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The Dislocated Self: Robert Lowell's "The Mills of the Kavanaughs."

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THE DISLOCATED SELF: ROBERT LOWELL'S "THE
MILLS OF THE KAVANAUGHS."
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THE DISLOCATED SELF: ROBERT LOWELL'S "THE MILLS OF THE KAVANAUGHS"

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by
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................... iv

Introduction ................................................ 1

Chapter 1: "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" ............... 4

Chapter 2: A Critical Reception ......................... 60

Chapter 3: Allegory to Causality: Reduced Signification ...................... 99

Chapter 4: Changing Modalities ......................... 128

Appendix A ................................................ 207

Appendix B ................................................ 226

Bibliography ............................................. 246

Vita ...................................................... 252
Abstract

Rather than with the success of *Life Studies*, the failure of "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" is where the major shift in Robert Lowell's poetry occurred. Yet, while the rest of his work has received more critical attention than that given any other poet of his generation, "The Mills" has been generally slighted.

The first two chapters of this study are devoted to establishing the background to the poem itself. The opening chapter provides an exegesis, with some attention given to a few pertinent biographical details. A stanza-by-stanza reading of the poem exposes places where the mythic method that Lowell employed collapses into irreconcilable ambiguity. But generally, significant details in the poem are highlighted as part of an extended paraphrase which is useful for later discussion.

The second chapter is devoted to a summary of the critical reception which the poem received upon publication in volume form plus a summary of later opinions as they have appeared in books more generally devoted to Lowell. As a summary, it completes the basis necessary for the more specialized third and fourth chapters.
The third chapter is a twofold treatment of narration that seeks to explain why Lowell had to change his style. There are problems particular to this poem's narrative, also more general problems. The realism of literal events in Anne Kavanaugh's revery relies upon causality. The significance of those events, however, operates through allegory. With the loss of a Christian cosmology, Lowell's particular experience is that his poetry loses the ability to signify allegorically. Rather than vertical, events become strictly horizontal. A change in poetics becomes necessary.

For the fourth chapter, I have borrowed heavily from Heidegger and Husserl because their concerns are strikingly similar to Lowell's. The chapter argues that a sense of groundless process appears first in "The Mills," then matures as a series of lyrics in Life Studies.

With Heidegger to round out why Lowell changed his style, Husserl can be used to describe how such a poetics operates. Anne Kavanaugh's series of reveries and the poet's description of physical and mythical detail create a counterpoint which is basic to the poem's structure. Her revery carries the poem diachronically, and her descriptive detail (plus that provided by an omniscient narrator) supplies a synchronic multiplicity that compounds the poem's meaning. A similar process is carried
out more successfully by the series of lyrics in *Life Studies*, through which Lowell (rather than using a persona such as Anne Kavanaugh) posits past phases of himself which operate reflexively and in sequence to locate a present-fleeting self.

Lacking a Christian cosmology, Lowell lost the allegorical level of meaning. His later poetry operates as a mode of thought that brackets experience. If not unity of experience, his poetry still could create a continuum of events.
Introduction

Since its appearance as the title poem in Robert Lowell's third volume, most critics have maintained that "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" is a remarkable but fatally flawed poem. Assuming that some failed poems can be as important to the discussion of poetry as other poems which are entirely successful, I have undertaken an analytical study of Lowell's longest poetic work and of the shift it represents. The poem is significant in itself, but it is also important for reasons which are, strictly speaking, external to it. It is Lowell's most ambitious effort, and it marks the major turning point in his career; his rejection of Catholicism, his mental disturbances, and his abandonment of strict form appear during or right after the poem's composition. In fact there is evidence for all three of these within the text of the poem.

At present, Lowell's poetry has received more serious critical attention than that of any other poet of his generation, yet "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" has been generally ignored. Critics who mention it do so in passing, classifying it a failure as they proceed to
other interests. My first point is that, while the poem is a failure, it is an important one. A significant phase in Lowell's poetic development has been overlooked by his critics, and the more important the rest of his career becomes the more glaring such a gap becomes.

But more importantly, "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" (1951) is at the center of the poetic shift Lowell made between his first phase, which reached maturity in Lord Weary's Castle (1946), and his second phase, announced with the publication of Life Studies (1959). That is, as much as the success of Life Studies, the failure of "The Mills" represents the major change in Lowell's career. And, because he has had wide influence, any reasons for such a change that can be detected within his work are pertinent to a more general discussion of poetry.

The way a poet perceives the world and the way he writes operate in conjunction. As I will discuss later, Hugh Staples argues that "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" contains "a complex of dualisms" which constitute a "characteristic habit of mind" for Lowell. One side of these "dualisms" (finally, "antagonisms") is optimistic, the other pessimistic; and their alternation is reminiscent of Lowell's perceptions, his manic vacillation. Within "The Mills" he seeks to mediate this split through the use of a unifying myth, that of Persephone and Pluto; however, contrary to Eliot's belief that myth can give
unity to modern experience, this center does not hold. Why such a "center cannot hold" constitutes my first inquiry, and how this is overcome becomes my second.

We often hear about a poet's vision, and just as often we hear about his voice. I believe that Lowell's style contains both of these and in its larger faculty amounts to a mode of apprehension which he uses to guage experience. If this is the case, then the way he sees the world is bound up in the way he writes; and the way he writes can be discussed in a larger context which reveals patterns of thought, patterns which out of their closure at times provide disclosure but which at other times preclude disclosure.
Robert Lowell's "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" is an example of poetry operating for the self as a locating mode of thought. As will be evident later, Life Studies performs a similar function but does so in a radically different manner. One way of understanding the predicament faced by Lowell, when writing either "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" or Life Studies, is to think of time as a process that continually absents and presences the external world. Such a world serves as an analogue for the self; therefore, its presence or absence--finally, its rotation between these two--effects an interior world, that of the self. For Lowell, poetry gauges such change and by doing so generates unity of experience.

I am interested in using Husserl and Heidegger to treat poetry as a locating mode of thought that brackets experience. I want to show that due to problems with causality in narration and with compound mythical allusion Lowell abandoned his earlier mode for a series of
lyrics, as in *Life Studies*, intended to create a continuum of retentional modification that locates the self.

The locating process is active in "The Mills," but Lowell's poetic mode at this stage in his career hampers it. Anne Kavanaugh's series of reveries and the poet's description of both physical and mythical detail create a counterpoint which is basic to the poem's structure. Her revery carries the poem diachronically, and the poet's descriptive detail, imagery, provides a synchronic multiplicity which is intended to magnify the poem's meaning. However, what actually happens is that the synchronic multiplicity of images and mythical allusions trips over itself, is self-defeating. Carried forward by narrative (and backward), Anne's "dream vision" overlaps into what Hugh B. Staples calls a "montage" but what is more nearly a kaleidoscope, something which defies interpretation.

What follows, therefore, is a reading of "The Mills" which goes as far as the poem will allow. Though there are three versions, only the first and second are important. I have based my discussion upon the second, permanent version which appeared as the title poem in *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* in 1951, and this is included in Appendix B. The other important version appeared as the lead piece in *The Kenyon Review*, Winter, 1951, and is included in Appendix A.

To give a brief paraphrase or summary of the poem's
action is to run the danger of making it sound trite. Nevertheless, such a summary is necessary for the sake of clarity during the longer treatment which follows. And, I might add, it is fair to say that some of the details of Harry's and Anne's personal experience are trite; not only in the sense that they seem all too familiar but also because they fail to signify, to point beyond themselves.

A brief look at Jean Stafford's "An Influx of Poets" and "A Country Love Story" demonstrates the autobiographical character of Lowell's poem. And this fact obviously reinforces the position that Lowell's writing is a self-locating process. The events that are covered by both the stories and the poem amount to the dissolution of a young couple's marriage. The two have taken up residence in an old house in the New England countryside, one that is near water. The tensions that surface between them are heightened by their isolation. In Stafford's stories the end brings divorce; in Lowell's poem, the end is more violent, bringing one and possibly two suicides.

The best brief summary of the action that takes place in "The Mills" is given by Hugh Staples. I quote his summary because I cannot improve upon it:

As the poem opens, Anne Kavanaugh sits in the garden of her husband's estate, Kavanaugh (which
is the actual name of an old family mansion in Damariscotta Mills, Maine). She is playing a game of solitaire. She faces her husband's grave, which has a flag on it, indicating his naval service. She meditates on the decay of the Kavanaugh fortune, and on the tradition which she and her late husband have inherited. She remembers their childhood, and then falls off into a day-dream, which is intermittently interrupted by brief moments of return to the waking world. Psychologically right, these moments come near the beginning and end of her dream (stanza 5, stanza 32). From the end of stanza 2 to the middle of stanza 33, however, the narrative is a mixture of remembered incidents in her life and a symbolic commentary, largely phrased in Ovidian allusions, by which she endeavours to interpret these events. In terms of the outer framework of the poem, the action is confined to her imagination. The children splashing about in the pool, for example, in stanzas 7 and following, are images of herself and Harry Kavanaugh as children, not their issue. Indeed, part of the irony of the poem depends on the fact that the Kavanaugh line has become extinct with the death of her husband.

Her dream vision, although it has the overlapping quality of a montage, ranges over four periods of her life, which, in accordance with the basic myth of Demeter and Persephone, are ordered in terms of the four seasons. First she casts her mind back to the springtime of her life as she recalls her first meeting with Harry while she is picking flowers illicitly at Kavanaugh (stanza 4). Childhood is a romp through the verdant countryside (stanzas 6 and 7), but imperceptibly, spring becomes summer as they frolic and struggle in the millstream below the estate (stanzas 8-10). Adolescence coincides with harvest-time, and their sexual relationship, already prefigured in the swimming scene, becomes actual in stanza II [sic]: 'The world hushed. Dying in your arms, I heard / The mowers moving through that goldeneared / Avernal ambush . . .'. Anne is rescued from her indigent, shiftless and alcoholic father, with his 'thirteen children and his goat' by Harry's mother. She comes to live at Kavanaugh after her adoption, and her relationship to Harry becomes in a sense incestuous. In stanza 14, it is late spring again, and we learn that the pair are to be married in July. This marriage of Cinderella to Prince Charming is as brief as it is unhappy, and Anne is relieved to see her husband,
an officer in the Naval Reserve, sail with his ship for the Pacific in the summer of 1941. But he returns, mentally disturbed, after Pearl Harbor. The central part of the poem, stanzas 17-31, relates the progress of his mania and the gradual suspicion on Anne's part that the failure of their marriage is somehow her fault. Harry's illness reaches a pitch of horror when he tries to throttle his wife on Christmas morning. A paranoiac, he interprets her apparent reference to another man during the course of her nightmare as evidence of infidelity. In a sense, he is right, but the tragic irony arises out of the fact that the man referred to is himself idealized. Failing, however, in his murderous intent, his aggression turns inward, and he tries to kill himself by asphyxiation. After this episode, he is put under restraint at Kavanaugh, but his mental condition continues to deteriorate during the winter and spring, and he dies, presumably by his own hand, as the rest of the town celebrates Independence Day.

At this point (stanza 33) of her reverie, Anne Kavanaugh comes back to full consciousness. She 'rambles down the weedy path, past hill / And graveyard to the ruined burlap mill' (which also serves as a locale for 'The Holy Innocents' and 'New Year's Day' in Lord Weary's Castle). The remaining five stanzas record Anne's thoughts as she gets into her boat and rows down the millstream. Her quest for the meaning of her life is a coda that summarizes the meaning of the poem. It is a review of the history of the Kavanaughs, her marriage ('Even in August it was autumn') and her future ('Love, I gave / Whatever brought me gladness to the grave').

The poem is preceded by two epigraphs, one taken from Arnold's "Dover Beach" and the other from In the American Grain, by William Carlos Williams. Both express disillusionment by their minimal views of human relationships and in particular of the possibilities for love and morality. Arnold's famous poem confronts the possibility of love without the "Sea of Faith," after it has been lost. For him, religious faith as well as any kind
of faith, any coherent system that might give meaning to the world, is failing in one "long, withdrawing roar, / Retreating, to the breath / Of the night-wind." All that is left is the possibility for human kindness in an unintelligible and dangerously violent world. The lines that follow those which Lowell quotes state that the world has "neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain." In its own way, "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" sets about demonstrating this opinion.

The quotation taken from Williams, that "Morals are the memory of success that no longer succeeds," suggests the ethical wash Lowell may have found himself in once having left the Catholic Church. (And, as I will discuss later, Lowell was moving away from the Church while writing "The Mills.") Having lost his faith, he lacks the theistic ground necessary either to posit or consistently distinguish good and evil. The Kavanaugh's Catholic religion and the Kavanaugh fortune are specific instances "of success that no longer succeeds." As the paragraph that precedes the first stanza tells us, Harry's is an old and prominent Catholic family in Maine, and, as Anne quickly reveals in the poem's opening stanzas, it has become part of the bankrupt aristocracy. Later we learn of Red Kavanaugh's unscrupulous treatment of the Abnakis Indians. Thus the Kavanaugh "success" with
money has ended with "Harding's taxes," and the integrity of the Kavanaugh's religion is made suspect by the "skulls of the Abnakis left / Like saurian footprints by the lumber lord."

The line from Williams also fits with the fact that much of the poem "is a revery" within Anne's consciousness of "her childhood and marriage." That is, the good and the bad characteristics of the Kavanaugh past as well as those of Anne's marriage with Harry are approached via memory. Thus "the memory of success that no longer succeeds" is Anne's memory of her marriage and of the family into which she not only married but into which she was adopted as a child.

In the opening paragraph I described the absenting-presencing function of time in the external world as being an analogue for the self. Anne's revery functions in relation to this. Her memory telescopes back and forth from the present to the absent past. The motive for her search is "the memory of success that no longer succeeds," but her method is grounded in the various physical details of Kavanaugh surrounding her, details that carry significance because of past events.

Her somewhat romantic revery allows Anne to recall and to associate time and place. In particular, a place such as the mill pond at Kavanaugh enables her to represent past events that once occurred there and to
associate these with instances taken from mythology and the political past of her region. Further, her revery means that on one level past events still literally take place in her consciousness, and ours while we read.

The external world that by the nature of time absents and presences itself is recalled by an interior world of revery that re-collects past events in an order that is meaningful in light of the present. This process brackets the self. Anne locates herself by going both beyond and short of her disastrous marriage. The process is a sort of temporal range finding, and it functions to reconcile the dilemma contained in the quotation taken from Williams.

In the prose section that precedes the opening stanza we are given a series of related details. The time is both "afternoon" and "fall." The place is a garden within a small village with a grave "At one end of" that "garden." The suggested outcome of the setting as well as that of the time of year is the grave, death. That this is Lowell's intention becomes explicit during the course of the poem, which ends with Anne's saying "I gave / Whatever brought me gladness to the grave."

However the strongest suggestion that the outcome of Kavanaugh as manifested by Harry and Anne is death is made by the presence of Persephone. As part of the setting given before the poem's opening, Lowell mentions
"a marble statue of Persephone, the goddess who become [sic] a queen by becoming queen of the dead." The statue is by the mill pond, and this detail echoes part of the myth of Persephone. The pond is reminiscent of the pool Ovid calls Cyane.

The following are the central parts of Ovid's account of Persephone's abduction by Pluto and of the manner in which Ceres regained her daughter. Because I will have reason to refer to the myth often, I quote a large part of Ovid's account:

'Not far from Henna's walls
There is a pool called Pergus, whose deep water
Hears the swans singing, even more than Cayster.
A wood surrounds the pool, and the green leaves
Keep off the sunlight, and the ground is cool,
And the ground is moist, with lovely flowers growing,
And the season is always spring; and in this grove
Proserpina was playing, gathering flowers,
Violets, or white lilies, and so many
The basket would not hold them all, but still
She was so eager--the other girls must never
Beat her at picking blossoms! So, in one moment,
Or almost one, she was seen, and loved, and taken
In Pluto's rush of love. She called her mother,
Her comrades, but more often for her mother.
Where he had torn the garment from her shoulder,
The loosened flowers fell, and she, poor darling,
In simple innocence, grieved as much for them
As for her other loss. Her ravager
Drove the car fiercely on, shook up the horses,
Calling each one by name, the reins, dark-dyed,
Sawing the necks and manes. Through the deep lakes,
Through the Palician pools, that reeked with sulphur,
That boiled where earth was cracked, beyond the city
Corinthian men once built between two harbors,
One large, one small, they rode.

'Between Cyane
And Arethusa lies a bay, its waters
Held in the land's embrace. And here Cyane,
Who gave the pool its name, the one most famous
Of all Sicilian nymphs, rose from the ripples
That circled at her waist. She knew the goddess,
Daughter of Ceres, and she cried aloud:
"No farther shall you go! Ceres shall have
No son against her will; Proserpina
Should have been asked, not taken. If I may
Compare small acts with great ones, Anapis loved me,
And I became his bride, but at least he asked me,
He did not force or frighten me into wedlock."
She flung her arms widespread, as if her slimness
Could block that onrush, but the son of Saturn,
Burning with terrible anger, whipped the horses,
Whirled, with his strong right arm, the royal sceptre,
Smote the pool open to its very depths,
And the earth opened, and the chariot plunged
Through the new crater down to Hell.

'Cyane
Grieved for both violations, girl and fountain,
And in her silent spirit kept the wound
Incurable, and, all in tears, she melted,
Dissolving, queen no longer, of those waters.
Her limbs were seen to soften, and her bones
Became more flexible, and the nails' hardness
Was gone: the slenderest parts went first, the hair,
The fingers, legs, and feet: it is no great distance
From slimness to cool water. Back and shoulders,
The breasts, the sides, were watery streams, and water
Went through her veins, not blood, till there was nothing
For anyone to hold.

'And Ceres, meantime,
Was looking for her daughter, in every land,
On every sea. . . .

'It would take too long
To tell what lands the goddess wandered over,
What seas she crossed, and all in disappointment.
So she came back to Sicily, and searching still
Came to Cyane. Were the nymph not water,
She would have told her everything; she tried to,
But had no lips, no mouth, no tongue to speak with,
Still, she had evidence to give: the girdle
Proserpina wore, lay floating on the surface
Where it had fallen when they went down. And Ceres
Saw it, and only then appeared to fathom
Her daughter's fate, and beat her breast in sorrow,
And tore her hair. Where is she? She does not know,
Still does not know, and calls the lands ungrateful,
Unworthy of her gifts; above all others
Sicily is to blame, for there she found
The evidence of her loss. She cursed the land,
Breaking the ploughs that turned the earth, and killing
Cattle and men in anger, making fields
Lie sterile, blighting seed and crop: the land
Had a good name, but you would never know it
To see it now, corn withering in the blade,
Excessive sun, excessive rain, and stars
And winds both evil, and the greedy birds
Eating the planted seeds, thistle and darnel
And crab-grass taking over.

'Then Arethusa,
Daughter of Alpheus, from the Elean pool
She lived in, rose, pushed back the dripping hair
That fell across her forehead, saying: "O mother
Of the girl sought over the whole wide world, O mother
Of fruit and harvest, cease the endless labor.
Do not be angry at the loyal earth. . . .
the solid earth had opened
A way for me, I went through deepest darkness,
Rose here at last, and saw the stars again,
But in my voyage underground, I saw
Proserpina, with these very eyes I saw her,
Sorrowful, to be sure, and still half-frightened,
And still a queen, the greatest of the world
Of darkness, and an empress, the proud consort
Of the proud ruler of the world of darkness."
Ceres was like a woman turned to stone,
And then a woman raving, but her frenzy
Dwindled, at last, to anguish, and she drove
Her chariot to Heaven, pleading . . . "I have come,
Great Jove, to speak as suppliant for a daughter,
Your blood and mine. . . .

And Jove answered:
"She is our daughter truly, yours and mine,
A common bond, a common care. But let us
Be willing to face the facts: this was not done
Through wickedness, but love. . . .
Still, if you must
Break up this marriage, let Proserpina come
To the upper world again, on one condition:
She must, in the world below, have eaten nothing,
Tasted no food--so have the Fates enacted."
And Ceres, as he ended, was determined
To have her daughter back, but the Fates forbade it.
She had been hungry, wandering in the gardens,
Poor simple child, and plucked from the leaning bough
A pomegranate, the crimson fruit, and peeled it,
With the inside coating of the pale rind showing,
And eaten seven of the seeds. . . .

But Jupiter, holding the balance even
Between the husband and the grieving mother,
Divides the year in half, so that the goddess
May be with both and neither; and her bearing
Is changed, her sorrow alternates with sunlight,  
The cloud and shadow vanishing.  

Lowell's poem not only begins with a pool reminiscent of Cyane, it ends with Anne, having gathered lilies as Persephone did, rowing across the pond. She thinks that she and her Pluto, Harry, "row together"; then she remembers the scene from Ovid that recounts Pluto whipping his horses through the opened pool, and closes with the line I have already quoted: "I gave / Whatever brought me gladness to the grave." The intention throughout is that the Persephone myth be central to the poem's meaning.

Lowell's underworld motif is treated as mental instability in Jean Stafford's "A Country Love Story" and "An Influx of Poets." In "The Mills" the cyclical nature of the Persephone myth seems to parallel the cyclical nature of Lowell's illness as far as we can understand it. However, over against such light-dark motifs there are also instances of fixed order, the presence of which is vital for purposes of contrast and, finally, meaning. Preceding the first stanza, Lowell mentions not only the garden where Anne is sitting but the Bible (of which she makes an "opponent" in her game of solitaire), the fact that Harry was a naval officer, and the fact that "The Kavanaughhs are a Catholic family." Each of these represents a fixed order. Harry's madness and Pluto's abduction occur despite such order. The dramatic significance
of the abduction-madness motif, which suggests a sort of psychological underworld, is dependent upon the firm establishment of a healthy, waking upperworld; therefore, Lowell begins with a setting that contains not only the means of access to the underworld, the grave and the mill pond with Persephone beside it, but one that also contains the outward symbols of order for a living, upper world.

As I believe will become clear during the reading of the poem which follows, the upper world of order does not receive enough emphasis to provide a sufficient context for the poem's general departure from that world. There is a binary relation between Lowell's upper world and his lower world. For example, Hugh Staples identifies a "series of antagonisms" which he lists as "spring and fall, summer and winter, light and darkness, fertility and sterility, growth and decay, sanity and madness, wealth and poverty, love and hate--summing these up--life and death."6 This list provides particular instances of Lowell's binary world. One part of each of these takes its meaning from the other. A problem of meaning will arise, therefore, if one part (or, half) is stressed to the exclusion of its counterpart. Lowell's overemphasis upon the second half of each of these threatens the context within which his poem, more generally, would have meaning. Nevertheless, the notion of a God-ordained,
orderly world is basic to the poem's context, even when that world is seen as negated.

Mythical allusion is another basis for the poem's context, and, in addition to the above problem, it is often employed excessively, with a similar loss of balance occurring as a result. The specific situation of Anne and Harry Kavanaugh is intended to take meaning from its implied opposite, a normative and ordered world, as well as from an external, mythological construct. And this often works. When it does not work, however, it fails as a result of unbalanced emphasis.

The third element basic to the poem's problematical context is the supposed historical background of the Kavanaugh. The acquisition of what at one time was apparently excessive wealth was achieved at the sacrifice of a near extinct tribe of Maine Indians. Harry's ancestor, Red Kavanaugh, built a fortune on land taken from the Abnakis, and inscribed on his signet ring, "Cut down we flourish." While this originally applied to the Kavanaugh timber fortune, it takes an ironical meaning with Anne and Harry who are childless, and more generally it fits the Persephone myth. Where this third element also fails, however, is again in terms of uneven treatment. Parts of the Kavanaugh past fit neatly and significantly with the Kavanaugh present; others dangle as inexplicable details.
II

In the opening line of "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" we are presented with the Douay Bible, which has been placed on a garden chair. During the notes which precede the poem, Lowell has mentioned the presence of a Bible, that the Kavanaughs are a Catholic family, and that they "came to Maine in the 17th century." This cluster of details creates part of the background against which Anne and Harry stand.

The Douay Bible was printed in its entirety at Douai in 1609-10 by Catholic English exiles. Later in that same century the Catholic Kavanaughs immigrated to America. The wilderness they experienced must have been like moving, to reverse W. H. Auden's phrase, from a formal to a wild vineyard. Their moving to America brought them to a new garden, and from the start the reader is prepared to encounter some new manifestation of The Fall, this time discovered in the Kavanaughs' family history.

The particular nature of that fall is first indicated in the following two-and-one-half lines. The lady, Anne, is playing solitaire, and she is wearing a sealskin toque and a pair of blue jeans. The toque, being a modified form of a 16th century, small, plumed hat, worn by men and women, is reminiscent of another century, much as the rest of Kavanaugh seems left over from another century.
The incongruity between past and present is suggested by the incongruity of Anne's clothing; the blue-jeans she wears are not suitable for a member of the Kavanaugh line. They are suitable, however, to her original family, which was very poor. The toque, as hats often do, might be taken to symbolize her office or position, but the blue-jeans contradict this position.

In addition to her contradictory dress, which in the larger context of the poem's entirety suggests a fundamental confusion in Anne's position, she is playing solitaire, and "The Douay Bible . . . Is Sol, her dummy." Solitaire suggests solitary, which is part of Anne's position; it also suggests that she is gambling with herself, which, she later muses, "Is love of self." This leads us to a third implication, that Anne is a solipsist, and this is vitally bound up with what she suspects was her failure in her marriage. A fourth implication results from what can only be handled as a cluster of details. It is the suggestion that Sol, her opponent in solitaire, may also be Sol the Roman sun god who shares a relation with Helios and Apollo. (In particular, Apollo appears later in the poem in an allusion to Daphne.) Sol also suggests wisdom as it is an abbreviated name for King Solomon, and it is with this final understanding that Anne later says "'Sol / If you will help me, I will win the world.'" A competing
correlation is Apollo's association with prophecy. Thus, Sol as Solomon or as Apollo (it would be characteristic of Lowell at this point to say both) is a source of heightened knowledge, and Anne sees his knowledge as the means for control, or power, over "the world."

But "The Douay Bible . . . Is Sol, her dummy."
Thus in her solipsism, Anne ironically asks Sol, Bible yet dummy-opponent, to help her by his greater knowledge (that of Solomon, Apollo, and the Catholic Christian Tradition) to "win the world." She is asking to be restored to the world, yet she is also asking someone who does not exist but rather who is posited by herself as a sort of temporary alter ego. In her complete isolation, Anne addresses herself. Playing solitaire, she can win the world because she is the world. The presence of the Bible in a garden, therefore, is ironical. The various implications of it as "Sol, her dummy" point to her intellectual pride and self-love, the opposite of what a Bible's presence would normally mean.

Consistent with the Kavanaugh garden's relation to that first garden, the serpent is figuratively present:

There's a sort of path
Or rut of weeds that serpents down a hill
And graveyard to a ruined burlap mill;

That the path is "a sort of path" means that it is not a very good path in the sense that it is not clear or
certain. Also, "sort" suggests class, having something in common, thus this path "serpents down" in direction past a "graveyard to a ruined burlap mill." Descent is suggested, and the manner of descent may be discovered by the "rut of weeds" that characterizes the path. Literally, the rut is a grooved track one follows; however, indiscriminate copulation is also suggested by an alternate meaning for rut and by the fact that weeds, which are a sign of disuse yet are also indiscriminate, are growing along the rut. The rut, therefore, leads to ruin and death, as the "graveyard" and "ruined . . . mill" insinuate.

Lowell is developing a modern locus for original sin. In Roman Catholicism original sin causes the loss of sanctifying grace. As I will discuss later, Martin Heidegger would call this the god's absence. But within Lowell's terms, at the time he wrote "The Mills of the Kavanaughs," I think that the loss of grace as a result of original sin means the loss of God's love, and grace is instrumental in man's taking right action. That is, the metaphysical loss results in a moral loss.

Beside the "ruined burlap mill" and the mill pond there is "a maternal nineteenth century / Italian statue of Persephone." Part of Anne's failure, she suspects, is that she and Harry did not restore life to Kavanaugh. They raised neither the family fortunes nor the next
generation. The ironical presence of a "maternal" Persephone is an early hint as to Anne's particular situation, her marriage to death. Related to this and to the absence of grace, the statue "beckons to a mob of Bacchanals / To plunge like dogs or athletes through the falls." In a sense, the absence of one god evokes the presence of another, more primitive god. Persephone intends for those who "plunge like dogs . . . through the falls" to "fetch her the stone garland she will hurl." Whether as decoration, as poetry or as the prize for heraldry—the garland is stone; immediately after this Anne kneels at her husband's gravestone and folds his flag, his bit of heraldry. Persephone will hurl a stone garland and Anne kneels at a grave because the present god's nature is vitally bound up with death:

"This is the throne
They must have willed us. Harry, not a thing
Was missing: we were children of a king."

At the end of the first stanza we know that Anne's marriage is in some way a marriage with death, if not with Pluto outright. In addition, we also know that Kavanaugh has been the scene of some private re-enactment of the first fall from grace, and that in the wake of the Christian God's withdrawn favor a pagan god has surfaced. It appears that, in her revery, Anne sees Harry as Hades and herself as Persephone.
Experience the absence of the Christian God, Anne directs her affections toward the logical antipode, as it is incorporated in classical mythology. Experiencing the absence of her lover, she does the same thing. In both cases the process is one of giving to that which is absent the sentiments which naturally should be directed toward something present and capable of perception. In his essay, "Aesthetic Poetry," Walter Pater identifies a similar process:

Into this kingdom of reverie, and with it into a paradise of ambitious refinements, the earthly love enters, and becomes a prolonged somnambulism. Of religion it learns the art of directing towards an unseen object sentiments whose natural direction is towards objects of sense. Hence a love defined by the absence of the beloved, choosing to be without hope, protesting against all lower uses of love, barren, extravagant [sic] antinomian.

Anne's revery, and Lowell's, generates its own world (for Anne, solipsism and for Lowell, the poem). In the absence of apparent physical and spiritual life, Anne opts for physical and spiritual death. The poem participates not only in the tradition of the absent or lost lover but in one of the absent or lost god as well. As Pater points out, this absence allows the substitution of "reverie" directed towards "an unseen object." Such "reverie" is compensatory, but it ultimately identifies a basic antinomy in Lowell's understanding. The "series of antagonisms" that Staples identifies comprises a list
of particular instances of this. As Staples summarizes, the antimony is finally between "life and death." Thus as long as we are in Anne's consciousness, her revery, death is suspended but imminent due to her preoccupation. For such a condition, Persephone is the natural embodiment, half living and half dying.

As I outlined earlier, three basic stanchions in the poem are the assumption of a God-ordained order, and therefore context, the assumption of a mythical context, and that of a historical context. The opening stanza establishes the first of these and, in addition, introduces the Persephone myth. The second stanza develops the historical context, while the third turns back to myth. In general, the entire poem is carried out via the interaction of all three contexts. Each is intended to comment upon the other such that the text moves forward by a process of continuous contrast and reflection. This takes place within a floating omniscient point of view, one which occupies Anne Kavanaugh's consciousness for a predominant part of the poem.

The potential for meaning with this method is tremendous; its danger is equally great, however. Specifically, Lowell has difficulties maintaining distinctions between text and context. And his greatest problem arises with excessive mythical allusion. His myths overlap to the point of obscuring each other.
Another aspect of this problem, which is evident even in the second stanza of the poem, is that Lowell's history is so detailed it overlaps itself, obscuring some of what was its intended significance. For example, Anne has already begun addressing Harry in the first stanza. By the second she is recounting the family fortunes to him, though, if he hears, he should know the story better than she could ever know it as it was his family first. This is obviously a device, and her recounting is intended for the reader. But with continued use it becomes self-defeating.

However, the second stanza does flesh out the Kavanaughs' family history. Their dramatic fall from political and economic prominence is demonstrated by the contrast existing between Anne's reference to "Cousin Franklin Pierce" and her description of Harry's mother, "typing to redeem" the Kavanaugh "mills / From Harding's taxes." The fact that Kavanaugh must be redeemed morally, as well as economically, gradually surfaces during the course of Anne's revery.

In fact Anne actually begins her revery at this point by remembering her trespass on Kavanaugh land to gather flowers. Having established family prominence and family guilt in the second stanza, Lowell moves further into Anne's consciousness in the third stanza, and, as Staples points out, he relates the scene of
Anne's trespass to that in Ovid's account of Proserpina's abduction by Pluto. Ovid's description follows:

and in this grove
Proserpina was playing, gathering flowers
Violets, or white lilies, and so many
The basket would not hold them all, but still
She was so eager--the other girls must never
Beat her at picking blossoms! So, in one moment,
Or almost one, she was seen, and loved, and taken
In Pluto's rush of love. She called her mother,
Her comrades, but more often for her mother.
Where he had torn the garment from her shoulder,
The loosened flowers fell, and she, poor darling,
In simple innocence, grieved as much for them
As for her other loss.

Anne's account follows:

Once I trespassed--picking flowers
For keepsakes of my journey, once I bent
Above your well, where lawn and battlement
Were trembling, yet without a flaw to mar
Their sweet surrender. Ripples seemed to star
My face, the rocks, the bottom of the well;
My heart, pursued by all its plunder, fell,
And I was tossing petals from my lair
Of copper leaves above your mother's chair.

Staples was the first to note that stanza eight repeats Persephone's (or, Proserpina's) abduction; stanza eleven deals with her return to earth, and stanza seventeen recounts "Pluto's assertion of his right to reclaim his bride at the end of the growing season."

The fact that the third stanza is related to Ovid's account reinforces the sense of foreboding already generated by the poem. The failure of Anne's life with Harry is implied; her self-love, seen in the reflexive "bottom of the well," is as barren as the "copper leaves."
The fourth stanza begins with the reflection of the Persephone statue, and those of the Bacchanals, seen in the mill pond. Married to the dead, Anne says that Harry was "'a fool'" to leave "'the Navy when disgrace / Still wanted zeal to look him in the face.'" It is also at this point that she states that "gambling with herself / Is love of self." As she acknowledges her narcissism, she briefly surfaces from it and "feels" Harry's "fingers" on "her neck." At the same time, however, she demonstrates her relation to the dead.

By association, Anne's thought turns to Daphne who, while fleeing, felt Apollo's breath on her neck. Her introversion during her marriage was a flight from Harry, and she is reminded of Daphne's similar flight from Apollo. Both undergo a metamorphosis. But while Daphne becomes the laurel, Anne's change is to become queen of the dead. There is also a certain amount of ambiguity in Anne, as in Daphne, who "yet, perhaps, saw nothing to admire / Beneath Apollo." That is, what they flee, they desire in part.

Much of the poem's progress is carried out by a sort of synesthesia within Anne's consciousness. Also, Lowell often takes the poem out of Anne's consciousness and establishes the objective existence of her surroundings only to plunge back into her mind for another series of associations, some more synesthetic than others. As is
becoming evident, the poem's foremost problem is excessive association. Or, rather, the poem's meaning often cannot be as fully and as dramatically realized as it should be because there is more free play (or, association) within the text than the poem's context can reconcile. I quote the fifth stanza which demonstrates this problem:

The leaves, sun's yellow, listen. Love, they fall.
She hears her husband, and she tries to call
Him, then remembers. Burning stubble roars
About the garden. Columns fill the life
Insurance calendar on which she scores.
The lady laughs. She shakes her parasol.
The table rattles, and she chews her pearled,
Once telescopic pencil, till its knife
If you will help me, I will win the world."
Her husband's thumbnail scratches on her comb.
A boy is pointing at the sun. He cries:
O dandelion, wish my wish, be true,
And blows the callow pollen in her eyes.
"Harry," she whispers, "we are far from home--
A boy and girl a-Maying in the blue."

In the space of sixteen lines she hears falling leaves, her husband and the "Burning stubble." Ironically, Anne keeps score on a "life / Insurance calendar": then "She shakes her parasol . . . [the pun intentional] and chews her . . . pencil" while "The table rattles" and a "knife / Snaps open." Next she whispers, and we hear Harry's "thumbnail . . . on her comb." The reintroduction of Harry causes Anne to recollect him as a boy. Reintroduced, he proceeds to point "at the sun" and blows a "dandelion . . . in her eyes." The stanza
concludes with Anne whispering again, this time that she and Harry are "A boy and girl a-Maying in the blue."

Almost comically, Lowell is trying to do too much too quickly. Details such as the fact that the "pencil" is "telescopic" or that the "garden" is surrounded by "Burning stubble" that "roars" require our attention. However, these become lost in a crowd of others, all waiting to be interpreted. The problem is that such multiplicity denies meaning because the context is overloaded with details which it must reconcile.

The "Burning stubble" can be associated with the Kavanaugh motto, "Cut down we flourish," and with Pluto's entrance to the underworld. But association is not meaning. The "pencil" was "Once telescopic." Is this a particularity with no significance beyond itself? Or is it in some way suggestive of lost distance or perspective? Other than because Anne "chews" on it, why does the pencil's "knife / Snap[ ] open"?

With the knife's opening Anne asks "Sol" to help her "win the world." Immediately, Harry is there to run his thumbnail along a comb, creating his own sort of diatonic scale. Sol is, among other things, the fifth note in a diatonic scale. Is Anne's address to "Sol" reinforced by her doing so in the fifth stanza of the poem? Later, Harry's numbering process for categorizing birds is referred to, "'What's the twenty-eight. /
the twenty-eight--0 wait.'" This occurs (should we again say ironically?) in stanza twenty-eight. In sum, all too often we are given much fact but no finding.

What can and should be said about the fifth stanza is that as Daphne's "laurel branches" drop "from the blue" in the previous stanza, here Harry and Anne "are far from home-- / A boy and girl a-Maying in the blue." This is part of Anne's revery, yet it is also Anne's and Harry's condition. Each is lost "in the blue" in two senses: Anne is lost and changed as Daphne was, yet while she flees through the world she also wishes to "win the world"; Harry, in death, pursues Anne much as Apollo pursued Daphne and as Pluto abducted Persephone, but at the same time he is also a lost little boy. It is this twofold existence that causes their marriage to fail. In particular, Anne dreams of making love with Harry as a little boy, and Harry cannot relent his own dark pursuit when he hears her talking in her sleep and thinks she is dreaming of another man.

In the third stanza Anne wanders into Kavanaugh to pick flowers. Her action repeats Persephone's straying into a "grove" to gather the narcissus. And Anne's narcissism reinforces this. As a further link, Lowell introduces Ceres, or Demeter, in the sixth stanza. Ceres is mother to Persephone, or Proserpina. Upon losing her daughter, she made the earth barren, as was within her
power because she was Goddess of the corn, of agriculture. Thus, the failure of Kavanaugh may be seen as a curse placed upon it by Ceres due to the loss of her daughter, Anne's marriage to Harry.

Persephone's statue beckons to "a mob of Bacchanals." These followers of Bacchus or Dionysus suggest his presence and remind us of his early association with Ceres. Unlike many of the gods, these two were friends of the mortals. One was related to corn, or grain, and the other to the vine, two basic fruits of the earth that are needed daily. In addition, both represent assurance against death: Persephone's cyclic renewal is familiar; and Dionysus is associated with resurrection and therefore with belief in the life of the soul after death.

Anne fits as Persephone for several reasons; however, one reason is that she combines two myths. She is brought into the Kavanaugh family as a result of her father's excessive appetite and his indigence. This parallels the myth of Erysichthon, in which Erysichthon offends Ceres and she curses him with famine. He offends Ceres by cutting down a tree (much as Red Kavanaugh cut down many trees) that is in a grove sacred to her. Ceres plagues him by ordering Famine to plant hunger in Erysichthon. In order to buy food, he sells his daughter into slavery; however she prays to Poseidon who saves her by changing her back when the danger has passed.
Erysichthon, as does Harry, finally kills himself. Persephone, as does Erysichthon's daughter, goes through metamorphoses in order to provide food. That is, Erysichthon represents Anne's relation to the masculine world of Harry, her father, and Red Kavanaugh. Erysichthon's daughter, as Anne, enriches Anne's role as a Persephone to the dying Kavanaughs. Anne's purpose is one of redemption; her unique significance within Lowell's terms is that she fails at this. That guilt which is incurred by violating a grove sacred to Ceres, or that which is incurred by violating the new Eden of America, cannot be expiated.

During the course of the sixth stanza Anne identifies another part of her predicament:

How can I see
Things as they are, my Love, while April steals
Through bog and chalk-pit, till these boulders bear
Persephone—illusory, perhaps,
Yet her renewal, no illusion, for this air
Is orgied, Harry, and your setter yaps
About the goddess, while it nips her heels.

The seventh stanza opens:

The setter worries through the coils of brush
And streaming bramble, and the children rush
Hurrahing, where no marsh or scrubby field
Or sorry clump of virgin pine will yield. . . .

Jerome Mazzaro has suggested that "The setter worries through the coils of brush" may be a reference to the Uroborus, a symbol for time. This seems appropriate, particularly in light of what precedes. Anne articulates
one of her basic problems, that she is time-locked, when
she says, "How can I see / Things as they are." As I
have already suggested, such a concern was Lowell's con­
cern, and poetry was his solution; it was his mode for
seeing "Things as they are" in a world of time and pro­
cess. For Anne, the Persephone myth gauges time and
process and explains her peculiar situation, a situation
in which she is married to a dead man and married into
a dying family, more generally, married to death.

In her role as Persephone, Anne is also supposed to
generate renewal, something which would give unity to
her life in the sense that it would mitigate her being
time-locked. But in this capacity she fails. As she
says, "the children rush . . . where no marsh or scrubby
field . . . will yield." They fail to catch "the half­
extinct . . . bird" they chase, and it "sails beyond
beyond."

That is, Anne fails to redeem the Kavanaugh line
in a world where time has come to be understood not in
terms of the resurrection but rather that of the Uroborus,
the serpent that is circular because it eats its tail.
She cannot "see / Things as they are" because time, no
longer grounded in historical fact, sets any particular
point of view adrift. It is just such a predicament
which makes a phenomenological approach to experience
valuable. Anne's revery, or Lowell's poem, recollects
the past sequentially and by doing so becomes a self-locating mode of thought. Anne's revery is, therefore, a modality intended to generate unity of experience.

As Staples maintains, the eighth stanza "recapitulates Persephone's abduction by Pluto in the pool of Cyane." In a sense, Lowell broadens the focus at moments, much as a movie camera might do, in an attempt to locate the particular in its larger context. By this point, the Christian context has been lost; what remains are snatches of history and classical mythology. If Anne can see herself as another Persephone then her experience, though a failure, is not aberrant. If it were an aberration, she could not locate it. Being able to locate her experience means that in some way she (or, Lowell) is able to stand outside a particular situation and to that extent not be totally subject to it.

Ovid blends the stories of Cyane and Arethusa with that of Persephone, as the lines I quoted from his Metamorphoses demonstrate. In stanzas eight, nine, and ten Lowell intermixes these three stories and adds a fourth, that of Narcissus and Echo. As Staples rightly summarizes, Lowell is trying "to pack as much meaning into every line" as possible. What actually happens is that the myths overlap, and rather than concentration Lowell achieves confusion. In the next stanza Lowell alludes to the story of Paolo and Francesca, and if anything further compounds the confusion.
Lowell shifts Anne's revery by introducing various external facts such as the millpond or the knife attached to a "telescopic pencil." Another means by which he shifts her attention is by using seasons. Staples points this out, but he confuses certain details. He places Anne's and Harry's "first meeting" in stanza four, while . . . [Anne] is picking flowers illicitly at Kavanaugh. In fact, their meeting occurs in stanza three; and, it may be inaccurate to say that they meet in the first place. If they do meet, in either stanza, they do so strictly in terms of an allusion to Persephone's abduction by Pluto.

With the mention of "April," spring is introduced in the sixth stanza. The season parallels Harry's and Anne's youth. Stanza nine carries them into summer, and by stanza eleven they are in autumn. Thus, though allusion is the most basic method, the progression of seasons is used as a governing principle for Anne's and Harry's romantic progress.

Still within spring, stanza eight begins the process of combining the myths of Persephone, Cyane, Arethusa, and Narcissus and Echo. Persephone's absence from the upper world after her abduction corresponds with the progression of seasons into summer in stanzas nine and ten. Stanza nine includes the reference to Dante's Paolo and Francesca (the lovers who let passion overrule reason),
and the next stanza alludes to the myth of Narcissus and Echo. Taken as a whole, the three stanzas unite Anne and Harry not in spring but in summer, and in the process of doing so they suggest several flaws that contribute to the marriage's failure. Narcissism and lust cause Anne and Harry to be ignorant of each other; the suggestion seems strong that their marriage is a mutual abduction, resulting in no more than the wind-borne passion of Paolo and Francesca.

During the course of the eleventh stanza, Harry and Anne make love in Autumn. Anne seems "to hear / The harvesters," her union with Harry being a harvest, not regeneration. "The mowers moving through that golden-eared / Avernal ambush" not only refers to lagio Avernus, a lake near Possuoli, Italy, reputed to lead to the underworld because of its stench, but "ambush" also suggests that they are trapped. Part of their being trapped results from the guilt of the Kavanaugh fortune; Red Kavanaugh's abuse of the land is one reason for "Persephone's deferred / Renewal of the earth." Another part of their trap, however, is that regeneration is "deferred" by their lust or passion of which George Santyana says of Paolo and Francesca that Dante means if you abandon yourself altogether to love and to nothing more than love, you already are in Hell. Whether one views Anne's relation with her dead husband as a sort of life-in-Hell or as
just a bad marriage, the circumstances that contribute to her predicament are concrete in terms of the poem: That is, family guilt plus lust and narcissism result not in regeneration of Kavanaugh but instead cause its degeneration.

Stanzas twelve and thirteen trace Anne's life from her origin as one member of a poor family with thirteen children to her adoption by Harry's mother and the very different life she led at Kavanaugh. Anne and Harry live as "Brother and sister!"; for them, as children, the woods seem haunted by Abnakis, while Harry's home is dominated by his ancestry. Though their relationship is that of brother and sister initially, later they are to marry.

We are given the history of Anne's origin from a destitute family of thirteen children, whose father kept a goat and "a second woman twenty farms up the road," to her adoption by Mrs. Kavanaugh, who "charged . . . [her] board and lodging to the town." This last line suggests that Mrs. Kavanaugh's motive for taking Anne was to ease the family financial plight. Nevertheless, stanza thirteen does state that Anne and Harry are "Brother and sister!" which means that, "in a sense," their love is "incestuous." ¹⁷ If it is incest, it is primarily the result of Mrs. Kavanaugh's expediency designed to retain her family; incest is consistent with
this motive to the extent that it too can be motivated by a desire for retention of the self through those closest to being the self.

Added guilt is contained in references to the "Abnakis" Indians and to Red Kavanaugh in the following two stanzas, "who burned and buried child / And squaw . . . A pine-tree shilling a scalp." One may see Mrs. Kavanaugh's bringing Anne home as another attempt to maintain a guilt-ridden name and property, and the eventual result of this is a marriage that inherits guilt but which, because of its incestuous nature, cannot expiate it. Also, I think that it is fair to add that Anne's and Harry's narcissism is a type of incest of spirit and that this finds its physical counterpart in their brother-sister relationship.

Staples argues that "Your mother came and signed my papers . . . And charged my board and lodging to the town" (stanza 12) means adoption (and, therefore, incest), though this may be going too far. If so, however, it is Lowell's fault. He is trying to make Mrs. Kavanaugh's action mean two things which cannot coexist: At one point we are told that Anne is taken in for financial reasons, and at another, that she is adopted, which would mean that the town no longer paid Mrs. Kavanaugh for Anne's room and board. There are several motives that can make Mrs. Kavanaugh's action understandable and believable,
but we are given too little too quickly to make this part of the poem consistent and therefore completely realistic. Finally, if her adoption is for expediency, then can we really be convinced that Anne and Harry are "Brother and sister!" with all of the serious overtones to this which Lowell wishes us to accept?

The Persephone motif, more consistent than the incest theme, continues in stanza fourteen with "the woodsman [Red Kavanaugh] left a track / Straight as an arrow to the blacksmith's shack / Where I was born." This not only keeps the underworld relation in mind ("blacksmith"); it further relates Anne's origin with the Kavanaugh tradition. It is late spring and a month before their marriage and Harry swears that their "marriage . . . [will] renew the cleft / Forests and skulls" of the Abnakis. The family motto, "Cut down we flourish," again suggests the Persephone motif, that winter (or, death) seen by her going underground will always be displaced by the renewal of her return, spring. The particularity of the use of the myth in this poem, however, seems in part to be that their marriage occurs in the summer (July), not in the spring, and that the season of renewal has already passed for them.

This idea continues. In stanza fifteen the dead Indians chant their "Miserere." As if that is not enough, the opening line of stanza sixteen shouts the point with
(this time obvious) one more allusion: "Marriage by drowning!" In addition, the inappropriateness of the timing of their marriage is also suggested by Anne's being a "Cinderella at their Mass" whose bridesmaids are dressed in "red," not only the lust of Francesca, but the fire of Hades. Reminiscent of her gazing into the well in stanza three, she says, "'Prince Charming is my shadow in the glass.'" Then she shifts from revery back to the cards, "The lady stacks her cards. She laughs and scores," remembering Harry's statement that "God knows why!" he married her.

One flaw in the Persephone motif may be simply the added association with Daphne. Cinderella (in stanza 16) echoes the change that Daphne underwent to escape Apollo, who, like Paolo, did not have rational control of his love. Taking revenge upon Apollo, Cupid said, "Thine arrows may strike all things else, Apollo, but mine shall strike thee." Thus, beyond rational control, Harry says of his marriage to Anne, "'God knows why!'" But Anne, like Narcissus, loves the reflection of herself, and, like Daphne and Persephone, she wishes to withhold herself.

The "shadow in the glass" is finally a solipsistic shadow, and the omniscient shift from Anne's revery to a description of her continuing to play solitaire reinforces this. Incidentally, her playing is not objective
(as it would be) but is in fact subjective; she does not shuffle but "stacks her cards," and this of course determines the order in which they will come out. The consequences of this are suggested by the fact that she sees a shadow where her reflection should be.

But beyond being radically subjective, the character of Anne Kavanaugh is not consistent: She moves from being a cluster of Persephone, Daphne, Francesca, and Narcissus (with which one might go along) to having the opposite characteristics of Apollo (with whom Harry was previously associated) in her attempts to win the world and to circumvent possibility by stacking the deck of cards. Is this to be read as just one more metamorphosis in Anne's character or one metamorphosis too many? Once again Lowell's dense method seems to be trying to do too much too quickly.

The following stanza is a further shift backward in time to Anne and Harry climbing the "snake-trail" of the mountain where a "Widow's Walk" is "balanced on a drop" and where "Demeter's daughter first reviewed the dead." Anne remembers one motive for her marriage, "hearing how she'd come to little good, / She took a husband to dispirit hell." This echoes the Persephone theme and in particular may allude to Pluto's rape of Persephone, only this time it is in the context of the colloquial and the moral: "she'd come to little good." Harry has returned
to commit suicide and, as Pluto, to lead her to a world of the dead. Anne's situation is soon to literally require a "Widow's Walk." Their marriage is "balanced on a drop."

The following stanzas trace Harry's mental dissolution and paranoia, his violence and his eventual death, either by suicide or as a result of an earlier attempt at suicide. Lowell does not make clear which. Stanza nineteen suggests Harry's interest in suicide, "falling from dishonor on a sword." At the same time Anne says that she "thought her kindness had restored him." In stanza twenty it is Christmas, and she says ironically (in light of both Harry's condition and the remark that Anne would "come to little good"), "'Harry's mine for good'' while he stumbles to onomatopoetically stir a "stoup of glüg." The mention of "a silver dollar" echoes Red Kavanaugh's guilt and the mention of the gas oven-stove establishes the setting for Harry's attempted suicide, a setting that reappears, along with other details, in "Her Dead Brother."

In the following stanza, twenty-one, Anne and Harry have gone to bed, and Harry has drugged himself, though he flinches when she touches him. Anne sleeps and dreams of their childhood at the "mill-fall," which was the locus for their re-enactment of the original fall from grace. Harry ideally defends Anne from Medusa and then
says, "'I will have to yield / You to the dragon, if you fall asleep'" in stanza twenty-two. She dreams that she "slept" (which means that she is "yield[ed]" to the dragon or to Medusa, which the "snowplow" with its "eye-headlights" and "thirty gangling feet of angled lights" suggests).

Beginning in stanza twenty-one, however, there is a fusion of two events in the story of Perseus which is made possible because of Lowell's use of dream. By letting Anne's subconscious carry events at this point Lowell is afforded even greater latitude than usual. Specifically, the "snowplow" represents first Medusa and second Harry's automobile. In addition, Harry has said that he "will have to yield" Anne "to the dragon," which plays off the scene in which Perseus saves Andromeda from a great snake. Part of Lowell's associational method follows:

Then I slept. I found
That I was stalking in my moccasing
Below the mill-fall, where our cave begins
To shake its head, a green Medusa, crowned

With juniper. A dragon writhed around
A knob above you, and its triple tails
Fanned at your face. Furlongs of glaucous scales
Wallowed to splatter the reproachful hound
Eyes of the gorgon on the monstrous targe,
Plated with hammered-down tobacco tins,
You pushed and parried at the water's charge.
Your blue and orange broadsword lopped its fins
And roaring . . . I was back in bed.

Anne's dream continues, and, as I have already pointed
out, she believes Harry has threatened to "yield" her if she, in her dream, falls asleep.

Stanza twenty-three contains the main action in the poem, what has been called "one ancient bedroom joke." Anne dreams that she is making love with Harry as a boy but warns that the mature Harry is "driving back." The "snowplow" that she saw while falling asleep is now her husband's car. She wakes and Harry is asking "'who, who, who?'" and hitting her. She remembers the "green shoots on . . . [his] signet ring." In stanza twenty-four, he ironically mocks her saying, "'Anne, / You want yourself,'" which suggests that her solipsism has the effect of narcissism. The effect that the event has upon Harry is to bring about his mental disintegration. Her dream has revealed a sort of Medusa and leaves Harry, if not stone, at least transfixed by his breakdown.

Anne's logical response is to say, "'Harry, we're not accountable for dreams.'" Yet, although she makes such a reply, she suspects she does have responsibility for Harry's disintegration, and it results from dreaming of one sort or another. A look at Jean Stafford's "A Country Love Story" adds credence to the idea that Anne robs Harry of his identity by having an imaginary lover, a sort of demon lover. The reality of their marriage is denied by this. Anne will not reconcile the ideal and the real. Her failure is that she does not mediate
between two polarities, what she believes should be
(Harry as a boy) and what she actually experiences, a
very imperfect man.

Anne's failure has destructive consequences, and
they appear in stanza twenty-five. Harry attempts sui-
cide by cutting either his wrists or his throat, or both,
and by turning on the "oven jets." In stanza twenty-six,
Anne's inability to help Harry, "'I must have fainted,'"
suggests Persephone's inability to keep Pluto from con-
ducting her to the underworld through Avernus. Anne
says that where she "sank" the water "stank." Avernus
is reputed to be the way to Hades because of its stench.

Having fainted at the sight of Harry, Anne dreams
that they are in a "dory" and that Harry is using a
"pitchfork" to catch "crabs." The crab is the fourth
sign of the zodiac, which includes the months of June
and July; Anne and Harry were married in July. The
"pitchfork" suggests (as does "trident") Neptune; it
also brings Satan to mind. The "eel-grass" seems to be
an allusion to the serpent and to Medusa; both, I assume,
are sexual symbols intended to relate guilt and time,
much as in stanza seven "the setter worries through the
coils of brush" is a likely reference to the Uroborus.

But these allusions are identical to the action in
Anne's dream, which is a journey with Harry to death.
As mentioned before, the river stinks much as Avernus
is supposed to stink, opening a way to Hades. In stanza twenty-seven the water is yellow and appears to boil. At the same time the "dry-flies" snap past Anne's ears and seem to say "Wish my, wish my, wish," which returns us to Harry as a little boy with a dandelion. "Those dead-horse waters" suggest Pergus and Cyane, through which Pluto drove his horse drawn chariot. Perhaps the fact that the water in Anne's dream boils and is yellow identifies it with Ovid's description of Pluto's driving his horses and car "fiercely.... Through.... deep lakes.... that reeked with sulphur" and "That boiled," since the yellow water might be full of sulphur which is yellow. The water is literally yellow with "summer's drought," the time of year in which their childless marriage took place. In fact, the child that does exist is Anne's memory of Harry as a boy who said, "wish my wish, be true" in the fifth stanza, which runs to the next with Anne saying, "'we are far from home-- / A boy and girl a-Maying in the blue /'"Of March or April.'"

Anne's dream is a journey with Harry, who has just attempted suicide, into a region of the dead. The concluding lines of stanza twenty-seven depict this, and the very last ones are those (though slightly altered) which ended the earlier version of the poem as it appeared in The Kenyon Review in 1951:
I gasped. My mouth
Was open, and I seemed to mime your hound's
Terrified panting; and our trimming ship
Was shipping water . . . I was staring at
Our drifting oars. The moon was floating--flat
As the old world of maps. I thought, 'I'll stay.
Harry,' I whispered, 'hurry, I will pray
So truly; hurry! God, you must, you must
Hurry, for Death, carousing like a king
On nothing but his lands, will take your ring
To bind me, and possess me to the dust.'

Despite this dream, Harry continues to live, "To
baby-smile into the brutal gray / Daylight" as she puts it in stanza twenty-eight. He no longer recognizes the birds he "once memorized / By numbers." Their "kinds" are "numbers, numbers!" and (as mentioned earlier) he asks too cleverly, "'What's the twenty-eight, / The twenty-eight, the twenty-eight'" in a stanza of the same number. Lowell certainly did this consciously, but it is neither ironical nor humorous. It appears somewhat antic on his part; but its net effect is to appear contrived.

Harry continues to decline. In stanza twenty-nine, Anne says, "To the ungarnished ruin of your mind / Came the persona of the murderous Saul." Harry cries "'Where is my harper?'" then sucks his "thumb for joy" or "When the phantasmagoria" leaves, weeps "For their return." Of this Anne feels it is as if she had "never lived . . . never, never anything," and she feels "the stump and green shoots at . . . [her] throat." That is, she has failed to restore life to Kavanaugh. If they are part
of a royal line, as "Saul" and "children of a king" (in the first stanza) suggest, they are the last members of that line. Their marriage has not continued life but destroyed it. "Cut down we flourish," which was on the ring that Anne felt when Harry hit her, can only be understood in a doubly ironical sense. By it Red Kavanaugh meant cutting down trees and Indians would bring prosperity. By it, now, Anne means that she is to enter Hades, that her part in the Kavanaugh history is only the cutting down, not the flourishing.

This segment is followed in the next stanza by another revery of their marriage in which she says, "'My life / Is like a horn of plenty gone to grass. . . . / Who is this, and who is this. . . . his kiss, / The consummation of the silvered glass.'" Her idealization of Harry is part of her solipsism; because she is the boundary of all that exists, she may have as many Harrys as she can create from one moment to the next. Opposed to this is the interjection of what is apparently Harry's fragmentary conversation with his "male-attendant," saying that Anne had taken him "for the other guy," which serves to return the action to the literal situation, Harry's deterioration.

The following stanza describes a child dressed as an Indian who tells Anne that Harry is dead. In the earlier version there actually is an Indian, which
suggests that the Abnakis have outlasted Red Kavanaugh's line. The month is July, the same time of year in which Anne and Harry were married. It is also "The month of freedom." His body sitting up in bed, Harry seems to say, "'You must bury me / As if you gloried in my liberty.'" The stanza concludes with, "How will she disown / The leisured condescension of his frown / That still refuses." The implied answer is that she will never "disown" it.

Stanza thirty-two has Anne again playing solitaire and saying, "'But it's so dull . . . This autumn.'" She also says, "I am just a girl, / Just one man's not the fleet's." However, her "wits" are somewhat "overseas." She builds "a card-house" which is meant to be Kavanaugh. The cards are described as Kawanaughs or "effigies / Of kings and queens" which she shuffles "so badly that she always wins," as "She dreams her luck has brought her husband home." Addressing him she says that "The applause" is for him, "Gods of ancient Rome / Rise from the mill-pond on their marble knees."

In the next stanza she continues meditating upon these gods, "their eyes, / Stars of a recognition" that nothing "will hinder." The nature of this recognition is suggested by the following lines:

now . . . they have found
Me their Persephone, gone under ground
Into myself to supplicate the throne
And horn of Hades to restore that stone,
Imperial garland, once the living flower,
Now stone--Harvest, my mother's, only dower
To the dark monarch, and the futile dead
In Hades, where I lost my maidenhead.

Hell, or Hades, is "myself" for Anne Kavanaugh. Her condition is similar to Milton's Satan who says, "myself am Hell." A journey "underground" to the dead is simply a journey into her finite self, which like Satan's mind "is its own place," capable of success only by "shuffling . . . badly."

The concluding stanzas serve as a "coda," as Staples points out. Anne reviews the Kavanaugh history of fortune and guilt while rowing down the mill stream. Lowell likens the scene she recollects to something from Fragonard, supposedly sensual, fluid, and spontaneous. Perhaps Lowell had Fragonard's Bathers in mind; a few lines later he mentions Harry's mother bathing, her stockings and skirts a polite version of the Fragonard scene. Also, there may be an intended parallel existing between the Kavanaugh's having outlived their era and Fragonard having outlived his, being reduced to poverty during the Napoleonic reign.

Anne rows and gathers lilies, much as Persephone gathered lilies. In the thirty-seventh stanza she says to Harry, "'I think we row together, for the stern / Jumps from my weaker stroke.'" That is, Anne, like
Persephone, is with her Hades and on the water that opens to the underworld. In support of this I quote the view of Kavanaugh she describes while looking back from her boat:

and down the cove
Our house is floating, and the windows burn
As if its underpinnings fed the stove.

Then there is a definite shift from the temporal world in which Anne is rowing to an a-temporal one in which Harry's mother is still present, typing to redeem the mills:

Her window's open; look, she waits for us,
And types, until the clattering tin bell
Upon her room-large table tolls for us.
Listen, your mother's asking, is it well?
Yes, very well. He died outside the church
Like Harry Tudor. Now we near the sluice
And burial ground above the burlap mill;
I see you swing a string of yellow perch
About your head to fan off gnats that mill
And wail, as your disheartened shadow tries
The buried bedstead, where your body lies--
Time out of mind--a failing stand of spruce.

Stephen Yenser argues that Anne commits suicide at the conclusion of the poem. While, as "Time out of mind" suggests, her consciousness certainly does move into a realm of the dead (indeed it has been, through revery, close to that realm during most of the poem), there is no evidence of suicide or that Anne actually dies in either version of the poem. Yenser is pressing a tenor unjustifiably beyond its vehicle. The last three lines
of the poem state that as "the virgin . . . gave herself because her blood was warm" so, "for no other reason," Anne Kavanaugh "gave / Whatever brought . . . [her] gladness to the grave." This does not mean she committed suicide so much as that she married death. Giving what gave her "gladness" is not synonymous with giving her life, or taking it. In fact "Whatever brought . . . [her] gladness" can be only part of her life as obviously her life experienced both gladness and unhappiness. Persephone did not commit suicide, and Anne is being likened to Persephone. Both do, however, have to give themselves over to death for half of a cycle. But that is not suicide.

To summarize, the poem is an example of the method of mythical allusion. Its weaknesses are occasional obscurity caused by different myths getting in the way of each other, and for Lowell history and ethical systems function as myths. In addition, the poem suffers from excessive density, which puts too much meaning into too little action. Nevertheless, the Persephone motif is consistently maintained throughout the poem as a mediation between living and dying and as a thematic buoy about which the poem's action circles.
The consistency in Lowell's use of the Persephone myth is a good angle from which to regard the two significant versions of the poem. The earliest version appeared, as I have mentioned, in The Kenyon Review. Before publication as the title poem in Lowell's third volume, "The Mills" underwent somewhat limited but significant revision. The third version, which is merely the last five stanzas of the second version, appears in Lowell's Selected Poems but is of no importance to this discussion.

What is of importance, however, is the question of consistency in the Persephone myth as motif, as it appears in the permanent version of the poem. Lowell gives a particular emphasis to the myth and maintains it consistently throughout the poem. But the consistency of that emphasis is satisfactory only if we regard the myth-motif internally, which the preceding exegesis sought to do.

Regarded externally, the poem actually employs only half of the Persephone cycle. That is, "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" is a long, detailed, meditative walk from late summer through autumn that ends with the approach of complete dormancy. Persephone's return to the upper world does not occur. From the poem's beginning
Anne and Harry are depicted as failing to bring new life to Kavanaugh and the Kavanaugh line. If Harry is Hades, how could they? But the larger aspect of this is simply that Lowell slights half of the significance of Persephone (renewal) in order to dramatically stress the other half (death), though neither half can have complete meaning without its counterpart. Anne is not Persephone. She is merely associated with one half of Persephone's nature.

Restated, the renewing character of Persephone is suppressed in order to give emphasis to her relation to death, and in the process of doing this Lowell does achieve dramatic meaning within the poem. Persephone, as the wife of Hades, does serve as the buoy or point of reference amid a drama of irony and paradox.

External to this, however, is the rest of Persephone's significance existing in the completed myth and operating in the average reader's mind. Though, as revised, "The Mills" seems to satisfy requirements for dramatic meaning, its earlier version demonstrates that Lowell was originally conscious of external pressures.

I have in mind his use of Catholic references. In particular, Saint Patrick and the Virgin Mary appear in the earlier "Mills," but they are removed from the second version. In the first version of the poem the Catholic allusions do not work as they were intended but create confusion in the manner I have already described, Lowell's
trying to do too much in too little space. That is, on one level, his intention to have such allusions was sound as they rounded out the poem's meaning, in particular its use of Persephone. On another level, however, Lowell perceived the confusion that was actually created, and his removal of unnecessary allusions had an equally sound intention.

The essential point is that the presence of a traditional, religious understanding of events rounds out that part of Persephone that is otherwise missing. Renewal via Christ (or, Persephone) is a necessary ingredient for the significance of and meaning in Anne's lack of renewal. The absence of this completing element in the poem, I will argue later, is vitally related to a break in Lowell's cosmos, in particular his departure from the Church.

IV

In conclusion, I would like to comment briefly upon the poem's two versions. Aside from deletions I have already mentioned, the other change of real significance is the addition of the second version's concluding stanza. It contains some of the best writing in the poem. It also demonstrates Lowell's movement away from a Christian framework within which to depict, if not explain, events.
The earlier version is useful not only because its presence alongside the second version helps to demonstrate Lowell's departure from Catholicism but because in some ways it reveals Lowell's original intentions and, by doing so, clarifies the permanent version in places where it is murky.

"The Mills of the Kavanaughs" appeared as the lead piece in Winter Issue, 1951, of The Kenyon Review. As in the final version, there is a prose introduction preceding the first stanza. Unlike the final version, however, the quotations from Matthew Arnold and W. C. Williams are not present. Also, between the first and second prose introductions there are four significant differences, which should be pointed out. In the earlier introduction we are given three details not present later: At the end of the garden in which Anne is sitting "there is a stone bedstead"; Anne's husband "has killed himself"; and he was "the last" of the Kavanaugh "line."
The later version includes an explanatory sentence as to who the Abnakis Indians were, which is missing in The Kenyon Review version.

Anne's and Harry's situation is more fixed in the earlier introduction and the earlier poem. One reason for this is that the dramatic tension in the poem stems largely from the fact that Harry, a Catholic, committed suicide. In the later version, the Catholic context
has been greatly restricted, and, as a result, Harry is less dramatically guilty. Lowell compensates for this, however, by giving emphasis to the guilt inherited from Red Kavanaugh's treatment of the Abnakis Indians. This shift represents one instance in what can be generalized as Lowell's departure from the Church and entrance into secular humanism.
NOTES


4 Staples, pp. 57-58.


6 Staples, p. 58.


9 Staples, p. 59.

10 Ovid, p. 119.

11 Staples, p. 59.


13 Staples, p. 59.

14 Staples, p. 62.

15 Staples, p. 57.

17 Staples, p. 59.

18 Ovid, pp. 16-20.


20 Staples, p. 58.


A Critical Reception

Robert Lowell is a significant subject for any discussion of poetry written over the past thirty-five years simply because his career has become a benchmark for the poetry of his generation. No other poet of his era has received the critical attention that has come to Lowell, and, despite the many changes that occur in his work, he seems always to have had an enthusiastic audience in attendance. That is, he has been favorably received on a very broad basis, which makes his work important to any study of poetry since World War II.

In many ways Lowell is a public poet, and the broad acclaim that he has received is in part due to his use of public themes. But before it is public, his work is private. It is vitally bound up with a sense of dislocation, and on this primary level his writing serves as a modality for locating the self, for bracketing experience. Much as the cartographer's map, his poetry is intended to fix the self to an identifiable locus; one that is seemingly spatial because of imagery but that in fact is predominately temporal. Early and late in his career,
Lowell has led the way at points of change in poetry (particularly into confessional modes), and a consideration of what he departed from as well as what he arrived at will help identify fundamental concerns for poetry at the present. If poetry has taken some peculiar turns since World War II, Lowell's career will not only place these turns but will shed light on how they came about as he was often leading the way.

Critics give many reasons for the dramatic change which occurred between The Mills of the Kavanaughs (1951) and Life Studies (1959). One reason is Lowell's departure from the Catholic Church. Patrick Cosgrave says of the title poem in The Mills of the Kavanaughs that it "represents an important stage of Lowell's farewell to Catholicism, and of his search for an alternative system or systems." Irvin Ehrenpries discusses this move as it surfaces in "Beyond the Alps," the opening poem in Life Studies, and says that basically the poem depicts "a train journey from the city of priests to the city of artists, Rome to Paris." Lowell's divorce from Jean Stafford may also be related to his break with Rome simply because within the Church it was unacceptable. And there are other events in Lowell's life which critics suggest may have contributed to his poetic shift: Mental disturbances, an interest in psychology, the cold war, McCarthy, and (of all things) the election of a Republican
to the White House are some of the reasons given. With
the exception of the last of these, all may have played
a role to some extent in Lowell's shift. In any event,
the fact that so many reasons have been offered demon-
strates the seriousness with which the shift has been
taken.

But for change to be significant it must be plotted
with reference to an original state. For Lowell, that
state reached its height in *The Mills of the Kavanaugh*
and particularly in the title poem. Hugh B. Staples, in
the course of summarizing the first twenty years of
Lowell's career, has identified *The Mills of the Kavanaugh*
as the last instance of Lowell's early phase:

But from a later perspective, it is easier to
view *The Mills of the Kavanaugh* as a crisis
in Lowell's career. It represents the continuation
and intensification of the experiments in
an impersonal approach towards experience al-
ready begun in *Lord Weary's Castle*—experiments
in an objective narrative mode that remain ul-
timately lyrical and subjective. It marks,
furthermore, the end of a style, first begun
in *Land of Unlikeness*, perfected in *Lord Weary's
Castle*, and ended in the pyrotechnics of *The
Mills of the Kavanaugh*.

Staples goes on to say that due to "the obscurity of its
narrative, the intricacy of its symbolic structure and
the complexity of its theme: "The Mills of the Kavanaugh"
has never received "the attention it deserves." And
though he made this remark in 1961, it is still applicable
today. Despite a burst of interest in Lowell around 1970.
most critics have either skipped over "The Mills" altogether or have stressed the second half of Lowell's career, that dating from 1959 forward.

But Lowell has said that "All your poems are in a sense one poem." This being the case, then what he tried to do with his early, formal approach was continued by his second phase, but with radically different machinery. I think that Lowell's most basic concern is with locating the self in a dislocating world. How he does this is accessible to us through his poetry; and as we have shared Lowell's dislocating world, his attempts to gauge it are of significance to us all, even when they partially fail. If, as I said earlier, Lowell was leading the way when poetic turns were taken, then how he made those turns is of importance. If some of them led to dead-end streets, a study of them is still important if for no other reason than their future avoidance.

Reviewing The Mills of the Kavanaughs for Furioso in 1951, Dudley Fitts says of the title poem that "It is a serious and beautiful poem; yet . . . gravely flawed." He finds its form "over-demanding," with many of its passages false dramatically, its facts "hurled" at the reader when many details are unnecessary. For Fitts, the most remarkable aspect is that "out of a great deal of imperfectly assimilated history and one ancient bedroom joke" Lowell was able to make of the poem "so moving a story."
William Arrowsmith's review is the most technical treatment of Lowell's method to appear when the book came out. Writing for The Hudson Review, Arrowsmith argues that Lowell takes methods used to sustain long poems and compresses them to short poems with the explosive results of Lord Weary's Castle. However, for Arrowsmith there is a "monotony of violence" in "The Mills" which results from the methods he outlines below:

What Lowell had done [prior to "The Mills"] was to take almost every device by which, normally, long poetry is protected from monotony--the enjambment, the substitutions, the breath-sweep, clause-piling and rhyme roughening--and compress them within a shorter frame.

Within "shorter" poems his method "worked; magnificently so." But within a larger frame Lowell was seeking to "expand" his "compressed lyric--at the same compression." Arrowsmith argues that this method has "boomeranged" on Lowell, that the result is "a monotonous poem" containing "magnificent poetry." Fundamentally, he sees it as failing in terms of its narrative. In particular, the absence of "strophic and antistrophic balance" causes the lines to slam together. As he says, "economy and a sense of balance in big poetry might have suggested a tonal contrast between end-stopped couplets and enjambed verses."

Anne's revery, which covers her past and is addressed
to Harry, serves as the poem's "tenor," and Arrowsmith adds that this is meant to be "supported" by the Persephone myth. Yet he finds that Lowell's overly suggestive use of myth blurs the poem's meaning rather than clarifying it. Speaking of Persephone and Hades, he says that "The danger of eschatologies is their very richness." Ignoring this problem, "Lowell . . . packs his symbols so that his simplicities assume a complexity which wrecks them." Arrowsmith rightly concludes that in narrative and dramatic poetry "symbols have to be given a different kind of life than in lyric poetry" because they must sustain "motives, completions and pace." Lowell's expansion of the "compressed lyric--at the same compression" fails at this.

I have quoted Arrowsmith at length because I think that he, along with Jarrell, has been the most incisive reviewer to tackle "The Mills." For him, "in both technique and content long Lowell looks just like short Lowell." And Lowell's inability to modulate at this point suggests why later when he did change he did so in such an extreme manner; it was his inability to evolve a new style out of his earlier one that caused him to drop it altogether in favor of something radically different.

It is interesting to note that Randall Jarrell has employed the same term to typify "The Mills" that William Arrowsmith uses: What is "monotony of violence" for Arrowsmith is "monotonous violence" for Jarrell. Also,
he is quick to mention the poem's failure as "a narrative poem," much as Arrowsmith points out Lowell's failure to modify his symbols to narrative needs. Thus for both reviewers there is a significant shortcoming as far as the believability of the poem is concerned, and I think this failure is grounded in a sense of realism as causality. We are convinced of an event insofar as we can determine a process which has brought about that event. Lowell's inability to modify lyrical symbols to narrative needs is in effect a failure to provide a context (or background) that has enough reasons in it to convince us of the reality of the action that takes place. To return to Dudley Fitts for a moment, the fact that he terms the central event in the poem a "bedroom joke" demonstrates that he is not seriously convinced of the reality of the event. Similarly, Jarrell says of Harry and Anne that he does not think "many readers will think them real." He continues:

the husband of the heroine never seems so, and the heroine is first of all a sort of symbiotic state of the poet. (You feel, "Yes, Robert Lowell would act like this if he were a "girl"; but whoever saw a girl like Robert Lowell?)

For Jarrell, Lowell's is primarily a failure with narrative. He does not create "the live half-accidental half-providential rightness that some of his best poetry seems to have." Again, a shortcoming in terms of
realism, though colored by Jarrell's particular way of seeing things. Near the end of his review, Jarrell says that Lowell has forced the poem, that "He is a poet of both Will and Imagination, but his Will is always seizing his Imagination by the shoulders and saying . . . 'get to work!'"15 Thus rather than letting the poem's meaning surface through setting and action, which would provide sufficient causes for belief, Lowell has too often superimposed significance.

Arrowsmith and Jarrell argue that the poem's main problem is bound up in Lowell's confused method. As far as they go they are correct. However, I hope it will become clear later that the mixed modes employed by Lowell are as much a confusion of perception as they are a failure in craftsmanship. The lyrical mode of perception is one that operates outside causality, while the narrative mode must use causality to make events believable, seemingly real and therefore significant. Part of Lowell's confusion in "The Mills," therefore, is in terms of method, but the other part is in terms of perception. Too often Lowell the lyric poet, standing outside strict reason, sought to be Lowell the public poet whose thought should be rational, and in particular causal.

Two other responses to The Mills of the Kavanaugh that appeared upon publication are brief enough to be quickly summarized. William Carlos Williams, writing
for The New York Times Book Review, describes "The Mills" in terms of "An unwonted sense of tragedy coupled with a formal fixation of the line." Otherwise, he is seemingly positive about the book yet so allusive the reader is left feeling uneasy. David Daiches, writing for The Yale Review, is equally brief in his treatment but pointed enough to register a complaint similar to Arrowsmith's and Jarrell's. He finds "an odd mixture of casualness and hysteria" throughout the book, saying "the poems" are "studies in the instability of memory and desire." In addition, Daiches finds that rather than having this confusion restricted to his poetry's theme, Lowell has been unable to separate subject from craft. Lacking "full control" he lets "his talents run wild." As I suggested above, Lowell's confused method, identified by Arrowsmith, Jarrell and Daiches, in turn becomes his confused perception.

To return to Hugh Staples, the critical "consensus" from 1951 to the present is basically "a great talent, but not a great book of poems," and of course this applies to the title poem. During his discussion of the poem, Staples cites the remark made by Dudley Fitts, which I have already quoted, as being "a middle critical position." Yet while Staples agrees that the poem is at once remarkable and "gravely flawed," he singles out the character of Anne Kavanaugh as moving and memorable, even reminiscent "of Greek tragedy."
Perhaps at this point it is worth returning to Lowell's process of locating a dislocated self through poetry. Staples correctly ends his discussion of "The Mills" by singling out Anne Kavanaugh; the poem's action is primarily filtered through her consciousness as it spans her childhood and maturity. The poem's central motif is Anne's likeness to Persephone in her role as wife to a dying line. That is, the poem's action is a bracketing of Anne's life carried out within her consciousness that seeks to locate her in the midst of a confused, dying and therefore dislocating world.

But, as Jarrell says, "the heroine is first of all a sort of symbiotic state of the poet." (As noted in the first chapter of this study, there are striking similarities between events in "The Mills" and events in Lowell's life.) In his discussion of the poem, Staples concludes that "The final meaning of the poem" is not "in the series of dualisms with which Anne . . . contends, and of which she is a part"; the meaning resides "in her ultimate acceptance of them." Thus insofar as it at least tangentially locates a dislocated Robert Lowell, the poem seeks to integrate contemporary and historical conditions with personal experience in an intellectual climate of dualism. Much of Lowell's locating process depends upon the acceptance of certain dualisms which seem fundamental to his understanding, indeed to his temperament.
Lowell's basic dualism is "life and death," and by 1951 this is confronted in a world without religion where death is magnified. Rather than Promethean, his task is very modern: There are no longer any Gods to steal from. As is evident from a comparison between the early version of "The Mills," published in *The Kenyon Review*, and the later version which appeared as a title poem, Lowell was moving away from Catholicism while rewriting the poem.21 As Staples first noted, the earlier "version contains numerous allusions to the Virgin Mary and to St. Patrick. . . . These are omitted in the later version." Generally, "there is a theme of opposition to Catholicism . . . that goes beyond mere indifference."22 Anne Kavanaugh comes late in "the fall of a noble house." In her acceptance of death she says she "gave / Whatever brought" her "gladness to the grave." To quote Staples once more, the poem concludes not on a note of Christian consolation but on one of "stoic resignation."23

In a more recent discussion, Stephen Yenser agrees with Arrowsmith that the mythologies employed in "The Mills" "do not cohere."24 However, for Yenser this is in part a result of Lowell's tendency to yoke "contraries"; also he emphasizes the poem's on-goingness, its "multiplication of analogy." In a poem such as "At the Altar," "The Lord and Lucifer are inexplicably one figure, who solicitously rocks the baby's carriage and sedistically
roasts the soul upon a spit." However, in "The Mills" opposites do not remain static: On the one hand, Lowell's attempt at continuous modification of mythologies results in their lack of coherence; on the other, "This multiplication of analogy" consistently produces the poem's "rich texture and complicated point of view," as "Lowell's chief means of analysis is multiplication of analogy." There is nothing new in this except the attempt to have analogies revealed in sequence so that they are in a process of continuous modification. The result, as I will demonstrate later, is often eidetic variation resulting from a poetry that is in many ways phenomenological.

Speaking of this analogical method as it develops, Yenser says Lowell begins "to see his poems in the same way that he sees his symbols, and he is starting to organize those poems into a narrative sequence that is itself symbolic." Life Studies is the first instance of this as described here, but the basic process of continually modifying myths and symbols had already been attempted in "The Mills," with narrative used to govern the movement. There are roughly two strategies for achieving continuous modification of "contraries." One may be seen in "The Mills"; the other is a series of lyrics which take up a subject from different points of view. Yenser actually touches on both in his third chapter, titled "The Logic of Contradiction":

In a world that is fundamentally ambivalent, to have but one point of view is perhaps to falsify; it is perhaps to become, in Stevens's words, a "lunatic of one idea." People, institutions, and even the gods, at least in the perspective framed by mortals, are complex and self-contradictory, Lowell implies, and therefore only a certain ambivalence can keep one from oversimplifying.29

Just as Staples finds "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" ends on no more than a note of "stoic resignation," the avoidance of "oversimplifying," for which Yenser opts, is at best a minimal goal. For the later Lowell, however, truth is no longer apodictic because he finds that the "world . . . is fundamentally ambivalent."30 Knowing this helps to explain his shift from intricate use of symbol and myth within long, self-qualifying poems, such as those in Lord Weary's Castle, to use of a series of seemingly casual lyrics which are nevertheless carefully arranged, as in Life Studies. In a sense, "The Mills" is the fulcrum underneath this shift, for after this transitional poem Lowell exchanges one modality for another, one mode of thought for another, as he seems increasingly convinced of the world's "ambivalence."

It is in this context that I earlier said that Lowell's mixed modes are as much a confusion of perception as they are the failure of craftsmanship that Arrowsmith argues. I think it is fair to say that in a world that has become relative and therefore "ambivalent," in a world no longer grounded in a metaphysical system
such as that provided by Congregationalism or Catholicism, the "rich texture and complicated point of view" that Yenser speaks of are all that are left. And in a world such as this, phenomenology offers a particularly interesting approach to a poetry now concerned with generating some formal structure for phenomena. For where there are merely phenomena, the self is first of all dislocated and, secondly, responsible for whatever locating takes place.

Discussing the similarities between Lowell's third book and the two preceding ones, Yenser notes an important difference, "Lowell's increased tendency to contradict himself, to get the process of thought rather than its product into the poetry." In an "ambivalent" world "process" appears to have more potential as a way of understanding because it contains ambivalence to the extent that it continues moving from one point to another, whether the points contradict or agree. As Staples noted, "stoic resignation" is possible; however, statement is not. Instead of any notion of truth, all attention is given to the mind's dialectical working from one moment to another in an attempt to establish pattern. As Yenser says a little later, "it is not so much that the poems [in The Mills of the Kavanaughs] come to ambiguous conclusions as it is that they consist of the interaction, the transactions of conflicting thoughts." Lowell no
longer pursues "the unity of things" but instead focuses on "the struggle" that is necessary to realize "unity."³²

It is easier to see the process carried out in Anne Kavanaugh's mind as being a transition within Lowell's process as a poet if we remember not only his retreat from Catholicism but also his shift from unifying contraries to analyzing distinctions. Yenser makes this point by linking how Lowell sees to what he sees:

In terms of religious belief, the difference is that between one which accepts paradox in the name of a faith and one which calls a faith into question because it is paradoxical; in terms of poetic method, the difference is that between one which synthesizes or unites contraries and one which analyzes or insists upon distinctions.³³

The basic paradox in the poem is contained in the Kavanaugh motto, "Cut down, we flourish," which in fact is the Winslow motto, Lowell's maternal family.³⁴ Persephone's alternating between being above ground and below ground fits with this, and Yenser argues that it is "an intuitive recognition of the paradox that 'To die is life,'" but a "secular . . . rather than sectarian" one. For him, the paradox is "ogygian."³⁵

Ogygius, a Boetian king, was the son of either Poseidon or of the soil, and the poem works both ways: First, if Anne commits suicide by drowning and if her death can be taken as somehow positive because she "accepts" it (indeed, causes it according to Yenser)³⁶ then the Poseidon reference
can be associated in a minimal way with the poem's action. Second, certainly Ogygius as son of the soil works because the Kavanaugh wealth was based upon a timber empire. But insofar as the poem is "secular," its insistence upon distinctions calls not "faith" but meaning "into question." The poem resists interpretation because its "contraries," "dualisms," and loose analogies cannot be correlated in a larger intellectual context.

Yenser's approach to the poem leads him into some peculiar observations that derive from the poem's inconsistent use of myth. For example, he believes the poem's closing lines mean that Anne was not abducted but that she gave herself to death (committed suicide), which is clearly outside the Persephone myth. Rather than finding this an inconsistency between myth and action in the poem, he says it is a "view of the Persephone myth" that is "unprecedented." In the name of analyzing distinctions, Yenser overlooks the poem's failure in its most basic purpose, its final meaning. Or, put another way, if it is a "view of the . . . myth," why is it one that cannot be integrated? Yenser recognizes that "analogies proliferate to reinforce, obscure, and nullify one another in stanza after stanza," but in his enthusiasm for "contraries" he occasionally makes distinctions where there is no framework within which things can afterwards signify.
Patrick Cosgrave's discussion of "The Mills" and of Lowell's writing in general serves as a counterbalance to Yenser's views. For Cosgrave, there is "a complex system of reference" in Lowell as evidenced by his use of analogy, but there is an "absence of a complex system of value" within which meaning can operate. Thus, "the consequences of Lowell's attempt to fill the vacuum of meaning left by his failure to penetrate the meaning of his own analogies" is related to his failure to deal properly with historical experience. 

Elsewhere, Cosgrave says Lowell's real failure is "in his judgement of New England history." He uses "the same technique of judgement that he condemns in his ancestors." The following is a more particular statement:

First, the vacuum is filled by the willful violence of Lowell's judgement on his own time. Ultimately—and despite reservations of fondness and admiration for different men and periods—all human experience in history is condemned. Secondly, condemnation as such is not the poet's ambition: that ambition is to find value, to discover the unblemished Adam. But, thirdly, the method adopted—and the attempt to provide an over-mastering analogy for historical episodes and the kaleidoscopic jumbling of persons and periods is a method as well as an achievement—is ultimately destructive.

Perhaps the best way to contrast Yenser and Cosgrave is in this manner: Cosgrave would have meaning and value which require static points of reference in a culture, thus poetry should discover the order beneath apparent
disorder; on the other hand, Yenser is willing to accept a poetry which "analyzes or insists upon distinctions," and he does not press for their final resolution but, rather, leaves meaning suspended by process.

In their differences, Yenser's pluralism makes him a poetic minimalist. Cosgrave, however, distinguishes "method" and "achievement," and his doing so allows him to regard Lowell's poetic mode of thought without being inundated by the poetry's moment-to-moment dialectic. That is, Cosgrave has an objective distance from Lowell which Yenser lacks, and this enables him to be more optimistic about poetry in general, though more reserved about Lowell in particular.

As a method, Lowell's "over-mastering analogy for historical episodes and . . . kaleidoscopic jumbling of persons and periods" cannot be separated from the truth claims which his poetry ultimately makes. As Yenser correctly suggests, how Lowell sees is vitally bound up with what he sees. And one way to test the accuracy of what he sees is to look at his methods, his modes of thought. As Cosgrave says, early Lowell "uses form deliberately . . . for refining and moulding his experience," though "Eight years later" form is "abandoned for the informality of Life Studies." However, beneath the ordering function of form for experience and art there is the issue of authority. Lowell often makes
public statements based upon his judgment, and this requires an appeal to authority. Part of his early way of gaining authority was by form, thus he set form over against the "kaleidoscopic jumbling" mentioned above.

Yet the real source of authority for Lowell could not reside in form alone, though form could reinforce its presence. The source was external to his art, grounded in religion. Speaking of Lowell's move away from form, Cosgrave is quick to point out the concurrent move away from religion, and his observations on the inadequacy of that religion in the first place are worth quoting:

It was also about this point [his writing "Thanksgiving's Over," the last poem in The Mills of the Kavanaughs] that Lowell abandoned religion as the source of an independent system of moral reference and evaluation to put against quotidian experience in his verse. The trouble with his religious structure was, of course, precisely its failure to provide him with--or his failure to find in it--a wide and flexible system of values. His theology (his New England theology) was always very Puritanical; it was also inhuman. The message was that it was wrong to go on as we were going, but no suggestion was offered that to do differently would make us happier, even in afterlife. 43

Cosgrave continues by pointing out that there is "no range of sin and error in Lowell's catechism." Any failure deserves "the ultimate condemnation." Judging "nature from conduct" and finding "all conduct sinful," he concludes that "all nature" is "repellent," and arrives at what Yvor
Winters would call "Maule's Curse." Once again, how Lowell perceives, what mode he uses, vitally affects what he perceives.

In line with this, Cosgrave says that much of Life Studies is simply thin and does not "merit analysis." Abandoning his earlier formal mode grounded in an imperfectly understood religion, Lowell turned to "limited poems" based upon "the doctrine of the significance of the object . . . derived from" a pluralistic emphasis on "personality" and the "dissolution of sensibility," which ultimately dislodges the ability to discriminate. Lacking their opposite, Lowell's contraries become self-defeating in their "hundred visions and revisions." Lowell's analogies often fail to be analogous in any serious way because the larger religious context that gave them meaning before has been abandoned with no replacement near its equal. In Cosgrave's view, good and evil are set adrift in a failed "system of values." Lowell's excessively harsh treatment of his father for what were finally minor failures is one dramatic example of his own failure to employ a realistic set of values.

In many ways Cosgrave's reservations about "The Mills" are consistent with those already registered by Arrowsmith, Jarrell and others. While noting the particular use of time in the poem, that it "combines description of the present and reverie about the past,"
he concludes that "the borders between the two are mixed and overlapping." That is, as a linguistic mode that deals with experience, and therefore with time, the poem breaks down. And this results from Lowell's misuse of methods that were successful in shorter poems; as Arrowsmith has said, Lowell sought to "expand" his "compressed lyric--at the same compression." The following excerpt from Cosgrave's discussion clarifies the methods Lowell used and (excepting problems with casualty) makes clear why his narrative structure had to fail:

It ["The Mills"] exhibits all the ambiguities of meaning and nuances of symbolism that we have seen in 'The Quaker Graveyard' [a shorter poem] but to a much greater extent; the resources of Ovid's Metamorphoses are called upon by Lowell; and the central ambivalence lies in the character of Anne herself, contradictory in all things, even in alternate attachments to life and death, as is appropriate to her origin in the myth. Multiple allusions are created, to other myths as well as to other poets until the poem is clogged, not with judgments, but with references... The real difficulty with a poem such as this, which carries to an extreme a tendency to reference found almost everywhere in Lowell, lies not in the appropriateness or inappropriateness of particular references or images but in the structure of the work as a whole.48

Cosgrave goes on to say that once the basic Persephone motif is established "the symbolism and allusions do not advance the argument: they merely decorate the phenomenon." Lowell's achievement through symbolism and allusion is one of "Decoration," not "concentration." This is because
many of his references are in excess of the poem's rational structure, its ability to digest them. Thus they are "pseudo" references, and "The result is rich, but opaque and decadent."\(^{49}\)

Aside from seconding observations made by Arrowsmith and others, Cosgrave adds a dimension that has been previously overlooked, and (as I have already mentioned) that is Lowell's lack "of a complex system of value" within which meaning can operate. Lowell has been celebrated as a public poet, but his lack of a value system goes to the heart of his failure as a public poet. From refusing the draft in protest over Allied bombing of civilian targets in World War II to marching in Washington during the Vietnam war, Lowell has addressed himself to contemporary, public issues. However, the theology within which Lowell originally grounded his values was "very Puritanical . . . inhuman." According to Cosgrave, Lowell's judgment was negative with no alternative, no possibility for positive action.\(^{50}\) Thus, he has performed only half of the task required of a public poet.

A related example of Lowell's failure as a public poet, due to a confused "system of values," is his inability to see evil operating in *Benito Cereno* as Melville certainly saw it; Lowell's reworking of the story concentrates on Yankee Imperialism and completely overlooks the real issue, evil existing in the heart of
both slave and master, finally the evil inherent in power. As Phillip Cooper has said of the play, "The world of current events is translucently the subject of [Lowell's] Benito Cereno, for all its setting in 1803." His treatment of evil is restricted to the public traumas of the 1960's, even when the text from which he is operating contains something much more subtle.

To summarize for a moment, in terms of external failures in "The Mills" Cosgrave would say that Yenser's "contraries" lack meaning without a larger, static context within which such oppositions can have reference. While Yenser is willing to leave meaning suspended by process in a series of infinite "distinctions," Cosgrave is not. For him poetry should finally synthesize order by gauging the present against a permanent set of values. When Lowell does make a value judgment he does so in a confused manner. As often with his father, any failure receives "the ultimate condemnation." And with Anne Kavanaugh, the rightness or wrongness of her life is as ambiguous as most of Lowell's allusions.

Though he disagrees with Yenser, Cosgrave is basically in agreement with Arrowsmith, Jarrell, Pitts, and Staples as to the internal failures of "The Mills." Excessive use of allusions and symbols which are superimposed on the narrative, rather than evoked by it or somehow allowed to surface through it, causes the poem's internal confusion.
After The Mills of the Kavanaughs, "Life Studies was a major departure" for Lowell. However, the external dislocation that Cosgrave identifies did not go away, though a modified poetic mode sought to counteract this internally. Furthermore, in addition to a confused mode of understanding and a confused mode of writing, Cosgrave suggests that "Lowell's own uncurbable personality" was a problem. But it was his mode of writing that was the immediate cause for an altered poetic perception and understanding.

Richard Fein covers familiar ground when he notes that in The Mills of the Kavanaughs "Lowell makes his first moves from religious faith to doubt." A major characteristic noted by Fein is "intensity of memory," something which "The Mills of the Kavanaughs shares with Life Studies." Lowell's characters possess "The power of recalled experience, or of dreamed experience," and they not only "remember well," but "too well." Memory constitutes a continuum which is necessary for their self locating. As Fein says of Anne Kavanaugh, "She herself is her only opponent, her only salvation." Her memory poses and counterposes the meaning of her existence, and much of that existence centers around Harry and the Kavanaugh line. Thus in understanding herself Anne is confronted with re-collecting the events of the Kavanaugh history as well as those of her life with Harry.
Fein states that "The family in Lowell's poetry is a structured chaos within which a victim-member continues his efforts at survival." Lacking a religious ordering principle, Lowell is left with a natural order, the family, whose significance is bound up in its lineage. Memory is the appropriate tool.

Lowell's movement in The Mills of the Kavanaughs "from religious faith to doubt" is, in a sense, the point at which he became a modern. The poetry that follows appears to wrestle out of radical doubt and to do so with only partial success. It seeks to locate a dislocated self temporally in ways that are largely phenomenological. What takes place in Anne's mind, her memory which poses and counterposes, takes place in a series of lyrics in Life Studies. Images from childhood operate as past phases of an eidetic ego which transcends the groundless present with a sort of Janus consciousness that looks to the past and to the future in the same act of transcending. The present is groundless because, without the historical fact of Christ, time is mere process, and it passes too quickly for experience and cognition to take place at once. A phenomenological bracketing provides a way to gauge such process, and, in large part, Life Studies represents a new effort at bracketing.

Another aspect of Lowell's movement "from religious faith to doubt" concerns his role as public poet. In
this role, he is fundamentally undermined because, as Fein suggests and Cosgrave argues, he never found a consistent system of value against which he could compare particular events; there was "no range of sin and error in Lowell's catechism," to quote Cosgrave again. After he left the Catholic Church, his judgments could be equally black and white, but they were minus external authority. Ironically, his reputation as the public poet of his era rose as he rejected the public's traditional grounding for value judgments, religion. This fact may in some way mirror Lowell's age, but mere reflection does not qualify him to judge in the manner of a public poet.

Thus "doubt" alters Lowell's poetry, and it alters his relationship to his audience. As previously quoted, Fein states that an important characteristic in Lowell is his "intensity of memory" which, in response to uncertainty, constantly poses and counterposes. For Lowell, or his personae, it is a tentative means for survival. Of this Fein says:

The speaker of "Mother Marie Therese," like Anne Kavanaugh, like the old man with the Aeneid, like the woman of "Her Dead Brother," and like Michael in "Thanksgiving's Over," must locate and live with her turmoils and regrets but without too much assistance, if any at all, from religious views. In The Mills of the Kavanaughs we listen to secular sensibilities who can refer to Christian motif (and, of course, to Classical ones), but who are finally lost in their world with no sure footing.
except that of their ability to reminisce painfully and dramatically. Their honest confessions or remembrances are all they have.\textsuperscript{58}

Finding himself in doubt (or, as Fein says, "with no sure footing") yet aiming first for absolute knowledge then later for relative knowledge, Lowell nears the position Husserl describes in the opening of his \textit{Cartesian Meditations}.\textsuperscript{59}

Before concluding, I would like to summarize again for a moment. Robert Lowell is, first of all, important to us simply because of the serious attention he has received. He has become a part of the tradition. Second, in many ways he is a public poet, but he is a private poet first. Therefore, Lowell's religious shift, which was private, has had a weakening influence upon what Cosgrave calls his "system of value." Being publicly used in many of his poems, the confusion or loss of such a system in later poems has meant the confusion of judgments necessary for poetic statements. Nevertheless, the direction Lowell has taken is of major significance because it represents a serious response by an exceptional poet to a dilemma that is increasingly before all of us. If the response fails to reconcile the dilemma, it has produced a handful of remarkable poems which carry some interesting implications.

The critics covered in this chapter tend to agree,
with some exceptions, upon certain characteristics in Lowell's poetry. In conclusion, I would like simply to suggest some of the implications that these characteristics raise because they point to the following two chapters.

I think that it is fair to say that the single most important characteristic shared by The Mills of the Kavanaughs and by Life Studies is "intensity of memory." Lowell's use of revery or simply his reliance upon memory has often been noted. If we look to Husserl (who is first of all not concerned with a stream of objects, as in memory, but in concentrating on only one object) a psychological dimension appears in Lowell's poetic revery. In the Cartesian Meditations, Husserl describes the retentional and protentional functions of a reduced ego (the "horizon structure" of the ego's intentionality) as being part of the process by which that ego generates intentionality. Before anything else, these functions require memory; then the intentionality which they make possible in turn makes experience intelligible. Suppose you leave a warm glass of milk in a dark room, and in your absence someone replaces the milk with warm bourbon. Upon returning to that dark room, you drink the contents of the glass in one gulp, experiencing the usual sensations that go with warm bourbon. For a moment, before you recognize that you have been
tricked with a glass of bourbon, you have an experience that is in no way preconstructed by intentionality. That is, your intentionality has been frustrated; you have experienced raw matter, something which cannot be integrated into previous experience and which therefore cannot be understood. For the sake of understanding, intentionality gathers from the past and projects toward the future; it governs the possibility of new experience.

The point of the above is that in Lowell memory retains past experience, and the past limits what can be understood of future experience. If a metaphysically understood past, such as that provided by Congregationalism or Catholicism, is rejected, then for future understanding to be possible, as Husserl describes it, some other past must be inserted in its place. A more limited retentional experience will generate a more limited protentional experience. Or, by limiting Anne Kavanaugh’s past, Lowell automatically limits the possibilities for her future. In Husserlian terminology, human experience (and meaning) deteriorates because intentionality is narrowed, and this curbs possibilities for future experience.

Heidegger offers a way out of this predicament, but it is a way that requires a "singing" (or, lyric) poetry, not the causal reasoning necessary to elements in narrative. (As Arrowsmith has said, in "The Mills of the
Kavanaughs" Lowell was still writing a compressed lyric, though he was also writing narrative.) Heidegger's alternative is related to why Oedipus, in Oedipus the King, sings when out of horror and grief he is beyond his former discursive language and accustomed reason. He has realized Apollo's decree and, with that realization, his own limitation. Dramatically, he is at a point where his will has been broken. Heidegger would say that he is leaving "the will to power" and entering "the will as venture." 63

In his "The Nature of Language," Heidegger discusses Stefan George's poem, "The Word." What he finds taking place in George's poem, and in the activity of writing the poem, is something very similar to what happens with Oedipus when he sings. Realizing Apollo's decree (which is experienced linguistically) as he sings, Oedipus "experiences an authority, a dignity of the word than which nothing vaster and loftier can be thought." Oedipus is brought to this point by his defeat and grief over this defeat. Speaking of "sadness," rather than grief, Heidegger makes the following remarks:

True sadness is in harmony with what is most joyful--but in this way, that the greatest joy withdraws, halts in its withdrawal, and holds itself in reserve. By learning that renunciation, the poet undergoes his experience with the word's lofty sway... The poet could never go through the experience he undergoes with the word if the experience were not
attuned to sadness, to the mood of release-
ment into the nearness of what is withdrawn
but at the same time held in reserve for an
originary advent. 64

Allowing for Heidegger's own "lofty" diction, the
point seems clear. In refutation (to go back to the
glass of milk) or "renunciation" at a particular point,
we arrive at something "originary." For Oedipus this
is the realization which he sings. For Lowell, it is
contained in the phrase "O to break loose," with which
I will deal in a moment.

Out of his being broken Oedipus gains a particular
knowledge. The first instance of this knowledge, however,
surfaces as song. In his grief he is ecstatic, and,
being so, he stands outside himself, outside his own will.
Within himself, his cognition has been grounded in par-
ticular past experiences which contributed to his inten-
tionality, and his intentionality precluded perceptions
that were wide of it. What he has entered now Heidegger
would call "the balance" and Rilke would call "unshielded-
ness," 65 and this is fundamental to a lyric mode such as
that of Lowell's "Waking Early Sunday Morning" in which
he says, "O to break loose . . . jumping and falling
back, / nosing up to the impossible / stone and bone-
crushing waterfall." The following remarks by Heidegger
explore this more fully:
As ventured, those who are not protected are nevertheless not abandoned. If they were, they would be just as little ventured as if they were protected. Surrendered only to annihilation, they would no longer hang in the balance. . . . What is so ventured is, of course, unprotected; but because it hangs in the balance, it is retained in the venture. It is upheld.66

Though he shows no sign that he believes he is "retained," Lowell nevertheless wishes to venture himself. Paradoxically, for Heidegger it is just by risking the self that the self is sustained. Lowell's wish to nose "up to the impossible . . . waterfall" is just what Heidegger would have him do, as he says in "What Are Poets For?," quoted above.

Heidegger would say further that Apollo's will "befalls" Oedipus. Oedipus undergoes "an experience . . . not of . . . [his] making,"67 much in the way Lowell wakes involuntarily to the world he describes in "Waking Early Sunday Morning." But the experience is a linguistic one:

But when does language speak itself as language? Curiously enough, when we cannot find the right word for something that concerns us, carries us away, oppresses or encourages us. Then we leave unspoken what we have in mind and, without rightly giving it thought, undergo moments in which language itself has distantly and fleetingly touched us with its essential being. 68

Heidegger goes on to say that "No thing is where the word is lacking, that word which names the given thing." That
is, language presences things by naming them, not by operating as a sign that merely points but by a naming that invokes. He uses the expressions "'in the name of the King'" and "'in the name of God'" to represent what he means.

During "What Are Poets For?" Heidegger discusses what poetry can do in a "destitute time," an "era" defined by the god's failure to arrive, and this is the situation out of which Lowell writes, a world without religion, a world of doubt perhaps beyond Husserl's expectations. For Lowell, death often seems to be so magnified that it is not a venturing of the self but the self's annihilation. His basic dualism, life and death, remains a dualism so long as his poetry fails to "hang in the balance." By its nature, narrative does not lend itself to what Heidegger means by balance, but at moments the lyric does. Thus, the imaginative free play which Lowell used to write "Waking Early Sunday Morning" is an instance of what Heidegger would mean were he to say "0 to break loose." All of the poems discussed in "What Are Poets For?" are lyric, just as Oedipus sings a lyric. The ecstatic character of the lyric makes it a mode which can bring about "unshieldedness" because it does treat "the will as venture," the self as vacated. What our "destitute time" needs is "unshieldedness" similar to that found in the lyric.
Rather than the god's failure to arrive, which typifies our era, Oedipus dramatizes the god's arrival. As Apollo becomes evident, Oedipus must vacate his "will to power" for his "will as venture," that of a blind wanderer. In fact, that which made him unique, his intellect, is in Apollo's hands the direct agent of his downfall. Because the lyric impulse to song is an instance of "the will as venture," Oedipus's singing is Heidegger's "gathering release." Its center, Heidegger would say, is Being, as opposed to the mere being of human existence, and it is a vacated center. Through an imaginative free play with language, the lyric can occasion a greater Language. It symbolizes, and by this activity our mere being can occasion Being. For Heidegger, this means that lyric poetry is a modality that presences, as much as is possible, something transcendent and metaphysical, something outside discursive language and in particular outside causality. It does this in part by perceiving absence, which is necessary for whatever presencing follows. Recognizing an object's absence, we are already presencing it.

As with Oedipus, Lowell's shift in his thinking is vitally concerned with the god's absence and the god's arrival. The concurrent shift in his writing may be seen, therefore, as one which moved from a "will to power" to the "will as venture." The distinction is like that made
between mere force, which is exhaustible, and power, which is not. Again, the god's absence as opposed to the god's arrival.
NOTES


8 Dudley Fitts, "Review of The Mills of the Kavanaughs," Furioso, 6 (Fall 1951), pp. 76-77.


10 Arrowsmith, pp. 624-5.

11 Arrowsmith, p. 627.


13 Jarrell, p. 696.

14 Jarrell, p. 697.
15 Jarrell, p. 697.
18 Staples, p. 53.
19 Staples, p. 63.
20 Staples, pp. 63-64.
21 Cosgrave, p. 89.
22 Staples, p. 55.
23 Staples, p. 63.
25 Yenser, p. 88.
26 Yenser, p. 87.
27 Yenser, p. 88.
28 Yenser, p. 4.
29 Yenser, p. 105.
30 Yenser, p. 105.
31 Yenser, p. 83.
32 Yenser, p. 86.
33 Yenser, pp. 87-88.
34 Staples, p. 60.
35 Yenser, pp. 94-95.
36 Yenser, pp. 94-95.
37 Yenser, p. 97.
38 Yenser, p. 98.
39 Cosgrave, p. 31.
40 Cosgrave, pp. 52-53.
41 Cosgrave, p. 31.
42 Cosgrave, p. 43.
43 Cosgrave, p. 44.
44 Cosgrave, p. 45.
45 Cosgrave, pp. 140-41.
46 Cosgrave, p. 44.
47 Cosgrave, p. 106.
49 Cosgrave, pp. 107-108.
50 Cosgrave, p. 44.
52 Cosgrave, p. 109.
53 Cosgrave, p. 110.
54 Fein, p. 35.
55 Fein, p. 36.
56 Fein, p. 37.
57 Fein, p. 38.
58 Fein, pp. 45-46.
60 Husserl, p. 46.
61 Husserl, pp. 58-59.

63 Heidegger, p. 102.


65 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 103.

66 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 103.


69 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 132.
The most engaging aspect of Robert Lowell's career is the dramatic change that took place in his poetry between *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* and *Life Studies*. As I have said before, most readers of Lowell focus their discussions of this shift upon *Life Studies*, where the change is most easily recognized. In fact, with its publication in 1958, Lowell became a major force in poetic development, a force still felt today. What has been overlooked amidst the many discussions of this evolution, however, is the fact that the basis for much of his later development stems from what he was writing just before *Life Studies*.

A consideration of Lowell's mode of writing prior to this shift is useful because as much as the success of *Life Studies*, the failure of "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" marks the beginning of the major change that occurred in poetry after World War II. The revisions Lowell made while rewriting "The Mills" reveal
his realization that something very basic had altered. Between the first and second versions of the poem he began to exchange his early objectivist, synchronic poetry, which had reference to a fixed world order, for a diachronic poetry intended to gauge a world understood as process.

Lowell's metamorphosis may be seen as twofold, first in terms of reduced signification. His movement away from a Catholic-Congregationalist myth restricted the allegorical function of his narrative. As part of this, three of the traditional four levels of meaning (the literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical, employed from Aquinas to Fyre) no longer coincided with his poetry because there was no cosmology to which such levels of meaning could refer.

The complaint registered by William Arrowsmith upon reviewing The Mills of the Kavanoughs for The Hudson Review, that Lowell was trying to "expand" his "compressed lyric--at the same compression," is related to this problem. Lowell had not fully realized the new demands he was placing upon his poetry. It could no longer take its significance from heaven downward; it must build significance from the ground up, from experience. Though the practical result of this was that the "compression" of Lowell's poetry lessened in Life Studies, something more fundamental was occurring.
A change central to much that has happened to poetry in the last thirty years concerns its function as a mode of thought, and here Lowell has been more than a leader. As it was first published in The Kenyon Review, 1951, "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" generally represented the current objectivist virtues of irony, paradox and mythical allusion. In fact some of the poem's key stanzas were written in 1937 while Lowell was staying with his first mentor, Allen Tate. And as the poem's permanent version demonstrates, Lowell stuck with much that was typical of his earlier manner, that which characterized Lord Weary's Castle. Nevertheless, Lowell's subsequent departure from his early style took place while he was working on "The Mills," and that change meant that his poetry became more a means for perceiving than for representing, more diachronic than synchronic. Rather than achieve dramatic meaning by aesthetic closure, the intentions of his later poetry were to perceive contingencies always just under the surface of meaning.

As Steven Axelrod has recently pointed out, Lowell was at a crossroads. He recognized a "need to bring humanity into his poetry" and to avoid "desiccated abstractness." In his attempt to grasp "'direct experience,'" Lowell "mistook his gift and obsession to be fiction when in fact it was autobiography." In fact, Lowell's turn within narrative poetry, which ostensibly
created a fictional world, was only a half step away from an autobiographical poetry which he was later to write, one that was intended to gauge experience and, doing so, locate the self.

In the light of his lost faith, lost wife, confused politics, and troubled mind, Lowell's poetry became an activity of magnified significance. It could generate order in a world that was increasingly disorderly. In particular, Lowell's writing obliquely about the disintegration of his marriage was not merely a result of that experience but a means for getting beyond it. The problem with this, however, was that his mode of writing in "The Mills" was not appropriate for the demands that were developing. Increasingly, Lowell experienced what may be called a sense of dislocation, and this had its basis not only in his private life but on a public level as well.

Though a catchall, since World War II existentialism has become a household word, and with reason. Without seeking to rehash philosophical debate or even to codify Lowell's thought, it is fair to say that his divorce from Jean Stafford (who was Catholic), his departure from the Church itself, and his marriage to Elizabeth Hardwick ("who was politically on the left and not religious") each of these contributed to Lowell's movement away from a cosmology he might share with his
mentor Tate (or, with Aquinas and Frye) and into something much more tenuous. Axelrod suggests that it was "almost against his will" to enter "the liberal agnostic tradition" where Lowell in fact found himself.6

Certainly *Life Studies* represents a new and increasing reliance upon the self, saint or skunk, to generate meaning. There is an emphasis given to experiential concreteness not present in Lowell's previous writing. Out of this emphasis upon existence, he generates unity of experience, and he does this, in part, by giving sequence to what appears otherwise as a confused, if not absurd, outer world.

But this is the much discussed and overly celebrated later Lowell. There is a vital point that is the fulcrum to what his writing became during the second half of his career which has been generally overlooked. Indeed, most students of Lowell appear embarrassed by what they consider to be his foremost failure, and, being so, they say little if anything about "The Mills of the Kavanaughs." If the reason is not embarrassment, then it is simply that, within its own terms, the poem is a failure. But it is also a landmark in the move away from objectivist theories, a transition that has led to a more expressivistic poetry that contains its own failures.

Reaction to failures internal to a poetry, as well as new pressures external to it, is a valid reason for
change. However, the nature of reaction too easily can be merely to assume the obverse, the negative counterpart, to what previously stood. Thus, with Lowell objectivism is overturned for a brand of subjectivism, or, in Axelrod's terms, "autobiography." Similarly, the fixed cosmos of the Catholic tradition, arranged from heaven downward, is reversed for an existential process in which the only meaning is that which is created by human initiative. Deduction from a traditional myth such as Christianity is no longer valid, or authentic; induction, however, carries the dramatic persuasiveness of either the participant or at least the eyewitness.

I think that what lies beneath the switch I have described is that, more than anything else, poetry is a mode of thought. Its foremost responsibility is to create meaning, for reader as well as writer. But, as we are all too well aware, meaning itself has become problematical. To borrow from Hans-Georg Gadamer, "artistic experience is a mode of knowledge," but the unique character of artistic knowledge is that "the work's existence" is "the breaking-off of a formative process which actually points beyond it. . . . [A] work of art is not, in itself, completable." There are problems of text and context, work and audience.

Art exists by a fluid process, "the medial nature of the play process," such that the reader actually
completes the poem. Lowell's early phase was under pressure to change because of forces external to it, forces that are often first encountered in the reader who stands between the poem and its surroundings. In sum, text no longer seemed to fit context, or to answer it.

Lowell's personal crises could only have been made more difficult by their taking place in a world apparently outside traditional bases for meaning, a world of process. To borrow again from Gadamer, "Self-understanding takes place in relation to something else that is understood and includes the unity and sameness of the other." What Lowell experienced was the lack of "the unity" of this "other." He not only "found his Christian myth-making out of place" but, specifically, "that the global apocalypse he had prophesied . . . had failed to occur." In this sense, his earlier artistic mode of thought appeared to have been invalidated.

In response to this, Lowell changed his mode of writing and thus his mode of thought. His poetry became a means for self-locating. By writing a series of lyrics which, as they were made, looked backwards and forwards, Lowell sought to create a continuum of retentional modification that located the present for him. In a world understood as process, this could only be a mediating activity carried out between the known past and an
expected future. *Life Studies* was an appropriate title for such an activity.

Lowell's best image for the groundless present in a world of process is the train he rides from Rome to Paris in "Beyond the Alps." He is leaving the failed fixity of the Church and arriving at the activity of art, Paris. The rest of *Life Studies* follows. Its primary pattern is to telescope back and forth over Lowell's personal and cultural past in range-finding manner.

But that locating process was already operating in "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" in the form of Anne Kavanaugh's revery. Indeed the major failure of "The Mills" lies in the fact that it does not fully realize its locating intentions. During the period between the version published in *The Kenyon Review* and the one which appeared as a title poem, Lowell removed most Catholic allusions. But the poem's thinly disguised autobiographical elements remained. Though the earlier version was flawed and many of the changes Lowell made were for the best, the most significant one was the deletion of Catholic references, and this change worsened the poem's major problem.

The original framework upon which the significance of Harry's suicide depended for its dramatic meaning was Catholic doctrine. Read in its second version, "The
Mills" depicts a world that lacks the meaning that such a system bestows. Harry's suicide loses significance, though it is intended to be one of the major events in the poem. In addition, the very absence of a Christian framework depends upon our remembering it to make its absence fully meaningful. That is, Harry's is a family with a long Catholic tradition that has outlived its faith, but unless the context of that faith is somehow kept before us we cannot fully understand the significance of its loss. As part of this problem, Lowell's allegorical level of meaning fails because its referent (the external context provided by history, classical mythology, and the Christian myth) is reduced by one-third.

In the poem's second version, Lowell does try to be consistent in his move away from the Church. If the values by which the poem's action is judged have been modified, so the action itself has been modified. Harry's suicide was particularly condemnable within a Christian understanding: Parallel to the removal of that understanding, Lowell removes the specificity of Harry's death. In the poem's second version, the camera is turned slightly out of focus. The reader must assume that Harry died either as a result of his earlier attempt or as a result of a new attempt. The manner of his death is suggested rather than stated because there is no longer sufficient context to give dramatic meaning to a more specific
account. Such specificity would be mere detail in the poem's second version, and the loss of meaning here is an instance in the more general loss of an allegorical level of signification in the poem.

In the second version, Lowell retains Anne's role as Persephone. In fact, the poem depends most heavily upon the Persephone motif. Harry is Anne's Hades, beckoning her to the underworld. And yet there is no suggestion that she will return, which, as Persephone, she should do. Lowell makes Anne a combination of two reluctant virgins, Daphne and Persephone. However, only in the first version is she contrasted with the Virgin Mary. Part of her character, as originally intended, must be taken to stem from the presence of all three virgins. Such a combination would more fully contain all the facets of Anne's character and of her predicament. As the poem stands upon revision, however, removal of the promise of life reduces the dramatic significance of the loss of life.

In the poem as it appeared in The Kenyon Review, Persephone fails in half of her role, the promise of renewal in this world; however the presence of the Virgin Mary fills that gap. She provides the promise of the next world. Deletion of Mary, as the deletion of Christian references in general, is part of the leveling process that took place in Lowell's revision. Paul Tillich
might say that part of the "dimension of depth" has been sacrificed for a more strictly "horizontal" understanding. Lowell's version of the four senses of interpretation was in trouble. This was particularly the case on the level of allegory. The umbrella-like system of thought, under which his narrative could operate, was necessary for allegorical meaning. Nevertheless, Lowell set this system aside with nothing comparable to replace it.

To summarize for a moment, the removal of the Virgin Mary and other Catholic allusions, such as Saint Patrick and Hallowmass, does not clear up the confusion that already existed; such removal merely erases part of the external framework intended to reconcile the poem's tensions. Originally, the Catholic myth was intended as the final myth, among many, one which would provide closure to the poem's action. By such closure, the poem's method of mythical allusion, including allegorical dimensions, could be encompassed and forced into disclosure.

Lowell decided that the one myth did not adequately reconcile the many: The dramatic meaning that his method was meant to achieve did not come about. However, his answer was merely to get rid of the Catholic allusions, retaining the rest of his myth apparatus. The irony and paradox that had gotten out of control in the earlier version remained out of control, and excessive mythical allusion remained a problem, despite the restriction of one myth.
Yet the strong narrative-autobiographical aspect of the poem was intact. That is, the poem's second version remains, to a large extent, an oblique account of part of Lowell's marriage to Jean Stafford. As such, the poem (in either version) is not only a locating of the poet by bracketing experience, it is also an expression. Harry's suicide is Lowell's articulation of his own predicament. But the expression has lost those surroundings which, as with an earlier poem such as "After the Surprising Conversions," would give it full meaning. There is no Church opposing suicide, no Church to promise redemption for the difficulties of the temporal world, and no Church to formalize and sustain a relationship.

During the same year Lowell began the earliest stanzas in "The Mills," Alfred North Whitehead began the first in a series of lectures later collected under the title, Modes of Thought. Much of Whitehead's attention is devoted to the problems inherent in a world of process. In particular, he is concerned with intelligibility in our experience and with what he calls "importance."\textsuperscript{12}

In a passage that sounds reminiscent of Kierkegaard's discussion of the false knight of faith and the true knight of faith,\textsuperscript{13} Whitehead contrasts "importance" and "expression." He defines "importance" as that which "is derived from the immanence of infinitude in the finite." But, he continues, "expression is founded on the finite
occasion. It is the activity of finitude impressing itself on its environment."

What this distinction means in terms of Lowell is that "The Mills of the Kavanaughgs" fails on the level of "importance" because the myth by which Lowell grasped "infinitude," Christianity, was discarded. In the poem's standing version, the mediating function of myth between finite and infinite world views is no longer considered valid. What is still possible, however, is "expression." Though Anne's and Harry's relationship can be understood in a religious framework now only ironically, the poem's more direct expression of despair is still possible. In fact, concentrating on Kavanaugh as "environment" and Anne's experience (actual events and her revery) as "the finite occasion," the entire poem may be seen as Lowell's expression of despair due to the apparent failure of a system that made "importance" and a sense of awe possible.

In addition to expression, however, Lowell's narrative-autobiographical approach could also locate the self. Anne Kavanaugh is able to bracket her experience (and indirectly Lowell's), and her revery appears to be the means by which she does this. A peculiar aspect of this process is that, while it appears spatial because of description and imagery, it actually provides a temporal fix for experience. Anne has been displaced by events, and re-presenting them sequentially places her in relation
to these events. Her narrative, though lacking in allegory, still gives sequence to raw experience. Her mental process, which largely constitutes the poem, is less the New Critics' static, synchronic artifact of wit and irony and more a diachronic movement of the mind of the persona through a series of re-presentations.

It is the means by which she carries out her self-locating process that I would like to discuss next. A closer look at Anne's (or, Lowell's) method of representing may give some indication as to why her revery not only locates but is an isolated and isolating process.

II

At this point, Kant can be used to introduce objects (that Husserl leaves out) which are part of the immanent structure of consciousness. For him, the world makes sense only if there's a fixed referent, or object. Thus, for example, in causality the world makes sense only if there is a First Cause serving as an object to which we can refer. Causality without a First Cause, such as we get in the narrative of the revised version of "The Mills of the Kavanaughs," finally dissolves the self because it runs infinitely into the past and infinitely into the future. On the other hand, causality with a First Cause gives us some hope of making sense of ourselves, though
we are thus understood as causal selves. I mention this because the one way that the causal plane of Lowell's narrative can be valid is by grounding itself in a First Cause. But, by setting his Christian cosmos aside Lowell not only undercuts his allegory, he also invalidates the self-locating process meant to replace allegory. By removing First Cause from causality, he removes the fixed referent that keeps causality from dissolving the self.

As I have already stated, "The Mills" slips from the more ambitious goals of allegory and Whitehead's sense of "importance" but continues to operate on an empirical level as a relatively long, narrative poem. Indeed, much of Anne Kavanaugh's revery, and therefore much of the poem's organization, depends upon the characteristics of conventional narrative structure; thus, in addition to sequence, there are assumptions basic to narrative. The act of story telling always entails the mind's order being brought to bear on a surrounding world. What I would like to consider now for a moment is the nature of the mind's order, in particular some of Kant's "categories":

Just as perceptions arranged sensations around objects in space and time, so conception arranges perceptions (objects and events) about the idea of cause, unity, reciprocal relation, necessity, contingency, etc.; these and other "categories" are the structure into which perceptions are received, and by which they
are classified and moulded into the ordered concepts of thought. These are the very essence and character of the mind; mind is the coordination of experience.  

The forms of perception alluded to above are space and time. These and other modes of thought are a priori to our grasp of experience:

There is [an exit from blind alleys of thought] says Kant, if we remember that space, time and cause are modes of perception and conception, which must enter into all our experience, since they are the web and structure of experience; these dilemmas [of thought about a First Cause] arise from supposing that space, time and cause are external things independent of perception. We shall never have any experience which we shall not interpret in terms of space and time and cause; but we shall never have any philosophy if we forget that these are not things, but modes of interpretation and understanding.  

Because in dealing with process the function of narrative is to reproduce experience, or to appear to do so, narrative is a modality that assumes such Kantian categories as time, space, cause, unity, and necessity. A closer look at the operation of one of these, causality, in "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" reveals why the poem fails in certain ways, and it provides, representatively, one reason for the general shift in poetry following the publication of Life Studies. That is, Lowell's poetic shift, which occurred after his most ambitious narrative, represents an attempt to get away from some of the limits that accompany this mode of thought, particularly once it has lost its ability to function allegorically.
Causality requires substance as well as concepts of space and time. It assumes unity and, usually, necessity as well. We generally think of all these collectively. When we speak of them, we are likely to say realism or to make an appeal to realism.

Lowell's use of classical mythology, of religion, and of history in "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" assumes causality in a sort of cultural realism. He invokes these for the dramatic meaning of events he narrates, but the very nature of the events themselves is also causal. Those at Kavanaugh are believable to the extent that we can ascribe reasons for their taking place; they are effects owing their existence to certain causes, and we believe or disbelieve them to the extent that we can identify satisfactory reasons for their taking place.

Yet Lowell's narrative orders a world at Kavanaugh beyond traditional values, in many ways one of mere process. By selection, it gives sequence to events, and it supplies causes for these in the guise of characterization, antecedent events, and setting. We are prepared for Harry's suicidal tendencies because we know something of his character. By our observation, via Anne, of his behavior after he returns from the Navy, we learn that he is dangerously distracted. Similarly, we know about antecedent events in Harry's life because Anne's revery recounts these. He had hoped to restore life and order
to Kavanaugh yet experienced some disgrace in the Navy which required his resignation (despite the presence of war) and which to a large extent cost him this hope. Finally, Kavanaugh, the homesite of a bankrupt but aristocratic family, sinks into a winter landscape that establishes the primary setting for Harry's despair.

The detailed causes for Harry's failures and for his suicide are more extensive than space allows me to indicate. For example, Anne's psyche plays a major role in Harry's disintegration, but to trace its machinations would require almost a line-by-line rendering of the poem.

On the other hand, there is one aspect to Harry that should stand outside causality. It is his free will. Though we rely upon causes to explain his actions, we assume that Harry, as well as Anne, enjoys free will. Yet, as part of the poem's dramatic meaning, Harry has his own set of causes and effects by which he understands his actions. In particular, the apparent evidence of Anne's infidelity, what she says when she talks in her sleep, serves as the most active cause for Harry's decision to attempt suicide.

When we add to this a failed career, with accompanying guilt, plus failure to restore Kavanaugh financially and create heirs for it, Harry's actions become very believable. Lowell satisfies our sense of realism, and, due to a set of determinist causes, Harry's suicide achieves its moment.
I should add, that because the poem's determinism heightens the significance of a dramatic event does not mean that the poem is therefore a reliable method for apprehending the world external to it (though it can mean that the poem satisfies certain objectivist theories). More often the opposite is the case: Rather than being purely objective and cognitive, the real purpose of a fated or a determined event in a work lacking other levels of signification (such as allegory) is dramatic in a restrictive sense. If we are afforded free will, then the emotional power of a poem such as "The Mills," which results from determinism being superimposed upon events, is in opposition to its function as a mode of thought intended to accurately perceive the world external to it, a world which in Lowell's view at this time was not at all deterministic but increasingly indeterminate.

The context generated by "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" governs actions and their significance by a series of causes which, within the terms of the poem, generate necessity. Indeed, the unity of the poem depends upon the presence of realistic reasons to substantiate events. Thus details are marshaled in such a way as to reciprocate convincingly. The irony that Anne dreams of Harry as a boy only heightens pressure surrounding the poem's outcome. The net result is that while achieving dramatic meaning
Lowell creates a deterministic world that, due to its very effort to be realistic, in sum becomes unrealistically fixed.

Put somewhat differently, internally the poem achieves sufficient cause. Nothing is absent that is necessary to create the desired effect, which is finally a dramatic effect. Externally, however, sufficient cause is lacking, and this becomes a problem in a hermeneutic sense. The poem's gothic build up of causes for events does not correspond with the way most of its readers would understand those events. To return to Gadamer, the fluid or "medial ... play process" necessary between work and reader is overshadowed by the dictates of the poem. The reader does not have a chance to complete the poetic process because all conclusions have already been overwhelmingly made, and they have been made in a way that does not fit the reader's experience.

At points the poem sinks into melodrama. As mentioned earlier, stanza twenty-eight is one of the best examples of this: Harry's, or Lowell's, manic play on the number twenty-eight within a stanza of the same number does not have sufficient meaning to satisfy the attention it calls to itself. More generally, however, we are taken step by step towards an unavoidable conclusion that loses its meaning by the very fact that it is unavoidable.
A substantial part of meaning is derived from the concurrence of mutually dependent opposites, something which determinism largely denies. Harry's suicide, therefore, can only have meaning to the extent that its opposite is kept in view. But by compounding causes for the dramatic necessity of Harry's suicide, Lowell loses sight of that which gives meaning to such an action, Harry's freedom to choose life.

Apparently Harry never entertains hope even momentarily. Related to this, Persephone is restricted almost entirely to her underground role, death, whereas half of her significance stems from her return to the upper world. The presence of the Virgin Mary would offset the eccentric emphasis given Persephone and qualify it were she not deleted from the poem's revised version. Thus Lowell stacks the deck for dramatic effect, but by doing this he invalidates the poem's perception.

Narrative that is free of allegorical intentions employs an empirical persuasiveness. The realism generated in the reader's mind results from accumulated details. Similar to this, a series of lyrics such as most of those comprising Lowell's later books can operate empirically. In each case the convincingness of a work's argument is based upon an inductive process. Generality is arrived at from a series of facts often gleaned by the poet at first hand. Confessional poetry, in which Lowell played a major role, is a recent example of this.
Such a process employs an implicit, if not explicit, causality. Obviously no one mode of thought is universally applicable, however. Thus not only is causality in narrative limited; the lyrical and ecstatic poetry of Holderlin and Rilke for which Martin Heidegger opts also has its blind spots. The essential point is that Lowell's needs changed before his poetics. By 1951 he could no longer assume the constructs of a Christian myth. In a sense, he arrived at a truncated view of anything claiming to be apodictic. Nevertheless, he continued to write a poetry whose tendencies were to locate the self by arranging events and by exercising value judgments; a poetry which in its very activity sought certitude, what philosophically would be called necessity.

III

Both Kant and Hume regard causality as incapable of arriving at necessity. Kant approaches causality in the "Second Analogy" of his *Critique of Pure Reason* as an idealist, while Hume deals with it on an empirical level. For Kant, causality exists because of our experience through the apparent connexity of time, and this apparent connexity exists only in the empirical world, not in the world of pure reason. Causality represents connection between otherwise discrete events, but it exists "only
in appearances." We can "apprehend" such a "continuity in the connection of times," but only on the empirical level:

I apprehend [erkenne] an object to which I must ascribe a certain determinate position in time--a position which, in view of the preceding state, cannot be otherwise assigned.\(^1\)

In his treatment of the pure categories Kant does not admit causality as a productive force (a push-pull) but does admit it as an ordering of events. Similarly, necessity is allowed in the empirical world but is not among the pure categories of reason. Causality and necessity are only a means by which we apprehend events by perceiving one after another:

Every apprehension of an event is therefore a perception that follows upon another perception. \(\ldots\) [I]n an appearance which contains a happening (The preceding state of the perception we may entitle A, and the succeeding B) B can be apprehended only as following upon A. \(\ldots\) The order in which the perceptions succeed one another in apprehension is in this instance determined, and to this order apprehension is bound down. \(\ldots\) [I]n the perception of an event there is always a rule that makes the order in which the perceptions (in the apprehension of this appearance) follow upon one another a necessary order.\(^1\)

Kant has been contrasting the perceptions of a house with those of a ship moving down stream. With the house, which is spatially fixed and in that sense synchronic, Kant could begin by perceiving the roof and moving down
to the basement, or he could begin with the basement and move upward. The house is static, and there are several ways to apprehend it. Using any one of four approaches, he can move up or down, right or left. However, with an event such as the ship's movement the perception is diachronic and restricted by sequence:

For instance, I see a ship move down stream. My perception of its lower position follows upon the perception of its position higher up in the stream, and it is impossible that in the apprehension of this appearance the ship should first be perceived lower down in the stream and afterwards higher up.

Though here only analogous to what Kant is describing, narrative too relates events. One event necessarily follows another and is perceived to do so with cause. We operate daily in the empirical world which for us must be understood as a world of causality and necessity, though we lack certainty by this. In sum, such modalities are not apodictic. Setting, characterization, and previous events exist in the same relation to each other as positions through which Kant's ship was seen to move. Within Lowell's poetry such a thought process is literally makeshift. The apparent certainty resulting from a narrative has no basis for an absolute truth claim.

Much as the house (in its fixity) can be approached in several ways, the four levels of meaning operate severally within the cosmology of a fixed world. Without
that cosmology, however, we are caught up in process and can go no farther than empirical limits allow. We must view the ship sequentially because we are time locked.

In revised form, Lowell's narrative is time locked as he begins to wrestle with a restricted understanding of being. Under an apparently invalid cosmos, his narrative seeks to generate its own meaning by sequence and causality. No longer skyward looking, the consciousness in Lowell's poetry, during his revision of "The Mills" and afterwards, becomes a Janus. It is a mind limited by and balanced between a retentional past and a protentional future.

An empiricist such as David Hume approaches causality from the opposite direction, yet he arrives at the same conclusion that Kant makes. In addition to the impossibility of achieving transcendence, "absolute time," by empirical means, as Kant argues, Hume states that even empirically necessity does not follow causality. One problem with causality for Hume is that once we begin tracing causes we enter an infinite regress. Every cause is the effect of a preceding cause. It is Kant's ship infinitely in reverse. Like Zeno's arrow, we never arrive.

The illusion of necessity in narration has to be present for a narrative to exist, even if it is ultimately the "subjective necessity" of which Kant accuses Hume. The realism (that which is believable to the reader)
ascribed to necessity cannot come about to convince a reader if the causes, such as character, setting, and previous events are not sufficient causes.

Because there is an infinite regress of causes, the extensiveness of causality becomes its invalidation. Alone, the narrative mode lacks sufficient cause and therefore the certitude for which Lowell's poetry constantly drove. However, the most important point to be made in this discussion is that Lowell fell into a poetry subject to questions of causality in the first place. That is, without an enveloping myth within which his narrative could operate on several levels of meaning, Lowell's poetic locating process was reduced to a local activity.

In particular, his early poetry generally sustains an allegorical level of meaning, among others. However, as I mentioned earlier, with the loss of his Christian myth, Lowell lost the framework within which the allegorical level could function. For Lowell, allegory now lacked a referent and could no longer bridge the gap between permanence and process. On a practical level, the removal of the Virgin Mary apparatus reduced Persephone's significance. More generally, the removal of Catholic references lessened the significance, both dramatic and purely analytical, of Harry's suicide. Meaning underwent a leveling process. No longer capable
of being ontology, as Maritain would have poetry,\textsuperscript{21} Lowell's writing narrowed to a sort of phenomenology, a bracketing of experience perhaps more suitable to the many changes he found taking place.

Serious poetry always makes ambitious claims to truth. Different poetic modes may be taken to have made different assumptions as to how the truth of a situation can be apprehended, as well as what that truth may be. Because poetry always assumes certain modes of thought and those modes are evident first in terms of style, Lowell's stylistic shift cannot be separated from a cognitive shift the significance of which extends far beyond matters of taste, even psychology and politics. The details of Lowell's new-found limits and needs, which led to a major change in poetics, should be kept in mind. They reveal an implicit reduction in the horizon structure of a known past and an expected future within which Lowell and many who follow him gauge experience.
Notes


3 Axelrod, p. 80.

4 Axelrod, p. 75.

5 Axelrod, p. 76.

6 Axelrod, p. 79.


8 Gadamer, p. 84.

9 Gadamer, p. 98.

10 Gadamer, p. 86.

11 Axelrod, pp. 75-76.


14 Whitehead, p. 20.


16 Durant, p. 207.

18 Kant, p. 221.

19 Kant, p. 221.


21 Kant, p. 44.

In order to give context to the shift that took place in Robert Lowell's poetry between 1951 and 1958, I would like to appeal to Heidegger and Husserl. Heidegger provides a discussion of the imaginative use of language that applies to Lowell's cosmology and the changes it underwent. Husserl's methodology, as outlined in his *Cartesian Meditations*, is of importance because it parallels Lowell's latter poetic mode. Husserl's method and Lowell's mode are equally grounded in Cartesian doubt from the outset, though Lowell's is a radical doubt. That is, Husserl sheds light upon how Lowell's consciousness functions (insofar as we can understand such a thing) when he is writing in his second poetic phase. At the same time Heidegger provides reasons for why this phase operates in a Husserlian manner in the first place.

In the preceding chapter I sought to demonstrate that Lowell's loss of a Christian myth meant his loss of three of the four levels of meaning (the allegorical,
moral, and anagogical). Without Christianity as a static and enveloping referent, the possible levels of interpretation in Lowell's poetry were reduced to one level, became horizontal; the action in his work became strictly lineal with one event following another in sequence and explainable on a causal plane that precluded any notion of a transcendent.

In spite of this, Lowell's most fundamental drive continued to be toward certitude. The dialectic of his antagonisms, as Staples calls them, sprang from dissatisfaction with that very limitation on the causal plane in which such antagonisms existed in the first place. Lowell found himself with only a horizon to look forward to, nothing transcendent; yet the desire "to break loose" continued to inform his poetry. The fact that "Waking Early Sunday Morning" is one of the best poems in his second phase is not a coincidence. It is so powerful a poem because it returns to one of Lowell's basic drives, to break free of or at least see beyond temporal limitation. It is what Allen Tate, once introducing his "The Swimmers," called the poet's one poem which he writes and rewrites throughout his career.

In summarizing Patrick Cosgrave's discussion, I pointed out that Lowell's loss of an ethical system, such as that provided by Christianity, cost him his ability to make statements about the morality of events.
Cosgrave has already touched upon the leveling process that began to take place in Lowell's poetry as early as "The Mills of the Kavanaughs." Implicit in his argument is that Lowell has lost the moral level of meaning. Because of early Lowell's strong Catholic interests, I thought it was not an exaggeration to suggest that in his first phase his poetry aspired to something like Maritain's notion of poetry as ontology. With the loss of his Catholic religion, however, Lowell lost the myth by which he could grasp a metaphysical understanding of being. Since he could no longer take an earthly event to be emblematic of heavenly significance, Lowell's allegorical level of meaning was flattened. Related to this, his ethical system was no longer grounded, and his moral judgments lost their conclusiveness because they lacked a system to which they could refer. (The implications of such a situation are explored by Gerald Graff in his essays, "The Myth of the postmodernist breakthrough," which appeared in *TriQuarterly*, and "The Politics of Anti-Realism," which appeared in *Salmagundi*.)

In sum, Lowell's poetry did move from ontology to a sort of phenomenology. Metaphysical questions were no longer possible, but a strictly horizontal plane of sequence and causality did allow a phenomenological bracketing of experience. The first real instance of this bracketing process may be seen in Anne Kavanaugh's revery.
Later, Lowell realized his intentions more clearly and no longer needed a persona to carry out this process. His poetry became explicitly rather than implicitly autobiographical. But at the point of his writing "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" Lowell was still in transition. He had not fully realized the change that was taking place with his departure from the Catholic belief. Indeed, his use of a persona represents his halfway stance with regard to allegory. A persona could still represent Robert Lowell's experience, but Robert Lowell's experience could no longer represent anything other than itself.

Lowell was not only one of the most talented poets of his generation, but he was also one of the better educated and more intelligent. Thus his making the shift that I have described above indicates that there were substantial pressures for such a change. He had the talent to write much as he pleased yet found it necessary to alter his style dramatically. Similarly, he had the mind and education necessary to locate his work within the tradition; if he had not changed his poetry, he would have been able to marshal plenty of arguments for sticking with his earlier mode. The external reasons for his taking such a dramatic turn, therefore, must be the result of pressures of considerable magnitude.

What I would like to do now is to consider changes external to Lowell's work which, however, ultimately
affect it internally. For the moment, I would like to suspend in suggestive mid-air various observations taken primarily from Heidegger which, allowed to remain in suspension long enough, will provide the frame (if not the formula) necessary to understand Lowell's poetic shift.

II

The first point that should be made is that Heidegger argues we exist in a destitute time when the gods have defaulted, have failed "to arrive." In many ways, Lowell never stopped being an absolutist. And the frustrations for an absolutist in a world of process such as Heidegger describes are self evident. At the beginning of his essay, "What Are Poets For?," Heidegger makes the following statement:

The default of God means that no god any longer gathers men and things into himself, visibly and unequivocally, and by such gathering disposes the world's history and man's sojourn in it. The default of God forebodes something even grimmer, however. Not only have the gods and the god fled, but the divine radiance has become extinguished in the world's history. The time of the world's night is the destitute time, because it becomes ever more destitute. It has already grown so destitute, it can no longer discern the default of God as a default. 2

Technology exemplifies "the world's night." Seeking to hold the world over against the self, to dominate the
world, we obscure it. We cannot see it for what it is because of the way we have come to regard it. We cannot even see that we have obscured the world. In order to overcome this, the world (which we affect through art, which we alter because of the way art makes us see and think) must turn "about fundamentally," turn "away from the abyss" that is created by the god's failure to arrive which, were the god to arrive, would ground the world. "But for this it is necessary that there be those who reach into the abyss."³ Such reaching, through the imaginative use of language, is the poet's job.

In his "The Way to Language" Heidegger borrows from Aristotle and Wilhelm von Humboldt to develop a definition of what he considers language to be. For Aristotle, spoken language represents what is the soul and writing represents what is spoken. Of these he says they "are a show in the first place, are among all (men) the same passions of the soul." Aristotle's is a "classical architectonic structure." Writing represents sounds; sounds represent "passions in the soul"; and such passions reveal "the matters that arouse them." Summarizing, Heidegger says the following:

Showing [i.e., language] is what forms and upholds the intertwining braces of the architectonic structure. In various ways, disclosing or disguising, Showing makes something come to light, lets what has come to light be perceived, and lets the perception be examined. The kinship
of Showing with what it shows—a kindship never developed purely in its own terms and those of its origins—later becomes transformed into a conventional relation between a sign and its signification.4

Heidegger goes on to discuss the transformation from showing to designation, "by which man's mind is reset and directed from one object to another object." Designation does not show a thing in the sense of bringing it to light but rather has a utilitarian purpose behind it. The difference which Heidegger here puts in terms of designation and showing is that between a language which uncovers, and in that sense shows, something for what it is and a language (such as technology) which designates something for some purpose and, in its focus upon purpose rather than what is present, which covers over the real nature of the thing or being.5

For Wilhelm von Humboldt language is "persistent and in every instant transitory":

In itself language is not work (ergon) but an activity (energeia). Its true definition may therefore only be genetic. . . . Essentially, however, only the totality of this speaking can be regarded as language.6

Rather than architectonic, as with Aristotle, language for Humboldt is an activity. One is reminded of the distinction between a synchronic and diachronic understanding of poetry. In light of Heidegger's notion that ours is a destitute time, language performs a special task in which
it presences that which is otherwise absent. Related to this Heidegger makes the following remark:

Since the Greeks, beings are experienced to be whatever is present. Since language is, it--whatever speaking occurs at any time--belongs to what is present.7

The implication is that language performs a presencing function when properly (artistically) used, and in this way it is both architectonic and genetic. As in his "Letter on Humanism," published in 1947 when he was released from house arrest, Heidegger again argues that language is "the house of Being."8 The capitalization of being means that Heidegger is referring to the transcendent. Man employs language in an imaginative way that makes way, as he means by "wegen," for Being.9 Used properly, our language can occasion Language; engaged in such an activity, man's being can occasion Being.

But to balance the above comparison between Humboldt and Aristotle, Heidegger says that "The essential being of language is Saying as Showing" (genetically saying but at the same time architectonically showing). The saying activity shows something systematically arranged.10 Over and above Aristotle's and Humbolt's descriptions of language, Heidegger finds it to be related to the transcendent. In a sense, language speaks us, though it "remains unmistakably bound up with human speaking":

Language needs human speaking, and yet it is not merely of the making or at the command of our speech activity. On what does the being of language rest, that is, where is it grounded? Perhaps we are missing the very nature of language when we ask for grounds?

Or could it even be that Saying is itself the abode or rest which grants the quiet of mutual belonging to all that belongs within the structure of the being of language?1

Following this circular process or verbal linking of our activity with language and the higher implications of that activity, Heidegger discusses what he means by "Appropriation." Of this he says:

All true language, because assigned, sent, destined to man by the [wegen] way-making movement of Saying, is in the nature of destiny.12

Language is an opening process that can grasp what is true and therefore direct us to what may be regarded as destiny simply because, being true, it is what is. Being led by a lie would not have "the nature of destiny" because it would lead to nothing, whereas destiny implies something present. This should help to clarify what was meant above by the statement that in a sense language speaks us. It pre-structures the world. In a Husserlian sense (that will be discussed shortly) it is a sort of absolute intentionality.

The idea is related to the god's presencing in Oedipus the King, which I discussed at the end of the second chapter. As the oracle proves to have been right,
Oedipus is taken beyond his own power, and yet it was his power over discursive language that enabled what the oracle said to come about. Because Oedipus' fate was spoken by an oracle, its "Saying" was "in the nature of destiny." And yet it needed the "human speaking" that Heidegger discusses above. Apollo's will is realized not only by the oracle's (who is human) saying Oedipus' fate; it is also realized by Oedipus' interpretation of this saying and by his attempt to avoid its meaning.

Oedipus uses discursive language in his attempt to avoid his fate and, doing so, facilitates that fate. However, his final use of language is lyrical; he sings. And his singing reveals (or, shows) him, whereas his discursive, goal-oriented language obscured the self. His singing finalizes Apollo's will. Much as the faun who challenged Apollo (god of music) to a music contest and lost disastrously, Oedipus tries his wits against Apollo (also god of prophecy and sunlight) and loses not only his future as king but his eyesight. He also loses doubly in his attempt to circumnavigate the prophecy because he is the instrument of his own downfall.

It is along these lines that Heidegger concludes his chapter, "The Way to Language," with reference to song:
Saying is the mode in which Appropriation speaks: mode not so much in the sense of modus or fashion, but as the melodic mode, the song which says something in its singing. For appropriating Saying brings to light all present beings in terms of their properties—it lauds, that is, allows them into their own, their nature.13

If we think of Oedipus in this manner, then his singing represents the moment at which he relinquishes his will to the god's will; or, as I said earlier, it represents the moment at which he moves from a will to power to a will as venture. Such a revised willing bridges the mortal and the divine to the extent that "it lauds" "all present beings" and (following Heidegger) increases their being, an activity quite different from the ratiocinations of Oedipus as we encounter him earlier in the play, or for that matter, an activity quite different from technology.

The lyrical or poetic activity within language bridges in the following sense:

our saying—always an answering—remains forever relational. Relation is thought of here always in terms of the appropriation, and no longer conceived in the form of a mere reference. Our relation to language defines itself in terms of the mode in which we, who are needed in the usage of language, belong to the Appropriation.14

Much as in one's singing a song what one will sing is previously determined because (though the song is experienced each time it is heard as unfolding through time and the activity of its being sung) to be a song it must already
be and therefore be fixed... much as this is the case, our saying is "relational" to something that precedes it. We answer in our saying as the singer unfolds in his singing. Both are relational. To repeat something said earlier, without strictly determining, Language prestructures and makes the presence of things and beings possible. A way has already been made and is followed by our saying or singing, yet our activity is necessary to that way's being uncovered. We are not only relational to language but important to it.

Heidegger says, "All reflective thinking is poetic, and all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking." For him, "The two belong together." But what happens when for some reason the two become separated?

With the loss of his cosmos, which informed his "reflective thinking," this is what Robert Lowell experienced, and his almost immediate attempts to adjust to a new situation may be seen in his writing and revising of "The Mills of the Kavanaughs." After the adjustment was completed, the causes for it and the tracks that reveal it were much less discernable. That is, Life Studies tells us less about Lowell's shift than "The Mills." It is the fait accompli, and, as such, covers over the steps that brought it about. But by its very imperfection, its incompleteness, "The Mills" exposes why Lowell initiated such a major shift and in many ways how he did so.
I have referred to William Arrowsmith's review often because I think that he touches on the most revealing aspect in Lowell's shift, his use of compression. Why did Lowell continue his method of doubly compressed writing (by which he compacted the characteristics of large poems into the limits of relatively short, lyrical poems) when he finally turned to a large poem? There are two possible answers.

The simplest answer is that if compression worked for him before, why abandon it? However this only skims over the surface and, I think, slights Lowell's understanding of what he was doing. A more satisfactory answer is that Lowell was still interested in the possibilities of a cosmos. As a student of Ransom and Tate and as a very serious Roman Catholic, Lowell's early strength was his ability to fuse myth, history and religion in an objective network that appeared to be self-sustaining. With the loss of one third of his external framework (religion), myth and history were expanded to complete the network, though the myth apparatus overlapped to the point that it too failed. Aside from the more direct autobiographical aspects of "The Mills," a large poem written at double compression might be expected to superimpose its order upon the poet's experience.

On the other hand, a long narrative poem would not need to be dense and overlapping to the extent "The Mills"
is if it had an external context upon which it and the reader relied to complete it; for example, a context that would make allegory possible. A poem about The Civil War such as Davidson's "Lee in the Mountains" has reference to a small world of fact by which it achieves its significance, a significance that is limited by the small number of suitable readers. Dante provides the ideal example. The point is that whether history, religion or both, we believe in the existence of what is being said in such a poem by its implicit reference to an external system.

Not being that of a king, general, or some other public figure, Lowell's life history was personal in a restrictive sense. Before, his religion gave his experience a largeness that his world otherwise lacked. Without that religion, or some other external referent equal to it, what could give his personal experience the public significance that published writing always claims? We are nearing the dilemma that, I believe, has dated the recent confessional poets.

Unlike the Eliot of "Ash-Wednesday," Lowell's ascent was carried out by one who remained "separated." He operated secularly and aesthetically. Hulme might say that the overreaching intensity of "The Mills of the Kavanaughhs" is an attempt to shore up "spilt religion." For the purposes of this discussion, however, the striking
fact is that Lowell's doubly compressed long poem represents an ambitious effort to press aesthetics to the point of becoming something larger. It is the descendant of Arnold's internalized dialogue, as the epigraph from "Dover Beach" suggests, and it is related to Pater's "Aesthetic Poetry," in which he says:

Of religion it learns the art of directing towards an unseen object sentiments whose natural direction is towards objects of sense. 15

Lowell's extensive use of myth repeats Eliot's method, which assumed that myth could make the modern experience intelligible. 16 The fact that Lowell failed with this method in "The Mills" explains why, when he resumed writing, he retreated from myth as he already had religion and settled for the third stanchion mentioned above: History, both large and small, became his single referent. By an aesthetic suspension of horizontal, lineal events, Lowell sought to render his experience more intelligible.

Yet while Lowell truncates earlier levels of meaning and produces a lineal progression of events, Heidegger, in his "Origin of the Work of Art," stresses the allegorical nature of art, that is, that art always has other levels of meaning:

The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made. 17
Related to this, Heidegger makes a remark later in the same essay which applies to the situation in which Lowell found himself after *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* appeared:

> Just as a work cannot be without being created but is essentially in need of creators, so what is created cannot itself come into being without those who preserve it.¹⁸

This is an observation similar to Gadamer's remark about "the medial nature of the play process." The leveling of signification in Lowell's poetry that I have described was, as I have argued already, part of a larger cultural shift. Those who might "preserve" his poetry would not do so if it were alien to their understanding.

In a quite different essay, "What Was New Criticism? Literary Interpretation and Scientific Objectivity," Gerald Graff compares the New Critics (who informed early Lowell's poetics) with phenomenological hermeneutics, which has some interesting relations to later Lowell. Graff argues that both schools contain a "drive toward monistic transcendence." But there is a basic difference in the way each grounds this drive:

Unlike the hermeneutics . . . the New Critics at least sought an objective basis for interpretation and also, some of the time, for the referential truth of literature. To this extent, and setting aside the fact that their organicist assumptions frustrated their attempts to establish this objective basis, the aims of the New Critics were in my view admirable. These critics were willing to face up
to the fact that without objective criteria for correctness in interpretation, the reader's experience of a literary work is subject to trivialization by an unchecked relativism in which all readers, however distorted, are equally "correct."\textsuperscript{19}

After "The Mills," Lowell lacked "objective criteria for correctness." He was more likely to agree with Heidegger's assessment of modern thought, of its "rootlessness."\textsuperscript{20} Or, put differently, he was no longer certain of those "who preserve" a work because there was no "objective basis" upon which writer and reader could agree.

Related to the loss of a fixed culture and therefore an audience that would share consistent values, Lowell confronted stylistic difficulties. His poetry could no longer build prismatically by reflecting several levels of meaning at once. Grounded now in experience, in personal and public history, it had to assume a lineal character.

Summarizing some of his statements about language made in "The Way to Language," I said that, for Heidegger, language speaks us, that it pre-structures. Similarly, in his essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger suggests that art pre-structures:

If art is the origin of the work, this means that art lets those who naturally belong together at work, the creator and the preserver, originate, each in his own nature.\textsuperscript{21}

But how art can pre-structure depends upon how the artist
and the preserver view the world. If they no longer agree upon a myth by which they might previously have grasped the transcendent, then they must agree upon some other basis. In Lowell's case, this was the knowledge contained in history and personal experience. As I will argue shortly, the problem is one of intentionality. For the moment, however, Lowell's transition to a lineal understanding of experience was coupled with his transition to a lineal artistic mode, and such a mode pre-structures the way artist and preserver confront each other.

Viewed from one angle, we have never left the opposing positions held by Aristotle and Humbolt. For Aristotle, language involves "Showing." It is, if not prismatic, architectonic. All of these descriptions share in their spatial character a tendency to be synchronic. On the other hand, rather than "Showing" something which, to be able to be shown, must already be present somehow... rather than this, Humbolt understands language to be an "activity," to be "genetic." His approach is more diachronic.

Beyond their differences, however, these two descriptions apply to Lowell's poetic shift and are united by his career. Early Lowell understood the world to be architectonic and prismatic. There were structures to be shown. But later, Lowell relied upon recollection and
saying to carry him along a lineal progression of events that by their arrangement helped him to locate himself. Finding he was dislocated by the loss of a fixed point of reference, which the Christian cosmology had provided, Lowell made his poetry a self-locating process. Though there was no certainty of the hereafter, he still could bring into focus a before and after.

Not black and white, the distinction is subject to emphasis. But it does exist and fits Lowell's poetic shift. In addition, Heidegger's discussion of our romantic tendency to hold the world over against the self (as in technology) and of, therefore, the god's failure to arrive is revealing as to why Lowell's personal and poetic changes came about in the first place.

But there are also consequences to Lowell's poetic shift. Discussing the relatedness within which all art must stand, Heidegger uses the example of a Greek temple which encloses the figure of a god yet which in the act of concealing allows the god to stand out into "a holy precinct." The god's extension and the temple's delimitation constitute the god's presence; together they make of space a place, a precinct whose closure discloses the holy. The fluid relation between the man-made and that which is greater than man is suggested by Heidegger's balancing "extension and delimitation." As a delimiting process, art can occasion that which, strictly speaking, is greater than it can ever be.
The process is something like the fusion that occurs in a symbol. (And earlier, Heidegger says, "The work is a symbol."\textsuperscript{23}) We usually think of a symbol as something that derives its meaning and therefore its power from its being purely natural. This is the way I. A. Richards understands a symbol in Speculative Instruments.\textsuperscript{24} Yet, as Kant argues, the symbol is not only natural but, equally important, it is anthropomorphic.\textsuperscript{25} That is, the symbol exists by a dual nature of extensiveness (the purely natural aspect that Richards cannot get over) yet at the same time delimitation, man's limiting act of assigning importance to one thing while passing over another.

One aspect of Lowell's later phase is a reluctance toward "delimitation." Rather than assign importance to one event at the exclusion of another, Lowell seems to be saying that hierarchies will never work. His poems seek to gauge, to bracket, the swatch that comprises his experience as "extension" without assigning orders of significance. After such a leveling process, a skunk carries as much meaning as a saint. But by its very nature art delimits. A poem frames an experience which is therefore taken to be important. The consequence, thus, for Lowell is confusion. The lineal relation between events precludes an hierarchical understanding of their significance. They become equipollent. But by the framing process and selecting process of a poem,
Lowell implies that some sort of hierarchy is in use, apparently a personal one. Yet, following Graff, is this not an instance "of a literary work [being] subject to trivialization by an unchecked relativism"?

Another aspect that should be noted is the distinction Heidegger makes between thrownness and projection and the suggestive way this distinction applies to Lowell's metamorphosis. First, here is Albert Hofstadter's comment on Heidegger's distinction because it gives a better summary than I am capable of giving:

Thrownness . . . is understood in Being and Time as an existential characteristic of Dasein, human being, its thatness, its "that It Is," and it refers to the facticity of human being's being handed over to itself, its being on its own responsibility; as long as human being is what it is, it is thrown, cast . . . . Projection . . . on the other hand, is a second existential character of human being, referring to its driving forward toward its own possibility of being. It takes the form of understanding, which the author speaks of as the mode of being of human being in which human being is in its possibilities as possibilities. It is not the mere having of a preconceived plan, but is the projecting of possibility in human being that occurs antecedently to all plans and makes planning possible. Human being is both thrown and projected; it is thrown project, factual directedness toward possibilities of being.

As I will discuss later, though this antecedent possibility does not pre-structure as we normally think of pre-structuring, it does precede, and I think that in part it touches upon what Husserl means by intentionality.
But for the moment, in a different vein, the above distinction is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's remarks on Philistinism in *The Sickness Unto Death*. \(^{27}\) That is, Kierkegaard contrasts probability (which is a kind of modern day thrownness) and possibility (which parallels Heidegger's notion of projection). Perhaps the most important thing to note is that probability is characteristic of Philistinism, in Kierkegaard's view. (Remembering that Heidegger relates romanticism and technology, what is more Philistine than technology?) Making such a parallel provides comment upon Lowell's own thrownness plus his shift to a lineal poetic process, a poetic view that precludes the possibility of a transcendent (which is one type of projection).

In terms of his experience, Lowell might say that he definitely finds himself thrown, and he might add that his writing is an attempt at projection. As thrown, he lives in a world that understands itself by such modalities as probability, a world that Heidegger finds to be swept up in the equipmental understanding of the technological approach. \(^{28}\) As a writer who projects, he uses his imagination in a non-utilitarian thought process, one characterized by free play, to explore (or, drive "forward toward") "possibility of being." In both his early and his late phases Lowell found himself thrown yet at the same time found his poetry to be a means for projection.
A song's singing is a pre-structured activity, much as a poem's being read is pre-structured. A song's being written is similarly controlled once the melody is discovered. But what do we say of a poem? As we have seen, Heidegger says that all true language (and this includes poetry in particular) is "the way-making movement of Saying" that is somehow "sent." True language is a "Saying" of "destiny." Of poetry, it is a "way-making."

Though it is minus the music in a song, it is nevertheless guided by a sort of melody, a tone. For Lowell in the activity of writing, it is all of these. To repeat Hofstadter:

It is . . . the projecting of possibility in human being that occurs antecedently to all plans and makes planning possible.

But if, as in Lowell's experience, there no longer is a transcendent to be aimed for, then poetic projection toward possibility is seriously restricted.

In his chapter, "What Are Poets For?" (in Poetry, Language, Thought), Heidegger stresses the verbal character of being, the fact that we are in process. Nature is not nominative, as we usually think of the word, but verbal:

Natura . . . is the Being of beings. . . .
This is the incipient power gathering everything to itself, which in this manner releases every being to its own self.29
The poetic activity facilitates "the Being of beings," and in this way occasions (but does not control) what is transcendent. This, in Heidegger's view, is the ultimate "projection" for poetry, and, though poetry does not control what occurs, it does uncover Being, thereby making it possible:

Poetry, however, is not an aimless imagining of whimsicalities [in its projection toward possibility] and not a flight of mere notions and fancies into the realm of the unreal. What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen.30

Lowell's more restricted versions of "the Open" occur in his poetry often at the conclusions of his poems, probably for dramatic reasons. I have in mind not only Anne Kavanaugh's giving "Whatever brought . . . [her] gladness to the grave" but the conclusions to "For the Union Dead," "Waking Early Sunday Morning," "Near the Ocean," "Beyond the Alps," and "For Sale," to name a few. Each of these poems ends by opening out into a distance that (similar to Heidegger's Greek temple) is at once definite and indefinite. Aesthetically definite, the poem gives closure to a perception that, being perceived, discloses the presence of something compellingly out of reach. Such an opening draws in the reader and by doing so gives name to what otherwise would be missed.

Following the above description, Lowell's poetry
not only makes us recognize the existence of what we
can never fully grasp but also reminds us of such limita-
tion. Lowell teaches us awe at the inscrutable amidst
our ordinary patterns and rhythms for living. A brief
poem such as "For Sale" demonstrates this. Lowell's
description presents us with the everydayness of his
father's cottage and the efficient removal of all that
was his father's from it. Owned for a year and then
sold at his father's death, it dramatizes transience be-
cause it is a home and should represent fixity, yet,
being on the market twice in twelve months, it actually
represents just the opposite. The poem concludes:

Ready, afraid
of living alone till eighty,
Mother mooned in a window,
as if she had stayed on a train
one stop past past her destination.

The house is the train gone one station too far.
Both it and the train reflect Mrs. Lowell's condition by
their fusion. Yet they are natural opposites; the one
meant for movement, the other for staying in place. Mrs.
Lowell has become a fusion of mutually dependent opposites
(Staples would remind us, "life and death"), each achiev-
ing significance by the existence of its counterpart. In
the process of a major change in her life, she neverthe-
less moons statically at a window, which frames and fixes
what she sees (or, more precisely, what she thinks). And
of course, her mooning contains fused opposites also.
The point is that, because neither relents, such opposites open up a neutral ground, a clearing, in Heidegger's terms. As Lowell's mother has been, we are forced to recognize the effect the life-death process has on us. As living beings who die, we anticipate and experience the ultimate closure to our own perceptions. In its disclosure, such closure teaches us awe at what remains inscrutable in our coming and our going. But Lowell's naming the predicament objectifies it, localizes it, and enables us to move ahead, beyond it. His naming opens the poetic projection toward possibility.

Noting the privileged (linguistic) position that poetry enjoys over the other arts, Heidegger adds:

Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. . . . Such saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is the Open as.}

The naming may be negative with Lowell. He often names what "beings come into the Open as" having failed to be. Nevertheless, the naming process does take place. Nautilus Island is renamed, and by such naming magnified, as a result of Lowell's writing "Skunk Hour."

To summarize, for Heidegger the above uses of poetry involve the assumption of a possible transcendent at all times, even when the transcendent is, in one way or another, specifically shown to be missing. Of Lowell he
might say such uses of poetry (though not the poetry itself) remain the imaginings of a skyward looking man. Husserl might add that they are made possible because in his early phase Lowell believed there was something transcendent (due to his religion), and, later, this enlarged his intentionality, even though he then saw things very differently. Regardless, the first way we meet Lowell's poetry in his second phase is by recognizing his thrown position (outside a religious framework, his "being on . . . [his] own responsibility") and the lineal process within which he operates.

Though his later poetry also projected toward a "clearing," Lowell abandoned his Christian myth and thus lost the means by which he could project toward a transcendent, as we usually understand it. No longer able to poetize vertically, he turned to a poetry of lineal progression, one that at first used mythology and history but that soon leveled to personal experience, on the one hand, and, on the other, history as public experience. At first, Lowell sought to overcome the restrictions of a historical, lineal view by sheer aesthetic force, as in "The Mills of the Kavanaughhs." It was as though by writing the long, doubly compressed poem that Arrowsmith describes he could generate internally the four levels of meaning that, externally, were no longer possible.
By turning to a poetry of experience, many of the possibilities that could exist in Lowell's first phase were precluded. To this extent, his poetic shift amounted to a limiting of possibility within the imaginative free play of the poetic process. The lineal view of his second phase uncovered new insights in its own, specialized manner, but at the same time it denied projection toward a transcendent, as such. Stated in the extreme, such a poetic shift amounted to a move from ontology to phenomenology. Heidegger might add that insofar as Lowell's second phase results in a poetry based solely on experience, it represents a restricting approach to experience by the very fact that it is based upon what it regards. It is much like the figure of a Janus, privileged with seeing what comes before and what comes after, but incapable of seeing that which is immediately present because it is underfoot. Though tangential here, Heidegger remarks on the relation between art and experience, saying that "perhaps experience is the element in which art dies."32

But artistic possibilities always project beyond what we mean by experience. To deny this is to restrict a vital element in art that uncovers certain parts of the future. Yet an art whose intentionalities (whose imaginative expectations) go no farther than what is empirically known of this world (or an art reluctant to go farther) uncovers less than an art whose horizons are wider to
begin with. The horizons in Lowell's early phase ran past "the rainbow" of the Lord's "will" to infinity. The horizons of his second phase, however, tend to be restricted to this world of "realistic," causal experience. As will be discussed in the next section, Husserl overcomes this problem (though not artistically) by dividing the self into an ego as experience and a transcendental ego as the observer of the experiencing ego. Within the poetry of his second phase, Lowell employs a similar division.

III

Lowell's poetic shift represents his movement into a world of mere experience, a world basically restricted to empirical judgment. Having lost a cosmology, he turns to art (Paris, in "Crossing the Alps"), not so much certain of what he knows as certain of what he does not know.

Where Lowell uses art to gauge experience, Husserl proposes a phenomenological methodology to accomplish much the same thing. The two approaches are very different, however. The former is imaginative and fortuitous while the latter is thoroughly systematic. Yet they share basic characteristics.

What I would like to do is to suggest that, beginning with "The Mills of the Kavanaughs," Lowell's later
sequences of poems bracket his experience much in the manner that Husserl's method, as outlined in his *Cartesian Meditations*, was intended to do. Without the assumption of a transcendent, poetry (particularly a series of lyrics in the manner of *Life Studies*) can perform the function of a loosely structured phenomenology and, by doing this, locate the self. The change is something like shifting from celestial navigation to piloting one's way from one local point to another.

First, it is necessary to summarize Husserl's method, allowing him to do some of the work though trying to be as concise as possible. At the same time, I would like to suggest four analogies which relate Husserl's proposals to what Lowell in fact did by writing *Life Studies*. The analogies distort some of Husserl's methodological procedures, but they arrive at his conclusion.

Like later Lowell, Husserl starts from a position of doubt:

> I have . . . chosen to begin in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge. Beginning thus, obviously one of the first things I ought to do is reflect on how I might find a method for going on, a method that promises to lead to genuine knowing.33

Much as Husserl begins "in absolute poverty . . . of knowledge," Lowell concludes *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* with a farewell to the knowledge provided by Catholic theology. The final poem in *The Mills* is "Thanksgiving's
Over." The conclusion to the first stanza states the poem's overall direction:

Now Michael sleeps,  
Thanksgiving's over, nothing is for keeps:  
New earth, new sky, new life: I hear the word  
Of Brother Francis, child and bird, descend,  
Calling the war of Michael a pretend;  
The Lord is Brother Parrot, and a friend.

A few years later, Lowell had completed his turn from the Church. He and Flannery O'Connor had become friends in the late forties when they were both staying at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York, and, judging from her letters, Flannery O'Connor made an effort to keep up with her friend and fellow Catholic; however, in early 1954 she learned something of the changes he had been undergoing. In a letter to Sally and Robert Fitzgerald she writes the following:

Cal Lowell [writes that he is not] "rejoining the flock." He thought he "could do more good outside, at least for myself." And some other claptrap about Henry Adams being a Catholic anarchist and he was the same, only agnostic too. I wrote him that his not being in the Church was a grief to me and I knew no more to say about it. I said I severely doubted he would do any good to anybody else outside but that it was probably true he would do good to himself inasmuch as he would be the only one in a position to.

O'Connor might have made the same assessment of anyone seriously employing a phenomenological approach to his experience. At any rate, anarchy was the political
manifestation of Lowell's doubt, agnosticism the religious.

The next stop in Lowell's development is "Beyond the Alps," which I have cited before. Marking his departure from the Church, from Rome, and his arrival at the city of art, Paris, it is the opening poem to Life Studies. From now on Lowell's poetic process will be secular and, as "Studies" suggests, tentative.

Operating out of Cartesian doubt, Husserl decides to split the ego (what Lowell might call the conscious self) and pursue a transcendental ego as the phenomenality of everything that is. Such an ego is in many ways analogous to Lowell's poetic imagination. But for the moment, Husserl:

At this point, following Descartes, we make the greatest reversal that, if made in the right manner, leads to transcendental subjectivity: the turn to the ego cogito as the ultimate and apodictically certain basis for judgments...

[The world is for us only something that claims being. . . . Not just corporeal Nature but the whole concrete surrounding life-world is for me, from now on, only a phenomenon of being, instead of something that is.

[The being of the experienced world remains unaccepted by me, still this abstaining is what it is; and it exists, together with the whole stream of my experiencing life. Moreover, this life is continually there for me. Continually, in respect of a field of the present, it is given to the consciousness perceptually, with the most originary originality, as it itself; memorialy, now these and now those pasts
thereof are "again" given to consciousness, and that implies: as the "pasts-themselves". Reflecting, I can at any time look at this original living and note particulars; I can grasp what is present as present, what is past as past, each as itself. . . .

Meanwhile the world experienced in this reflectively grasped life goes on being for me (in a certain manner) "experienced" as before, and with just the content it has at any particular time. It goes on appearing, as it appeared before; the only difference is that I, as reflecting philosophically, no longer keep in effect (no longer accept) the natural believing in existence involved in experiencing the world—though that believing too is still there and grasped by my noticing regard. The same is true of all the processes of meaning that, in addition to the world-experiencing ones, belong to my lifestream . . . when I am in the natural and non-reflective attitude. . . . [T]he philosophically reflective Ego's absention from position-takings . . . does not signify their disappearance. 36

Husserl is describing his "transcendental epoché," which he calls a "transcendental-phenomenological reduction." 37 He is pursuing a more objective grasp of experience by, as he says, a "great reversal," a radical subjectivity. His phenomenological reduction provides a bracketing of the real world that helps him locate himself within his ongoing experience. As part of this he divides his conscious self into an ego as experience and a transcendental ego as the phenomenality of everything that can be.

Such a self-division is basic to Lowell's poetic process. In the radical subjectivity of the imaginative process, Lowell turns his own existence into an object.
It is a variation on the Cartesian split with the subject (rather than thinking about or doubting his existence) imagining variations upon that existence. By allowing his transcending and imagining ego to be the observing and rearranging subject over his objectified ego as experience, Lowell manages to bracket his experience on the one hand and, on the other hand, to explore possibilities for new experience.

In the above quotation, Husserl gives the first hint of intentionality as he uses it when he says that the "life-world is for me . . . only a phenomenon of being." As a phenomenon, it can be affected by his intentionality, what he expects to see, which is molded by what he has already seen. He also provides for a time sense by distinguishing between past and present, to which he later adds a protentional positing of the future. Finally, though (as he says) he abstains from accepting the experienced world, he nevertheless recognizes that the world or its object is in some sense apodictically given.

To summarize the correspondences between Husserl's method and Lowell's process, I would like to use four analogies which, taken simultaneously, approximate the sort of consciousness that both poet and philosopher intended. The analogies are as follows: The consciousness of space-time experience as a solitary skin diver;
the process of recollection from the past and projection to the future operating in the previous consciousness much as a column of slides in a slide projector in which the present is the slide being shown at the moment; intensionality operating in a consciousness that contains at once both the diver's process and that of the projector, an intensionality which governs yet is capable of being refuted (as with the milk-bourbon analogy given earlier) but one which can be varied to allow for discovery of what, not normally being intended, might not be experienced; and, finally, the consciousness of time as a retentional and protentional continuum, a Janus consciousness.

One way to think of the above four analogies is as a group of transparencies which one overlays on a map or chart. That is, though I identify them as distinct processes, they actually occur in the consciousness simultaneously. Indeed, though I name them separately, they cannot be independent of each other and still exist.

Because he will eventually be seen to be the most inclusive of the four, the diver is the best figure with which to begin. Having descended into a lake, at first he does not know what to expect. He can see for approximately forty feet in any direction through water that has sediment but that is relatively clear. Having descended to twenty feet above the bottom, he swims in a
straight line, and the distance he covers cannot be separated from the amount of time that passes. Thus, his swimming is a space-time continuum.

As he swims he remains twenty feet from the bottom. Each instance in the time he swims is coupled with a different spot on the lake bottom over which he passes spatially just as time passes in its manner. In this sense, his experience is synchronous and might lend itself to a sort of calculus, were the diver outside his experience. At this point, however, he is not; he is Husserl's ego as experience, though a modified version of this. The modification I have made is that, rather than experiencing only one object through the eidetic reduction as an eidetic horizon (as Husserl does), this ego experiences a whole series of objects appearing over an ever-opening horizon. He has been put into process and, to this extent, psychologized, something Husserl does not do.

What he experiences is a lighted disk on a lake bottom that changes with his space-time swimming. His horizon of experience is, though 360 degrees, always only forty feet away. As he swims, he notices whatever features the lake offers coming into view over that horizon, various fish, rocks on the bottom and so forth. However, gradually he begins to expect to experience certain fish or certain sized rocks because of former fish and former
rocks. He is building up a bank of past images that inform his receptiveness to what lies in the future.

The past images retained in the diver's consciousness are constantly pushed farther back by new images which become part of the past as soon as they are experienced. These past images are like the slides column fed through the projector. Future images are yet to be screened, but past images are retained and can be called back to mind much as one might reverse a projector. Eventually, however, past images become forgotten; they are covered over and lost unless something happens to startle them back into memory. They are covered or sedimented in the diver's consciousness much as the horizon behind him is obscured by sediment and distance as he swims away from it.

Because what he sees informs his consciousness, these past images constitute past phases of the ego, what can be called an eidetic ego because it is formed by use of the eidos. Because he is in part formed by this past, what the diver encounters in the future is modified by earlier encounters. This is the basis for intentionality; we are able to experience a thing because our expectation has in some way pre-structured its coming about. The man who expected warm milk did so because of his previous experience with putting the milk in a glass and leaving it. His consciousness is
actually startled into an original (rather than expected) experience by having his expectations or intentionality refuted with warm bourbon.

So far I have mentioned the diver, the slide projector and the man who intends to drink milk. What remains is the Janus consciousness, which incorporates all of the above analogies and adds its own particulars. Having gathered experience, the diver's consciousness is like a slide projector in that it retains the past while proceeding ahead moment to moment, or slide to slide. Each slide is the fleeting present. The Janus incorporates this function and adds something to it. The backward-looking Janus retains the past, as does the slide column. The forward-looking Janus, however, adds the intentionality of the man who expects milk plus the space-time movement of the swimmer that uncovers new experience.

The Janus may be seen as a combination of the other three functions. Yet there is one difference that sets the Janus apart. Just as the two-faced guardian of portals is able to experience past and future (beginnings and endings) simultaneously, which the above three cannot do, he is incapable of seeing what is immediately beneath him, and that is the present, what John Brucuth would call "the magic ground, / Lost or fled or sundered." The points over which the diver swims are instances of discrete, punctual experience, yet the full experience
of the consciousness described by all four analogies is excluded from the present because it is in constant process. Being time-locked, it moves from one moment to the next synthetically and by the very nature of such movement is incapable of fixing on any one moment such as the present, which is in itself also fleeting.

Furthermore, our whole approach to this multi-faceted diver has been from somewhere outside him. I have described him in such a way that he is always before us but separate from us. And yet I have been trying to grasp the process of his consciousness. This multi-faceted diver represents the ego as experience, but there is that other ego, the transcendental ego.

What this means is that, following Husserl's method and Lowell's poetic process in terms of the above analogy, the diver has a double who is swimming directly above him watching him watch, experiencing his experiencing only removed so that there is greater room for variation. This is the transcendental ego (or, in Lowell, the poetic imagination). It is the ego that has thrust itself outside the ordinary continuum of experience, never letting that experience become lost, however. Repeating a distinction made between "adequacy" and "apodicticity" of that evidence we gain as experience and maintaining that, in this area, "adequacy" will suffice, Husserl continues:
Perhaps this remark was made precisely with the case of transcendental self-experience in mind. In such experience the ego is accessible to himself originaliter. But at any particular time this experience offers only a core that is experienced "with strict adequacy", namely the ego's living present (which the grammatical sense of the sentence, ego cogito, expresses); while, beyond that, only an indeterminately general presumptive horizon extends, comprising what is strictly non-experienced but necessarily also-meant. To it belongs not only the ego's past, most of which is completely obscure, but also his transcendental abilities and his habitual peculiarities at the time. External perception too (though not apodictic) is an experiencing of something itself, the physical thing itself: "it itself is there". But, in being there itself, the physical thing has for the experiencer an open, infinite, indeterminately general horizon, comprising what is itself not strictly perceived—a horizon (this is implicit as a presumption) that can be opened up by possible experiences.

Two positions exist: The diver and his double. There is thus a doubling, eventually a multiplying, of horizons. The experiencing diver comes upon objects which also have horizons, horizons other than his. But first, the transcendental ego (or, diver) can watch the experiencing ego (or, diver) from his horizon structure and gain a second structure. Next, if the experiencing diver is encountering an object with its own, third horizon structure, then the possibilities become multiple.

What this finally represents is the opening up of possible experiences in an eidetic ego. The imagining poet regarding his own experience, or the transcendental ego as diver regarding his experiencing ego, is able to
use that experiencing self as a second locus, and when that experiencing ego encounters another object with its implicit locus and horizon structure, a whole world structure becomes possible for an otherwise time-locked and isolated consciousness. In fact the experiencing ego encounters many other objects over a period of time, and this greatly expands possible horizons, possible worlds, for an intentional self. The important point is that at first a triangulation of experience occurs, and (as in navigation and in piloting) this is the most basic method of self-locating, the primary method.

But such a triangulation can only occur after a "Pairing," such as that between ego and alter ego, has taken place. It is an "Appresentation" of an "Other," an "organism" which proves it is other by its "continuous change in behavior from phase to phase." Much as the transcendental diver who watches the experiencing diver who has his own experience,

The character of . . . [an] existent "other" has its basis in . . . [a] kind of verifiable accessibility of what is not originally accessible. . . . In other words, another monad becomes constituted appresentatively in mine.40

Husserl is describing a monadic consciousness which contains within itself all that exists outside itself. It is a microcosm.

One is reminded of Sidney's view of the poet "freely
ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit."\textsuperscript{41} However, the present view involves an isolation of the consciousness that would have been antithetical to Sidney's understanding, particularly his belief in the allegorical function of a poem standing between philosophy and history as a "speaking picture."\textsuperscript{42}

Just as later Lowell's poetic consciousness is one that exists without a theology, Husserl's description of consciousness involves one that exists without a philosophy. But both have history, and (though not by philosophy or theology) both also have means for exploration of possibility. In Husserlian terms, because there "is a universe of compossibilities," as a result of the community of monads, there is a rationality of time. Working systematically, the ego is capable of a unified experience, a history:

\begin{quote}
We can call it furthermore a formal regularity pertaining to a universal genesis, which is such that past, present, and future, become unitarily constituted over and over again, in a certain . . . formal structure of flowing modes of givenness.

But, within this form, life goes on as a motivated course of particular constitutive performances with a multiplicity of particular motivations and motivational systems, which, according to universal laws of genesis, produce a unity of universal genesis of the ego. The ego constitutes himself for himself in, so to speak, the unity of a "history."\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

Somewhat like the past of the column of slides that
has already been screened, like the retentional Janus
and like the intentionality of the man expecting warm
milk, the "flowing modes of givenness" become "a unity
of . . . genesis of the ego," a history. One is re-
mined of Lowell's poems which are often almost a snapshot-
series of past phases (static images much like slides)
within his consciousness. But as an eidetic ego that
transcends his time-locked "flowing . . . of givenness,"
or as a poetically imagining consciousness capable of
free play and projection, Lowell can not only trace his
past development, but by eidetic variation he can also
explore "an infinity of forms," including possibilities
held in the future. His intentionality may direct which
"forms" he chooses, but "an infinity of a priori types
of actualities and potentialities of life" make choice
possible in the first place. Husserl calls this capa-
bility the "universal Apriori," itself an "eidetic form"
in the transcendental ego but a form that contains "an
infinity of forms." 44

What we are approaching is an isolated consciousness
that works its way out of isolation by first positing a
"non-Ego," which "is the other Ego," and which ultimately
sees itself existing in a community of monads:

[T]he intrinsically first other (the first
"non-Ego") is the other Ego. And the other
Ego makes constitutionally possible a new
infinite domain of what is "other": an
Husserl is describing the world as a "transcendental inter-subjectivity . . . in which . . . the Objective world" is constituted. But "the constitution of . . . [such a] world essentially involves a 'harmony' of the monads." He argues that he has moved from the realm "of the 'as if,'" a realm of "phantasies," to "Objective experience" dealt with by "scientific activity."45

The preceding sentence makes a claim that cannot be applied to Lowell's poetry, which remains in the realm of the "as if." I know of no actual "scientific activity" taking place within Husserl's method; however, his description is illuminating as to the problems faced by the secular subjectivity of the modern poetic imagination, which remains the predominant poetic imagination today. In addition, Husserl's overcoming what we generally call the romantic subject-object split (by using that very split with a vengeance) parallels the most common modality that we find in modern poetry.

In his The Situation of Poetry, Robert Pinsky touches on John Berryman's use of a persona. Henry allows Berryman to get away with "Tennysonian" language. Using
Henry is a strategy "for retaining or recovering the elevation of Victorian diction." But something more basic takes place as well. At times, Henry can be an appresentation of Berryman. As Husserl would have it, Berryman (the imagining poet as transcendental ego) appresents Henry (the experiencing ego). Such a method gains the stylistic objectivity that Pinsky identifies, but more importantly it also provides objectivity for the poem as a mode of thought. In terms of taste, Berryman may get away with "Tennysonian" diction by putting it in Henry's mouth; but he also gets beyond the modern predicament of radical subjectivity by doubling that subjectivity. Henry becomes another monad, and the horizon structure of his experiencing ego is incorporated into the poet's horizon structure. Each object observed by Henry constitutes a third structure, thus (as mentioned earlier) we are able to build a self-locating system of triangulation within "an Objective Nature . . . a community of monads."

Pinsky's concern at this point is primarily a stylistic one which he relates to the tradition; however, his remarks about Lowell and Berryman, immediately after, carry an assumption that is much the same as "the unity of a 'history'" that Husserl discusses. The tradition that Pinsky is concerned with represents that history. Language that Lowell or Berryman would like to use (such
as that of James or Tennyson) represents the sensibility (and the point of view) of a particular past phase in the retentional consciousness of each poet, even though learned second hand. The problem is how to recognize that past phase of the poet's (and reader's) transcendental ego in the present. It is part of the present in Husserlian terms because as a past experience it modifies the intentionality by which we encounter the present; in Pinsky's terms, because it is part of the tradition, which might be seen as a specialized instance of intentionality. Moreover, we may discuss this as a stylistic concern, but, as I have tried to demonstrate, style cannot be separated from thought.

Discussing Lowell's "Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats" (a poem that "is entirely enclosed between quotation marks," which means that a second ego is speaking), Pinsky notes that we are presented with the "contours of the speaker's character" and with "the subject of remembering." The poem is a self-locating process for Lowell in Husserlian terms of time and experience and, though vaguely, self-locating in the broader terms of guilt and responsibility. A monadic voice speaks, recollecting past phases of experience which were violent encounters with others whose experience was equally monadic and equally valuable, therefore the guilt.

Before leaving Pinsky, I would like to quote a paragraph
in which he relates Lowell and Berryman in their use of protagonists:

To assign part of the poem to a voice or protagonist gives the attributed element a kind of autonomy, however illusory or conventional. Lowell has used that illusion of autonomy as a way to approach elusive or ambivalent judgments of outward matters, values of a cultural or social kind [a strategy meant to overcome the loss, that Cosgrave identifies, of a system of value upon which to base judgments]. In John Berryman's poems dramatic devices often seem to work similarly in relation to more wholly inward judgments; the quasi-autonomous element in the poem supplies a way to have one's self-dramatization and yet to judge it—or at least to stand a little apart from it. (Ted Hughes' Crow seems to carry this principle even further.)

Stylistic matters of persona, protagonist, or voice (as in "Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats" or as in Anne Kavanaugh's revery) become even more important to the discussion of poetry when they are recognized as also being widely employed modes of thought. As modes of thought, they are strikingly similar to Husserl's separation of the experiencing ego (here the persona) from the transcendental ego, here the poet.

Though it is different from Heidegger's example of a Greek temple, poetry operating in a roughly Husserlian manner is a world-building activity. Largely because it is linguistic, it can occasion more than in itself it ever is, Heidegger's "Open" which makes the possibility for the god's return. Related to this, Husserl's method
is not a psychology of experience; nor is Lowell's. Toward the end of the "Fifth Meditation," Husserl discusses the "Metaphysical results of our explication of experiencing someone else." As already mentioned, he has arrived at a plurality of monads that spatializes and temporalizes the world. It is seen as a space-time continuum much like the diver's swimming. Wallace Stevens understands such a world (particularly in its protentional and projecting aspects) as being informed by "supreme fictions":

There is, in fact, a world of poetry indistinguishable from the world in which we live, or, I ought to say, no doubt, from the world in which we shall come to live, since what makes the poet the potent figure that he is, or was, or ought to be, is that he creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and that he gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it.

Without such fictions informing our intentionality, we will fail to see what they protentionally provide for the future. Heidegger would say that such fictions can project toward that transcendent which, lacking them, we generally miss. Husserl would say they are the products of eidetic variation carried out by the transcendental ego which gives us "an Objective world."

Closer to Heidegger here than elsewhere, Husserl would also say that such fictions are "Our monadological results" and that they "are metaphysical, if it be true
that ultimate cognitions of being should be called metaphysical." Having abandoned the objective world by a method of radical subjectivity that arrived first at one then two monads, then more, Husserl continues:

[T]he two [or more] worlds are then . . . mere "surrounding worlds" . . . mere aspects of a single Objective world, which is common to them. . . . As imagined by me, each of them is in necessary communion with me (or with me in respect of a possible variant of myself) as the constitutive primal monad relative to them. Accordingly they belong in truth to a single universal community, which includes me and comprises unitarily all the monads and groups of monads that can be conceived as co-existent. Actually, therefore, there can exist only a single community of monads, the community of all co-existing monads. Hence there can exist only one Objective world, only one Objective time, only one Objective space, only one Objective Nature.51

This is quite a distance from the apparently relativistic (if not nihilistic) beginnings of Husserl's method grounded in doubt. Indeed the above is more the articulation of an ideal than it is of a fact. But it leads directly to the possibility of eidetically varying the self through imagination to cope with our time-locked consciousness which has no other means to proceed but synthetically:

Leibniz is right when he says that infinitely many monads and groups of monads are conceivable but that it does not follow that all these possibilities are compossible; and, again, when he says that infinitely many worlds might have been "created", but not two or more at once,
since they are incompossible [sic]. It is to be noted in this connexion that, in a free variation, I can phantasy first of all myself, this apodictic de facto ego, as otherwise and can thus acquire the system of possible variants of myself, each of which, however, is annuled [sic] by each of the others and by the ego who I actually am... If I phantasy myself as a pure possibility different from what I actually am, that possibility in turn prescribes what monads exist for him as others. And proceeding in this fashion, I recognize that each monad... predelineates a compossible universe, a closed "world of monads", and that two worlds of monads are incompossible, just as two possible variants of my ego (or of any presupposedly fantasied ego whatever) are incompossible.52

We are not as far away from Lowell as might seem the case. Because of its imagery, his poetry appears to represent a spatially dislocated self. But in fact, since "two possible variants of... [the] ego... are incompossible," the dislocation is a temporal one. This first becomes clear in Anne Kavanaughs revery, by which she (as transcendental ego) re-presents past phases of her experiencing ego. They are past and must be re-presented because no two horizon structures are identical, and because her moving through such plateaus of past experience explains her present situation, thus locates her.

In the poem's opening lines we immediately have the three horizon structures of possible experience necessary for triangulation. Anne's present, reflective self represents a transcendental ego, and her past self is an experiencing ego. Lowell, as poet, provides a third monad, the one closest to us, though obscured. Harry provides a
fourth horizon. Harry and Anne as children provide others, as do Harry's mother, Red Kavanaugh and, distantly, even Anne's drunken father. Ultimately, all of these are experiencing egos for Lowell's transcendental ego, or poetic imagination. They all contain variations upon Lowell's own experience, which has been dislocated because time-locked in mere process. As Husserl says, no "two or more" worlds can be conceived at once "since they are imcompossible [sic]."

Because for Lowell time was no longer grounded in the historical fact of Christ as, within a Christian understanding, it once had been, he found time to be a dislocating process. Lacking an adequately grounded system of value, his judgments were in danger of becoming relative, indeed situational to the point of mere opinion. An historical consciousness was intended to correct this; however, as with Lowell's dramatic version of Benito Cereno, his judgments often lacked perspective and instead were provincial in terms of the brief time frame (the sixties) that informed them.

Similarly, lacking a transcendent that was fixed so that the process of his allegory might reflect it prismatically, Lowell turned to the fixity of a personal and a public past. Dislocated by time, he employed time to relocate himself, much as Husserl exploited subjectivity to overcome subjectivity.
In a letter that is part of her extensive correspondence with a person so far known only as "A," Flannery O'Connor summarizes her experience with Robert Lowell around the time he was writing and revising "The Mills of the Kavanaughs":

You ask about Cal Lowell. I feel almost too much about him to be able to get to the heart of it. He is a kind of grief to me. I first knew him at Yaddo. We were both there one fall and winter. At that time he had left his first wife, Jean Stafford, and the Church. To make a long story short, I watched him that winter come back into the Church. I had nothing to do with it but of course it was a great joy to me. I was only 23 and didn't have much sense. He was terribly excited about it and got more and more excited and in about two weeks had a complete mental breakdown. That second conversion went with it, and when he came out, he was well for a time, married again a very nice girl named Elizabeth Hardwick, and since then has been off and on, in and out, of institutions. Now he is doing very well on one of these drugs—but the Church is out of it, though I don't believe he has been able to convince himself that he doesn't believe. . . . The last thing he wrote was called The Mills of the Kavanaughs. Right now he is writing an autobiography. This is part of some kind of analytical therapy.  

And then in a letter to the same person four years later:

Let me right now correct, stash & obliterate this revolting story about Lowell introducing me as a saint. . . . At the time it was happening, poor Cal was about three steps from the asylum. He had the delusion that he had been called on some kind of mission of
purification and he was canonizing everybody that had anything to do with his situation then. I was very close to him and so was Robert [Fitzgerald]. I was too inexperienced to know he was mad, I just thought that was the way poets acted. Even Robert didn't know it, or at least didn't know how near collapse he was. In a couple of weeks he was safely locked up. It would be funny if it had not been so terrible... Robert and I both made fun of him when he said such things, but there was no deterring him. He mixed it all in with his wild humor. Things went faster and faster and faster for him until I guess the shock table took care of it. It was a grief for me as if he had died. When he came out of it, he was no longer a Catholic.

Not only was Lowell's autobiographical writing a "kind of analytical therapy" (or, self-locating), as the first quotation maintains, but, as the second suggests, his religious interests, his poetry, and his illness are intertwined. In all three he was an absolutist from the start. As O'Conner first knew him, he would have agreed with Denis Donoghue's recent remark (made in The Sovereign Ghost), "that imagination is the secular name we apply to the soul" in our efforts "to live peacefully with our neighbors." Donoghue goes on to say that he "cannot believe... the imagination is other than divine in its origin," and he later adds, "the poet believes that the direction of his work is a kind of destiny."

These opinions would be perfectly agreeable to Lowell as Flannery O'Connor knew him at Yaddo and shortly after. But consider the difficulty involved in his intellectually rejecting such notions (particularly deciding that his
poetry is, after all, not "a kind of destiny") yet remaining an absolutist by temperament and beyond dissuasion. O'Connor's observations are interesting because, though mentally healthy, she too confronted illness, was a writer, and was a serious Catholic. Her position on Lowell seems to have been that he never gave up a religious desire but that because of his instability he stayed intellectually and emotionally clear of traditional Christian doctrine or formal practice as much as possible. In sum, Lowell continued to have the absolutist's drive for certitude, as I believe that "Waking Early Sunday Morning" and "Near the Ocean" demonstrate. But because of his instability it was a drive without a goal, a desire without an object or, to borrow again from Pater (only something that sounds as though it could be from Heidegger), "a love defined by the absence of the beloved."

Discussing what he calls "enterprises especially congenial to the imagination," Donoghue lists the contemplative, descriptive mode, Allen Tate's angelic mode, and the negating-differentiating mode. Early Lowell tended toward the second of these, the angelic, but later he tended toward the third, the negating-differentiating mode which is reminiscent of the "antagonisms" that Staples identifies in Lowell and the "contraries" for which Yenser opts. But to return to Donoghue's idea of
the angelic mode of imagination, which fits much of early Lowell:

Sometimes the act of imagination is felt as a desperate necessity, like an act of faith in the absence of evidence in its favour. Natural forms are not felt as sustenance, and the leap of faith is made in the needy hope of aspiring beyond nature to more complete satisfactions. If nature is not enough, the imagination must act upon its own authority. Such an imagination is often "angelic," to use Allen Tate's description, and it results in a hypertrophy of feeling, will, and intellect; of feeling, since it exhibits "the incapacity to represent the human condition in the central tradition of natural feeling"; of will, since it features "the thrust of the will beyond the human scale of action"; and of intellect, since it shows "the intellect moving in isolation from both love and the moral will, whereby it declares itself independent of the human situation in quest of essential knowledge."57

The above description fits Lowell's early phase only in part, as is also the case with the summary of the negating-differentiating mode's application to his second phase. Nevertheless, the concentrated writing in Lowell's first phase, that Arrowsmith picked out, has its own "desperate necessity." With very little violence done to them, most of the poems in Lord Weary's Castle and The Mills of the Kavanaughs do read like acts "of faith in the absence of evidence." Also, they are too strained and uncomfortable to be representations of "the human condition" in anything like a "tradition of natural feeling," and, in their concern with an absolute that is often more Calvinistic than Catholic, they are instances of the
writer's will thrusting "beyond the human scale of ac­tion." On the other hand, Donoghue's description of the angelic imagination's "intellect" is less satisfactory because at this time Lowell's Catholicism tended to in-tegrate his thought and "moral will."

Discussing the negating-differentiating mode, Donoghue alludes to the Preface to Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind*, "where [Hegel] speaks of the mind engaged with distinctions and difference." By negating, the self makes a difference evident, and making distinctions is fundamental to the mind's synthetic progress toward knowledge. However, there also exists a gray area in the negating-differentiating mode. If you negate with a great deal of "vehemence you make the reader aware of the vehemence necessary to banish" the object in the first place. This has the effect of increasing the object's presence. 58

Whether the object is maintained by "faith in the absence of evidence," as with the angelic mode, is negated, or is again made present by the vehemence of its banishment, there exists an absenting and presencing tension. Both modes confront this; they merely stand on opposite sides of the process. "The Mills of the Kavanaughhs" stands between the two sides. Lowell's revisions amount to a banishment in themselves; however, the dual nature of Anne Kavanaugh as Persephone amounts
to a negating-differentiating mode in itself, but at
the same time she is emblematic of the renewal of life.
She can negate life in part, and her doing so amidst the
Maine countryside amounts to a differentiation. However,
she also stands for the return of life, and in this
capacity she represents an instance of "faith in the
absence of evidence." The latter significance applies
to Anne Kavanaugh particularly in the first version of
"The Mills" when the Catholic references were still
present to reinforce this half of her.

The negating-differentiating mode is summarized by
Donoghue, with even a reference to Pater that is close
to the one used earlier in this discussion. Donoghue
begins with a positive use of negation that reminds one
of Husserl's first step with Descartes:

Human language alone contains the principle
of negation. Negation is therefore a linguis-
tic marvel by which the mind repudiates its
dependence upon objects. The objects exist,
they are there, [much as Husserl finally ac-
knowledges an objective world] but the
mind exerts itself by rejecting them [much
as Husserl follows Descartes by beginning
with doubt], I assume a direct relation
between the principle of negation and
Pater's account of those moments in which
the mind replaces the object in nature by a
wealth of sensations and impressions [similar
to eidetic variations]: these are the only
remaining traces of the object, and thereafter
their intensity is independent of the object
[as they become mere phenomena which are part
of the horizon structure and intentionality
of a consciousness].
I have interrupted Donoghue with comparisons to Husserl because the parallels between his third mode and Lowell's second phase are even more striking than those between his second mode and Lowell's first phase. The overriding point to be emphasized is that in his description of three ways the modern imagination has come to operate, two of Donoghue's modes do outline the two phases of Lowell's poetic imagination that I have described. If Lowell were not a leader in the move from the second imaginative mode to the third, his poetic shift would still be a prime example of the distinction that Donoghue makes.

I might add that, as previously suggested, Lowell's early phase is not altogether religious. He has all of the judgment that negates the world and little of the grace that enlivens it. This characteristic also fits the angelic mode:

[T]he imagination proposes to set against the natural world a rival fiction which owes as little as possible to nature and nearly everything to itself.60

That is, the implicit system of value by which Lowell makes judgments is "set against the natural world" in its very negativity as "a rival fiction."

Not only in some ways negative in its judgment, an early poem such as "The Drunken Fisherman" demonstrates the three characteristics of the angelic imagination.
given above. The poem suggests that our modern life is a "dynamited brook" whose waters "peter out." Acknowledging the recurrent failure that Peter represents, it nevertheless appears to conclude positively. Yet at the same time it includes the angelic characteristics, which are not positive: First, the poem's violent diction ("this bloody sty," "raging memory drools," "bloody waters," "remorse, / Stinking," and so forth) is part of the eccentric and negative view it represents of (as Donoghue says) the "human condition," and (again Donoghue) such diction does not "represent . . . the central tradition of natural feeling." Second, in its vision of the power of Christ over "the Prince of Darkness" who stalks us in our human limitation, the poem opts for "the thrust of the will beyond the human scale of action," here in religious terms. Finally, the fisherman's Christian ruminating (or, "intellect") is so isolated from anyone else that it demonstrates neither "love" nor "moral will" but instead seems intent upon a "quest" for "essential knowledge" (Donoghue's terms), which surpasses the "bloodstream['s] . . . Stygian term"; in his drunken isolation, if not solipsism, the fisherman's preoccupation is with an "essential knowledge" that, going beyond his place in the world, is angelic.

Other early poems, such as "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," "After the Surprising Conversions," "Her Dead
Brother," "Mother Marie Therese," and "Thanksgiving's Over" contain isolated consciousnesses similar to the one I have described above. In sum, the dislocated self, whose isolation is so evident in Lowell's second phase, was already present in his first phase, only needing certain modifications to then surface as his main concern.

Before discussing the alternative to his early phase, Life Studies, I would like to recollect the basic pressures for Lowell's abandonment of his earlier style. Up to "The Mills of the Kavanaughs," the Christian framework provided a transcendent order within which human action took place. Having a First Cause gave adequate grounding to the causality in the narrative of "The Mills." Without a First Cause, however, one faced an infinite regress through preceding causes and an attendant loss in the significance of any one instance of cause and effect, due to the multiplicity of causes and effects in a groundless, infinitely ongoing process. The loss of such a transcendent also meant the loss of three of the four levels of interpretation.

Jerome Mazzaro has noted that the poems in The Mills of the Kavanaughs "complete the disintegration of the anagogical level in Lowell's poetry."61 As far as he goes, Mazzaro is correct, but he overlooks the changes that made the anagogical level unworkable, changes that
first appeared in the two versions of "The Mills." The disruption of the moral level of meaning and that of allegory came first. And the key to the loss of all three lies in allegory because, moving step by step with the narrative, it is the link between the temporal world of human experience and the divine world of a-temporal value. An anagogical level of meaning cannot come about until the literal, moral and allegorical levels are fully in place. Thus, moving one step farther back, it was the loss of his Christian myth that cost Lowell the grounding for causality, and it was the same loss that undercut his allegorical level of meaning. Without these, he needed a new modality, a new poetics.

By looking at the titles of the poems in *Life Studies*, one sees that Lowell begins operating with a narrower world view. The majority of the poems deal with his personal experience, which is informed by and reflective of the secular world he has come to inhabit. Neither Lowell nor the world he perceives is capable of projection beyond a horizontal plane.

"Waking in the Blue" contains a reference to the Azure which seems to be an allusion to Baudelaire's "metaphysical disgust." Lowell says, "Azure day / makes my agonized blue window bleaker." An important change has taken place. The early Jonathan Edwards poems express their own type of "metaphysical disgust," as do other
poems of the first phase, but the disgust Lowell expresses in "Waking in the Blue" (unlike that of his earlier poems and unlike that Baudelaire expresses) is restricted to this world. Lowell says derisively of himself that he is "Cock of the walk." Rather than for the metaphysical, his contempt is now for the thoroughly pedestrian mental patient, one who forestalls the absolute and metaphysical question of death by using "a locked razor."

As a series, the poems begin with Lowell's revised view of the world in "Beyond the Alps." Next there are three variations upon the present, "The Banker's Daughter," "Inauguration Day: January 1953," and "A Mad Negro Soldier Confined at Munich." The intended condemnation is represented in almost snapshot fashion.

Each of these poems provides a bracketing of Lowell's postwar experience. "The Banker's Daughter" and "A Mad Negro Soldier Confined At Munich" are experiencing consciousnesses which Lowell explores variationally so that he may take measure of the worlds they re-present. The former begins with an objective voice then moves into Marie de Medici's consciousness, while the latter is in the soldier's consciousness throughout. The other two poems in the first group are in Lowell's voice, but each of the four provides an "other," an Husserlian appresentation which provisionally regards the "experience of someone else." 63
Such an other's experience operates reflexively upon Lowell in two ways: The condemnation of public values is the first thing one notes; however, more basic than that, and eventually more significant, the poetic mode by which Lowell is perceiving the world makes possible much of the experience with which he is able to work. The figures whose consciousnesses he uses preclude some insights just as they make others possible. In "The Banker's Daughter," Marie de Medici gives an historical context for the political brutality that took place during World War II, for example, Mussolini's Italy. But by the nature of that context she is incapable of making a statement like, "The Lord survives the rainbow of His will."

The second section of Life Studies is the prose piece, "91 Revere Street," which first appeared in The Partisan Review, Fall, 1956, as part of an autobiography that was in progress. The flat, factual narration of events is in marked contrast to the narrative in "The Mills of the Kavanaughs," reflecting the abandonment of allegory. Moreover, the assertiveness and compounding allusions that were characteristic of the first phase are noticeably absent. And though this absence is in part because, here, Lowell is writing prose, it is also part of a more general lessening of concentration. The essential point is that here Lowell regards past phases
of himself as an experiencing ego, which he (in the present as a transcendental ego) varies into an arrangement that reveals his present position by the past's contrasting appresentations. No longer looking to heaven, he can still locate himself, but it must be by looking backward and forward rather than upward.

The book's third section is made up of four portraits of other modern literary figures: Ford Maddox Ford, George Santayana, Delmore Schwartz, and Hart Crane. Each may be taken as a variation upon some part of Lowell, who at the same time regards his experience plus that of the other four as at least five sides of the modern man of letters. Each represents an experiencing ego whose horizons are identified so he might round out an objective world for Lowell's imagining and transcending ego. That they are seen as isolated consciousnesses is consistent with the fact they are all seen as alienated in some way.

As the observer, Lowell is alienated also, and his eidetic variation of four others who are like him in that regard means that he exploits a predicament in order to overcome it. As Husserl uses subjectivity to get past subjectivity and into an objective world, Lowell uses his alienation (which is a type of subjectivity) within mere process to get beyond the dislocating effects of time and process. He locates himself in a world that is eidetically mapped by the four portraits which serve collectively to locate him.
The fourth and final section of Life Studies is broken into two parts. All of the poems in both parts, however, are autobiographical, except "To Speak of Woe That Is in Marriage." This poem is in the voice of a woman married to perhaps an exaggerated, manic version of Robert Lowell.

Other than the above, the poems in this section are explicitly about Lowell. They tend to be conglomerates of past phases in the poet's eidetic ego. In fact most of the pieces in the book are monadic because their images (or, Lowell's past phases) round out the horizon structure of an other located elsewhere in a space-time continuum. They become microcosms of the world that existed then and there, and, located variously around the transcendental ego, they constitute the reference points by which the present can be located, though only relatively.

I have suggested a spatial disposition for these poems of past, monadic consciousness, but if taken too literally this could be misleading. Each disposition is first and foremost a temporal one. Most of the poems are made up of past phases in Lowell's experience. They contain past profiles of him and of the world he inhabited. The simplest way to locate himself is for Lowell to place what phases he recalls in sequence. But in addition to providing sequence, the poems contain horizons. Thus
there is a spatial quality in their relations to each other. In fact, placed in sequence, they are in constant comparison with one another.

This comparison is most visible in terms of the various criticisms Lowell launches. However, the mere ordering of his space-time experiencing ego (which is like the diver) is what first gives the possibility of arrangement to the later, imagining Lowell. We are near a conclusion Husserl makes, the mutual dependence (or, intersubjectivity) of the conscious self and the "other" that it posits and confronts. If order is found to exist external to the subjective consciousness, it can only be found because there already was "an Objective Nature." Of course even the tautological character of this situation does not prevent the subjective consciousness from eidetically varying into worlds that do not exist, or do not yet exist. Lowell's self-locating is both retentional and protentional. He finds out where he is by seeing where he has been, and he varies this information to open up possibilities that lie in the future.

Before leaving Life Studies, I would like to take a closer look at one poem that represents the building process that is possible for the transcendental ego that operates throughout Lowell's second phase. First, one's past experience is objectified, and the imagining self operates without a history as it objectively turns upon
its experiencing self. As said above, the final effect of this is not only to locate the present self but to project into the future as well.

In "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow" we are presented with the world of Lowell's childhood. Lowell, as an experiencing ego, is also presented. There are several other experiencing egos within the poem, each carrying his own horizon structure. Taken collectively, these help to round out Lowell's horizon, both present and past. The retentional consciousness of the Janus and of the slides gathers the diver's past horizons. Uncovered, they trace how he got to the present; freely varied, they project protentionally into the future of possible experience, broadening his intentionality so that the possibilities for experience in the future are increased. Indeed, insofar as his expectations contribute to the future, not only his experience of it but the future itself is increased. On the level of modality, this process does something similar to Heidegger's notion of the "Open," also the will as venture. The difference is that Heidegger sees the basic element in this process not as phases of experience but as words.

There are four experiencing egos in the poem that are substantial enough to count. Foremost, there is Lowell; secondarily, there are his grandfather, his aunt Sarah, and his uncle Devereux Winslow, who is dying.
The poem recollects the initiation of a "five and a half" year-old Robert Lowell into his first knowledge of death. The "earth and lime" with which he plays double in significance retrospectively, as do other details, but these are all within the experiencing ego of a child. Other horizons (though not completely re-presented as is attempted with a rounded character in a novel) are implied and partially revealed by the presence of the other three experiencing egos.

Aunt Sarah represents an isolated, eccentric, and defeated life. She supposedly "jilted an Astor." (Lowell has a weakness for the social register.) Then, a pianist, she "failed to appear" for a recital which was to begin her career. She now practices on a dummy piano to avoid disturbing Lowell's grandmother who is tone-deaf. Uncle Devereaux, knowing that he will be dead soon, nevertheless wants to go abroad. Grandfather Winslow is responsible for the world which these characters inhabit. He has made it possible with "his Liberty Bell silver mine," though he also owns "fools'-gold nuggets." The point is an ironical one. There is not wealth and freedom here, in a human sense, but poverty of spirit and entrapment. As Heidegger might say, we are given people who when thrown (on their "own responsibility") have failed to project "forward toward . . . possibilities of being." Their attempts to project are consistently thwarted
because there seem to be no goals toward which they can project. Again, the god's default.

Uncle Devereux would travel to broaden his experience when he is dying; Aunt Sarah practices furiously on a dummy piano and will never actually make music; Grandfather Winslow inhabits the world which he has built but which has turned out to be "overbearing, dis-proportioned"; and young Robert is in his most formative process, soon to confront mortality yet stereotyped like a manikin in "Rogers Peet's boy's store." Each of these circles of experience is in some way short-circuited, and each is seen to prefigure the truncated world of Lowell's second phase.

The poem brackets a past phase in Lowell's experience, a past horizon in fact, and by adding the implicit horizons of his aunt, his uncle, and his grandfather it becomes monadic. Its primary function is to give Lowell's consciousness an other by which he can measure his present location. Much as Anne Kavanaugh's revery does elsewhere, the poem helps to gauge the poet's experience; tangentially, the reader's also. As a series, all of the poems in _Life Studies_ operate cumulatively to this end.

On the level of experience approached methodically, Lowell has made an artistic and therefore somewhat arbitrary limiting of experience that delimits it and makes meaning possible. Reminded of Kant's point as to the
anthropomorphic aspect of an otherwise "natural" symbol, we can see how the natural flow of one's experience must be anthropomorphically (and to that extent not naturally but arbitrarily) limited to ferret meaning from it. The process is one of closure to achieve disclosure.

And yet Heidegger says that the limiting process creates an "Open," that what we close off is thereby opened up in a way that uncovers the activities and processes that constitute us. Much of this mystery stems from the nature of language. Neither Aristotle nor Wilhelm von Humboldt was wrong. We are presented with mutually dependent opposites, reciprocal and in constant process.

Lowell’s Anne Kavanaugh is an early instance of John Berryman's Henry, John Irwin's Bricuth (the Old English, to bridge a gap, and as used by Irwin, a temporal gap), or Crow, for Ted Hughes. Later Lowell uses past phases of himself for himself (the split ego now being less disguised) in the same manner that Anne's reverie created a Janus-like space-time continuum from her childhood forward for her bracketing. Her retentional-protentional range-finding gauged her experience and, indirectly, Lowell's.

Robert Pinsky sees the use of a protagonist or persona as a stylistic strategy to regain an expressivistic language that we have become too self-conscious to use
openly. What I would like to add to his argument is that, seen as a mode of thought, the stylistic peculiarities of a given period in the history of poetry (even within only a decade) reveal how much of the world we are able to accept at the time.

Finding large segments of a previous order impossible to sustain (as with the post World War II poets) writers seem to set about reclaiming what has become lost. In this sense, many modern poets have sought to write beyond the relativistic and secular world they inhabit. They have entered the indeterminate, forward moving "Open" of the will as venture pretty much as Heidegger would have them do, though they may have failed to look as closely at the language by which they were doing this as he would like. In addition to this, because of the way the poetic imagination operates in the first place and because post-war poets begin with an unusually strong sense of doubt, the process of much recent poetry has been directed toward a bracketing of the poet's experience that performs the sort of phenomenological process that Husserl proposed.

Since we are time-locked, we must create strategies to adequately grasp our world and locate ourselves. Poetically, there are two basic systems for this that are currently operating jointly. One is the appresentation of an experiencing ego by a transcendental, imagining ego. By such a method we (as subjects) detach our experiencing selves to be regarded objectively.
Treated thus, our experience is seen as the accumulation of horizons, the past phases and past profiles of an intending consciousness moving through a space-time continuum. In terms of poetry, our past is retained by a series of images, and we operate both imaginatively (varying that past) and as a Janus, gathering phenomena retentionally and protentionally.

But that is only the synchronic side of the poem. As a second system, the poetic activity, the writing and the reading of a poem, carries us diachronically. In fact the formal poem's rhythm and phonetic patterns constitute a melody which, according to Schopenhauer, orders our willing through time. By melody, we can repeat a time experience. Reading a poem which is formal enough to be able to tell you how it is to be read causes a repetition in experience.

You not only make a span of time repeat itself melodically, but by the eidos you also re-present past instances, moments of punctual experience which could not be understood at the instant they were experienced and which, if not re-presented, are eventually sedimented by process and lost. Such past phases increase our knowing by building our intentionality, which modifies future experience. Thus regarded in this light, a melodic poem fuses knowledge and experience, the analytical with the emotional, somewhat like Schopenhauer's title, The World
as Will and Representation. Put another way, Aristotle's and Humbolt's views of language are joined in such a poetry.

A melody diachronically contains the will's willing and orders the emotional aspects of our experience. As modern psychology has repeatedly told us, many images represent things we cannot grasp on the surface of our normal discourse. Within poems, such images are the synchronic moments of an eidetic consciousness. Past instances are not only re-presented, but their significances are symbolized such that whole networks of relations between one thing and another are recalled. And such relations can be grasped even by those who did not actually have the experience.

As Husserl says, a phenomenological method will give adequate but not apodictic knowledge. Within poetry such an approach has been adequate not only for Lowell but, judging by his critics, for the vast majority of readers as well. And yet we should not forget that such a poetics is a strategy that answers what Heidegger calls "the default of God."

Flannery O'Conner's summary of his experience during the early fifties indicates that certainly for Lowell (both healthy and ill) the god had defaulted in some terrible and tragic way. However, it is only fair to add that for O'Conner and many others (such as, the Fitzgeralds
and the Tates) the god had not defaulted. For them, the revised poetics I have been describing would merely lack the power of allegory, and therefore the moral and anagogical levels of signification.

To those who retain a cosmology, Lowell's second phase, influential and acclaimed as it has been, represents the inauguration of a minimal poetry whose language signifies but cannot embody. Finding horizons to have become local, such a poetry's expectations are equally local. A restricted intentionality will produce an equally restricted protentional experience. Forgetting the possibility of a transcendent precludes knowing it.

Poetry cannot do philosophy's job. Recent poetry is not phenomenology. But the external pressures of a given period are felt by both poets and philosophers, and a comparison of the solutions that surface in their very different disciplines can often tell us a great deal about those pressures. We also clarify the change that has occurred within a discipline by comparing it to that of another. Husserl and Heidegger are useful because they uncover some of the steps an absolutist such as Robert Lowell took to find certainty amidst relative surroundings. Previously, it has been taken for granted that Lowell's poetic shift came about in Life Studies. There the change was apparent. However, "The Mills of the Kavanaughs" is actually where the shift
took place, and it merits our attention because its artistic difficulties expose both the new and the old modes of thought with which a representative Robert Lowell was struggling.
Notes


3 Heidegger, p. 92.


12 Heidegger, On the Way to Language, p. 133.


18 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 66.
22 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, pp. 41-42.
29 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 100.
31 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 73.
32 Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p. 79.
35 O'Conner, p. 71.
36 Husserl, pp. 18-20.
37 Husserl, p. 21.


39 Husserl, pp. 22-23.

40 Husserl, pp. 112-115.


42 Sidney, p. 161.

43 Husserl, p. 75.

44 Husserl, p. 74.

45 Husserl, pp. 107-108.


47 Pinsky, pp. 18-19.


49 Husserl, p. 140.


51 Husserl, p. 140.

52 Husserl, pp. 140-141.

53 O'Conner, p. 152.

54 O'Conner, p. 395.


56 Donoghue, p. 32.

57 Donoghue, p. 41.

58 Donoghue, pp. 42-43.
59 Donoghue, p. 43.

60 Donoghue, p. 41.


63 Husserl, p. 114.

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207-245
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