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**War as a Perversion of Christianity: The search for Man's Redemption in
Robert Lowell's Land of Unlikeness and Lord Weary's Castle.**

Abstract

Lowell's war poems are perverse confirmations of Christian truth. They reveal the fact that Christianity measures and dramatizes but cannot finally redeem man's suffering. This Christian view enables Lowell to achieve a level of war poetry never attained by his contemporaries, who could not reveal the suffering most men felt. In Lowell's poetry, war becomes the immoral equivalent of religion. It is a weird mirror image of Christianity. The significance of Robert Lowell's war poetry lies in the fact that his was the only kind of religious poetry to come out of World War II, which attempted to explain that violence which every man witnessed. Lowell's view that war is a distortion of religious experience is revealed in his first two volumes Land of Unlikeness (1944) and Lord Weary's Castle (1946). In Land of Unlikeness Lowell reveals his preoccupation with the alienation of the human soul from God. This alienation is responsible for the collapse of civilization embodied in the mass destruction of World War II. The title refers to the United States of America. Lowell converts the war into a retelling of the Cain and Abel myth, with the United States playing the part of Cain. The many war poems in Land of Unlikeness, therefore, all attack the United States, especially for its use of saturation bombing. In his second volume Lord Weary's Castle, Lowell continues his treatment of war in relation to religious themes. The title also refers to the rich and powerful state of modern America, especially its material wealth which it has gained at the expense of others, an inheritance which in the end will only cause the destruction of its owners and their children. Hence, the poems in this volume focus on the destructiveness of war, the corruption of modern society, and the desire for Christian faith. Here, Lowell comes to consider war as an indication of human stupidity and cruelty. He tries in these poems to find a way of emerging from the catastrophe of World War II. He also puts this catastrophe in the context of a previous one of Christian meaning by relating it to the violence done to Christ. In these two volumes, Lowell is admired for showing respect for facts and this enables him to make life enter his poems. He is

an inheritor of western civilization; and his poems become something of a community product, while remaining based on quite personal feelings. Thus, Lowell's imagination connects his literary experience with his actual experience of World War II. In title and concerns, then, both Land of Unlikeness and Lord Weary's Castle represent Lowell's brilliant effort to bring his vivid religious sense to bear upon contemporary war experience.