Robert Lowell's "Raw" and "Cooked" Poetics: From the Formal Traditions of Modernism to the Transformations of the Confessionals

Ikram Hili
English Department,
University of Monastir
ISLA Moknine, Avenue des Martyrs, 5050 Monastir, Tunisia
Member of the Laboratory on Approaches to Discourse, FLSH, Sfax
Ikram_hili@hotmail.com

Abstract:

In 1960, Robert Lowell won the National Poetry Award for his collection *Life Studies*. In his Award Acceptance Speech, Lowell talked about two types of poetry that were, at the time, vying for prominence: "cooked," tightly-structured poetry which, following the formal dictates of New Criticism, can only be "digested by a graduate seminar;" and "raw," more loosely-patterned poetry which, breaching the New Critical poetic decorum, can be delightfully "dished up for midnight listeners" (Lowell 1960). An appraisal of Lowell's works, therefore, shows that his poetry itself is a mixed bag, in the sense that his early poems read as "cooked" poetry, while his late poems are the ones that have catapulted him into the revolutionary realm of "raw" aesthetics. Here, I introduce Confessional poetry and the sweeping aesthetic transformations it has brought about. But it is always worthwhile to note that, breaking with the Modernist tradition of impersonality, Confessional poetry has often been denounced as visceral, introspective, and self-centered. A deeper appreciation of this literary mode, of Lowell's late poetry in particular, shows that the personal is but a gateway to wider political and cultural concerns, for it presents a first-person speaker resistant to the pressure to conform to the overall containment culture of the fifties and early sixties in the United States.

Keywords: Modernist Tradition; Impersonality; Objectivity; Confessional Poetry; Postwar America

1. Robert Lowell's Literary Influences:

When we talk about tradition and transformation in Lowell's poetics, it would be remiss not to talk about two major poetic fathers, if so we may call them, who colored his career as a poet. They are Allen Tate and William Carlos Williams, the poetry of each associated with a different style: Tate's being formal, while Williams's being free. In this regard, eloquently describing Lowell's literary influences, Steven Gould Axelrod (1978, 20) states that the poet "was torn between the 'paleface' notion of art as a discipline and the 'redskin' notion of art as a liberating opportunity for self-expression." Towards the end of his career, Lowell seemed to have moved full steam ahead into art as a liberating self-expression, into what he calls "raw poetry," as mentioned above.

Notably, in their early attempts at composing poems, many poets began writing traditionally, using elaborate rhyme and meter. Lowell was no exception, as he had been much influenced by High Modernists such as T.S. Eliot and his tenet of impersonality, one that Lowell himself later sought to overturn. But prior to that, Lowell believed that the personal emotions of the poet had to be suppressed or at least expressed through what T. S. Eliot refers to as an "objective correlative" of art. As Paula Hayes (2003, 114-15) explains:

> Largely the view held within the Tate and Eliot camp was that a poem should not contain an obvious reference to the life of the poet, but this view arose from these critics' interpretation of what it meant in nineteenth-century aesthetics for the subjectivity of the artist to merge with the objectivity of art's form.

It follows, then, that under the influence of the early modernists, Lowell managed to transform his emotions and personal experiences into those impersonal patterns, believing that his personal life should be depersonalized, as it were, in order for him to produce what was, at the time, perceived of as "pure" art.

Later in his artistic career, Lowell felt the urge to depart, gradually, from the role that had long been assigned to poets—that of presenting the self and the poet's emotions through the Eliotic "objective correlative," realizing that there was probably no such a thing as an emotionless art. Lowell became rather intrigued by poetics that he equated with "huge blood-dripping gobbets of unseasoned experience," as he puts it in his National Award Speech. He was particularly enthralled by Allen Ginsberg's revolutionary poem "Howl" (1956), feeling that his own poems (i.e., Lowell's) are too stifled and rigid in tone and structure, thus paling in comparison with Ginsberg's free and "raw" poetics. Expressing his disenchantment with his own poems, Lowell wrote:

> I became sorely aware of how few poems I had written, and that these few had been finished at the latest three or four years earlier. Their style seemed distant, symbol-ridden and willfully difficult. I began to paraphrase my Latin quotations, and to add extra syllables to a line to make it clearer and more colloquial. I felt my old poems hid what they were really about, and many times offered a stiff, humorless and even impenetrable surface. I am no convert to the "beats." ... My own poems seemed like prehistoric monsters dragged down into the bog and death by their ponderous armor. I was reciting what I no longer felt. ... When I returned to my home, I began writing lines in a new style. (Qtd. in Ostroff 1964, 14)

This "new style" signals Lowell's break from the modernist tradition and his engagement with what came to be known, later, as the Confessional mode of writing.

In fact, aligning itself with the Beat's aesthetics, Lowell's *Life Studies* (1959) initiated the so-called Confessional poetry, a new poetic mode in which the poet inscribed his most tantalizing personal difficulties with pungent honesty and great intensity. Accordingly, Lowell readmitted

intention and emotion back into art in a bold departure from, particularly, T. S. Eliot's dictum of impersonality. Although they address slightly different issues, Beat poetry and Confessional poetry are less irreconcilable than they might seem, for both schools seek to shed light on the humdrum life of the post-war period, and on the plight of the many people left behind like so much human flotsam.

2. The Emergence of Confessional Poetry

It was M. L. Rosenthal who first coined, quite reductively, the label "confessional poetry," while commenting on Robert Lowell's *Life Studies.* His grouping of Confessional poets includes Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath. This label has remained a bone of contention not only within academic circles, but also among Confessionals themselves, who expressed on several occasions their rejection of such an appellation. The identification of specific poets under the confessional label is equally contentious. In her article "What Was Confessional Poetry?" Diane Middlebrook, for example, regards Snodgrass as a Confessional poet while excluding Berryman. Thomas Travisano (1999, 42), for his part, argues that Elizabeth Bishop "would seem to qualify not merely as a confessional poet, but as, perhaps, the school's most decisive progenitor."

Confessional poetry is widely considered as the poetry of the self, dealing exclusively with personal experience, pouring the poet's traumas and distresses into verse and, in doing so, shattering the otherwise inviolable boundary of the taboo. However, such appraisal can obscure other subjects that the poetry addresses, for it would be myopic to enclose this mode of poetry in the tight confines of the personal and the autobiographical, allowing it to speak about little else. On this note, Robert Phillips (1973, 4) writes:

> The confessional mode ... has always been with us. It merely has not until recently been officially 'named.' It is that writing which is highly subjective, which is in direct opposition to that other school of which Auden and Eliot are modern members—writers who consciously strove all but to obliterate their own concrete personalities in their poems ... in opposition to, or reaction from, the Eliotic aesthetic which influenced several generations of poets.

Confessional poets, in this respect, seek to liberate their poetry from the rigid confines of formalism and the mandates of New Criticism such as unity, coherence, harmony, organization, clarity, and precision—aspects that, to the New Critics, constitute the makings of "good" poetry.

It is noteworthy, in this sense, that Confessional poetry has drawn both acclaim and approbation. Robert Burns Shaw (1973, 12) talks about "the amorphous quality of the Confessionalist movement, [having always seemed] less a movement than an ill-defined crowd." As a result, critical opinions of this literary mode have wavered between those who "maligned it as 'confessionalism' [and those who] hailed it as a liberation from the tyranny of poetic decorum" (Beach 2003, 154). Adherents of the first view have routinely lauded Confessional poets for rebelling against the tenets of New Criticism, particularly T. S. Eliot's idea that the poet's emotion, in order

to be translated into true poetry, needs to manifest itself in an "objective correlative," as stated above. They also commend its breaking of the rigid divide between the private and the public spheres, disrupting political discourse by challenging its premises. Jo Gill (2006, 20), like other advocates of the movement, describes Confessional poetry as "autobiographical, therapeutic and unflinchingly truthful," being not only a breakthrough but also, and most importantly, "a break out" from "earlier orthodoxies." The birth of this new type of poetry is manifest in the sudden shift from highly impersonal poetry to "an exceedingly personal free voice" (Bawer 2007, 6). It is also an art that features an excruciating disclosure of private matters, subtly echoing the political turmoil following the Second World War and the malaise engendered by the Cold War.

The converse stance undervalues poetic Confessionalism allegedly for its want of literary standards, disparaging it as an overly introspective, sensational, visceral, self-centered form of poetry and, worse still, as a deviation from what has long been known as good poetics. Richard Wilbur, an adamant opponent of the Confessionals, describes the difference between the Confessional poem and the lyric using the metaphor of a house—a suggestive figure, as home is a towering metaphor in American history and politics generally, but especially in the post-war era. Wilbur (1950, 7) regards the lyric poem as a window that offers "a partial vision of the world," arguing that the poet who fails to understand the architecture of the lyric, such as the Confessional poet in Wilbur's view, is a poet who takes the window for a door, making the world "an extension of himself." Wilbur (1950, 7) further elucidates the metaphor as follows:

> Some writers think of art as a window, and some think of it as a door. If art is a window, then the poem is something intermediate in character, limited, synecdochic, a partial vision of a part of the world.... If art is conceived to be a door ... the artist no longer perceives a wall between him and the world; the world becomes an extension of himself, and is deprived of its reality. The poet's words cease to be a means of liaison with the world; they take the place of the world. This is bad aesthetics—and incidentally, bad morals.

Here, Wilbur espouses the view of art as "a window" and seems to insinuate that the Confessionals' poetic choices produce "bad aesthetics" because these poets perceive of art as "a door." Nevertheless, Confessional poets do think of their connection with the world around them as a kind of window through which they view and reflect on reality; but, in a rebellious act, they also seek to smash that window entirely.

Commenting on Wilbur's metaphor, and describing the Confessionals as "the rebels" of the fifties, poet Mark Doty (1991, 137) states that "a generation of poets would then find it necessary not only to open the windows but to break them, to widen them into doors, and the result would be a revisioning of the entire house." Accordingly, a new radicalized and groundbreaking poetics is born. And contrary to what the New Critics thought of Confessional writings, the Confessionals produced an art devoted to what Bawer (2007, 8) calls "intimate particulars," striking an emotional

chord among readers, and awakening in them "a sense of common humanity, a mature recognition that the essentials of one life are the essentials of all."

The debate over Confessional poetry seems interminable, so much so that even Rosenthal (1974, 25), who first labeled it, eventually grew skeptical of the appellation, acknowledging its limitations and arguing in his book *The New Poets* that "it was a term both helpful and too limited, and very possibly the conception of a confessional school has by now done a certain amount of damage." Steven K. Hoffman (1978, 687) seems to consolidate Rosenthal's doubts, holding that the term *confessional* has indeed become "a token of derision and outright contempt." As the term *confessional* remained quite controversial, the twilight of the 1960s paved the way for "new but no more adequate labels," as Hoffman states, "including Alvarez's 'extremist' poetry, Monroe Spears' 'open' poetry, and Marjorie Perloff's 'documentary' verse" (1978, 687). Among these appellations, Alvarez's has found the greatest purchase among scholars and critics.

3. Confessional Poetry as "The Poetry of Revolt"

In his introduction to his *American Poetry Since 1960*, Shaw (1973, 11) writes:

> I note first that these essays support the prevalent view of sixties poetry as a poetry of revolt.... *Howl* might not have been enough to shutter the hegemony of academic formalism, but *Life Studies* certainly signaled its declining power. The basic challenge, whether it came from Ginsberg or Lowell, was directed against the Eliotic cult of impersonality. The poet no longer hedged himself about with ironic literary illusions, but presented the reader with (we were asked to believe) unvarnished portraits of himself, the more warts the better.

In keeping with Shaw's views, Confessional poetry is also understood as a mutation, if not a subversion, of critical poetic standards.

An examination of the cultural milieu that propelled the rise of Confessional poetry helps account for this mode of poetry as "poetry of revolt." Molesworth (1976, 163) stresses "the emotional vacuity of public language in America and the insisting psychologizing of a society adrift from purpose and meaningful labor." The fifties gave rise to "a mass man," disenchanted, disenfranchised and disappointed by a hollow public discourse. Confessional poets seek salvation from this void in self-directedness, and especially through the language they create in order to voice "the split between revealing intimate details in an unvarnished context and obscuring the occult curve of their own dissociated self-concealing emotional lives" (Molesworth 1976, 168). Commenting on the stylishness of Confessional poets, Molesworth (1976, 168) suggests that it is as though their language "were asking us not to regard what we see but rather to admire the speaker's ability to maintain an interest in words when the experience ought to result in incoherence or silence."

It is equally noteworthy that Confessionalism sprouted in a politically agitated era—an era dominated by containment culture that created a highly-politicized cultural milieu, in which the

lines drawn between the political and the social, the public and the private, become significantly blurred. Confessional poetry, in this respect, not only explores the insidious repercussions of those strategies on the individual, but also strives to challenge and subvert the hegemonic rhetoric of the period. These poets point out that repressing and containing those anxieties was sure to eventually boomerang, one way or another.

The anxieties generated by the Cold War affected people's economic, social and cultural lives; they impacted the world of literature as well. In fact, while the 1930s witnessed the rise of a highly politicized generation of poets (chief among them W. H. Auden), the end of the Second World War saw a considerable steering away from such political suffusions in poetry. That reaction was soon overcome by a relentless and vibrant political preoccupation in the mode of poetry that aimed unflinchingly to expose deep personal experiences and present "the domestic space as highly inflected with public and political anxieties" (H. Stevens 2005, 164).

Probably nowhere is the Confessionals' transformations and the Modernists' traditions better described than in John Paul Russo's words (1988, 198) when he posits that:

> The New Critics invented the tranquilized [with reference to Robert Lowell's "tranquilized fifties"] poem; they performed surgery upon a poem as if it were a patient etherized upon a table. In the event, the poem was not tranquil, only tranquilized; artificially drugged and immobilized were the political, social, and historical implications of the text which still bore all the suppressed and conflictual problems.

Confessional poetry is, therefore, more than a mere documentation of the poet's life and traumas, or an outspoken confiding of the poet's secrets, as is often claimed. It is rather a deep brooding over the cultural, social, and political realities of the era. It is also "not overtly political, but it participated in the protest against impersonality as a poetic value by reinstating an insistently autobiographical first person engaged in resistance to the pressure to conform" (Middlebrook 1993, 635), not only to the principles of New Criticism, but also to the prevailing ideologies of the era.

4. Personal and Cultural Confessions in Robert Lowell's "Skunk Hour": A Meta-poetry of Survival and Transformation

In his seminal essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T. S. Eliot (1981, 40) states that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates" and that the poet should find a "transforming catalyst" in order to integrate his fragmentary and incongruent experiences into the autonomous unity of the poem. "Skunk Hour" is the best illustration of Lowell's departure from this Eliotic dictum.

"Skunk Hour" is set in "Nautilus Island," an indirect reference to Castine in Maine, reportedly Lowell's cottage in 1957. The poem is composed of eight, almost symmetrical stanzas. The first part probes into the public world while the second part delves into the private realm of the poet. Although they seem separate spheres, the public and the private are very much intertwined, here, in

the sense that the personal dejection dominating the second part of the poem is but a direct reflection of the decay casting its spell on the speaker's outer surroundings. By association, moral, social and even religious deprivation—which he evokes in the first four stanzas—entails the speaker's malaise, if not sickness. The self becomes an extension of the world, mirroring its ailments and distress, a characteristic feature of Confessional poetry. In this sense, the poem reads as a psychological as well as a cultural confession of all sorts of ailments, which substantiates M. L. Rosenthal's observation that the speaker of a confessional poem is placed "at the centre of the poem in such a way as to make his psychological vulnerability and shame an embodiment of his civilization" (Rosenthal 1974, 79).

Back to the public degradation that the speaker observes around him, we notice that the first part of the poem reeks, indeed, of a sense of sterility, rearing its head in an entire social structure that Lowell describes as futile, desperate and decaying. The "hermit heiress ... is in her dotage/ Thirsting for/ the hierarchic privacy/ of Queen Victoria's century." To her dismay, though, she buys instead "the eyesores facing her shore/ and lets them fall" (Lowell 1959, 89). "The summer millionaire" is also a failure, for "his nine-knot yawl/ was auctioned off to lobstermen" (Lowell 1959, 89). "The fairy decorator" is no exception; "there is no money in his work,/ he'd rather marry," the speaker tells us " (Lowell 1959, 89).

The sterility of the setting makes the speaker call to mind "one dark night" during which he felt so empty and useless—"an existential night" as Lowell himself calls it and describes it even further as such:

> The first four stanzas are meant to give a dawdling more or less amiable picture of a declining Maine sea town. I move from the ocean inland. Sterility howls through the scenery, but I try to give a tone of tolerance, humor, and randomness to the sad prospect. The composition drifts, its direction sinks out of sight into the casual, chancy arrangements of nature and decay. Then all comes alive in stanzas V and VI. This is the dark night. I hoped my readers would remember St. John of the Cross's poem. My night is not gracious, but secular, puritan, and agnostical. An Existentialist night. (Qtd. in Parkinson 1968, 131-32)

The shift from "the season's ill" to "my mind's not right" at "the dark night of my soul" is intriguing and comes as no surprise, actually, as it reinforces an already dismal place. "I myself is hell," the speaker adds, which implies that hell is both within and without. Nowhere is the speaker's emptiness and vacuity better expressed than in the following, contracted line: "Nobody's here" (Lowell 1959, 90)

In an attempt to divest himself of the feeling of hollowness that gnaws at him, the speaker engages in two voyeuristic experiences, if so we may call them. The first experience adds to his distress, while the second one brings solace to his despondent soul. First, he drives up a hill and watches "love-cars:"

One dark night,
my Tudor Ford climbed the hill's skull,
I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
they lay together, hull to hull,
where the graveyard shelves on the town. ...
My mind's not right.

A car radio bleats,
'Love, O careless Love . ...' I hear
my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,
as if my hand were at its throat . ...
I myself am hell;
nobody's here— (Lowell 1959, 90)

Even love is "careless," as expressed in the above lines. Worse still, the speaker sets on watching "love-cars" and not "lovers." Love is automatized, as it were. The radio "bleats" a love song, in a sheep-like, if not sheepish sound. The setting is also telling as it helps impart a haunting effect analogous to the one permeating the first part of the poem: the speaker is on the "hill's skull .../ where the graveyards shelves on the town" (Lowell 1959, 90). In a word, love is equally rotten and dying, which affects the speaker's psyche.

Most important, the register of decay and contamination prevalent in the first part of the poem—as in "eyesore," "fall," "dotage," "ill," "lost," "stain," etc.—is further compounded with a lexical field of gloom and blankness: "dark," "skull," "graveyard," "not right," "careless," "ill-spirit," "sob," and "hell." Such blankness and wretchedness, ailing society and the speaker's self alike, are set against the bold attitude of the skunk family, as revealed in the second, more promising voyeuristic experience the speaker goes through. The speaker's dispiriting remark, "Nobody's here—" is soon qualified with his observation of the family skunk, when he says: "only skunk, that search/ in the moonlight for a bite to eat" (Lowell 1959, 90). These skunks, it seems, are the only creatures that endow the setting, and symbolically the poem, with life and energy. Their scavenging for food in the town's "garbage pail" testifies to their commitment to life, despite the odds.

The skunks, in this regard, seem to provide the only glimmer of hope in the midst of all this dejection and depravity. With her "column of kittens," mother skunk symbolizes integrity long lost on human beings. And it seems that human love and care is rather embodied within the skunk family. Skunks are neither intimidated by nor scared of such vacuity. In the midst of decay, they move on, looking for life-sustaining food, even it be in the garbage pail. The skunk's commitment to life and their content with leftovers are inspiring—an attitude that runs counter to "the hermit heiress," who just lets the worlds "fall." "[The skunks] march on their soles up Main Street," the speaker tells us (Lowell 1959, 90). They are real, which is subtly conveyed through the intriguing

pun in "soles" and "souls." Their eyes are "red-fire," fiercely cast against the bleached, "chalk-dry" church walls. Together, they form a reinvigorating force.

"I stand on top/ of our back steps and breathe the rich air," the speaker says (Lowell 1959, 90). The shift from the dark, suffocating night to "the rich air" is revelatory of the speaker's new solace. Axelrod further comments on this, saying:

> They swill the garbage pail, the refuse of the past. The skunks are an image of the new world Lowell has entered, and an image of Lowell himself, having entered. He breathes the "rich air," accommodating himself to this present, this future. (Axelrod 1978, 131)

The world that Axelrod alludes to is notably Lowell's poetics and his aesthetic imagination. Accordingly, the meta-poetic aspect inherent in the skunk symbolism cannot be overlooked. Put differently, the skunks' nonchalant and defiant attitude might stand for the poet's desire to veer from the rigid confines of formalism. Such association is substantiated especially when examining the working draft of this poem, originally entitled "Inspiration." As revealed in the drafts, the "fairy decorator" that we find in the printed version of the poem proves to be the poet himself, saying:

> My shades are drawn, my daylight bulb is on;
> Writing verses like a Turk,
> I lie in bed from sun to sun—
> There is no money in this work,
> You have to love it. (Qtd. in Axelrod, 1978, 250)

Like the decorator, Lowell had probably found himself caught within a precarious job—writing. That is why, "You have to love it," he avers. He seems enamored with this new mode of poetry, what he calls "raw poetry"—probably as savage, fervent and unpredictable as the skunks themselves. The skunks "cannot scare," Lowell writes—which implies that they do not scare and that they cannot be scared, either. Along these lines, commenting on Lowell's collection *Life Studies* and on the symbolic value of this particular poem in the formation and the development of Lowell's poetics, Charles Altieri (1970, 183) writes:

> The emblem of the skunk suggests a new secular mode for art. As it swills the garbage in its desperate quest to live and provide for its family, it is doing exactly what Lowell does with his past in *Life Studies.* And, the volume successfully completed, Lowell too "will not scare." At the end of his essay on "Skunk Hour," Lowell returns to one of the basic motifs in the volume to summarize the importance of this last poem, "With Berryman, too, I go on a strange journey! Thank God, we both come out clinging to spars, enough floating matter to save us, though faithless."

Like the skunk family, Lowell ultimately manages to overcome all the bleakness of the world. He manages to find "enough floating matter to save [him]." He clings to "spars," but these are definitely not the "chalk-dry and spar spire/ of the Trinitarian Church," he alludes to in his poem (Lowell 1959, 90). He simply survives, "faithless," as he puts it. Lowell concluded his National Award Acceptance Speech by saying: "When I finished *Life Studies*, I was left hanging on a question mark. I am still hanging there. I don't know whether it is a death-rope or a life-line." Doubtless, "Skunk Hour" is a *life-line*. The skunks "cannot scare," and so is the case with Lowell's new poetics of transformation and revolt.

5. Conclusion

James Merrill once wrote, "To sound personal is the point" (qtd. in Perloff 1970, 470)—a statement to which Lowell seemed to have fully ascribed to as he composed his more mature poems. But the disenchantent characterising his age was never lost on him, either. Accordingly, writing personally was not a purely aesthetic choice; it was also a political decision as the poet tried to internalize the moral and political disturbances of his/her times, and to undergo them personally. Lowell's late, "transformed" poetics has long been considered as a form of therapy. However, as Walter Kirn (2005, web) quipped: "Lowell's poems proved that if writing is a form of therapy, it's a uniquely unsuccessful one, at least in medical terms, and that insights into the larger human predicament don't guarantee their author a good night's sleep, a stable marriage or a dignified passing." They rather generate, in Wallace Stevens's words, "a violence from within that protects us from a violence without ..., the expression of it, the sound of its words, helps us to live our lives" (W. Stevens 1960, 36).

References:

Altieri, Charles. "Poetry in a Prose World: Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*" *Modern Poetry Studies* 1 (1970): 182-97.

Axelrod, Steven Gould. *Robert Lowell: Life and Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Axelrod, Steven Gould. "Plath's and Lowell's Last Word." *Pacific Coast Philology* (1976): 5–14.

Bawer, Bruce. "Sylvia Plath and the Poetry of Confession." *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Sylvia Plath*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007. 7–20.

Beach, Christopher. *The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Shaw, Robert Burns, ed. *American Poetry since 1960: Some Critical Perspectives*. London: Carcanet Press, 1973.

Doty, Mark. "The 'Forbidden Planet' of Character: The Revolutions of the 1950s." *Profile of Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (1991): 131–57.

Eliot, T. S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *Perspecta* (1981): 36–42.

Gill, Jo, Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Sylvia Plath*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Hoffman, Steven K. "Impersonal Personalism: The Making of a Confessional Poetic." *ELH* 45, no. 4 (1978): 687–709.

Hayes, Paula. *Robert Lowell and the Confessional Mode*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003.

Kirn, Walter. "The Passions of Robert Lowell." *New York Times, Sunday Book Review*. 26 June 2005. Web. 10 March 2017.

Lowell, Robert. "National Book Awards Acceptance Speech." *National Book Foundation*. Web. 30 September 2013.

Lowell, Robert. *Life Studies*. New York: Vintage Books, 1959.

Middlebrook, Diane. "What Was Confessional Poetry." *The Columbia History of America Poetry*. Eds. Jay Parini and Brett. C. Miller. NY: Columbia University Press, 1993. 632–49.

Molesworth, Charles. "'With Your Own Face On': The Origins and Consequences of Confessional Poetry." *Twentieth Century Literature* 22, no. 2 (1976): 163-78.

Nelson, Deborah. "Plath, History and Politics." *The Cambridge Companion to Sylvia Plath*. Ed. Jo Gill. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. 21–35.

Ostroff, Anthony, Ed. *The Contemporary Poet as Artist and Critic*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1964.

Parkinson, Thomas, ed. *Robert Lowell: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Perloff, Marjorie G. "Realism and the Confessional Mode of Robert Lowell." *Contemporary Literature* 11, no. 4 (1970): 470–487.

Rosenthal. M. L. "Poetry as Confession." *Critics on Robert Lowell*. Ed. Jonathan Price. London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd, 1974.

Rosenthal. M. L. *The New Poets: American and British Poetry since World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Russo, John Paul. "The Tranquilized Poem: The Crisis of New Criticism in the 1950s." Texas Studies in Literature and Language 30, no. 2 (1988): 198–229.

Stevens, Hugh. "Confession, Autobiogarphy and Resistance: Robert Lowell and the Politics of Privacy." *American Cold War Culture*. Ed. Douglas Field. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. 164–84.

Stevens, Wallace. *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination.* London: Faber, 1960.

Phillips, Robert. *The Confessional Poets*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973.

Travisano, Thomas. *Midcentury Quartet: Bishop, Lowell, Jarrell, Berryman, and the Making of a Postmodern Aesthetic*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999.

Wilbur, Richard. "The Genie in the Bottle." *Mid-Century American Poetry*. Ed. John Ciadri. New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1950.