

Blair Clark:

An Inventory of His Robert Lowell Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Clark, Blair, 1918-2000
Title:	Blair Clark's Robert Lowell Collection
Dates:	1938-1983
Extent:	2 boxes (0.84 linear feet)
Abstract:	This collection represents Clark's compilation of papers related to Robert Lowell and includes undated poems by Lowell, holograph and typed drafts of "Santayana's Farewell to the Blue Sisters," Clark's handwritten notes of various conversations (1970-1978), correspondence, articles on Lowell and reviews of his works, three audio cassette interviews (1967, 1982), and Lowell's obituaries.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-04877
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials.
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Administrative Information

Acquisition: Gift, 2001 (G 11875)

Processed by: Liz Murray, 2001

Repository: [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

Biographical Sketch

The lifelong friendship between Blair Clark and Robert Lowell began in the 1930s when both were students at St. Mark's Episcopal boarding school in Southborough, Massachusetts, and continued at Harvard. While at Harvard, Clark edited the *Harvard Crimson*, a harbinger of his career in journalism. After graduating from Harvard and serving in the Army in World War II, Clark co-founded the *New Hampshire Sunday News*. In 1953 he joined CBS News as a foreign correspondent in Paris, later anchored *The World Tonight* for the CBS Radio Network, and became vice president and general manager of CBS News in 1961. After leaving CBS in the mid-1960s, Clark helped establish the *New York Review of Books*, was associate publisher of the *New York Post*, and editor of *The Nation* from 1976 to 1978. Along the way he was active in Democratic politics, working for W. Averell Harriman in 1956 and managing Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign. In later years he taught at Princeton and New York University.

Scope and Contents

This collection represents Clark's compilation of papers related to Robert Lowell and reflects their close friendship until Lowell's death in 1977. It is arranged in three Series: Series I. Writings by and about Lowell, Series II. Correspondence, 1938-1983, and Series III. Information on Lowell. The papers provide significant insight into Lowell's work and relationships, especially with his second wife, Elizabeth Hardwick, with whom Clark and his wife Holly also shared a close friendship. This collection, especially the correspondence, complements the Ransom Center's existing collections of Lowell and Hardwick. In addition, it provides the viewpoint of Lowell biographer Ian Hamilton who worked with Clark during his research and writing of *Robert Lowell: A Biography* (Random House, 1982).

Series I. Writing by and about Lowell contains several undated poems by Lowell, some in his own handwriting, for example, verse penciled on the back of a December 1938 letter from Lowell's psychiatrist Merrill Moore. Also of note are holograph and typed drafts of "Santayana's Farewell to the Blue Sisters" written just after his philosopher friend George Santayana, who had been in the care of the Blue Nuns in Rome, had died. Another typed but handcorrected poem reads in part "...my final bow is in the stars, or the cards; But I am alone and there are none to help!" A draft of Lowell's acceptance speech for the National Book Award for *Life Studies* is also present. Clark kept handwritten notes of conversations he had with various people including Lowell, Hardwick, Lowell's first wife Jean Stafford, third wife Caroline Blackwood, friend Mary McCarthy, and others. These notes date from 1970-1978; some were found in a folder marked "for the memoirs." Drafts of Clark's 1979 article on Lowell for *The Harvard Advocate* are also present. The final piece in this series is an early work of poet Richard G. Eberhart, Lowell's mentor at St. Mark's, who captures Lowell's angst of the 1930s and

1940s in an empathetic verse play "The Crystal Sepulcher" which was later revised and printed as "The Mad Musician" in a volume of Eberhart's collected plays.

Series II. Correspondence, 1938-1983 contains Clark's correspondence with Lowell, Ian Hamilton, Elizabeth Hardwick, Jean Stafford, and letters from others including Dr. Viola Bernard, Robert Giroux, Lowell's mother Charlotte, Lowell's 1954 romantic interest Giovanna Madonia, and Martha Ritter who knew Lowell at Harvard in 1969. Hamilton had access to and drew heavily upon this correspondence in the writing of his biography. Clark and Hamilton corresponded frequently, especially in the 1980s just before the biography was published. The Clark/Lowell letters number over fifty exchanges between the two friends from 1938-1976 with the heaviest concentration of letters in the early 1970s during the breakup of Lowell's marriage with Hardwick and his marriage to Caroline Blackwood. A similar number of letters are found in the Clark/Hardwick correspondence, especially frequent in the mid-1950s while the Clarks were assigned to Paris. Jean Stafford's letters to the Clarks are few in number, but her file includes several articles by and about her, including an article she wrote in *The New Yorker* the year after Lowell's death. The two Charlotte Lowell letters are written to Jean Stafford in October and November of 1943. Robert Lowell was in jail at that time for declining service in the Armed Forces, after he addressed a "Declaration of Personal Responsibility" directly to President Roosevelt.

Series III. Information on Lowell contains articles on Lowell and reviews of his works, especially *The Dolphin*, *For Lizzie and Harriet*, and *History*. Also present are three audio cassette interviews: *Time* magazine interview with Clark for a June 2, 1967 cover story on Lowell (issue included); a Sept. 29, 1982 Clark interview on Lowell and the Hamilton biography for The South Bank Show for ITV; and Hamilton interview on NPR Morning Edition, Nov. 29, 1982. Book reviews of the Hamilton biography, Lowell's obituaries, order of service for the funeral, and photographs of Jean Stafford in 1940 and 1941 are also included in this series.

This collection was donated to the Ransom Center through the generosity of Blair Clark's widow Joanna Rostropowicz Clark.

I. Writings by and about Lowell

Poems by Lowell, holograph and typed, including "Santayana's Farewell to the Blue Sisters" and "Epitaph for a Fallen Poet," 9 Jan. 1953

Box 1
Folder
1

Typescript draft of Lowell's National Book Award acceptance speech, 25 March [1960?], with additional holograph emendations.

Clark's holograph notes, 1970-1978, on Lowell, Elizabeth Hardwick, Jean Stafford, Caroline Blackwood, Mary McCarthy, and others.

Drafts of Clark's article on Lowell for *The Harvard Advocate*, with carbons of letters to Hardwick and Sarah Chace

Richard G. Eberhart, "The Crystal Sepulcher," playscript, revised and printed as "The Mad Musician"

II. Correspondence, 1938-1983

- Lowell, Robert and Clark, 1938-1976 **Box 1 Folder 2**
- Photocopies of Lowell's letters as above, copied for a researcher **Folder 3**
- Hamilton, Ian and Clark, 1972-1983, with additional correspondence of others relating to Hamilton's biography; Clark's notes on Hamilton. **Folder 4**
- Hardwick, Elizabeth to the Clarks, 1952-1971, and EH to Lowell, 10 Feb. 1971; review of "Sleepless Nights." **Folder 5**
- Stafford, Jean to the Clarks, early 1950s and n.d., with Dorthea Straus and Robert Giroux articles on Stafford and Stafford's article "An Influx of Poets" in *The New Yorker*, 1978. **Folder 6**
- Various correspondents including Dr. Viola Bernard, Robert Giroux, Charlotte Lowell, Giovanna Madonia, and Martha Ritter. **Folder 7**

III. Information on Lowell

Articles and reviews, 1964-1978	Box 2 Folder 1
Interviews on audio cassettes (non-circulating), with <i>Times</i> article on Lowell, 2 June 1967.	Folder 2
Obits, funeral service, condolence letters	Folder 3
Photographs--Jean Stafford Lowell, 1941, beside pool in Princeton, N.J., and Jean Stafford with Lowell and Peter Taylor in New Orleans, 1940, with list of photos loaned to Ellen Tarlow	Folder 4
Book reviews of Hamilton's biography of Lowell	Folder 5