**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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| IAmong twenty snowy mountainsThe only moving thingWas the eye of the blackbird.III was of three minds,Like a treeIn which there are three blackbirds.IIIThe blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.It was a small part of the pantomime.IVA man and a womanAre one.A man and a woman and a blackbirdAre one.VI do not know which to prefer,The beauty of inflectionsOr the beauty of innuendoes,The blackbird whistlingOr just after.VIIcicles filled the long windowWith barbaric glass.The shadows of the blackbirdCrossed it, to and fro.The moodTraced in the shadowAn indecipherable cause.VIIO thin men of Haddam,Why do you imagine golden birds? Do you not see how the blackbirdWalks around the feetOf the women about you? | VIIII know noble accentsAnd lucid, inescapable rhythms;But I know, too,That the blackbird is involvedIn what I know.IXWhen the blackbird flew out of sight,It marked the edgeOf one of many circles.XAt the sight of blackbirdsFlying in a green light,Even the bawds of euphonyWould cry out sharply.XIHe rode over ConnecticutIn a glass coach.Once, a fear pierced him,In that he mistookThe shadow of his equipageFor blackbirds.XIIThe river is moving.The blackbird must be flying.XIIIIt was evening all afternoon.It was snowingAnd it was going to snow.The blackbird satIn the cedar-limbs. |