

# Epilogue

By Robert Lowell

Those blessed structures, plot and rhyme—  
why are they no help to me now  
I want to make  
something imagined, not recalled?  
I hear the noise of my own voice:  
*The painter's vision is not a lens,  
it trembles to caress the light.*  
But sometimes everything I write  
with the threadbare art of my eye  
seems a snapshot,  
lurid, rapid, garish, grouped,  
heightened from life,  
yet paralyzed by fact.  
All's misalliance.  
Yet why not say what happened?  
Pray for the grace of accuracy  
Vermeer gave to the sun's illumination  
stealing like the tide across a map  
to his girl solid with yearning.  
We are poor passing facts,  
warned by that to give  
each figure in the photograph  
his living name.

Robert Lowell, "Epilogue" from *Day by Day*. Copyright © 1977 by Robert Lowell. Used by permission of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, LLC, <http://us.macmillan.com/fsg>. All rights reserved.

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Source: *Day by Day* (1977)



The most celebrated and ambitious American poet of his era, Robert Lowell transformed the particulars of his prominent New England family's background and turbulent private life into controversial art. Lowell's book *Life Studies* (1959), which reveals his struggles with madness,

alcohol, and marital infidelity, gave rise to the so-called “confessional” school. In subsequent works he explored political issues and historical figures while extending his experiments in verse technique.

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