster. In Black Mud . . .

The rhetoric of Mercutio and the sensibility of Saint Teresa don't marry well.

Again, one feels the special licence for the procedure comes from Eliot, particularly *Waste Land* Eliot. F. W. Bateson has spoken suggestively of the "hysterical sublime"²⁸ of that poem — but how much applicable is this to "At the Indian Killer's Grave" and a good many others of Lowell. There is an unearned distraught, hysterical undertow whose purely artistic result is monotony. It is the monotony of unrelieved intensity, which no one need deny the young Lowell — a near-ruinous surcharge.

Even here, though, there are fascinating indications of the possibilities he explored in his later poems. In "Prayer for the Jews," for example, the poem becomes effective, one feels, when the poet "drops his costume for a moment and talks in terms of actuality"²⁹:

Here Yankee laissez-faire and enterprise
 Built pyres on expiation to the night,
 The rising sun of aping Japanese
 Blazes upon the democratic twilight³⁰

As Mailer observes of the later poems — “hypnotic they resolutely were not, for the language was particular, with a wicked sense of names, details and places” (p. 257). Lowell’s sense of progression is almost too dialectic in its chartable reactions and counterstatements and determined indeterminacy.

It is fascinating to follow Lowell’s spoor from his early extreme of artifice to the poems of *Notebook*, *History* and *The Dolphin*, which characteristically offer something anxious to assert its provisional status, a post-modernist, post-New-Criticism unbuttoning, a deliberate slovenliness which constitutes its own critique, making it difficult to criticize. Indeed, the adverse critic may even find himself seized like a malevolent Lilliputian and stuffed into the rag-bag, preserved, like a wasp in honey, for posterity:

Ah the swift vanishing of my older
 generation — the deaths, suicide, madness
 of Roethke, Berryman, Jarrell and Lowell,
 “the last the most discouraging of all
 surviving to dissipate *Lord Weary’s Castle*
 and nine subsequent useful poems
 in the seedy grandiloquence of *Notebook*.”

(*History*, p.204)

Perhaps it is not too fantastic to see Lowell’s image for his own sense of the desired change and contrast in poetic “mode” in “Fear in Chicago,” in which an *arriviste* millionaire’s pad, with its fake *haut couture* interior, is routed by the authenticity of the little girl’s posters:

. . . sheen of the centuries;
 as my eye roved, everything freshly French;
 then I saw a score marked *sans rigueur*
 on the little grand piano, muddy white,
 a blank-white and medallion-little bust
 of Franz Schubert, a blown-up colored photograph
 of the owner’s wife, executive-Bronzino —
 this frantic touch of effort! Or out-window
 moored boats below the cars — more Louis Quinze
 and right than anything in this apartment;

except the little girl's bedroom, perfect with posters:
 "Do not enter," and "Sock it to me, Baby."

(*Notebook* [1970] pp. 228-29)

Indeed, looking back again to the early poetry with the special hindsight we now have, it seems obvious that what it lacked was any very palpable social dimension, while, at the same time, some radical adverse judgment on modern society is so clearly implied. The rhetorical intensities of "The Holy Innocents," perhaps the best known of his early poems, are undeniable. The modernist collapsing of time and place to include a sharply rendered New England of "cindered ice below the burlap mill/And ale-wife run" with the friezed Hieronymous-Bosch-like evocation of

King Herod shrieking vengeance at the curled
 Up knees of Jesus choking in the air . . .

(*Poetry*, 1938-49, p. 14)

is a sharply arranged diptych. But the stylistic resourcefulness encapsulates such a diffuse emotional charge the effect is of a blunderbuss fired at the modern world.

An outstanding example of the half-world the poem inhabits is the oxen. They are nothing if not symbolic, but the author's insistent realism (they "drool and start") defines the poet's attitude as one of distance and distaste, in Miltonic phrase. After all, oxen are gelded cattle. What else, in the poem, are they? They are, surely, the weak and exploited of the world who "blunder hugely": the fictional context in which they are placed (admittedly in microcosmic terms) is as Baroquely and magnificently absurd as Milton's War in Heaven in *Paradise Lost*. A form of radicalism seems inseparable from this particular Christian point of view, but the poet, with the Whig grandee manner inseparable perhaps from being Lord Weary crossed with Stephen Dedalus (though "we were like the sixth cousins of the Duke of Something. We gave no feeling of swagger"³¹) cannot help despising them for their servility—*Relinquant omnia servare rem publicam*. Abrupt confirmation is provided by the later phrase about those who "turn with the tread of the ox to serve the rich" (*History*, p. 118),

easily correlated with the irony which visits oppressed as well as oppressors in

the poor who always must remain
poor and republicans in Maine

(*Near The Ocean*, p.17)

— a savage misapplication of Christ's words resprayed with a complacent Toryism — the god of the Status Quo will see to it that their servitude is protracted, that they will blessedly not be reimbursed for their expense of spirit. These poor are generalized from the figure in *Life Studies* "scavenging filth in the back alley trash cans," who is "a young Republican" — the quotation marks fix the absurdity of his pathetic self-concept. All this is part of the dingily servile and "tranquilized" decade.

There is no need for the reader to think of the poet as the foiled natural mouthpiece of the Symbionese Liberation Army. Lowell does provide a kind of rueful chronicle of his own insurgency, and his incarceration as a draft dodger in the Second World War is well known (a protest against the saturation bombing by the Allies of civilian areas), as is his support of the later draft dodgers of Vietnam. On the one hand, there is controversial commitment; on the other hand, Lowell is as tirelessly sceptical about himself and his motivation as the most hostile reader could be. In the fulcrum-poem, perhaps almost too dutifully symmetrical, "Memories of West Street and Lepke" (pp. 99-100) Lowell refers to his "manic statement" as a young revolutionnaire "telling off the state and president," but speaks with equidistant and fastidious distaste of his later self, bourgeoisified, privileged and "hogging."

The example of "The Holy Innocents" does show, I think, how something important was squeezed out of the early Lowell's poetry which can be supplied by hindsight — and a little more. For example, the well-known "Christmas Eve under Hooker's Statue" "was first published in the *Partisan Review*, X (July-Aug., 1943) under the title "The Capitalist's Meditation by the Civil War Monument" (Staples,

p. 90), while "in the earlier versions . . . the narrator is a profiteer who 'bawls for Santa Claus and Hamilton/To break the price-controller's stranglehold'" (p. 91). American Marxism was influential in the thirties, but gradually outlawed as an outrage to the most basic American pieties—hence the attendant irony of "Fourth of July in Maine" as

Our Independence
Day Parade, all innocence
of children's costumes, helps resist
the communist and socialist

However, in our own decades of "social awareness" Lowell has been able to deal much more directly with this important area of his and everyone's experience as a social animal. His work has come to reflect more and more directly his response to pressures all must feel, in an expanding subjective correlative. What makes it particularly valuable is that his attacks on the state, on social injustice and the misuse of power are balanced by a critique of the self which is all too rare in radicalism, the besetting vice of which is the Rousseauistic basis of its attack on social evil and social institutions which fails to take account of

. . . that evil, that evil in the self, from which
In desperate hallow, rugged gesture, fault
Falls out on everything —
(Stevens, "Esthetique du Mal")

Lowell, then, nothing if not self-critical and watchful, refers, in a poem of a series occasioned by the events surrounding the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1968, to the "clichés of paranoia." In another poem, "Romanoffs," he begins with a crazed logical extreme of radicalism — "*Let's face it, English is a racist last ditch*": the conclusion is inevitable — "we, the Romanoffs with much to lose" (*History*, p. 99) — a beautifully decisive discomfiture of radical chic, underscoring the schism with an earlier self —

"Those *statesmen*," said Lenin, "sent 16 million to death."
Such fairy stories beguiled our brainwashed youth

Domiciled in England with his third wife in a country mansion, he accepts with grizzled wisdom that his side of

the barricades is chosen for him. In another poem which blends the personal and the political he finds himself unable either to match or to wholeheartedly oppose the political fire of his daughter:

My daughter telephones me from New York,
she talks *New Statesmen*, "Then we're cop-outs! Isn't
not voting Humphrey a vote for Nixon and Wallace?"
And I "Not voting Nixon is my vote for Humphrey."
It's funny-awkward; I don't come off too well;
"You musn't tease me, we were clubbed in Chicago."

He feels his old aggression smoulder, inveterate scars:

We must rouse our broken forces and save the country:
we often said this, now the beaten player
opens old wounds and hungers for the blood-feud
hidden like contraband and loved like whiskey.

One can't help feeling a little that the danger here may not be the danger of political commitment or the lack of it, but the danger of dicing with journalese, of importing a media-based crudity which empties out the baby of whatever poetic virtues there are with the bath water of that Gothic lettering for which demand has slumped so heavily. Lowell *is*, in this late work, dangerously antithetical to the extreme formalism of his regretted poetic youth. But the variety of concern and the linguistic resourcefulness of the total context atone for this.

Even the poems which seem closest to polemic can go deep, however: a critique of radicalism is swiftly offered in

Karl Marx orphaned his illegitimate child (*History*, p. 188)

a reference which also invokes Rousseau and the private inadequacy that lay behind Rousseau's radical romantic individualism — the ethos, in large measure, of modern America.

Society cannot simply be viewed as an agglomeration of corrupt institutions. Society is also, as John Cege, in his incorrigibly simplistic way, once put it in a radio broadcast, a mind.

Universal nature moved by universal mind? But the nature of that mind? Early, believing Lowell was able to

hypostatize a bogeyman fully adequate to an ethos "when time was open-eyed,/Wooden and childish." (*Poems, 1938-49*, p. 20). Late, unbelieving Lowell dates from *Life Studies*. In *Life Studies* God is dead. But so far from its being true that if God is dead anything is possible, there is instead the terrifying burden of total autonomy, total responsibility of a self fielded reluctantly as a substitute for God. God is the imagined hypostasis of a total concerned awareness without which life, given the unacceptability of the universe,³² seems impossible.

In Lowell's case, too, there was a particular horror in the comparatively early death of his father, given the poet's refractory behaviour, his "bristling and manic" insurgency, and his father's quintessential herbivorous fecklessness which "in three years . . . squandered sixty thousand dollars" (p. 86), and characteristically

Father's death was abrupt and unprotesting.
His vision was still twenty-twenty.
After a morning of anxious, repetitive smiling,
his last words to Mother were:
"I feel awful."

The recording of the rebelliousness goes back to *Poems 1938-49*:

There was rebellion, father, when the mock
French windows slammed, and you hove backwards, rammed

"Hove backwards, rammed" is an ironic reference to his father's ill-fitting naval self-concept, for though he sings "Anchors aweigh!" in his bathtub "with seaman-like celerity/Father left the Navy" (*Life Studies*, p. 85) but in the earlier poem the reason for the "rebellion" is not given: one of the occupational hazards of Lowell's edging-towards-non-fictional-episodic-novel form is the tantalizing amount of offstage action, as is the cult of the non-epiphanic epiphany, which has caused several critics to complain. But Lowell rewrites the incident later in several poems in the different versions of *Notebook*, rewritten again for *History* — "There was rebellion, father [a cue-in] and the door was slammed" — when we learn that a disapproved-of liaison

with a girl was involved, the name of the girl (Anne Dick), and the attendant lack of satisfaction in this not-untypically-adolescent "phase" —

I knocked my father down. He sat on the carpet —
My mother calling from the top of the carpeted stairs,
their glass door locking behind me, no cover; you
idling in the station wagon, no retreat. (p.112)

— the honourable flatness banishing the suspect afflatus of the young poet's presentation of the affair.

(In the same way, the maddening peek-a-bo particularity of "1958" in *Near the Ocean*, p. 29, comes home to roost too as "Anne Adden" of several sonnets in *Notebook* and *History* — one made out of the letter sent by her on reading the poem! Here is the omniverousness of an awareness by which no sparrow shall fall unrecorded, a feigned impotent Providence inside the whale, the Leviathan, history: in *History* he is still reminiscing about Jean Stafford, his first wife, rewrites the version in *Notebook* of the wonderful elegy for Roethke in *Near the Ocean* — he ruined the poem for *Notebook*, in fact, but made a partial recovery for *History* by reconstituting its sublime austerity completely. Likewise, "In the Cage," a poem from the days of the poet's sojourn in *Lord Weary's Castle*, was included in the first version of *Notebook*, included with textual changes in the following version, and rewritten for *History*. The poem is a palimpsest because the self is.) Meanwhile, his father appears in "Middle Age," a poem epitomizing the psychological trough, the *Waste Land* modality of *For the Union Dead* — in the unexorcised *doppelgänger* presence of his absence, the permanent Limbo of the poet's inability to be reconciled or (in the *Sturm und Drang* years) to declare his sympathy:

You never climbed
Mount Sion, yet left
dinosaur
death-steps on the crust
where I must walk.

In a sense, then, Lowell's work walks an enormous circle round a "drying crust" of perpetually present experience —

a poetry of exorcism and hence a palimpsest-poetry. The later poetry has large Tolstoyan designs — though the pattern of the poet's own life, nest-feathering, go-getting, conscience-stricken, keeps a tight control on his temptation to play God. Nevertheless, without forgetting what Eliot, apropos of Hawthorne, called "the hard coldness of the genuine artist"³³ — the dreadful symbolic sick-joke appositeness which Lowell has made use of in the inability to strike the matches and the identification of the dead child — in the poem that follows — the attempt is to shock us into humanity, to bring a collective humane awareness to a focus:

When they first showed me the boy, I thought oh good,
 it's not him because he is a blond —
 I imagine his hair was singed dark by the bomb.
 He had nothing on him to identify him,
 except this box of joke trick matches;
 he liked to have them on him, even at mass.
 The police were unhurried and wonderful,
 They let me go on trying to strike a match . . .
 I just wouldn't stop — you cling to anything —
 I couldn't believe I couldn't light one match —
 only joke-matches . . . Then I knew he was Richard.

It will not have escaped the readers' attention that, though this is an I.R.A. bombing, the dead boy is a Catholic.

Paradoxically or not, then, the late poetry is nothing if not religious, though it avoids any formal commitment: the earlier poetry can project a narrowly-based dogmatic alignment with great force

But it doesn't make one feel
 the temptation to try to be a Christian

(*Dolphin*, p.68)

The recovery of belief — New England style — is an imaginative *tour de force* in which the figure of Jonathan Edwards plays a crucial role. In "After the Surprising Conversions," spoken by him, there is this sharply revealing node of meaning: "At Jehovah's nod/Satan seemed more let loose amongst us" — a superbly histrionic touch, which makes the Puritan God a god of cruel omnipotence coldly and arbitrarily exercised, a hypostasis of a Caesar — a

much more sinister figure, incidentally, than the Lyndon Johnson of "Waking Early Sunday Morning": "swimming nude, unbuttoned, sick/of his ghost-written rhetoric!" Jehovah, product of a particular historical matrix, is a god so primitive that even religion seems merely another of the atavistic forces making the world irredeemable.

The acknowledgement of such a god is a failure of the Christian imagination, once more "when time was open-eyed/Wooden and childish": the vicarious hangman of a deeply internalized sadism. Hence, "After the Surprising Conversions" must be read along with "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," which underwrites a gloating sense of sadistic power over a helpless victim — spider-like, as it were — again through a fascinated observation of the horror of nature whose law is death. This is apparent even in the parts which *only* — a significant word, as I shall show in a moment — deal with the idea of the death of a spider:

. . . . As a small boy
On Windsor Marsh, I saw the spider die
When thrown into the bowels of fierce fire

Yes, and no strength exerted on the heat
Then sinews the abolished will, when sick
And full of burning, it will whistle on the brick
(*Poems 1938-49*, pp. 69-70)

In the euphoria of pulpit rhapsody, the spellbound congregation encourage a revelation of the obsession of the preacher, emphasized by the autobiographical invocation of spiders in various remembered contexts. That a boyish sadism is reanimated is made clear, particularly in

It's well
If God who holds you to the pit of hell
Much as one holds a spider, will destroy,
Baffle and dissipate your soul.

In the original sermon by Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," "much as one holds a spider" is confirmed as "much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire."³⁴ At this point Enter Schopenhauer, conspicuously enough, I think. In criticizing Christianity for not seeing all forms of life as a continuum or spectrum

(unlike Buddhism) and thus exercising selective sensibility, he quotes a passage from Jung-Stilling's *Scenen aus dem Geisterreich*: "Suddenly the skeleton shrivelled up into an indescribably hideous and dwarf-like form, just as when you bring a large spider into the focus of a burning glass, and watch the purulent blood hiss and bubble in the heat," and comments: "This man of God then was guilty of such infamy or looked on quietly when another was committing it!"³⁵ Thus, although I can hardly be said to have "demonstrated" this (although the influence of Schopenhauer in a general way is admitted, and Lowell of course quotes him in *Life Studies*³⁶), I feel Lowell must have been "influenced" by this passage, as well as the general point of view of Schopenhauer's essay. And, although the memorable phrase about the "hourglass-blazoned spider" (a weird metaphysical kenning) cannot by the dictionary be made to refer to a "spider" brought "into the focus of a burning glass," I nevertheless think that part of the poet's mind was thinking along those lines.

As the analogy between the spider and man is pressed home, Lowell brilliantly focusses the burning-glass of Edwards' sermon on an individual, Josiah Hawley (Edwards' uncle):

Josiah Hawley, picture yourself cast
 Into a brick-kiln, where the blast
 Fans your quick vitals to a coal

Hawley committed suicide, so at least, unlike the spider-man of Edwards' fevered imagination, he was the author of his own end. Here he is selected like the new boy at some frightening Dickensian school as the individual target of the disgusting analogy. Indeed its primitive concentration-camp-guard psychology (George Santayana once defined Puritanism as the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy) is a powerful emblem of a stultified and eminently rejectable culture. I think this poem one of Lowell's best. Indeed, the only trouble with it is the sheer intensity of its identification with such an unsavoury atti-

tude, such is its rapport with what William Empson has described (in a prolonged ranting polemic which is quite the most remarkable thing to come from a "respectable academic" in recent years) as "a God who is satisfied by torture."³⁷ We are perhaps uncomfortably reminded that the poet's pet-name is "Cal" — short for Calvin, of course. John Berryman speaks of "resentment of Cal's tiny Jewish blood" in *Recovery*. Randall Jarrell in *History* says: "But tell me,/Cal, why did we live? Why do we die?" (p. 135).

Jonathan Raban errs, I think, in seeing Edwards as sympathetically represented, standing for a robust old culture which the modern world has extirpated (p. 165) — indeed, so inappropriate and repellent does this notion seem that I looked again at his notes to confirm that I was not imagining this. Formal demonstration that this is not so is provided by what is obviously an atonement-poem in *History* ("The Worst Sinner, Jonathan Edwards' God"):

But Jonathan Edwards prayed to think himself
worse than any man that ever breathed;
he was a good man, and he prayed with reason . . .

Finally, it should be confessed that my paradoxical contrast of early and late Lowell is perhaps a little factitious, since there is a continuum of awareness and even a continuum of strategy, as, in the examples we looked at, both the child-frightening tactics of the hell-fire sermon and the catch-penny shock-tactics of journalism are turned into devices with a common, humanizing purpose.

In his late books Lowell outruns the vulgar inquisitorial curiosity the poems seem sometimes to evoke by disclosing but somehow also deep-freezing what they disclose. The poems accept the stunned neutrality of print in a kind of glamourless vacuum, as if they were already half-way to the "Back Stacks" he forms a poem on (*History*, p. 193). Perhaps prolonged celebrity underscores the fact that the self which experiences is utterly gone by the time the poem takes shape: "this open book . . . my open coffin" (*History*, p. 194), he says at the end of one poem in which he com-

pares himself to a bee building a wax and honey "mau-soleum." One begins to feel how important the tag from Heraclitus about the ever-changing river is for him. Reading the poems makes one feel there is nothing between that immediate experience which is annihilation and utter night and the archives. It is an archivist poetry with mummy truths to tell. One feels this even in an excoriatingly personal poem like "In the Mail" (in *The Dolphin*) ("I love you, Darling, there's a black black void,/as black as night without you").

In *Life Studies* he had already in a sense performed the literary equivalent of those high-powered Lords who in England have taken to letting the public trample through their stately homes. In guaranteeing his authenticity he accepts his own vulgar self-interest ("full of himself"³⁸), rather after the manner of Auden's novelist who "must suffer dully all the wrongs of man." Corresponding to this private vulgarity is the public vulgarity of journalism already referred to, from which Lowell draws some of those infinitely pathetic stories, like Dante in the *Inferno*, before they are whirled out of sight for ever. For what purpose are these often anguishing human situations revealed? Only if they confirm a resonant collective humaneness can these revelations be justified. Lowell's use of them diminishes the possibility of their being read smugly as a prop to the reader's own sense of security which makes newspapers a component in the psychopathology of cities. Whatever the illusion of permanence in the compelling of such material into what is essentially the parody-form of a sonnet, it is this poetic "form" only in an artlessly schoolboy sense, with no prescribed formality of internal relationships, no Italo-Shakespearian inhibitions, only the mass grave of a flickering consciousness, a form as arbitrary and external as the gilt frame of a painting.

The later poetry challenges comparison with Berryman's later — *Love and Fame* and *Delusions, Etc.* are also in a quasi-confessional "mode" and have apparent concessions to

journalistic titillation. Each man might be accused of trading on his acquired capital of poetic fame. One might play one writer off against another and say that the first impact of Berryman's late work is overwhelming, and that for sheer shock value he runs out an easy winner. In the tragic intimacy into which the reader is ushered, as well as the shock of its deliquescent authenticity, the reader realizes that he is in the presence of someone who gave everything for literary prowess and success. Fathomless troughs of depression alternate with a crazed euphoria which no reality will underwrite. I suspect that the "influence" ran into reverse and Lowell got a powerful feedback from Berryman's late poetry, a manically competitive soul-losing attempt on fame. Indeed, one suspects that Berryman wrote poetry to achieve an elevation of spirit, which, when it went up in smoke, had to be conjured back in ways which killed him — though I am not overlooking the obvious "genetic" factor here.³⁹

But Lowell, for all his vulnerability and perhaps even self-lacerating tendencies is, one imagines, a tougher man in actuality than is the self his poetry makes shape to project. A self-contained and resilient quality shows through, in a way rather reminiscent of Sir John Betjeman, who (in his own undeviatingly minor way) also dramatizes his vulnerability so well.

All this should not be taken to imply, of course, that Lowell is the inferior poet — though these late works of Berryman do have great and immediate impact. What Lowell is, ineradicably, I hope, is a difficult poet. Though he has absorbed what he can from Berryman, whose late surface offers no resistance, he is condemned to a thicker-textured kind of poetry, he remains an heir to the Meta-physicals — "Death the dirty crown/On a sound fingernail" (*Notebook* [1970], pp. 216-17) — who compels a wide range of material into coexistence, not necessarily peaceful. At his best he grows in the mind at a third or fourth reading. But his obscurity cannot always be defended; it is sometimes the obscurity of a director who has his actors,

his *dramatis personae*, always shouting from the wings but never appearing onstage: the earliest example of this in full flow was "1958" in *Near the Ocean*, already alluded to, when the reader had to gnaw his knuckles for several years before being ushered into the private record office of a few of the facts behind the poem's gratuitously detailed private ecstasy, in *Notebook 1967-68*. A few more were disclosed in the additional poem and revised old ones in the revised version of *Notebook* (1970), and an additional poem and revisions to the previous ones in *History!* A rubbing in with a vengeance of T. S. Eliot's lesson that the past is altered as much by us as we are altered by the past. There seems no reason why this should not go on for ever, in a restless twitching palimpsest-*mimesis* of the never-ever-changing same: "bright sky, bright sky, carbon scarred with ciphers" (*History*, p. 207).

Unlike some poets, including perhaps Berryman, despite the "heavy reading" the latter so constantly invokes, it seems natural to say of Lowell that he has a complex and interesting mind. And this no doubt implies that he has more trouble, not less, than lesser poets do in making a successful poem. This has nevertheless, as we have seen, coexisted in him with the novelist's hunger and ambition — particularly the form of non-fiction Mailer has particularly associated with himself — hunger and ambition to include more of life and life's immediate circumstances, even its trivia (a dangerous term to use in this context at all) than can readily be combined with the intensity and formal demands of the poem. It is this that is responsible for the feeling that others must have had, that *Notebook*, *History* and, to a lesser extent, *The Dolphin*, are offered as a kind of do-it-yourself critic's outfit — the more active involvement of the reader is guaranteed by forcing him to pick, anthologize and discard these provisional entities; they are not edited highlights but total replay. The near-misses, the wild ones, the wrong trajectories, are all foils to set off those which cleave the bull. The poet even offers us a

kind of multiple choice examination paper by providing us with alternative versions of both poems and experiences.

One cannot help feeling that, in England particularly, despite the *succès d'estime* of Lowell, that the "intellectual climate" is not really very favourable to him: if we are under anyone's aegis it is Philip Larkin's, and Larkin's explicit objections to "The Muse of Difficulty" have by and large prevailed.⁴⁰ This is not an ethos to which one would like to see Lowell making too many concessions. This article has itself skirted most of Lowell's nodes and abstrusities in the interests of space and time; but I hope the reader has gained some sense from it of the original and Larkin-defying difficulty of the marriage of realism and iconography in Lowell's Dolphinarium.

NOTES

- ¹See "Hamlet and his Problems," *The Sacred Wood*, 2nd ed., (London: Methuen, 1928), p. 101.
- ²"Remembrance Day, London 1970's," *History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p.198.
- ³I. A. Richards says that "Art (which he prints in Gothic script) envisaged as a mystic, ineffable virtue is a close relative of the 'aesthetic mood', and may easily be pernicious in its effects . . ." See *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 2nd ed. 1926; (rpt. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 18.
- ⁴Frank Kermode, "A Babylonish Dialect," in *T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work*, ed. Allen Tate (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 242. (The whole book was originally a special number of the *Sewanee Review*, 74 (1966), 1).
- ⁵Yvor Winters, *In Defense of Reason* (Denver: Univ. of Denver Press, 1943), p.87.
- ⁶*For the Union Dead* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p.72.
- ⁷Gabriel Pearson, "Robert Lowell," *The Review*, No. 20 (March, 1969), p.25.
- ⁸From "Afterthought," in *Notebook 1967-68* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), p.160.
- ⁹"Mastadon," *The Dolphin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p.45.
- ¹⁰"Robert Sheridan Lowell," *The Dolphin*, p. 61. In "Little Gingersnap Man", there is, I think, a deliberate reprise of a phrase in *Life Studies* 3rd ed. (1959: London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p.78, when in "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow," his Uncle, "dying of the incurable Hodgkins' disease" is said to be "like a gingersnap man in a clothes-press" — a reprise in a very different key.

- ¹¹Robert Lowell's *Poems: A Selection*, ed., with an introduction and notes, by Jonathan Raban (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 31.
- ¹²e.g. by David Craig in "The Defeatism of *The Waste Land*," *Critical Quarterly*, 6 (1964), 241-52.
- ¹³*Near the Ocean* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 27.
- ¹⁴*History*, p. 146. "The 9 a.m. man on the street is a new phenomenon to me" I take to be a tart irony corresponding to Mailer's representation of Lowell in *The Armies of the Night*. (The relevant section of this book is reprinted in the collection by London and Boyers mentioned above (New York: Lewis, 1970), pp. 243-58). In this, Mailer introduced Lowell as a Boston Brahmin.
- ¹⁵John Berryman, "Lowell, Thomas, etc." *Partisan Review*, Jan.-Feb. (1947), 80; see "In the Cage" from *Lord Weary's Castle* (rpt. in *Poems, 1938-1949* (London: Faber and Faber, 1950), p. 64).
- ¹⁶See, e.g., *Essays in Criticism, Second Series* (1888), "The Study of Poetry," in *Matthew Arnold: Poetry and Prose*, ed. John Bryson (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 663.
- ¹⁷T. S. Eliot, "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 43.
- ¹⁸Grover Smith, *T. S. Elliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 54.
- ¹⁹*Notebook* (1967-68), p. 60.
- ²⁰See e.g., *The Presocratic Philosophers*, ed. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1960), p. 197.
- ²¹Hugh Kenner: "Eliot's Moral Dialectic," *Hudson Review*, 2, (1949), 424.
- ²²"Song", in *W. H. Auden: A Selection by the Author* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 134.
- ²³Sylvia Plath, "Watercolour of Grantchester Meadows," *The Colossus* (1960; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1967), pp. 37-38.
- ²⁴"On the Eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1942," *Sewanee Review*, 51 (1943), 393; Buna and Bizerte are both places associated with military engagements in the Second World War: Bizerte is a seaport in Tunisia, standing on the site of Hippo; Buna is on the island of New Guinea: the Japanese invaded it in 1942 and subsequently used Buna as a base.
- ²⁵Cleanth Brooks, *The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth*, in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1939), p. 167.
- ²⁶Frederick Seidel, "Interview with Robert Lowell" 1961; rpt. *Robert Lowell: A Portrait of the Artist in His Time* (New York: Lewis, 1970). ed. London and Boyers, p. 269.
- ²⁷Hugh B. Staples, *Robert Lowell: The First Twenty Years* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 41.

- ²⁸Bateson, F. W. "Burbank with a Baedeker: Eliot with a La-forgue," *The Review*, No. 4 (Nov., 1962).
- ²⁹This phrase is taken from T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood*. Eliot is referring to "Drayton's dreary sequence of 'Ideas'" ("Im-perfect Critics," p. 30).
- ³⁰"Prayer for the Jews," *Sewanee Review*, 51 (1943), 395.
- ³¹Raban, p. 14.
- ³²Cf. "Long-haired Victorian sages accepted the universe./While breezing on their trust funds through the world", *Life Studies*, p. 11.
- ³³T. S. Eliot, Review of *The Cambridge History of American Literature* for *The Athenaeum*, 25 April, 1919, p. 237.
- ³⁴See, e.g. Jonathan Edward, *Representative Selections*, ed. Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson (Chicago: American Book Co., 1935), p. 164.
- ³⁵Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays from the Parerga and Paralip-omena*, tr. T. Bailey Saunders (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1951), p. 75.
- ³⁶See, e.g. Jerome Mazzaro, "Lowell after *For the Union Dead*," *Salmagundi* I, iv (1966-7), Rpt. London and Boyers, pp. 84-97; "To Speak of the Woe that is in Marriage," *Life Studies*, p. 102.
- ³⁷William Empson, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961): "The chief thing I felt I had learned, after trying to consider ethics in a fundamental manner, is that what Christians are worshipping, with their incessant advertise-ments for torture, is literally the Devil." (p. 260).
- ³⁸See "Robert Frost," *History*, p. 142.
- ³⁹The poet's father also committed suicide. See, e.g., *Love and Fame*, p. 18.
- ⁴⁰See, e.g., David Timms, *Philip Larkin* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973), p. 65.

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