**On Imagism**

from Amy Lowell, *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*

(New York: Macmillan Company, 1917)

In the preface to the anthology, "Some Imagist Poets," [1916] there is set down a brief list of tenets to which the poets contributing to it mutually agreed. I do not mean that they pledged themselves as to a creed. I mean that they all found themselves in accord upon these simple rules.

I propose to take up these rules presently, one by one, and explain them in detail, but I will first set them down in order:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.

2. To create new rhythms -as the expression of new moods -- and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry a new cadence means a new idea.

3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly of aeroplanes and automobiles, nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. Webelieve passionately in the artistic value of modem life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.

4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.

5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.

6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

There is nothing new under the sun, even the word, "renaissance," means a re-birth not a new birth, and of this the Imagists were well aware. This short creed was preceded by the following paragraph:

These principles are not new; they have fallen into desuetude. They are the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature

**Thirteen Short Poems in the style of “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens**

Students must choose an object that is outdoors and write 13 short poems in an observatory nature about the object.

**Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird by Wallace Stevens**

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| I  Among twenty snowy mountains  The only moving thing  Was the eye of the blackbird.  II  I was of three minds,  Like a tree  In which there are three blackbirds.  III  The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.  It was a small part of the pantomime.  IV  A man and a woman  Are one.  A man and a woman and a blackbird  Are one.  V  I do not know which to prefer,  The beauty of inflections  Or the beauty of innuendoes,  The blackbird whistling  Or just after.  VI  Icicles filled the long window  With barbaric glass.  The shadows of the blackbird  Crossed it, to and fro.  The mood  Traced in the shadow  An indecipherable cause.  VII  O thin men of Haddam,  Why do you imagine golden birds?  Do you not see how the blackbird  Walks around the feet  Of the women about you? | VIII  I know noble accents  And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  But I know, too,  That the blackbird is involved  In what I know.  IX  When the blackbird flew out of sight,  It marked the edge  Of one of many circles.  X  At the sight of blackbirds  Flying in a green light,  Even the bawds of euphony  Would cry out sharply.  XI  He rode over Connecticut  In a glass coach.  Once, a fear pierced him,  In that he mistook  The shadow of his equipage  For blackbirds.  XII  The river is moving.  The blackbird must be flying.  XIII  It was evening all afternoon.  It was snowing  And it was going to snow.  The blackbird sat  In the cedar-limbs. |