



Robert Lowell

(1917-1977)



Words for Hart Crane (1959)

“When the Pulitzers showered on some dope
or screw who flushed our dry mouths out with soap,
few people would consider why I took
to stalking sailors, and scattered Uncle Sam’s
phony gold-plated laurels to the birds.
Because I knew my Whitman like a book,
stranger in America, tell my country: I,
Catullus redivivus, once the rage
of the Village and Paris, used to play my role
of homosexual, wolfing the stray lambs
who hungered by the Place de la Concorde.
My profit was a pocket with a hole.
Who asks for me, the Shelley of my age,
must lay his heart out for my bed and board.”



T. S. Eliot (1969)

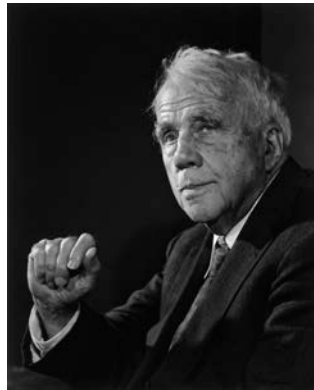
Caught between two streams of traffic, in the gloom
of Memorial Hall and Harvard's war dead.... And he:
"Don't you loathe to be compared with your relatives?
I do. I've just found two of mine reviewed by Poe.
He wiped the floor with them...and I was *delighted*."
Then on with warden's pace across the Yard,
talking of Pound, "It's balls to say he isn't
the way he is.... He's better though. This year,
he no longer wants to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem.
Yes, he's better. 'You speak,' he said, when he's talked two hours.
By then I had absolutely nothing to say."
Ah Tom, one muse, one music, had one the luck--
lost in the dark night of the brilliant talkers,
humor and boredom from the everlasting dross



Ezra Pound (1969)

Horizontal in a deckchair on the bleak ward,
some feeble-minded felon in pajamas, clawing
a Social Credit broadside from your table, you saying,
"...here with a black suit and black briefcase; in the briefcase,
an abomination, Possum's *hommage* to Milton."
Then sprung; Rapallo, and then the decade gone;
then three years, then Eliot dead, you saying,
"And who is left to understand my jokes?"

My old Brother in the arts...and besides, he was a smash of a poet."
 He showed us his blotched, bent hands, saying, "Worms.
 When I talked that nonsense about Jews on the Rome
 wireless, she knew it was shit, and still loved me."
 And I, "Who else has been in Purgatory?"
 And he, "To begin with a swelled head and end with swelled feet."



Robert Frost (1969)

Robert Frost at midnight, the audience gone
 to vapor, the great act laid on the shelf in mothballs,
 his voice musical, raw and raw--he writes in the flyleaf:
 "Robert Lowell from Robert Frost, his friend in the art."
 "Sometimes I feel too full of myself," I say.
 And he, misunderstanding, "When I am low,
 I stray away. My son wasn't your kind. The night
 we told him Merrill Moore would come to treat him,
 he said, 'I'll kill him first.' One of my daughters thought things,
 knew every male she met was out to make her;
 the way she dresses, she couldn't make a whorehouse."
 And I, "Sometimes I'm so happy I can't stand myself."
 And he, "When I am too full of joy, I think
 how little good my health did anyone near me."

FOOTNOTES

"This poem ["T. S. Eliot"] and the two following, from Lowell's volume, *Notebooks*, seem intentionally casual in organization. ["Memorial Hall"] A Harvard building memorializing the University's Civil War dead. ["warden's pace"] Eliot was an air raid warden during the Second World War. The Yard is the campus at the center of Harvard University. Lowell visited Pound when the latter was in St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the criminally insane, in Washington. ["Social Credit"] A dubious economic program which Pound fanatically supported. Eliot, who originally denounced Milton, as Pound did, and then later recanted. Released from the hospital, Pound went back to Rapallo, Italy, to live. Pound talked several times on the Italian radio during the Second World War. 'She' is Olga Rudge, Pound's companion [mistress]. Frost's son committed suicide. ["Merrill Moore"] A poet and psychoanalyst." ["Possum" was Pound's nickname for Eliot.]

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